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Islamic Revivalism and Social Transformation in the Modern World

Edited by
Jan A. Ali

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Editorial

Introduction to Special Issue: Islamic Revivalism and Social Transformation in the Modern World

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In Arabic, Islamic revival is called *tajdid*, which literally translates to "regeneration" or "renewal". It is also referred to as *as-Sahwah l-'Islamiyyah*, denoting "Islamic awakening" or "Islamic renaissance", as preferred by revivalists. This is generally described as a revival of Islam, usually with a focus on enforcing *shari'ah* (divine law) (Islam and Islam 2018). Sometimes, the Arabic term *islah* (reform) is also used in connection with Islamic revival. A revivalist leader is known in Islam as a *mujaddid* (renewer). According to Islamic tradition, a *mujaddid* is supposed to appear every Islamic century to revitalize Islam, cleanse it of extraneous elements, restore it to its pristine purity, and guide believers in protecting and organising the intimate zones of life, that is, marriage, family-making, child-rearing, and social relation-building. The revitalization of Islam is not a return to the past or an act of nostalgia, but a concerted effort by Muslim revivalists using classical Islamic teachings and practices to create a closer congruence between the blueprint that existed under the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad, his "Rightly Guided Successors", and actual reality. That early experience of the Muslim community and this blueprint has become a model for revivalists. For them, pristine Islam is a reality with the capacity to guide humanity in all realms of life. Revivalists assert that they are not attempting to recreate the society of the first Islamic century, but are trying to recreate or reform the current society by reintroducing and re-enforcing the principles used under the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad and his "Rightly Guided Successors".

Islamic revival has its origins in a combination of local and transnational conditions and manifests itself in myriad of ways, ranging from political revivalism and missionary revivalism to radical revivalism and jihadi revivalism (Ali 2023). Different local and international situations and thoughts take revivalists on different paths, and this is when their ideologies and methods of revivalism diverge from each other. In their ethnic background, language, norms and practices, as well as socio-cultural and political organization, they represent countless differences in the human experience. For all versions of contemporary Islamic revivalism and for all revivalists, it is, however, Islam as a *din*—a way of life—which unites them. Though Islam is not always the totality of their lives, it pervades their identity, regulates their patterns of daily practice, bonds them together in the socio-political order, and fulfills the quest for salvation. For all its variety, Islam brings these individuals together into the great spiritual community of believers—the *ummah*.

Revivalists emphasize that Islam is the God's prescribed way of life, and provides a set of ethico-moral principles for individual behavior, instructions for personal and communal life, and universal goals for the stability and unity of the *ummah*. Thus, they call for a renewed commitment to the fundamentals of Islam and place stress on the regulation of personal conduct, marital affairs, family life, education, social relations, and economic exchange according to divinely revealed rules. They want to see Islam be made the focal point, for instance, of state ideology via reliance on canonical religious texts to manage state affairs; allocation of government grants for *madrasa*s (educational institutions); and general Islamic education where classical Qur'anic and Islamic education is viewed as a powerful social force. Arabic would be made compulsory in all levels of

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schooling, and the commercial sale of *haram* (impermissible) commodities, such as alcohol and gambling, would be banned. Also, revivalists have a tendency to encourage and teach others about other aspects of life such as creation and procreation, providence and scientific evidence, moral and behavioral codes, and spirituality by referring to the scripture. They concentrate on the teachings of the Qur'an and *hadith*s (record of the words, actions, and tacit approval or disapproval of Prophet Muhammad as transmitted through chains of narrators); enforcement and observation of *shari'ah*; a return to the pristine Islam supposed to have flourished during the early days of Islam; and rebuilding of society using these sources. Whilst they have been focusing on these, they have been far less focused, however, on specifying macroeconomic policies, creating developmental strategies and processes, and articulating the inner complexity and detailed functionality of political order.

In academic works, "Islamic revival" is an umbrella term used to describe Islamic revivalist movements or the contemporary global phenomenon of Islamic revivalism. Constituted by a variety of Islamic revivalist movements of varying sizes and maturity levels, contemporary Islamic revivalism is a complex, dynamic, and internally diverse global phenomenon. Islamic revivalists have their own distinctive worldview regarding knowledge and its proper use, scientific understanding and its application, and technological innovation. In comparison to their non-revivalist coreligionists, Islamic revivalists have an opposite attitude towards secular sciences and anthropocentric notions of advancement and growth; they rely exclusively on the truth revealed in guiding human intellectual endeavors. Their conceptualization of the cosmos and of a just socio-political order is different, and for them, the world is split into *dar al-Islam* (House of Islam) and *dar al-harb* (House of War). In *dar al-Islam*, Islamic law and faith prevail, and in *dar al-harb*, this is not the case; therefore, they want to bring Islam into it. In the early 20th century, Islamic revivalism began to bring about widespread "re-Islamisation"—a process of refiguring of the public sphere, introduction of increased number of *shari'ah*-based legal statutes, and construction of universalistic Islamic self-conception.

Islamic revivalism is not a new phenomenon. It has a long-established theme within the Muslim experience, and "The history of Islam has witnessed a constant influx of revivalist movements" (Islam and Islam 2018, p. 331). The prevailing conditions in any given era, region, or society have a central function in framing the ways that Islamic revivalism expresses itself. However, this unique set of circumstances must be understood within the dimensions of the larger narrative of the whole Muslim world and the enduring historical experience of Muslim societies. It is critical to note that in any attempt to understand Islamic revivalism, it is important not to become overly focused on the immediate circumstances and leave the broader questions of the Muslim experience unaddressed. Thus, if we direct our attention to Islamic history, it is not difficult to notice that revivalism of Islam has been occurring in different periods throughout the Muslim world. In fact, Islamic revivalism started as early as 717 C.E., when Umar bin Abdul Aziz, the eighth Umayyad caliph, assumed the reigns of the Umayyad Empire, expanded Islamization drive, and brought about a wide range of reforms in the Muslim world (Hoyland 2015). Other popular revivalists and revivalist movements include the Almoravid and Almohad dynasties in Maghreb and Spain (1042–1269); Sunni Muslim theologian and ascetic Ibn Taymiyyah (1263–1328); a prominent Muslim scholar of Delhi, Shah Waliullah Dehlawi (1702–1762); and an Arabian theologian and preacher reformer, Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792). In the 19th century, notable Muslim figures, like Jamal al- Din al-Afghanii (1838–1897) of Iran, Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1898) of India, and Muḥammad Abduh (1849–1905) of Egypt emerged to respond to the Western cultural imposition, meet the modern challenges, and embark on a quest of forging what was dubbed a truly Islamic identity in order to establish an Islamically-oriented order. They advocated for pan-Islamism and Islamic modernism to reconcile their Islamic faith with modern values. Then, in the 20th century, figures such as Abul A'la Maududi (1903–1979) of India, Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865–1935) of Egypt, Hassan al-Banna (1906–1949) of Egypt, and Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966) of Egypt came to prominence through cultivating Islamic spirituality and renewal. They reinvigorated the

idea of the *as-Salaf as-Salih* (the first and best three generations of Muslims) as the heuristic model by which a truly Islamic code of life can be embedded into the general pattern of everyday living. By taking the *sunnah* (traditions and practices of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad), the *Tabiun* (Companions), and the *Tabi'in* (Companions' Followers) as their primary reference points in matters relating to religion, they encouraged the Muslim masses to adopt pristine practices and rituals.

What separates contemporary Islamic revivalism, whose origins are traced to the last quarter of the twentieth century (Volpi 2010)—arguably with the advent of Iranian Revolution in 1978–1979 (Mutalib 1990)—from earlier revivalisms, however, is the enduring fallout of European colonial expansion on Islamic life and the conquests of Muslim territories. European territorial expansion gradually introduced damaging transformations to Muslim societies. Through activation of the process of modernization, accompanied by secularization and Westernization, the Muslim political order embodied in the Moghul, Safavid, and Ottoman dynasties was fundamentally disassembled. Ira Lapidus notes that:

Islamic societies were profoundly disrupted by the breakup of Muslim empires, economic decline, internal religious conflict, and by the establishment of European economic, political, and cultural domination. These forces led to the creation of national states, to the modernization of agriculture and industrialization, to major changes in class structure, and to the acceptance of secular nationalist and other modern ideologies. In the course of these changes Islamic thought and Islamic communal institutions have been radically altered (Lapidus 1988, p. xxi).

Contemporary Islamic revivalism is a direct response to this and to other socio-economic and political afflictions, including relative deprivation, oppressive state policies, and social injustice in many Muslim countries. It has appeared in the twentieth century as a tendency and attitude paradigmatically embodied in certain representative personalities and movements, such as Mohammad Ilyas and his *Tabligh Jama'at* (Convey the Message of Islam Group) (established in 1924), Hassan al-Banna and his *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun* (Muslim Brotherhood) (established in 1928), and Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi and his *Jama'at e-Islami* (Society of Islam) (established in 1947). These are a product of modernity as well as a global response to the crisis of modernity (the failure of rationality, science, and technology to produce global progress, prosperity, and harmony).

Regarding these figures and their movements, Hassan al-Banna and his successor Sayyid Qutb, for instance, conceptualized Islamic awakening as a socio-religious and political endeavor. In their worldview, religion and politics were intertwined through the message of the Qur'an, and they wanted to create a new Islamic order by working with Muslims at the grassroots level by engaging in proselytization and networking, as well as at the political level using a top-down discipline and command-and-control mechanisms within the broader structure of the movement to instruct and guide the members. Sayyid Qutb, after al-Banna's death, developed al-Banna's worldview further using many of Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi's concepts and ideas, in which the modern world was understood to be steeped in *jahiliyyah* (ignorance or barbarism) and Islamic awakening was the process through which *jahiliyyah* was to be reversed. Islamic awakening, from their viewpoint, was a socio-religious and political project, and many of their followers today exhibit such a view.

In a different scenario, Mohammad Ilyas's approach to Islamic awakening was completely different. Mohammad Ilyas and his *Tabligh Jama'at* concentrated on ordinary Muslims and their reform on a personal level. In Mohammad Ilyas's worldview, politics and religion were intertwined, but his work of *tabligh* (preaching) was apolitical. All Mohammad Ilyas was focused on was to make religiously neglectful Muslims better practicing Muslims. He did not have a political program and, therefore, was distinct from Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, and Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi as a revivalist and an ideologue.

This demonstrates, as I mentioned above, contemporary Islamic revivalism's internal diversity. Distinctive worldviews produce different sets of priorities and methods of Islamic awakening in the modern world. Whilst some worldviews combine religion and

politics and act upon it, some worldviews separate religion and politics completely, such as groups with strong *Sufistic* (mystical) influence. Then, there are some worldviews that combine religion and politics, but only act upon religious or political aspects, such as the *Tabligh Jama'at*.

Contemporary Islamic revivalism maintains itself as a strategy or set of strategies by which struggling revivalists attempt to preserve their distinctive self-concept as an exclusive collection of people. Feeling this self-concept to be under threat in modernity, these revivalists reinforce it by a selective retrieval of doctrines, dogmas, and practices from the era of pristine Islam. These retrieved fundamentals are then modified, cultivated, and legitimized in consideration of pragmatism. They are seen to serve as a form of protection against the encroachment of harmful elements of modernity which threaten to drive ordinary Muslims into a syncretic, areligious, or irreligious cultural abyss. Moreover, revivalists place the retrieved fundamentals alongside reckless assertions and doctrinal innovations, encouraging Muslims to appreciate the retrieved and updated fundamentals, as they represent the religious values and experiences that originally shaped their communal identity. Revivalists seek major reforms in the social, economic, religious, and political institutions of their states. They see Islam to serve as a vehicle for social progress, and opt for a policy of re-Islamization, attempting to expand the sphere of operation of the *shari'ah* to the main areas of social, economic, cultural, and political activity.

Contemporary Islamic revivalism is about social transformations, and is not simply a phenomenon confined to the Arab world or the Middle East. Discussions of contemporary Islamic revivalism in the context of crises of modernity tend to imagine the Muslim world and the Middle East as identical and assume that the crisis is restricted to only these places. Muslims are not all Arabs or Middle Easterners, and, in fact, a vast majority of Muslims are non-Arabs and non-Middle Easterners (Held and Cummings 2014). Although the crisis of modernity is a global problem, regarding Muslims specifically, it afflicts them almost everywhere they live. Any discussion of contemporary Islamic revivalism, therefore, must include all Muslims. To not include all Muslims and Islamic revivalist movements in a discussion about contemporary Islamic revivalism is to ignore vital dimensions of the modern Muslim experience, which can render generalizations about contemporary Islamic revivalism not only weak, but even invalid. Revivalism has been an inherent part of the logic and experience of Muslims throughout their history. It is a common Muslim belief that in the Qur'an and the *hadith*s are the perfect blueprint for the "best" way of life. Many Muslims look up to the community of Muslims who lived during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad as a perfect community, and they work towards remodeling their current community in such a guise. They note that, as long as humans continue to fail to create such a model society, there will be an ongoing crisis.

Modernity has transformed the societies of the world through the formation of nation-states, the establishment of capitalist economies, the development of technologies and sciences, an emphasis on reason and rationality, and the reformation of socio-cultural processes and institutional operations. In the Muslim world, modernity found its way on the backs of European colonialists who colonized many Muslim societies under the guise of modernization. Muslim societies were faced with the challenges of scientific discovery and technological advancements, the popularization of rationality and rationalism, reason-centered ideas and institutions, and political reorganization. These challenges invariably operated interconnectedly.

In the Muslim world, the initial process of modernization, unlike in the West, was driven purely by external dynamics, which expressed itself through unfamiliar value systems, processes, and institutions. The role of external input into the transformation was never minimized and occurred almost abruptly. The Muslim world's modernization and liberalization took place as a result of its contact with the West, and not of its own initiative. For the most part, Muslim societies dealt with modernization from a position of cultural, economic, and political weakness, and modernity served to disempower the Muslim world

and reinforce its feeling of inferiority vis-à-vis the West. The popular embrace of modern values was never uniform and widespread.

Although some non-Western countries, such as Japan and South Korea, have benefitted hugely from Western modernization and liberalization and have undergone relatively successful transformations, this is not so for the Muslim world. The dynamics of modernization in Muslim-majority countries are fundamentally different from those in the West. Modern values did not spread organically through internal processes, but were imposed as consequences of contact, sometimes aggressive, with the West. Instead of empowering the masses and assisting in improving and modernizing their traditional value system, modern values did the opposite by undermining enduring traditional Muslim values, norms, processes, and institutional functions. Moreover, the highly elaborated modern value system as a total package, as well as new and highly complicated concepts such as citizenship, parliament, election, human rights, and freedom of speech, were introduced simultaneously and within brief intervals of one another to the Muslim masses, which made their adoption into the micro- and macro-levels of everyday living highly challenging and problematic.

Collectively, these generated, in the Muslim world, a religious response manifesting as an Islamization of Muslim countries. From the revivalists' perspective, modernity has always been seen as a foreign force imposed on the Muslim world from above by European colonial powers in partnership with the Muslim elite class in the wake of the gradual decline and ultimate deconstruction of Safavid, Moghul, and Ottoman Empires. The Islamic revivalist movements which emerged from this experience embarked on a salvational mission to save the Muslim world from drifting further into an abyss. Their basic tenet has been to save the Muslim world, and, by extension, the world, by returning particularly negligent Muslims to the ethico-moral standards preserved in the Qur'an and the *Sunna* (the teachings of Prophet Muhammad). They call for the abandoning of various so-called false and historically adulterated traditional practices and beliefs of Muslims and a renewed commitment to pure Islam—the Islam which was practiced by the first few generations of Muslims. They want to see a return to the *shari'ah,* which they believe will lead to communal solidarity, social justice, improved living standards, and universal prosperity. They seek to remove corrupt or dysfunctional regimes and to create a caliphate or a *shari'ah*-based Islamic state that they claim will protect and enforce Islamic morality and ethical standards in Islamized societies.

In this sense, contemporary Islamic revivalism is at once both derivative and vitally original, but it is not anti-modernity and does not seek the destruction of modernity. In an attempt to reclaim the efficacy of a comprehensive Islamic way of life, Islamic revivalists have revealed that they have much in common with other religious revivalists of the past and present. However, they do not intend to artificially impose archaic practices and lifestyles or return to a sacred past. What they do intend to do, however, is to make the revitalized Islamic identity an exclusive and absolute basis for a reinvented socio-political order that is oriented to the future and not to the past. In this sense, they use the "beneficial" elements of modernity to move forward. By selecting elements of tradition and modernity, Islamic revivalists pursue a goal to remake a world which is God-friendly and in constant service to divine will. In this attempt, they seek out members and promote rigorous socio-moral codes for them. Boundaries are set, processes are put into place, rules are articulated, and institutions are established and nourished in pursuit of a widespread reorganization of society.

This Special Issue aims to examine the phenomenon of contemporary Islamic revivalism and the approaches taken by various movements to address the malaise faced by Muslims and their different societies in the epoch known as modernity. The idea is to undertake a social scientific study of Islamic revivalist movements and grapple with issues regarding the root causes of the movement's origins, the revivalists' reactions to and discontent with modernity, and their approaches to community-building in the face of the fragmentation of modern society. An important question to address is that of the

message which they convey to the faithful and what material and spiritual solutions they provide for their necessities. To this end, scholars, experts, and researchers were invited to examine contemporary Islamic revivalism from their respective areas of expertise and disciplinary areas.

Eleven papers in total were successfully submitted. The papers explore the phenomenon of contemporary Islamic revivalism and its attempt to bring about social transformation in the modern world from differing disciplinary, analytical, and theoretical perspectives. What brings the papers together in this Special Issue is their focus on the inner workings of the contemporary phenomenon of Islamic revivalism, its impact on the patterns of everyday Muslim living, and its contribution to the development and transformation of the modern world. The paper entitled *Modernity, Its Impact on Muslim World and General Characteristics of 19–20th-Century Revivalist–Reformists' Re-Reading of the Qur'an* explores the new approaches to the Qur'an and its interpretation which have emerged in the last two centuries. The paper concentrates on reformist *tajdid*-centered suggestions of polyphonic modern Qur'an interpretations and how they affect or not affect Muslim societies. The next paper is entitled *Islamic Revivalism and Muslim Consumer Ethics*. This paper examines the concept of Muslim consumer ethics and its manifestation as a form of religious revivalism. The paper posits that Muslim consumer ethics comprise the moral and humanistic dimension of living in a globalized world, which is an extension of an individual's religious practice. The paper entitled *Modernity, Its Crisis and Islamic Revivalism* examines the phenomenon of contemporary Islamic revivalism as a religious transformative response to the crisis of modernity. It explains that contemporary Islamic revivalism is a complex and heterogeneous global phenomenon seeking to steer modernity out of its prevailing crisis through finding the universal blueprint of life in Islam. The paper entitled *Extremism(s) and Their Fight Against Modernity: The Case of Islamists and Eco-Radicals* compares and contrasts Islamist and eco-radical extremist groups involved in fighting against Western modernization. It further explores the meaning of "modernity" and the role of "frames" (the enemy to fight, the victims to protect, and the change to achieve) in the two extremist groups, as well as the impact of modernity on the development of alternative and extremist ideologies. The paper entitled *Tajdid (Renewal) by Embodiment: Examining the Globalization of the First Mosque Open Day in Australian History* examines the concepts of *tajdid* and *mujaddid*, as well as how a mosque open day in a country like Australia can be understood as a form of renewal of an Islamic tradition. The paper entitled *Moving Beyond Binary Discourses: Islamic Universalism from an Islamic Revivalist Movement's Point of View* explores the Hizmet movement and its origin, theology, and transnational character. It further examines the movement's outreach work in multicultural societies and its ability to adapt to a changing world through education and interfaith activities. The paper entitled *Emotion Work in Tabligh Jama'at Texts* examines the emotional dynamics of the written and oral texts of the Tabligh Jama'at. It claims that Tablighi emotion work contributes to transforming Muslims' emotional spheres by linking them emotionally to critical religious concerns, which ultimately leads to the social transformation of individuals and society. The next paper is entitled *An Islamic Revivalist Group's Unsuccessful Attempt to Find Meaning on WhatsApp: A Case Study of Understanding Unsustainable Asymmetrical Logics between Traditional Religion and the Digital Realm*. The paper explores how adherents of the Tabligh Jama'at utilized WhatsApp for the purpose of meaning-making during the coronavirus pandemic in Pakistan. The paper asserts that without structural authority and organization, communicative interactions between members of Tabligh Jama'at proved chaotic at best and combative at worst. The next paper, entitled *Religious Authority, Popular Preaching and the Dialectic of Structure-Agency in an Islamic Revivalist Movement: The Case of Maulana Tariq Jamil and the Tablighi Jama'at*, is a study of a popular Urdu-speaking Pakistani Muslim scholar and preacher, Maulana Tariq Jamil. Using ethnographic study and content analysis, and by relying on sociological framework of structure–agency, the paper reveals that Maulana Tariq Jamil's increasing exercise of agency in preaching Islam has unsettled structural expectations within traditionalist *'ulama* and the Tablighi leadership. The paper

entitled *Deprived Muslims and Salafism: An Ethnographic Study of the Salafi Movement in Pekanbaru, Indonesia* analyzes the process of reversion to Salafism in Pekanbaru, Indonesia. The paper is based on an empirical study, and the findings reveal that individuals who join the Salafi movement do so because of their experience of relative and existential deprivation. The paper entitled *Revisiting Literacy Jihad Programs of 'Aisyiyah in Countering the Challenges of Salafism* examines the contribution of *'Aisyiyah*, the oldest modern Muslim women's organization in Indonesia, to the transformation of Indonesian society through literacy jihad. Using data collected from fieldwork, the findings show that through the establishment of *'Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten* and the publication of the *Suara 'Aisyiyah* magazine, the literacy jihad of *'Aisyiyah* has empowered many Muslim women and families.

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Article

Modernity, Its Impact on Muslim World and General Characteristics of 19–20th-Century Revivalist–Reformists' Re-Reading of the Qur'an

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Abstract: The 19th and 20th centuries were times of great change and transformation for the Muslim world. The salvation of the ummah—which is getting politically, militarily, and economically more backward against the West, terms such as revival (*ihya*), renewal (*tajdid*) and reform and reconstruction (*islah*)—have occupied almost all intellectuals and ulama. Many prescriptions have been proposed on this subject, the most vivid examples of which are mainly related to new approaches to the Qur'an and its interpretation. This article deals with the innovations put forward by reformist–revivalist leaders in different Muslim geographies regarding the interpretation of the Qur'an under the influence of modernism. We see that these approaches, which are basically based on the assumption of the inadequacy of classical methods and understandings, open up to questions and discussions for many hermeneutical devices that have become entrenched in the classical period and even argue that they are now unnecessary. Contrary to classical Qur'anic exegesis, reformist *tajdid*-centered suggestions of polyphonic modern Qur'an interpretations, the theological reflections of these suggestions, and most importantly their effect (or ineffectiveness) on Muslim societies are among the main topics of the article. In the beginning, the pressure of modernity, which should not be ignored in the perception and interpretation of the Qur'an, has become an indispensable element in the course of time. This new phenomenon and changing conditions have forced many Muslim intellectuals to compromise on principles that have become norms. The result, instead of a healthy reform, consisted of eclectic innovations and only saved the day and could not find a serious ground for itself in the grassroots.

Keywords: the Qur'an; exegesis; *ijtihad*; revival; renewal; modernity

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1. Introduction

One of the most important common features of the contemporary reformist–revival scholars and movements under their influence manifested in different Islamic geographies is the need for a new way of re-reading the Qur'an. Almost all of them have taken the Qur'an as a basis for the *tajdid* (renewal) and improvement to be realized. In this article, firstly the developments that came with the Renaissance and enlightenment in the West and their impact on the Islamic world will be discussed. Then, general discussions about the perception of modernism in the Muslim world will be summarized. Finally, the reflections of the reformist and revivalist perception on the re-reading of the Qur'an, which is the main dynamic in various renewalist and revivalist movements, will be covered. In doing so, besides Qur'an and exegesis, approaches to the other major sources and related disciplines will also be discussed. It should be noted at the outset that we use terms such as reformist, modernist, revivalist or renawalist in a very general sense because of the transitions and intersections between them. It is also important to note that we will not be discussing the revivalist movements in which traditional Qur'an readings are continued. We will not focus on those who show new approaches by dressing classical instruments in modern clothes. The main approaches we will concentrate on are how changing conditions of modern periods have forced many Muslim intellectuals to compromise on principles that

have become norms. The result was that, instead of a healthy reform, eclectic innovations only saved the day, and could not find serious ground for itself in the grassroots.

2. Modernism in the West

At the beginning, it should be emphasized that modernism is not a concept which has had its boundaries drawn in a very clearly defined manner. In fact, it is a term which is defined in different ways by different people—both in terms of etymology and as a technical term. It is possible to summarize a special yet comprehensive definition of modernism, which is the development of a new point of view, as opposed to classical, traditional and ancient beliefs, as follows: 'the ideology and way of life brought to light by the mental transformation of the West which came with the Age of Enlightenment' (Demir and Acar 1992, p. 251). According to another description, modernism is both a philosophical and an art movement that refers to a global transformation in Western society and culture that from the early decades of the 19th and 20th centuries sought a new alignment with the experience and values of modern industrial life. It is an anthropocentric world view which is based on the foundations of humanism, secularism, and democracy, which gives supremacy and freedom to humankind, and seeks salvation in science rather than religion (Demir and Acar 1992). This, together with the fact that the comparison of all types of new things with the traditional, old, or ancient evokes modernism, modernity is presented to us as a never-ending process (Soyan 1993). In other words, modernism appears to us as a notion which is permanently constructing itself, in opposition to its old self. For this reason, post-modernism or post-post-modernism and the following processes are inevitable phenomena.

When we go back to the above definition, it does not evade our attention that enlightenment is a notification of modernism. The most radical change in this process is made to the traditional understanding of religion,—in particular, pietism, which views individual morals as the fundamental element of religion, and rationalism, which refutes all forms of orthodoxy have cracked the dogmatic structure of Protestantism (Erkilet 2001) and gives it a more liberal character (Sarıbay 1995). An important result of the emphasis on extreme rationalism, which we can call the corner stone of enlightenment, is its noteworthy variance from the status (authority) of the Bible. First, a limited God acting according to the laws of nature, and then many so called irrational Old and New Testament passages describing the transgression of these limits were tried to be presented in a more reasonable framework. In short, Christianity becomes historical and then history itself is given a more secular structure. According to A. Davutoğlu this is a revolution which allows the West to move from mythology to history (Davutoğlu 2001). However, it should not be forgotten that it is religion and faith which have been damaged the most from this revolution. That is because at the start of the Age of Enlightenment certain liberal thinkers, such as Baron d'Holbach, proposed that religion should be completely abandoned in order to be able to reach a full accord with nature, and this is extremely important in terms of how it exhibits the approach of the messengers of modernism. Even though they refuse to accept the authenticity of the religions, and despite the existence of certain pragmatists, such as Voltaire (Outram 1997),[1] who stated that the existence of religion should not be ignored as it ensures social order, it had almost become fashionable to associate the cause of all types of negative factors with God.[2]

On the one hand, religion seems to have lost its privilege and old value within the community—or, to put it in more cautious terms, the existence of religion simply became a vehicle—while on the other hand ,the rationalization of society, which is acknowledged as the most important gift of modernism, has especially tested the incidents surrounding modern human, and then presented it in a dominant way. This shows the degression of metaphysics and an uptrend in positivism. Mind shows that knowledge is power. Within this process secularization carries the role of a catalyst in the ever-decreasing religious practice. Meanwhile, the separation of public and private areas by Weber played an important role in religion being seen as something which is personal or to do with one's

own conscience, or, at the very least to be considered separate from the state and communal life. Clearly, whatever exists that is not in accord with the rational knowledge standards that come with the Age of Enlightenment, or, indeed, in conflict with them, now belongs in the individual area (Poole 1993). In a mentality where reason (intelligibility) is the sole measure of everything, it should be natural not giving the necessary place to religion. In a world where people possess the self-confidence, and unlimited right to criticize, for these people to exist and act constantly in accordance with their own subjectivity, God needed to die (Soyan 1993).

Further, the contemporary trinity (humanism, secularism, and democracy) upon which modernism is seated continuously evolves and transforms everything and makes it obligatory to move forward. Indeed, the fundamental reason underlying the emergence of many of the sciences in the West during the 19th century, such as historical philosophy, sociology, anthropology, the history of civilization, religious history, etc., is known to be the attempts to verify the correctness of the beliefs of progress, development, and modernization (Bulaç 1996). However, the essentiality of this change should not be limited just to religion. It is possible to observe changes in every area of social life, especially in sciences, politics, technology, architecture, morals, arts, aesthetics, etc. Additionally, the difference between economic (technological) and social (political, cultural, legal, artistic) modernism shows the intellectual transformation of modernism within a more categorical framework. With modernization, which has been shaped by the fundamental propositions of the philosophy of enlightenment, the West has achieved economic welfare on the one hand, through the industrial revolution, and on the other hand the democratic administrative structure which is present in the political arena. Further, being protected from social and political instability, avoiding the tyranny of an all-powerful state, and guaranteeing peace and ensuring the balance of power, which they achieved after the Vienna Congress in 1815 (Altun 2002), which had met for that very purpose, has led Westerners to obtain self-confidence and made them believe that the developments they would achieve in the commercial and industrial arenas via their well-organized states, and the financial development which resulted from this would be irrevocable. Further, both the administrative imperialism and the commercial dominance (colonialism) (O'Leary 1995) the West achieved over the rest of the world meant that they were placed in the very center of history and led them to view history through a one-sided perspective.

The clearest traces of this multi-sided development were felt much more within the social and cultural life. The progressive and evolutionary understanding which continued in a straight line forced some (such as August Comte) to see this process (theological, metaphysical, positive) as something that all communities must experience, and that otherwise they would disappear (Bulaç 1996). Therefore, the West has seen modernism as the peak point which could be achieved by any community. Indeed, some have even evaluated the attempts of other communities to undertake the Western-centered modernization as a national conversion into becoming civilized without hesitation (Davutoğlu 2001).

Scientific and technological developments are also important motives which led to a speedier transformation. The father of the atom bomb, Julius Robert Oppenheimer, argued that 'the technical progress made by mankind in the last 40 years is greater than the developments achieved in the 40 centuries' (Izzetbegovic 1989, p. 61); this is an important evaluation in that it shows the extent of the mentioned transformation. As well as creating communities which produce more and consume more, this speedy transformation caused serious damage to traditional views of religion and of the world. Modernism incited the individualistic and egotistical characteristics of humankind and broke their ties with the traditional community. Modernization caused individuals to act as if they were each some sort of small God, and as well as not refraining from devouring and obliterating natural resources in order to meet the economic demands of some societies led to unfair competition and exploitation through the cooperation of centralized state power and bureaucracy (Dallmayr 2001). Many critics of modernism state that it has not met every

need of humankind, and that, indeed, it has led to a more materialistic world, and a world which has become a commodity with human being at its center (ibid.).

Together with this, the problems faced on this matter by the West who experienced modernism considerably earlier than the Islamic world, are somewhat more. The emphasis on extreme positivism, the attempts to find the absolute universal truth based on experimentation and experience, causing the engineering of artificial communities by ignoring the existence of many factors which shape human life, by implementing scientific symptoms similar to those lost in the physical arena to social sciences and humanities, the continuous attempts to evaluate others in line with their own value measurements, and the acceptance of Western based communal, political, cultural and legal developments as the only measure has caused modernization to arrive at various impasses. Furthermore, the two important World Wars (I and II) caused by the West, and the serious economic crisis caused by the free market in America in 1929, together with this scientific and economic development, has led various philosophers to seriously question whether rational Western people possess the qualifications required to oversee science and its data (Davutoğlu 2001).

Added to this is the fact that contrary to Newtonian understanding of physics, Einstein's theory of relativity draws attention to the presence of more than one framework of time, etc., and these developments can also be seen as among the important factors disproving the accent on only one truth (Murphy 1995). This new era can be called post-modernism, or it can be referred to as ultra, neo or post-industrial or digital periods, but the fact is that the assumption that a different time is being experienced can be very clearly seen. However, this does not mean the arguments for modernism have disappeared completely. While post-modernism is, in contrast to modernism, carries a more relativistic, pluralistic truth claims, and allows for God in the life of the individual and of the community,[3] its many meta-statements, on the other hand have also been able to carry subjectivity and distinctiveness.

3. Muslim Perception of Modernism/Modernity

It will be beneficial to touch on the Muslim world and its experience of modernism, which is more important in terms of our subject matter discussion. The Muslim geography has spent the last three centuries in a very deep political, ideological, social, and commercial crisis. It cannot be said that they have come out of this crisis, even today. In particular, the intervention of Western powers has caused Muslim states to weaken, and even for much of the established and cultural heritage to be turned upside down. While on the one hand Western nations used their economic supremacy to control local industry in various regions such as the Ottoman lands, Iran, Indian Subcontinent, Egypt, North Africa, Southeast Asia, the Caucasus, etc., on the other hand they have succeeded in entering into local culture through the schools they have established in these regions (Lapidus 1996).

In Subcontinent, the Westerners, who were employed in the political and military arena by the weakening Moghul governments established schools in the region where they ensured that children grew up into intellectuals who could translate their own views. The Muslims, who had been the dominant class in the region, lost this distinction, especially after English became the only language used in state authorities and schools. The truth is that Hindus found more openings for themselves within the new structure of the region, in place of Muslims who lost their importance, both in the financial sense, and in their social status (Ahmed 1990).

The situation is no different in other regions either. Westerners established a school in Lebanon as early as 1728, and this school was followed by Maronite colleges established in 1735 and 1795 (Lapidus 1996). The intellectuals who became a sort of volunteer ambassadors of the new Western values played an important role in the cultivating nationalism and secularism in the lands where they lived. The effects of these individuals are not limited to just modern Western education either. This new elite who ensured that goods from the West were sold in the local markets, also published numerous newspapers and magazines to try to affect the structure of thought of local people in favour of the liberal Western

thought. If we look in particular at the media sector in various different Muslim regions, it is seen that the effective activities of the non-Muslim minorities in this sector were not a coincidence (ibid.). An interesting point about the economy is that all Muslim countries became completely dependent on the West in the second half of the 19th century. The Ottomans were in a state where they were unable to pay even the interest of the loans they took from Western countries in 1882. In 1875, Egypt was under the complete control of public debt (ibid.). The situation in Iran and India was no different to that of the Ottomans and Egypt.

The Muslim civilization, which had been continuously dominant against non-Muslim nations in both the East and the West for centuries entered into such a defeated relationship with the dominant West that this has led Muslim intellectuals to try to find ways out of this situation. During this period, when the defeated were forced to imitate the victorious, it was observed that the first reforms were in the field of the defense industry, due to the fact that military insufficiencies were given as the reasons for lost battles. In Ottoman case, Selim III. employed Swedish, French, British and Hungarian engineers and established military and naval schools, and those similar structures were implemented in the Egypt of Mehmet Ali Pasha and in Tunisia where a large number of Italian engineers were employed (Hüseyin 1986). As well as reforms concerning defense, many reforms followed in various fields, in these regions. The reform movements initially carried the idea that they could take the scientific techniques of the West and combine these with Islamic morals, but as the speedy decline of the Muslim world continued and spread even further, it is observed that Western civilization, which was at first seen as an unavoidable evil, became transformed into an indispensable good (Kara 1986). The following comment made by Ö. Çaha, shows the status of the attempts of the Ottoman State, which was in very close contact with the West, to modernize, very clearly: 'The laws enacted during the period between 1840 and the declaration of the 2nd Constitution (1908) were more numerous and more comprehensive than the laws cited during the Republican period' (Çaha 2001, p. 273). These new laws, in some instances a more eclectic and radical reform, rather than a more European or more traditional Islamic understanding of law, were aimed for in different areas (social, political, administrative, family law, penal law, citizenship, etc.).

In the meantime, an important point that needs reminding is that, contrary to the West, modernization and revivalist movements in Muslim countries appeared, and continued as a sort of religious movement (Kara 2001). That is why the role played by the traditional scholars (*ulama*) during this process is extremely important in terms of our subject. While it is not possible to define a single attitude amongst the ulama, in general their relationship with the modernist experience of Muslims presents a tragi-comic structure. It is true that the Ottoman ulama supported the reform movements to a certain extent. However, on the one hand the ulama were accused of being short-sighted when they supported innovation and Western style new laws in the country, and on the other hand, when they did not support it, they were accused of being against the reform. Religious foundations and trustees (*awqaf* lands and properties) are very good illustrations in this regard. Colonial powers could not intervene the *awqaf* because Ottoman lands and very important real estates were in *awqaf* status. The elimination of the ruling in these religious foundations and institutions would mean the removing of a serious obstacle in front of the colonization. While some revivalist scholars were aware of the danger, many liberal and reformists considered this in the context of personal liberties, property ownership, freedom, etc. This situation resulted in the cancellation of this feature of foundation properties and lands. Turkish exegete Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır, who worked as a minister of religious foundation during late Ottoman government, described the situation by saying that eastern table (*maide-i şark*) has been made ready to be to be eaten by the colonial powers (Öztürk 1993, p. 196).

It is possible to see a similar attitude in other Muslim regions too. Further, the more active role played by intellectuals, who had been brought up in the West, in the social and political life of the countries. They caused the existing status of the ulama to weaken

and a new elite, apart from the traditional ulama, about to be born. While one group aimed to modernize Islam from within by taking fundamental religious principles as their basis in the reform movements, another group was proposing a modernization where secular and nationalist sentiments were at the forefront, at European political and economic forums (Lapidus 1996). Further, while the thoughts of some on change were within the framework of ethical and religious reforms, others were hoping to make the socio-cultural structures of Muslims in the communal area fit in with the requirements of the modern era (Merad n.d.). As a result, the reform and revivalist movements undertaken by the seemingly more conservative attitude and those whose approach was more liberal, in the face of the West, caused semantic changes in many of the key terms of Islam (Bulaç 1996; Kara 1986). For instance, the identifying of Islamic Law with the rules of logic on which Western civil laws are based, or the attachment of Muslims to their religion with that of the attachment Westerners felt for the love of their countries by the Egyptian scholar Rifaa Tahtawi, who lived in Paris between 1826–1836 are good examples of this semantic change (Hüseyin 1986). Additionally, this required the Qur'an being interpreted in a new way, and its meanings being developed using modern approaches.

The return to the Qur'an and attempts to have it stated in a way that can be perceived in the modern century, which was supported by all religious, secular, and even atheist individuals living on Muslim soil, came about in the same way everywhere. We now want to touch on, albeit briefly, the conspicuous differences amongst Muslim intellectuals on Qur'anic readings, in this critical process of modernization. In order for it to be a systematic presentation, it is possible to list the mentioned differences under principal headings, and within the framework of some examples (Mertoğlu 2001, 2010). However, together with this, the inference must be made that the fundamental characteristics in modern revivalist Qur'anic readings are the shared characteristics of many reform-minded Muslim intellectuals (Mertoğlu 2001, 2010). That is because, as we will see later, the Muslim intellectuals in the 19th and 20th centuries exhibited a point of view, which, rather than being a single type of approach to interpretation, was at times even contradictory to its own systematic or inconsistent in its commentary. That is why it would be beneficial to perceive the fundamental characteristics of modern Qur'anic readings as the more frequent approaches to interpretation rather than as generally valid or as indispensable. It is possible to summarise these distinctive characteristics and renewal spirit in modernist Qur'anic exegesis as follows.

1. Qur'an centric reading of the Qur'an in modernity

One of the most fundamental characteristics of modern Qur'anic readings is that they are centered on the Qur'an. As an extension of the emphasis on the Qur'an which came with Shah Wali Allah, modern Muslim intellectuals say that because Muslims have been occupied with many Islamic disciplines the turn of the Qur'an did not arrive, and that an important amount of time has been spent on studying in other areas, and that is why not enough accent has been placed on the Qur'an. They further state that the Qur'an is not limited to just being in the monopoly of the ulama, experts and the jurists, but that it is the natural right of everyone (even non-Muslims) to give consideration to its meanings. Therefore, the modern Muslim reformer does not accept an approach such as the obliqueness of the Qur'an. The Qur'an is the clearest text; it can be understood without the need for external sources. Within this context re-reading and interpretations of the Qur'an are valued highly. The reader should be faced directly with the Qur'an, and should deliberate, reflect, discuss, and contemplate on it. Indeed, some intellectuals believe that even the *mutashabihat* (ambiguous or verses with multiple meanings) in the Qur'an possess the characteristic of being easy to understand which exceeds the classical understanding of them (Saeed 2005; Koç 2012; Kayacan 2013; Gökkır 2014). For instance, while Parwiz interprets *muhkam* as reality (*haqiqat*) and *mutashabih* as research (*tahqiqat*), we witness that Ahmad Khan interprets the former as fundamental principles and the latter as symbolic verses. Egyptian scholar Jawhari, however, possesses a more interesting point of view; the former points to existing species, while the latter refers to evolution (Baljon 1961).

A natural conclusion of this method of reading which is centered heavily on the Qur'an is that the sceptic approach among modern thinkers towards hadiths has become more prevalent. Even though the observed effects of the classical orientalist criticisms, such as the delayed codification of the hadiths, the insufficiency of the *isnad* (chain of transmitters) system(!), and sometimes the presence of some reports which are difficult to compile with the content of the Qur'an, cannot be denied, it is also true that modern Muslim revivalists have been giving direction to each other on the matter too. The most interesting attitude on this matter is the use of Qur'anic verses to disregard or ignore the hadiths. Scholars such as Ahmaduddin, Cheragh Ali, Parwiz, Chakralawi, Mashriqi, etc., are the first to display negative views on the prophetic traditions (Birışık 2001). Mashriqi, for instance, associates the interpretation of the Qur'an in the light of the prophetic tradition as a sign of seeing the Qur'an with the insufficient perception (Birışık 2001).

2. Critical evaluations of the traditional schools of thought

They do not accept traditional juristic schools and consensus. Their opposition to innovation and imitation are somewhat dominant in their writings. Additionally, their emphasis on new judicial opinion or reasoning is almost like an indispensable characteristic of all modern intellectuals. The opinions of past scholars are not valid today, because these opinions are historical, and they have been based on the time and situation which existed in the past. Islam, on the other hand, is a religion of logic and has structured itself on top of *ijtihad*. Hence, opinion has been seen as the essential condition of this great religion. However, as stated by many individuals, it should not be the duty of individual religious scholar to form *ijtihads* (new judicial opinion or reasoning), but of committees made up of experts in different fields (Jansen 1993; Siddiqi 1982). The door to *ijtihad* must be reopened. Some argue that this *ijtihad* will be realised through new Islamic legal studies which are centered on the Qur'an, rather than through traditional Islamic schools' methodologies such as the way of *mutakallimun* (theologians) or *fuqaha* (jurists). However, in such a project all Islamic legal sources other than the Qur'an may be ignored. Another point that needs to be reminded here is that contemporary scholars who are attempting to realise a new legal understanding centered on the Qur'an contradict even each other. Two important examples on the matter are Ahmaduddin's statement of the ritual prayer being performed to be three times a day, while Chakralawi says that there is nothing in the Qur'an about the call to prayer and concludes that it is tantamount to blasphemy (Albayrak 2004).

3. Criticism of Qur'anic sciences and sub-disciplines

The insufficiency of the Qur'anic sciences is another of the important subjects paid attention to by modern reformist scholars. According to them, the existing material should be evaluated in a systematic and critical manner, and a new method of interpretation should be developed. The most striking approach on the matter is displayed by Mashriqi and Fazlurrahman, who argue that the traditional Qur'anic sciences are pushing people away from the Qur'an (Rahman 1990; Çoruh 2019).

They do not in general accept the existence of *naskh* within the Qur'an (Rahbar 1956; Çoruh 2019; Şimşek n.d.). The subject of *naskh* is defined as one of the most difficult areas of exegesis in chapter three of *al-Fawd al-Kabir* of Shah Wali Allah (al-Dihlawi n.d.). Wali Allah argues that because of disagreement about exact scope of the notion of the *naskh*, some people increased the number of abrogated verses up to five hundred. Suyuti, in line with the exegete Abu Bakr b. al-Arabi, reduced this number from five hundred to twenty, and states that he himself has issues with this figure, namely twenty, before proceeding to look into the subject matter verses one by one, and reducing the number of abrogated verses to five (al-Dihlawi n.d.). This approach displayed by Dihlawi has encouraged his successors to evaluate the notion of *naskh* as a matter of *ijtihadi* (based on analogy and rational reasoning) issue, and even some to completely deny its existence within the Qur'an. For these many modern intellectuals and reformers, the Word of God is so great that it cannot be abrogated based on the views of people. Together with this, and there are also many modern Muslim

thinkers who do not deny *naskh*, there are also those whose approach is that it is the abrogation of the books of former religious traditions (Albayrak 2004; Şimşek n.d.).

Due to the providence concerning the hadiths, the reports of the occasion of revelations cannot be accepted when trying to understand the verses. In general, these modern scholars try to obtain the historical background of the Qur'anic passage from their textual context. Further, by frequently referring to certain issues in daily life, they have attempted to apply the verses to events that occurred during post-revelation period despite the existence of various subjectivity and ungrounded claims. Nevertheless, together in particular with the insistent emphasis of pro-historical hermeneutical readings of the Qur'an, the importance of the reports of the occasion of revelations have begun to re-emerge and increase in recent times (Albayrak 2004).

Another important point in the writings of the reformist scholars in Qur'anic exegesis is the notion of *tanasub/munasabat* (thematic and textual unity). The classical exegetes acknowledge *tanasub* (thematic unity) to be the most honourable of Qur'anic sub-disciplines, but which has not been able to achieve the necessary level of recognition in the commentaries of the Qur'an. Even though it is said that their recent insistence on *tanasub* is due to the fact that they are trying to establish an anti-thesis to the argument of some Western scholars that the Qur'anic verses, passages, and chapters were brought together in a disorganised way, there are other reasons too. The most significant one is that , as opposed to the approach of classical interpreters, who viewed the verses and passages separately and interpreted them part by part, the approach by modern intellectuals, where they looked into the Qur'an as a whole, has resulted in observing a large number of elegant and deep meanings in this unity (Albayrak 2004; Çoruh 2019).

There is a serious reaction against the *isra'iliyyat* reports (Biblical materials) in Qur'anic exegesis. The knowledge among some modern exegetes of the Qur'an of foreign languages or their grasp of the content of the sacred texts in the Hebrew or Syriac languages makes them different from classical counterparts. For example, Charagh Ali and Farahi used to know Hebrew as well as some other Western languages (Ahmed 1990; Albayrak 2001). Due to this, they have been able to read the Bible in its original or translated versions. Baljon states that modern Muslim intellectuals concentrated more on the Bible than extra-Biblical materials, such as the Talmud (Baljon 1961), or non-canonical writings of Christians. The most important pillar of the modern period of Muslim enlightenment is the total rejection of these exegetical narrations (Albayrak 2004). Sometimes, while criticizing the narrators who transmitted such reports with a heavy language, they sometimes make diachronic comments: 'this *ummah* cannot compete with or struggle against the state of Israel without fighting the reports of *israiliyyat*.' (İslamoğlu 2017a; Metin 2021). Some go further and uses some provacative expression to mix *israiliyyat* reports with modern state of Israel: 'Coca Cola belongs to Israel, to whom do *israiliyyat* reports belong?' or '*israiliyyat* is a state of Israel that fled into the Muslim communities' (İslamoğlu 2017b). These tragi-comic comments consider *israiliyyat* reports as an under-cover Mossad agent. This is an interesting anomaly in modern times.

The classical emphasis on the lofty rhetorical nature and literal dispensation of the Qur'an has been ignored in a considerable way in modern times. According to modern reformist, there is no difference between the Arabic spoken by a fluent Arab who lived during that time and the language used by the Qur'an. They openly expressed their dissatisfaction with prioritizing of the Qur'anic Arabic to other languages. As stated by Mashriqi, the rhetoric of the Qur'an is not to be sought in the composition of the text or the literary style, but in the manner in which it is seeking the right path. Importance should not be paid to the linguistic analyses of the Qur'an based on its wording. The message is more important than the literal imitability of the meaning of the words (Baljon 1961; Albayrak 2004). The Qur'an has explained many events by using different words and statements. In relation to this, it is also seen that modern intellectuals either have not made particular use of classical Arabic dictionaries or have frequently stated their inadequacies (Baljon

1961; Çoruh 2019; Albayrak 2004). Similarly, they also disregard various other linguistic apparatus of classical scholarship.

4. Reading the Qur'an in the light of modern sciences

The interpretation of the Qur'an is based on intelligence and the data contained within modern science. The Qur'anic expression *furqân* (the capability of human being to tell right from wrong) in the 4th verse of the chapter Al Imran, the importance of which is stated by Muhammad Abduh, is well-known to be also defined as intelligence (Jansen 1993). Karamat Ali states that the Qur'an contains numerous passages about physics and mathematics, and even that it discusses the old systems of philosophy from all their angles (Ahmed 1990). Interestingly, for him, this is an important piece of evidence as to how much importance has been attached to scientific rhetoric rather than literary rhetoric of the Qur'an. It is argued that reason cannot contradict the revelations, and that therefore many Qur'anic explanations are presented within the framework of intelligent definitions. Should any disaccord between modern science and the verses of the Qur'an be noticed, this must have resulted from a misunderstanding of the scientific data or from scientific opinions which have yet to be completely proven (Siddiqi 1982). As a result of these obsessions with the modern science and radically positivistic attempts to read the Qur'an, it is observed that with many scientific remarks where the text of the Qur'an suffers great difficulties because many new meanings produced from the Qur'an are foreign to the text of the Qur'an itself.

Some of the examples in which the miracles of the Qur'an are rationalized and presented in a scientific context are as follows:, Qur'anic *jinn*s (unseen beings or spirits) being defined as savage or Bedouin groups of people rather than invisible beings, the *Iblis* (Satan) being defined as an internal force within human representing his or her evil side, the parting of the sea at the time of the Prophet Moses' leaving Egypt as the tide, the Prophet Solomon's corpse not rotting after his death due to it being kept in candle wax. Similarly in the chapter Naml (27:18) the statement by one ant to the others 'go to your homes so that Solomon and his armies do not notice you and crush you', as showing ants to be germ bugs which spread bacteria, and the statement in the chapter al-Baqara (2:195) ' . . . do not lead yourselves into danger by your own hands.' as related to hygiene or preventative medicine) (Baljon 1961; Ahmed 1990; Albayrak 2004). The scientific explanations concerning the theory of evolution and the use of the Qur'anic material do not escape notice either.

At a time when the extremely rationalist point of view developed by the West after the Age of Enlightenment has been replaced by questioning positivistic nature of the science and its absolute truth claim together with that science has not clarified everything, the absolute confidence and reliance shown by Muslim intellectuals on the power of science and intellect forms an interesting irony (Baljon 1961). Further, the famous motto of Ahmad Khan, where 'The Word of God and the Works of God cannot contradict each other' (Rahbar 1956) identifies revelations with events in nature, and as a natural result of this many modernist readers of the Qur'an display a negative attitude towards traditionally accepted miracles. Baljon explains that there are three approaches on the matter: i. the complete refusal of the miracles; ii. showing that the miracles are in accord with the laws of nature by using rational explanations and iii. accepting the miracles but only affording them the minimum of importance (Baljon 1961). For instance, some refute the prophetic traditions on the heavenly journey (*isra* and *mi'raj*) because they find it contrary to the laws of nature, while some have perceived it as a mystical inner experience of the Prophet. As for those who accept the miracles, it is said that they do not afford it the highest significance in terms of proof of the status of the Prophet, because the Qur'an is addressing the intelligence of people, and encouraging them to think in a sensible way (Mertoğlu 2001). In fact, many modernist thinkers consider the most important miracles to be the Qur'an and the Prophet themselves, and that there is no need to chase after external signs in order to appreciate Islam. For instance, Muhammed Husayin Haykal states that there is no miracle within the Qur'an to prove the status of the Prophet Muhammed, and that the only miracle sent to him was the Qur'an itself (Siddiqi 1982).

Another important feature of modern reformist reading of the Qur'an is to metaphorize and allegorize the meaning of the various verses in connection with the above point. It has been seen that these types of explanations, which are somewhat relative and arbitrary, are attempting to empty some verses about the unseen and hereafter. Parwiz perceives the verses which are to do with heaven and hell as being about the peace and problems on earth, or as stated in the verse 2:36 'However, Satan caused them to slip out of it and removed them from that [condition] in which they had been. Additionally, We said, "Go down, [all of you], as enemies to one another, and you will have upon the earth a place of settlement and provision for a time." Parwiz interprets this *ihbitu* (go down) as the immature (*ghayr mukallaf*) becoming liable (*mukallaf*) is a good illustration of it (Ahmed 1990; Albayrak 2004). These are some of the important examples of symbolic readings of some Qur'anic words.

Debates concerning the historical authenticity of the narratives of the Qur'an: The most important representative of this approach is the Egyptian scholar Muhammed Khalaf Allah. He sees the events experienced by the previous Prophets and described in the Qur'an as a series of tales reflected in the heart of the Prophet and says that these parables gave comfort to the Prophet. He also states that these parables are not obliged to be based on the truth (Baljon 1961; Şimşek n.d.). Although this is a marginal approach for many reformists, it can easily be said that this view is supported by a certain group of Muslim scholars. What kind of contribution this understanding made to contemporary Qur'an readings is another matter of discussion? However, it offers very important clues in order to learn the general perception of the Qur'an by those who adopt such approaches.

5. Trials of new hermeneutic approaches

One of the important approaches is the adoption of the historical hermeneutical interpretation of the Qur'an by some Muslim intellectuals, especially influenced by the works of the Biblical hermeneutical studies. Traces of the debates on historicist readings of the Qur'an, which we see more frequently in recent times, are evident in earlier times as well. The matter which is debated concerns in particular the Muslims' point of view of the nature of Qur'an and its binding status. The Shi'ite author Amir Ali states that 'the assumption that all Qur'anic propositions are forced not to change is an unjust intervention both on history and on the development of human intellect' (Ahmed 1990, p. 109), and, in this way, points to the difference between the unchangeable (fixed) provisions of the Qur'an, and those which are changeable (open to new interpretation). Asaf Ali has a clearer approach and goes into making difference between legal order and moral order (Albayrak 2004). There are also some authors, who, while not displaying a systematic approach, use an atomic approach from time to time in order to imply that some Qur'anic verses are no longer valid in the modern world. Halim Sabit defines the law of natural disposition in creation (*qanun al-fitrah*) as changing judgements in the face of time, place and status' (Mertoğlu 2001). Bashir Ahmad Dar observes the verse on the people who are warming towards Islam as a provision or those whose hearts have been reconciled (*mu'allafa al-qulub*) which later loses its meaning (Baljon 1961, p. 61). This type of approach is seen too in Parwiz's explanations about the necessity for men and women to receive equal shares of inheritance (Baljon 1961). Further, some modern reformist evaluated the fact that Arab culture at the time of the revelation was included in Qur'anic narratives within the framework of the relationship of the Qur'an with the past events (occasion of revelations). Thus, for them, this indicates not universality but the locality of some Qur'anic commandments.

6. Taking social realities and contemporary situation into account

In contrast to classical interpretation, there is more attention paid to social, political and actual fields. This is one of the most important aspects of the revivalist reading of the Qur'an. The education of Muslims, the status of women within the community (divorce, family planning, polygyny, the right to inheritance, equality, etc.), types of government for Muslims (many debate the advantages of democracy over monarchy or the separation of the affairs of state from religious affairs), the economy, and in particular the matter of interest

have been dealt with very frequently. It is necessary for the ayahs of the Qur'an to be interpreted again in the light of new socio-political context. For instance, verse 42:38 about the administrative responsibilities of public, where the statement: ' . . . those who deal with matters among themselves in council . . . ' is said to be pointing to the parliamentary system (Jansen 1993). Further, many believe that modern economic life makes financial interest necessary. Redefinition of the meaning of interest inevitable. Of course, this new conceptualisation brings many other anomalies together. For instance, as regards the interest, the basis for its legitimacy is shown in the verse 2:185, where it says, 'God wants to make things easier for you, not harder . . . '. This is somewhat interesting (Baljon 1961; Jansen 1993; Albayrak 2004). Moreover, the modern thinkers can comfortably use numerous verses to validate their own opinions. Within this context, one of the important areas of emphasis of modern scholars is their attempt to actively include Muslims within history. The argument that those that are not of the earth or worldly cannot be present in the hereafter either is repeated frequently. The Qur'an does not prescribe just the ritual prayer, fasting or almsgiving, it also prescribes progress. Additionally, progress is only realised when Muslims become wealthier and more advanced. It is possible to sense progressive and revivalist state of mind in the comment by late Ottoman Sheikh al-Islam Musa Kazım that, ' . . . money is something that enables life to be lived; it is necessary for salvation, in fact it is life itself (*ma bihi'l-hayattır*);; and it is necessary to be wealthy . . . ' (Kazım 1909, p. 52; Mertoğlu 2001, p. 137; Albayrak 2004). Further, playing with semantic definitions of some key terms and concepts, they prioritise the world over the hereafter. For the interpretation of the expression *atqakum* (most devoted, God-conscious) as *as'âkum* (the most hard working one and the new meanings gained by the word *kasb* (earning) (Mertoğlu 2001). The explanations of Parwiz concerning the word *muddathir* (the cloaked one) shed light on the matter too. *Disru'l-mâl* is seen as 'a revenues officer' (Baljon 1961). Thus, Parwiz presents the Prophet not only as the founder of a new religion, but also as the leader of material means, which is the key to worldly prosperity (Baljon 1961, pp. 99–100). He takes out the word in question not only from the textual context, but also from the socio-historical framework and gives it a new meaning. Even if we cannot define this as being totally secularised in the modern sense, these types of approaches are important in a way that they vary from the line taken by very well-established classical scholarship.

The serious criticism of mystic approaches: Especially in classical interpretations, these mystical interpretations are mentioned after the linguistic, historical, and rhetorical interpretation as a richness of the meanings. However, in reformist mind, these comments, as well as the mysticism which they feed off are rejected as causing slackness among Muslims (Albayrak 2004). Disaccord in religion is not a hurdle to equality. There are attempts amongst citizens, and therefore also within the framework of brotherhood to evaluate the subject in some way (Mertoğlu 2001). In other words, Mystics do not fit the active Muslim perception in the minds of reformer scholars.

The modern revivalist interpretation is very selective. That is the reason they have paid great attention to the verses which discuss the provision of social justice, equality (Mertoğlu 2001; Albayrak 2004) friendship, brotherhood/sisterhood, unity, etc.

Another area where the effect of modernism is very clearly (and perhaps over abundantly) seen on modern reformists is the more moderate or humanist approach to the interpretations of the concept of *jihad* (struggle and fighting) within the Qur'an, or the verses where the punishment handed out by God to the unbelievers is discussed. *Jihad* is only to be used as a form of defense; God is not a Creator to be frightened of, He is a creator to befriend. His Grace comes before everything, even Justice. These and other similar types of approaches are emphasized very frequently (Baljon 1961; Ahmed 1990; Albayrak 2004). As an extension of this the distances between the religions have sometimes been decreased, and that shared values (the universality of fundamental moral principles) have been paid attention to, increasing the explanations that these values are the same in every religion, and separating religion and *shariah*.

It displays approaches which are centered on man, which attach a great deal of importance to the free will of human and evaluates him as an individual who is aware of his responsibilities. It will be beneficial here to remember in particular their active approach to the concepts of fate and destiny.

The wealth of meanings of the text in the Qur'an has been widened with psychological comments as well in many revivalist scholars' writing. Sayid Qutub's exegesis is full of this kind of examples which is alien to its classical counterparts (Düven 2020).

4. Discussion and Conclusions

So far, we have tried to summarize the process of modernization in the Islamic world and the attempts of Muslims, who live this process in a more passive structure compared to the West, to get rid of the current situation and crises with special references to the Qur'an. Before discussing the general structure of reformist–revivalist Qur'an readings in the light of the articles about the main paradigms of modern Qur'an reading, it is useful to clarify a few issues. First of all, it should be noted that expressions such as reformist–revivalist and renewal(ist) can be deceptive due to the breadth of their content and application areas. When we take into account not only such statements, but also their fellows (modernist, restorationist, renovationist, liberalist, progressive, rationalist, moderate(ist), secularists, reawaken(ist), revitalization(ist), constructivists etc.), we can witness intersections and divergences in many *tajdid* and reform movements (Haddad 1986; Ali and Orofino 2018, p. 27; Ali 2011). While an individual scholar may exhibit a very traditional attitude on one subject, he may adopt a liberal attitude that goes beyond the text of the Qur'an on another subject. On another issue, it is seen that he prefers to be renewed within the tradition. For this reason, as stated at the beginning of the article, we tried to use the aforementioned expressions in a very general sense. The 'revivalist-reformist' in the title of the article also refers to the dichotomy that expresses these intersections.

The article, which summarizes the views put forward about the new Qur'an readings and exegetical methods in the contemporary period, in the context of modernity, draws attention to the differences between the old and new hermeneutical perceptions, and from time to time pointed to the specific scholars who hold certain opinion. However, since the main target is the search for new methods rather than the commentators, the individual views of revivalist–reformist commentators and scholars have not been systematically analyzed with all their features. Because the aim of the article is the critical re-evaluations of the mindset and thought that reduces the experience of modernism and the social, economic and political problems of Muslims to the problem of understanding the Qur'an. However, it is a fact that the individuals in question also affected some of the masses that came after them. Abduh and the modern Salafi approaches or Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the Aligarh school and many educated Muslim elites are typical examples of this. It should be noted that this interaction was not specifically mentioned in the article. In summary, when we say reformist–renewalist or revivalist, we do not mean groups such as *Tablighi Jamaat* or *Ikhwan Muslimin* that emerged in the contemporary period. As Ali Jan said, the main purpose of these groups is to inculcate Islamic orthodoxy in the masses in the Muslim world as well as in diaspora communities through institutional developments, socio-political activities, missionary preaching, and propagation. Rather, we mean those who seek to get rid of intellectual stagnation, put an end to transmission and narration of the predecessors and develop a new methodology of interpretation of the Qur'an at the hermeneutic level. In other words, we target the group that wants to realize the renewal at the epistemic level first. However, it should not be forgotten that some of the searches for the methods of understanding the Qur'an mentioned in the article are also seen in the conservative or more traditional revivalist movements.

Revivalist–reformist Qur'an readings aim at adapting the verses of the Qur'an to changing conditions and ensuring renewal (*tajdid*). There is no doubt that such Qur'an readings and understanding of exegesis bring a dynamism to Muslims' relationship with the Qur'anic text. However, the most important difference from traditional revivalist ap-

proaches is how much autonomy the unchanging Qur'an expressions are applied to changing conditions. As the article draws attention to the approaches of reformist–revivalists with some extreme examples, it is seen that open-ended and uncontrolled interpretations force the imagination of the classical perception (the Qur'an, sunnah, ijma and qiyas are accepted as the criteria and the Qur'an is the eternal word of Allah and it is always contemporary). In other words, a change in *tajdid* (renewals) is normally a gradual, brings a new perspective to the assimilation of the main Islamic sources (Qur'an, hadith) whereas in reformist–revivalist, it can be fast and sometimes top-down and radical. Revivalist-reformist thinkers include a wide spectrum and although some of them have traditional revivalist reflexes (only rejecting the taqlid, imitation), mostly with the influence of modernity, their conclusions go beyond the borders of the Qur'anic text. This new approach, in which the mind is prioritized, and the human being is put in the center, contains many different colors and tones.

We have observed that there are endless suggestions and practices in the context of progress, modernization and understanding the Qur'an in accordance with the contemporary modern life, of very important concepts such as *tajdid* (renewal) and *islah* (restitution and reconstruction). It is an indisputable fact that the Islamic civilization, which is a fiqh civilization (Jabiri 1997)[4] in the traditional sense. By the civilization of fiqh, we mean the more practical aspect, and from one's individual life to social and political life, a Muslim responds to everything s/he encounters in his daily life with an Islamic 'judicial mind', that is, a fiqh coding. Everything he encounters is either halal (lawful) or haram (unlawful) (Aktay 2008, p. 46). However, this understanding has gradually moved away from the classical method in the contemporary period. It can be observed in this context that the hierarchy of evidence in the methodology of jurisprudence is overturned. For example, while the basic evidence of the methodology of jurisprudence such as Sunnah, ijma and qiyas are pushed into the background, controversial secondary evidences among the juristic schools such as maslahat, custom, istihsan, etc., has been brought to the fore (Kavak 2011, p. 161). More interestingly, it is the clearest evidence of paradigmatic shift that the main works within the traditional juristic schools, which are accepted by everyone, have been replaced by names such as Ibn Hazm, Shatibi, Tufi, Ibn Qayyim and Shawqani (Kavak 2011). As stated in the article, while the juristic schools and their views were completely evaporated, a new trend of ijtihad centered on the Qur'an but with uncertain methods and open-ended borders began. This new perception of *ijtihad* limited to the Qur'an, on the other hand, is a significant issue in that it shows the profound influence of modernity on the contemporary scholars and reformist–revivalist thoughts. For this perception, which accepts every interpretation of the Qur'an as a contemporary ijtihad, sects lose their meaning. We can easily see in some of the leading scholars of this reformist–revivalist an approach that attributes the bill of backwardness to the wrong religious education and perception of religion and sees it as the main obstacle to progress instead of updating classical methodologies. In the search for alternatives, it was first started as the inadequacy of classical Islamic disciplines and resulted in the making of Qur'anic exegesis, which is a secondary discipline compared to Islamic jurisprudence and theology (*fiqh* and *kalam*) as the primary and only discipline. Paçacı explains it eloquently 'As a result of modernity, the relationship among Islamic disciplines in question has deteriorated, and exegesis (*tafsir*), for example, has gained a prescriptive feature, as opposed to its descriptive character in the classical period, under the influence of Protestant scriptualism and textualism. In addition, theology (*kalam*) and especially jurisprudence (*fiqh*), which were the rule-making binding disciplines of the classical period, have largely lost their functions in the contemporary period' (Paçacı 2003, p. 85). In summary, the last two centuries of Muslim renewal and revivalist thoughts and some movements carried out the alleged reforms through the interpretation of the Qur'an. Of course, there are exceptions, but many reformists from Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan to Abduh (Abd al-Wahhab, the founder of Wahhabism is also included although he did not write a complete commentary) have made exegesis an indispensable part of reform movements. The efforts of these reformist approaches are admirable, as they have been

instrumental in the study of the main source (the Qur'an), which has been neglected for many centuries. In addition, efforts to appropriate the main resource in question should not be overlooked. Perhaps this is the first time in the history of Islam (post-prophetic period) that such a close relationship with the Qur'an is encountered. On the other hand, the fast and cheap spending of 12–13 centuries of Islamic knowledge and intellectual accumulation is an interesting development seen in some of the reform and renewalist movements of the last two centuries.

In this new understanding, where the methodology of the jurisprudence and similar disciplines and their methodologies have almost lost their meaning, the revivalists have mainly concentrated on the Qur'an and exegesis. Representatives of the Qur'an-centered renewal movements reduced all the problems of the Muslim world to the methodology of understanding the Qur'an in particular and Islam in general. It should be also noted that they, as individuals, have high self-confidence on themselves and their new approaches. Some even become obsessed with their methodologies in their re-reading of the Qur'an. Therefore, for a new reform and renewal, the main text, the Qur'an, should be understood with modern methods and new and constant *ijtihad*s that take into account the needs of the contemporary world, independent of traditional knowledge. According to them, it is impossible for a substantial reform or renewal to take place without independent *ijtihad* or more correctly interpretation. However, it is a fact that there are nuances among the modern reformers who embarked on a new *tajdid* and *ijtihad* on the basis of the Qur'an. The tension between the contemporary issues, developments and challenges and classical Muslim intellectual traditions and accumulation, and sometimes the anachcronism observed in classical sources seem to have forced these modernist scholars to gradually change their methods in understanding the main sources of Islam while preserving their Islamic identity. For many cautious and traditionally trained scholars and thinkers, the biggest risk here focuses on the degree to which the fine line between the changeable and unchangeable Islamic principles and Qur'anic rulings will be preserved. While the aforementioned reformist–revivalist leaders sometimes exhibited conservative reflexes, sometimes they undermined almost all the unchangeable normative rules in the Qur'an with very advanced liberal proposals. This, on the other hand, was perceived by conservative circles as the secularization of Islam and its contamination. Maybe they helped people get rid of imitation, but at the same time, they could not bring those people to strong faith and strong understanding (*tahqiq*) with the new way of reading they developed. To put it more clearly, while the traditional disciplines, the hierarchy among them and the classical methods they developed were destroyed, a specific and robust methodology could not be developed to be replaced with them. This has left the contemporary Muslim in a purgatory or limbo where countless views are displayed.

Subjectivities, eclecticism, and individualities have affected the bindingness of the revivalist movements specific to the Qur'an in adapting the unchanging provisions to the changing time and space. Although almost all reformists consider common good of the contemporary Muslim (*maslaha*), it is one of the indisputable facts that many subconsciously believe that classical literature is outdated. For this reason, it is clearly seen in the above-discussed features in all articles that an attempt is made to develop a new theology, jurisprudence, and even a mystical imagination by centering discussion on the Qur'an. In addition, as can be seen in the above items and articles, it has become a common view that every single Muslim will contribute to this vision in contemporary reform movements. In other words, every Muslim with a simple education will be able to contribute to these revival movements specific to the Qur'an. In summary, contrary to the classical perception, in this new understanding, which observes everyone as a potential *mujtahid* (authoritative interpreter of the religious law of Islam), every Muslim has a say on various issues with the exception of the rulings regarding creed and worship. In this new understanding of reading the Qur'an and *tajdid*, people are freed from all kinds of traditional juristic or theological school attachment. Of course, in this perception, the important mission given to the reformist–revivalist modern Muslim in order to read the conditions of the day (since they are the imams of their own madhhab now-juristic schools) does not escape the attention

that the distance between the sacred and profane is gradually narrowing. The notion of sacredness, which was the dominant perception in giving judgments in the classical period, turns into daily intellectual exercises in the modern period. In some of these extreme approaches, we observe the prioritizing of worldliness and heavily human-centered Qur'an readings and exegesis. One of the major side effects of such an approach is to witness the evaporation of unchangeable religious rules in the Qur'an. The best examples in this regard are the legal verses and the notion of miracles in the Qur'an in the reading of Amir Ali and Sir Seyyid Ahmed Khan.

This understanding of reformist–revival, which is to abandon imitation in modern Qur'an readings and build a more dynamic Qur'an perception, includes the danger of ignoring all Islamic discipline and hermeneutical tools created by the classical scholars and live long up until the contemporary period. Thus, the text of the Qur'an, which has become passive with the resetting memory, is transformed into a secondary structure that is forced to keep up with the age rather than giving direction to the age. As it is pointed out from time to time, such an approach undermined the classical notion of consensus (*ijma*) and caused polyphony in the modern period. In our opinion, the modern period shows a dialogue of discord and incoherence (individualistic) in contrast to the classical (even if it contains different sounds) symphony and harmony. In Egypt, the Indian subcontinent, and elsewhere, countless views and approaches with independent and divergent priorities have been put forward in the name of re-reading of the Qur'an in modern context and religious renewal, some negating others, while others almost completely ignoring distinctively Islamic identity. Similarly, they have also imposed their non-Qur'anic proposals and approaches on the Qur'an while ignoring the explicit ruling (*hukm*) of the Qur'an. To do so, they sometimes manipulate Qur'anic evidence.[5] This is the main dilemma of the modernist and reformist–revivalist reading of the Qur'anic text. Most interestingly, as with the Christian reformation, the longing for a Muslim version of Martin Luther is one of the prominent phenomena in many *tajdid* movements, *Sola Qur'anicus*.

While the inadequacy of the classical Islamic disciplines that have been created in the contemporary perception of *tajdid* and *ijtihad* has been highly emphasized, the issue of how these authors will carry out the reforms that concern everyone in the modern period has remained rather obscure. In the contemporary period, many classical hermeneutical devices such as abrogation, reports of occasion of revelations, clear and ambiguous verses, *israiliyyat* reports (Biblical materials in the Qur'anic exegesis), the notion of inimitability (*I'jaz al-qur'an*), disciplines such as *usul al-fiqh* (methodology of jurisprudence), *hadith* (prophetic traditions), etc., are almost completely ignored. This kind of methodical blindness has caused not only the shallowness of the reforms but also the sterilization of the rich Islamic intellectual tradition. Thus, in modern times, the rich tradition of exegesis has seriously lost blood in terms of content. However, while the reformists' emphasis on modern science and reason brings dynamism to the new approaches to some extent, it is seen that the balance is lost from time to time and the scripture that God sent as a guide has been transformed into a science book or manual for political constitution. While there are those who balance this issue in the reformist–revivalist scholars, there are also those who go to the extreme and draw attention with very absurd comments.

Finally, a more peaceful perception of religion is observed among the reformist thinkers of the Islamic world, which was defeated and withdrawn against the West in the last two centuries. We also witness interesting socio-psychological analyzes in these approaches that are more inclusive, world-peace-centered, environmentally friendly and human-well-being-prioritizing. Such Qur'an readings, which we do not see in classical *tafsir* (exegesis), increase gradually in the modern period are important issues in terms of showing that the reformists take the conditions of the day very seriously. In addition, it is worthy of attention that it carries not only exegesis, but also the Islamic belief to daily events in order to raise practical and responsible individuals. As a result, many reformist–revivalists, who sought a way out under the intense pressure of modernity, tried to bring dynamism to the current situation of Muslims by putting the Qur'an in the center. Sometimes, even

with good intentions, they might be destructive, and sometimes they breathe new life into believing people. Especially, the reformist–revivalist scholars of the 20th century to some extent preferred to ignore the rich Islamic disciplines' knowledge rather than revise it.

In the real sense, revival and renewal should be a phenomenon to be built on Muslim intellectual accumulation. Otherwise, it is certain that the renewal to be conducted by demolishing or denying the major devices of the exegetical traditions (such as occasion of revelations, the notion of abrogation, importance of the Qur'anic inimitability, etc.) will come with different problems. We are of the opinion that the reformist–revivalist scholars' renewal to be carried out with interdisciplinary revision of Islamic intellectual tradition rather than only imported phenomena might be more acceptable and longer lasting than mere intellectual exercises. The last two centuries of reforms among Muslims are the best witnesses of this.

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Notes

1 The data collected concerning the books read in this period are important also in terms of showing the point of view of the community to religion. More than 70% were made up of novels; 10% of history, biographies and travel and less than 1% of religious books (Outram 1997, p. 21).

2 As a result of the earthquake in Lisbon/Portugal in 1755, 10.000 people lost their lives and the city was reduced to ruins. Voltaire asked, 'How can we relate this to the idea of the existence of a merciful Creator', blaming God for the event. (Outram 1997, p. 43)

3 According to Jencks the door to pluralism has been opened as a result of postmodernism and history has been allowed inside, as well as tradition, rhetoric, iconography, colour, convention, statues, and even the decoration that we were so scared of. See (Zeka 1994, p. 15).

4 Jabiri says 'how we say Greek civilization is a "civilization of philosophy" and contemporary European civilization is a "Science and Technology Civilization", similarly we can say that the Islamic civilization is a fiqh civilization' (Jabiri 1997, p. 133).

5 The claim that there are three prayers in the Qur'an is a good illustration of this. However, from the point of view of the Qur'an, the night prayer (*tahajjud*) seems obligatory. Thus, if we leave aside the practice in the Sunnah and community, it is possible to increase the Quranic daily prayer times to six.

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Islamic Revivalism and Muslim Consumer Ethics

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Abstract: Although scholars have examined the link between religiosity and consumer ethics, the idea of Muslim consumer ethics has not received much traction within academia. The idea of Muslim consumer ethics is a manifestation of religious revivalism. Yet, its discussion must consider the critical roles played by Muslim youth and their consumption of new media because the latter has a profound effect on shaping and directing popular Muslim youth cultures. Muslim consumer ethics encompass the moral and humanistic dimension of living in a globalized world as an extension of an individual's religious practice. This phenomenon of ethical consumption has also been commoditized in a lucrative halal industry that fosters a Muslim identity market.

Keywords: Muslim consumer ethics; youth; media; digital age

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1. Introduction

A growing number of Muslims live in urban cities the world over, either as majority or minority populations—the latter owing to intense migrations that are both forced and by choice. This increase in the population densities of Muslims in urban cities, coupled with its rising middle class observed in many parts of the world (Nasr 2009; Jones 2012; Morris 2020), as well as a rather youthful demography who are the most connected generation to date having borne to a digitalized era, has ushered a new phase in Muslim consumption patterns. Within this context, the study of Muslim consumer culture is integral because "consumer culture represents one of the primary arenas in which elements of social change are played out in everyday life" (Miles 2015). For Muslims the world over, and especially for its youth, these changes have been more pronounced since the turn of the millennium. The patterns of Muslim consumption that have emerged have either been met with opposition due to perceptions of threat, or with opportunistic overtures that are eager to capitalize on a youthful, affluent market. However, beyond these polarized responses, how does one systematically make sense of the emerging behaviors in Muslim consumption?

The idea of Muslim consumer ethics needs to be deliberated in scholarly terms. Cesari (2004, p. 47) puts forth the concept of *ethical Islam*, an amalgamation that maximizes "individual autonomy with belief in a higher power" and "an adherence to the moral and humanistic values that underlie religious practice—without, however, adhering to the practice itself". Following Cesari, this paper argues that we should closely examine the intimate relationship between values and practices. Muslim consumer ethics encompass the moral and humanistic dimensions of living in a globalized world as an extension of an individual's religious practice. These refer to a set of considerations that Muslim consumers apply when making their decisions. As Muslims are not a monolithic group, the application of Muslim consumer ethics would necessarily lead to differential outcomes.

The link between piety and consumer ethics (Vitell and Paolillo 2003; Vitell et al. 2005; Vitell 2009) has gained currency in academia of late but the idea of a "Muslim consumer ethics", while having a long tradition in Islamic literature, has not been adequately discussed in Western academia (Hamzah et al. 2018). The practical reason for this lacuna is probably due to the diversity of opinions within the Muslim community, which inevitably prevents any homogenous "Muslim" approach to consumption. In this paper, I outline

some of the influencing factors and considerations in conceptualizing Muslim consumer ethics. Before going further, however, we would need to look at the relationship between consumption and Islam.

2. Consumption and Islam

The basis of what is *halal* (permissible) is revealed in the *Qur'an* (the divine book) from God (the Creator) to Muhammad (the Prophet) for all people. In turn, these laws are brought to life through the *Sunnah* (the life, actions and teachings of Muhammad) as recorded in the *Hadith* (the compilation of the traditions of Muhammad). As a rule, everything is sanctioned for the benefit of mankind, and nothing is forbidden save for what is categorically proscribed either by a *Qur'anic* verse or an authentic *Sunnah* of the Prophet. Understood sociologically, Islamic law necessitates social action for a believing and practicing Muslim. After all, religiosity is derived from the term Religare, which refers to the "daily disciplines" (Turner 2008). Hence, to be a Muslim is to navigate one's life in a generally *halal* manner. It is only logical then, when it comes to consumption, that the Muslim is obligated to only engage with *halal* products (Fischer 2016a).

Although the term *halal* has become somewhat synonymous with *halal* cuisines, food is just one of the objects of consumption. Conventional notions of *halal* consumption of food have also evolved. In principle, cuisines and beverages deemed as *halal* must not only be permissible, but they should also be 'pure,' free from any contamination of any *haram* (prohibited) elements. For Muslims living as minorities, ensuring a steady supply of *halal* food sources often becomes a consideration that affects major life decisions such as one's choice of dwelling. Many places have implemented systems of *halal* certification and accreditation to aid Muslim consumption. Although the primary focus has been on food, the Muslim consumer market and "*halal product*" businesses have grown drastically—particularly with the extension of the "*halal* requirement" to include products like non-alcoholic toiletries and *halal* cosmetics, for example. Fischer argues that against the backdrop of Islamic revivalism, *halal* markets have thrived on the international scene, with global cities such as Kuala Lumpur and London emerging as key players in the production and trade of *halal* products—even as the notion of what is *halal* is being questioned and shaped. Going further, he contends that events such as the Halal Exhibition, which are now common in both majority and minority Muslim countries, demonstrate "how the proliferation of *halal* sits uneasily between Islamic revivalism, commercialization and secularism as political doctrine and 'the secular' as an epistemic category in everyday life" (Fischer 2016b, p. 143).

Beyond individual products, a *halal* consciousness and assertion for a *shari'ah*-compliant lifestyle have led to the aspiration and evolution of Islamic-based systems. For example, Islamic financial institutions and banking instruments institutionalized theological principles around usury, fair trade and equitable transactions. This paper is not the place to discuss these issues as they warrant highly specialized attention.

The larger issue that I would like to examine is how there have been various attempts to discuss and promulgate a consolidated notion of consumption ethics based on Islamic tenets. For example, Mustafar and Borhan (2013) argue that six variables need to be considered when we broach the issue of ethical consumption in Islam, especially within the context of a developed country. These are the priority of needs, the preservation of the *maqasid al-shari'ah* (objectives of *shari'ah*), abiding by the regulations of *halal* and *haram*, quality consumption, an appreciation of individual and social *maslahah* (interest) and the practice of moderation. The first category of the priority of needs is deconstructed into three categories, *daruriyyat*, *hajiyyat* and *tahsiniyyat*, depending on their relation to the concept of need. *Daruriyyat* refers to the necessities and is critical for survivability. Its deprivation will cause harm to an individual's life. The second order, *hajiyyat*, is not a basic human need but life might be harder without it. The last, *tahsiniyyat*, refers to the luxuries, and complements life on this earth, leading to its so-called perfection.

Islam is often described as an orthopraxy, where the right actions are as important as religious faith. For example, considering social *maslahah* or public interest is a call for social

action. It allows for sociological analyses and theorizing as it calls for an inquiry beyond individual concerns of *halal* and *haram*. It is a dynamic concept dependent on factors that are both internal and external to conventional theological debates.

When we turn our gaze upon the young, urban, middle-class Muslims who have overcome the first order of needs and for whom the consumption of *halal* options is readily available, issues of quality consumption and considerations of what might be the social and public interest become increasingly important. As a result, what might begin with the more traditional concern for purity that revolves around the permissibility of ingredients and the manufacturing processes has transcended to a more sophisticated conception of *halal*-ness in contemporary times, which in turn, is intricately woven in the formation of a unique Muslim identity.

Undeniably, the Muslim identity market is a lucrative industry. The State of the Global Islamic Economy Report by Thomson Reuters and DinarStandard projects that the global halal economy will pass USD 3 trillion by 2023. The "*halal* industry" now includes Islamic finance, pitched as a more ethical alternative to mainstream financial institutions (Rudnyckyj 2019), which is estimated at between USD 1 trillion, with a healthy annual growth rate forecast for the next 10 years. Halal food forms the largest market, with consumer spending in the realm of USD 1.3 trillion and comprises a significant portion of the world's food industry. All these have ensured more nuanced debates on what constitutes *halal*-ness, which include discussions on who is funding these products and where the profits are channeled. Part of these conversations has spawned a series of "Islamic" products targeted at influencing the consumerist culture of young Muslims and the new Muslim middle class. The Internet hence becomes the space where the Muslim identity market aimed at the youth is often flouted.

In our attempts to understand the governing principles of consumption of Muslims today, we need to realize that its manifestations cannot be static. Despite being grounded on precepts of 'Islamic' ethics in consumption, Muslim consumer ethics are necessarily evolving. In the following sections, I outline some of the influencing factors and considerations.

3. Islamic Revivalism and Ethical Consumption

Much scholarly work on Islamic revivalism has focused on the study of social movements. Books have been written on Islamic movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood (Wickham 2013; Mellor 2018), Nadhlatul Ulama (Bush 2009), Muhammadiyah (Nakamura 2012), Gulen (Yavuz 2013; Hendrick 2013; El-Banna 2014), Tablighi Jamaat (Ali 2012; Siddiqi 2018) and so on, charting their impacts on the national, regional and global scene. These social movements are often portrayed as subversive and contrary to the modern and secular way of life by insisting on a re/introduction of Islam into the public sphere. As a corollary to this, and as an offshoot of this emphasis on a social movement perspective, academics have also charted the jostling for power among different schools of thought within and across these social movements.

In depicting Islamic social movements as confrontational to the ruling regime, these works tend to miss portraying the alignment of many of these movements with modern nation-state bureaucracies. Aljunied (2016), in examining the largest Muslim youth movement in Malaysia called the Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), demonstrates how members of the Islamic movement have worked within the ambits of the state apparatus to uphold the developmentalist visions of the modern regime. What is even less studied is the link between religious revivalism and a form of Muslim consciousness that cuts across social movements and national boundaries. This paper broaches the topic of Muslim ethical consumption—a form of religious revivalism that influences the collective consciousness of the *ummah* that does not subscribe to rigid social outfits or theological classifications but is more tied to the sensitivities and proclivities of the relatively young, urban middle-class.

4. A Youth-Driven Muslim Identity Market

An understanding of the consumption practices of Muslims cannot ignore the dispositions of the youth. In studies of religious identities and Islamic revivalism, there is a burgeoning interest to understand "how youth cultures intersect with global processes such as commodification and consumerism, media use, cultural politics, and identity" (Williams and Mohamed Nasir 2017, p. 200). There are several trends from which we can discern and abstract, which impact the demography and influence their practices. Some of these social and global processes are not exclusive to the young Muslim demography while others are more specific to the social group. As Hasan (2016, p. 167) puts it,

> Youth are important transmitters of the Islamic revival's ideas, and they creatively translate those messages into lifestyles, fashion, art, music, novels, institutions, and organizations. The messages, in turn, influence multiple social and political fields and encourage a collective identity.

Ostensibly, not unlike that of other youth, the consumption practices of young Muslim youth are a manifestation of global cultural flows. Media observers have portrayed young people as mere vassals that can be manipulated to fit current trends and shifts in the market. This sentiment is even more prominent in the capitalist industry where the "cult of the youth" is promoted. Backed by a plethora of consumer products, society is taught that the focus is not only on being young but on learning to be one. This narrative, which is backed by the media machinery with its persistent emphasis on acting and looking young, has made youth and youthfulness the order of the day. Globally, companies have tailored their marketing campaigns to explicitly focus on the youth demography and tap into their increasing spending power. However, research has shown that beyond the influences of the mass media, these choices that are made by the youth are often more complex than one might think (Chan 2010; Gbadamosi 2018).

Youth consumption patterns are influenced by several factors such as social class, cultural differences, as well as gender. There have been reports that show that although young people tend to splurge across a whole range of products, they are not just concerned with the consumption of leisure activities. This representation of the carefree youth can be deceiving as young people also strive to augment the family's household income by making steady contributions to their parents, settling personal and familial loans, and saving up for their present and future education (Shanahan et al. 1996). As a case in point, millennials make up almost a quarter of the population in Indonesia, the most populous Muslim country in the world. The 2019 Millennial Indonesia report, which surveys young people across twelve of the countries' major cities, found that the top three aspirations of the young are to please their parents, own a house and be good parents.

Trends in youth consumption also often reflect the symbols and predicament of their generation. "Islamic" streetwear fronted by Muslim hip-hop artists, sodas like the *Mecca Cola* and *Zam Zam Cola*, and other "accessories for the fans" enable young people to flaunt their Muslim and western identities simultaneously. Urban middle-class Muslim youth embracing this New Awakening and partaking in this conspicuous consumption and identity politics are not only "good for business". Mushaben (2008) and Mueller (2014) point to the development of *Pop-Islam* over the last few decades, citing as evidence, the growing prominence of charismatic *imams* and the impact of popular culture in creating entertainment celebrities and icons for the Muslim community. As a result, in Europe, a 'young, chic and cool' Islam has emerged among marginalized second-generation Muslim youth who are denied their fundamental rights of citizenship and access to social goods in their countries of birth. Mushaben noted that these trends were exacerbated especially in the aftermath of September 11 although tensions owing to generational gaps within the Muslim community were already evident way before that.

Seen in another way, this capitalistic trend is an example of the commodification of Islam. Skeptics are quick to point out, where is "Islam" in all this consumption? For example, Shirazi (2016) argues in her illuminative book, *Brand Islam: The Marketing and*

Commodification of Piety, that many of the products marketed as *halal* or Islamic have got nothing to do with religious practice or theology. Instead, it serves as a clever marketing strategy that exploits the overt piety of the middle class and a generation of Muslim minorities that yearns for a sense of belonging to a larger Islamic laity.

5. From Critical Consumers to Active Producers of Media

There have been many studies that demonstrate the necessary relationship between an ethical consumer and a critical consumer (Schifani and Migliore 2011; Gjerris et al. 2016). Being an ethical consumer compels one to be critical one. McGregor (2008, pp. 273–74), for example, argues that being an ethical or critical consumer is a sign of a good citizenship, for "the true objective of being a citizen is to strive to make decisions that err on the side of moral and ethical consumption as the dominant way of life". One prevalent aspect of contemporary ethical consumption in the digital age, especially in the era of what has been characterized as a post-truth society, has been the desire for content producers, not just individuals and groups on social media but also traditional mainstream media giants, to act ethically.

Muslim consumption patterns must be appreciated against the backdrop of the youth's ability to sustain a heavy dose of apprehension towards the mainstream media. Established literature on youth culture and consumerism often neglects the role of youth as conscientious consumers. Yet, they often form the social group that is generally dissatisfied and critical of mainstream media for its depictions of Islam and Muslims in general, and its portrayals of young Muslims in particular (Richardson 2004; Ahmed 2012; Alizai 2021; Jiwani and Al-Rawi 2021; Weng and Mansouri 2021). Scholars have also captured the pervasive view of Muslims who feel that the mainstream media's caricaturing of their identities is rendering them voiceless, and how the moral panic that is engineered by the mainstream media has sensationalized and demonized the young Muslim subject (Richardson 2004; Kabir 2010, 2013).

This growing discontent heightened in the aftermath of September 11 and the global war on terrorism as the securitization of Muslims was felt across the world. Pejorative depictions of their community and faith in mainstream media drove Muslims to seek alternatives through the Internet. They then appropriated the Internet as a platform to create social networks with other Muslims and express their opinions in online forums and chat groups. Undoubtedly, the Internet offers an important platform to examine identity formation for any social group, but it is even more significant for a generation of Muslims who largely feel misrepresented by mainstream media.

One recurring point of contention is the characterization of a "Muslim crime" in the mainstream media when other acts of criminality are hardly depicted as "Christian" or "Buddhist". This has made many young Muslims feel particularly targeted for their identity (Mohamed Nasir 2016a, p. 171). There are also reports (Bayrakli and Hafez 2021) that link a culture of fear with sustained unfavorable depictions in the public arena. To be sure, these portrayals affect not only how non-Muslims view the Muslim community but also how Muslims view other Muslims as well. The negative portrayal of Muslims in the media has also colored the judgment of Muslims, leading some of them to shun other Muslims.

The pejorative representation of Muslims is also evidenced in movies, advertisements and other forms of popular content. This has been the subject of scholarly discussion for some time now. Jack Shaheen's book, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (Shaheen 2001), is perhaps the most celebrated. Of late, Muslim artists have been taking a strong stance against this trend. Beyond rejecting offers to play stereotypical "Muslim roles", such as that of a terrorist, they are taking matters into their own hands by producing content to represent Muslim life on their terms. Hip-hop music is one of the most compelling examples here. Harnessing the potency of the most dominant popular culture of this age, hip-hop presents a powerful platform for Muslims, especially its youth, to offer their interpretation of social reality and engage in a dynamic form of identity formation (Abdul Khabeer 2016; Mohamed Nasir 2020). Furthermore, in Hollywood and especially

within the independent productions industry, Muslim artistes have churned out a corpus of work ranging from films to stand-up comedies, depicting a more nuanced view of Muslim life.

The youth's critical consumption of the media is also set against an unprecedented time where social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter and Tik Tok enable them not only to be selective consumers but more significantly, content creators. This is where the younger generation has been most successful in stamping their viewpoints, with scholars of social movements documenting the role of social media in mobilizing social revolutions like the Arab Spring (Howard and Hussain 2013; Bunt 2019). Granted that there is much of what Shirazi will call *Brand Islam* produced in the new media. However, a study of Muslim consumer ethics cannot neglect these attempts by Muslims to speak truth to power.

6. Autonomy versus Authority

These attempts at critical consumption have been aided by a crisis in institutionalized authority and their conventional platforms for legitimacy building. As ideological battles are increasingly fought on the Internet, the digital world has enfeebled the effectiveness of the state to control the dissemination of information, which it has traditionally enjoyed during the era of television and printed media. This volatility of the Internet, combined with its potentially widespread influence, makes the state vulnerable to challenges to its authority and legitimacy. This has convinced many ruling regimes to attempt at regulating the Internet. Nonetheless, any attempt at curtailing the autonomy of their citizens is even more problematic as the Internet traverse national boundaries.

The discourse of *Islamic radicalization* in the post-September 11 era has caused a struggle for autonomy amongst Muslims—both where they live as minorities and in Muslim majority countries where ruling regimes use the Islamic radicalization narrative as a pretext to entrench their hegemony. For the former, Muslims utilize social media platforms to rally support for issues of concern like the *hijab* and whistle-blow against discriminatory or oppressive practices against Muslims. For the latter, we have seen similar activism against reigning regimes that culminated in the sequence of events we know as the Arab Spring.

The democratization and liberalization of knowledge, which have been a marker of the digital age, have inevitably brought about a crisis of religious authority (Turner 2011). The diversification of Muslim consumption of information and knowledge ultimately poses a challenge to conventional institutions. Multiple sources of authority function and jostle for influence in a competitive environment. As a case in point, in Sydney, the *Australia Federation of Islamic Councils*, *Halal Certification Authority Australia*, *Halal Australia, Australian Halal Food Services* and *Islamic Co-ordinating Council of Australia Inc.* are some of the stakeholders in Australia's huge *halal* market, which also includes exports of its products across the region. Inadvertently, such a rich tapestry of industrial players ensures a more dynamic discourse on what constitutes *halal*.

This critical consumption and Islamic revivalism among young Muslims, is intertwined with the twin phenomena of *online religion* and *religion online*, that I have discussed extensively in my book, *Digital Culture and Religion in Asia* (Han and Mohamed Nasir 2016). The exceptional levels at which young Muslims are seeking religious direction on the Internet are in line with Bunt's observation of the generation of *iMuslims* and the digital *ummah* who gravitate to cyberspace where "Important new issues, with no immediate basis in traditional sources can be discussed. Opinions can be disseminated rapidly, but are not necessarily observed or followed by readers, who may visit another site to solicit an opinion more in line with their personal requirements" (Bunt 2009, p. 136). They are then able to adjust the consumption of religious content according to what Bunt has called "personal requirements", which "include anything from which branch of Islam s/he identifies with, to language, geographic location, level of education, social class, gender, personality, and previous life experiences" (Akou 2010, pp. 336–37). In the same vein, Mahmood's (2004) seminal study of Egyptian society shows that Islamic revivalism has taken a more personalized mode focusing on values of agency and freedom, instead of being centered

on the policies of the state. This very much aligns with Hirschkind (2001) who argues that, although a contingent component, the concerns and practices of Islamic revivalism have peripheralized the nation-state as an integral component determining religious piety.

Beyond seeking personal autonomy, contemporary Muslim consumption choices also transcend a "*halal* consciousness" (Mohamed Nasir et al. 2010) paradigm to include a global geopolitical mapping of events affecting the Muslim *ummah*. The following section on boycotts demonstrates this particularly well. In countries where Muslims live as minorities, this opportunity to connect with a wider Muslim fraternity reflects the global cultural flows that are accentuated in the digital age. The digital revolution also brings fresh ideas or old ideas packaged in new ways to the attention of religious adherents. Muslim consumption trends are equally affected by contemporary causes and global social movements such as environmental awareness, which has in turn spawned off into what has been termed *Green Islam* (Ibrahim 2010; Gade 2019).

The decision to purchase a particular product is very much a rational choice that prompts Muslims to reconcile their piety with popular consumption trends. The factors mentioned above relating to identity, autonomy, authority and a growing aspiration to be producers and not mere consumers that I have outlined above, cannot be more veraciously played out than in the case of Muslim boycotts.

7. Boycotts as Moral Protest

A powerful example of contemporary Muslim consumer ethics would be to examine the boycott movements over the last few decades. Although these protest movements are essentially global, they manifest themselves differently based on local socio-political conditions (Mohamed Nasir 2016b). Even among soft authoritarian Southeast Asian neighbors like Malaysia and Singapore, endorsements and participation of these movements depend on many variables such as ethnic majority-minority dynamics and state-society relations.

Assertions of Muslim identity have given rise to the practice of boycotts in consumption choices. Many websites were established for this purpose and the lively discourse within the Muslim community about boycotting is a testament to this. The protest culture of a particular locality profoundly affects the dispositions of Muslim resistance. Boycotting and protest culture are not foreign to mainstream Western societies. Groups and events that support "Muslim causes" such as the Palestinian issue and public campaigns against Islamophobia are also well-represented by non-Muslim individuals (Barghouti 2011). Besides boycotting national products, one of the most popular forms of boycotts is those extended to local franchises of global corporations which are perceived to be contributing to the oppression of Muslims overseas.

Consumer boycotts can also display a local element. In some instances, besides making the case for boycotts, Muslims have also promoted buying local products as a substitute and a strategy to aid the local economy. Thus, boycotts afford a chance for second-generation migrants, for example, to flaunt their "national pride" by supporting local produce and initiatives. Back's conceptualization of a "neighborhood nationalism", which simultaneously engages both local and national discourses on race and nation, would be instructive here. This concept of an ethnically inclusive localism or "neighborhood nationalism" in the community is reminiscent of discourses among Muslims who, in their choice to consume indigenous goods, regard the nation as a multicultural space where a sense of belonging is not confined to race or religion, but by a commitment to a particular area (Back 1996, p. 239). To this end, buying local produce can alleviate the moral dilemma in at least a couple of ways. Firstly, Muslims would have fulfilled their obligations to the global *ummah* by partaking in the boycott movements that they feel strongly for. Secondly, they would contribute to the coffers of the local economy and be perceived as patriotic countrymen by buying indigenous products. The act of supporting local products can be seen as a practice of their cultural citizenship.

Muslim boycotts are also sometimes promulgated at national levels and even supported by international Muslim bodies. For example, Muslim countries boycotted Danish

products in 2005 to protest the publication of unflattering cartoons of the Prophet that was released along with an article called *The Face of Muhammed* (Veninga 2014). A particular image of the Prophet with a bomb lodged in his turban proved emblematic of the resistance movement. When the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) convened in Mecca later that year, the representatives roundly condemned what they felt was the "desecration of the Holy Prophet Mohammad in the media of certain countries" calling on "all governments to ensure full respect of all religions and religious symbols" (Tiryakian 2009, p. 240).

My book *Globalized Muslim Youth in the Asia Pacific* (Mohamed Nasir 2016a) discussed how young Muslims in the global cities of Sydney and Singapore are also wary as to whether they are directly or inadvertently contributing to the finances of other religious movements in their country. In this aspect, it can be argued that the plurality of the "religious marketplace" leads to a form of competitiveness among faith communities. The reason for this hesitance comes from their discomfort in making financial contributions to the evangelical efforts of other religious groups. Therefore, economic boycotts are not solely triggered when the makers of the products are seen to be outrightly discriminating against Muslims but also when they are identified as advancing religious causes. Whether living in Muslim majority countries or as minorities in multicultural societies, Muslim communities do not possess any means to exact punitive measures to discipline those who do not conform. Instead, the "punishment" often manifests itself in the form of stigma and social pressure may it be from close-knit groups such as the family and friendship circles, or larger society.

Inescapably, the boycott movement has also influenced popular youth culture. This can be exemplified by a trend that Campbell (2010) calls Islamogaming. For instance, a British software company called *Innovative Minds* campaigns for the boycott of Israel. This initiative is operationalized through the production of multimedia and video games, which the company contends is "the best way to attract the youth to Islam". One of the games, called *The Resistance*, however, has attracted some controversy. Among the features of the game is that a player can take on the role of a farmer in the south of Lebanon who has to protect his family and land from the colonizing Zionist forces (Campbell 2010, p. 65). The series of Islamically themed games on its *Islamic Fun CD* include *Happy Hijab,* where a player helps a Muslim character locate her missing hijab, and *Building Blocks*, where players answer questions to earn blocks for the construction of a mosque.

Be that as it may, there are ongoing ethical debates within the Muslim youth fraternity on the practicality and justification for embracing boycotting as a form of resistance. Even among those who eventually decide not to partake in the boycotting movement, a large proportion of young Muslims have either entertained the idea or debated the concept of boycotting with others or within themselves. A segment of the community believes that the boycotting will end up hurting the smaller businesses more than the actual target, which is the huge multinational corporations. Therefore, in order not to affect "innocent bystanders", some Muslims have refrained from deploying boycotting as a strategy of resistance. Some even go further and dismiss the claims of piety among those who advocate for Muslim boycotts. Among other reasons, they allege that these boycotts can be abused and instead used as a ploy to destabilize business competitors. Compounding these debates on whether one should participate in boycott activities, is the efficacy and sustainability of boycotts as a disciplining tool. Detractors allude to the reactive nature of consumer boycotts and point to how sentiments tend to wane with time as a particular emotive event fade from social memory, leading to similar boycotting efforts being short-lived in the past. Nonetheless, Muslims are cognizant of the past successes of such collective action as a peaceful way of resistance. Among the oft-cited examples were the successes of the boycotting of British goods during the Indian struggle for independence, and the South African struggle against apartheid rule. In 2002, angered by the Israeli military offensive in the West Bank, millions of Arab consumers boycotted US-branded goods causing some companies to suffer up to 50 per cent losses in sales (Suhaimi 2009).

As is evident in this paper, although the Muslim approach to boycotting is not monolithic, the debates persist in the consciousness of Muslim consumers as its cyber presence develops over time. Several significant strands about boycotting can be gleaned from these observations. The first is cultural. Undeniably, contemporary boycotting movements are heavily intertwined with global popular youth culture. The second takes a more economic perspective, recognizing the minority status of Muslims both in numerical terms, and sociologically, in terms of power relationships. Given the small percentage of Muslims in minority countries and the weak economies of Muslim majority ones, some remain skeptical that their efforts would have any significant impact even if each one of them were to participate in the movement. The third argument takes a more social perspective given how boycotting may produce the unintended impact of harming those who are not the subjected targets of the movement. The final strand takes a theological perspective asking the fundamental question of whether boycotting is even permitted in Islam. Of this, some think that the Prophet does not endorse utilizing economic boycotting as a form of resistance.

An investigation of Muslim consumer ethics also must contend with the inherent tension between the concepts of the *ummah* and the state. The tension exists between the particular and the universal. The state is an inherently limiting concept, one that pivots on the concept of sovereignty. It imposes the idea of difference to make itself distinctive from the Other. On the contrary, the *ummah* is a concept that spans national boundaries, binding the Muslims of the world into an unbreakable chain. It is *sui generis*, an external that a Muslim is born into. It is a global fraternity of brotherhood that ignites social action and, occasionally, social change. The *ummah* traverses borders and requires a transcendantelization of the individual consciousness.

8. Conclusions

Muslim consumer ethics offer the lens through which contemporary pious Muslims navigate moral and humanistic quandaries in a globalized, interconnected world. Factors such as identity, autonomy, authority, as well as a growing aspiration to be producers and not mere consumers, collectively shape the consumption practices of Muslims who are driven not only by theological considerations but by national and global affairs. This paper demonstrates that these concerns might not be mutually exclusive, as Islam also promotes a wider conception of ethical consumption that is governed beyond *halal* concerns. The variegated ways that piety plays out in Muslim consumption patterns are, in large part, driven by the rise of Muslim religious consciousness.

Muslim ethical consumption is a manifestation of religious revivalism. Just as any study on the subject has necessitated scrutiny of the youth, this paper also highlights the unique practices of young, urban middle-class Muslims who are the main drivers of this resurgence. This revivalism is aided by the information revolution in the digital age that creates networked societies among urban Muslim youth, paving their way to access alternative sources and views, even where religious guidance and knowledge are concerned while providing a space to reconcile their religiosity with their consumption behaviours. As seen in the case of boycotting campaigns, although these movements are characterized by intense mobilization at the communal level, they are also marked by dynamic and complex debates within the Muslim community.

This paper has placed into sharp relief the phenomenon of Muslim consumer ethics through the blending of insights from various scholarly fields, such as Islamic studies, globalization, popular culture and studies on consumer culture. It has resisted looking at Muslims from a sectarian perspective in favor of placing a finger on larger trends that transcend geographies and intra-religious orientations. Such a reflection would hopefully provide a basis for the development of new methodologies and serve as an invitation for future scholars to indulge in the study of Muslim consumer behavior.

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Modernity, Its Crisis and Islamic Revivalism

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Abstract: Modernity is a global condition of an ongoing socio-cultural, economic, and political transformation of human experience, with tradition or religion having no significant role to play. It is the gradual decline of the role of religion in modernity through the implementation of the principles of secularism which has, according to Islamic revivalists, plunged the world into crisis or *jahiliyya* (unGodliness). Revivalists and sociologists such as Anthony Giddens (1991) call it the "crisis of modernity". In response, many Islamic revivalist movements have emerged to address this condition. The Iranian Revolution of 1978–1979 gave a boost to many existing Islamic revivalist movements and inspired many to appear anew. The phenomenon of contemporary Islamic revivalism is a religious transformative response to the crisis of modernity—i.e., the inability of secularism and the process of secularization to fulfill the promise of delivering a model of perfect global order. Contemporary Islamic revivalism is not anti-modernity but against secularism and is thus an attempt to steer modernity out of its crisis through a comprehensive and robust process of Islamization—the widespread introduction of Islamic rituals, practices, socio-cultural and economic processes, and institutional developments to the pattern of modern everyday living—and transforming modernity from *dar al-harb* (abode of war) to *dar al-Islam* (abode of peace). The paper argues that contemporary Islamic revivalism is a complex heterogeneous global phenomenon seeking to steer modernity out of its prevailing crisis through finding in Islam the universal blueprint of life. It further argues that Islamic revivalism is not anti-modernity but is a religious based reaction against the negative consequences of modernity, particularly against secularism, and carving out a space for itself in modernity.

Keywords: crisis of modernity; Islamic revivalism; Islamization of modernity; modernity; rationality; revivalism; secularism

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1. Introduction

The Iranian Revolution of 1978–1979 was a milestone event in our recent history that inspired a new Islamic activism across the globe as a response to the ongoing socio-religious, economic, and political predicaments in many parts of the Muslim world. Islamic activism or Islamic revivalism is not a new phenomenon and "The past history of Islamic societies contains many examples of reform and revival movements that developed as a response to changing political and economic conditions" (Lapidus 1997, p. 1). The trends of Islamic revivalism can be traced back all the way to one of the greatest Muslim caliphs—Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (680–720)—a "pious and respected caliph who attempted to preserve the integrity of the Muslim Umayyad caliphate (661–750) by emphasizing religion and a return to the original principles of the Islamic faith" (The Editors of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2022). Of course, the Revolution did not solve the problems within the Muslim world, however, it re-energized the prevailing Islamic revivalist movements (Aqababaee and Razaghi 2022) and paved the way for many new ones to emerge around the world, producing the phenomenon which came to be known as the contemporary Islamic revivalism (Ali 2012a). It is a religiously motivated transformative response to what is usually called, particularly in sociology, the crisis of modernity (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991; Bauman and Bordoni 2014; Ali and Sahib 2022) or what Lapidus explains as a collection of Islamic revival movements

who must "be understood as a reaction against modernity" (Lapidus 1997, p. 1) or what Minardi sees as Islamic movements which are "generally dissatisfied with the ongoing conditions . . . [who want] to make radical changes in the system of government and society" (Minardi 2018, p. 250). From the perspective of Islamic revivalists, the crisis of modernity is global but its impact on the Muslim world, particularly since colonialism which dismantled the Muslim world and plunged it into what Haddad (1986) calls the socio-economic and political crisis of the Muslim world, is ongoing. Thus, Islamic revivalism is a response to the decline of the Muslim world as well as the crisis that plagues the world. Drawing largely on Islamic scriptures—Qur'an and *hadith*s (compilation of books of Prophetic Traditions) and the *shari'ah* (Islamic law)—contemporary Islamic revivalism seeks to transform what is seen by Islamic revivalists as the crisis-ridden modernity or a *jahiliyya*-saturated modern world (Ali 2012b) through concrete religious actions and religiously informed policies and initiate structural reforms to mitigate and eventually overcome the crisis. Constituted by ideologically and methodologically diverse revivalist movements, contemporary Islamic revivalism is a complex multidimensional and multifaceted reality. Internally diverse with a number of very different streams within itself or, as Arjomand asserts, there is a "variety in Islamic [revivalism]" (Arjomand 2004, p. 11), it pervades the entire globe with varying intensity and extent. Diverse they may be, but what brings them together is their collective grievances about the plight of Muslims in Muslim societies and Islam as their proposed solution for Muslim socio-economic and political malaise. They are united in their collective actions rooted in Islamic symbols and identities seeking to establish an Islamic state through political reform and action, "promoting the ideologies of Sharia law and jurisprudence" (Aqababaee and Razaghi 2022, p. 249), and Islamize society by popularizing and institutionalizing Islamic legal principles, Islamic norms and Islamic ethico-moral values (Ismail 2004). Their "goal is to adapt Islamic principles, values, and institutions to the modern world while recognizing the importance of Islam as a cultural frame of reference" (Maghraoui 2006, p. 6) and to "advocate for the interests of Islam and Muslims . . . [and] revitalize Islamic teachings and principles not only in the private sphere but also in public (Munabari et al. 2022, p. 5).

Members of Islamic revivalist movements are not anti-modernity; they are generally opposed to Western philosophy, primarily secular nationalism, material capitalism, socialism, communism, and Westernism (Onapajo 2012). In addition, they find secularism to be the most abhorrent feature of modernity (Aqababaee and Razaghi 2022) and, therefore strive towards its removal (Ali 2012b). Ali states that:

> Islamic revivalism is a defensive reaction to modernity and a response to unfavorable conditions that exists in it. This does not mean Islamic revivalism is against modernization per se, but rather it is anti-Westernization and anti-secularization. (p. 70)

Dessouki (1982) finds contemporary Islamic revivalism to be a defensive reaction to secular modernity, particularly Western secularism and for Aqababaee and Razaghi it is a response to "the New World Order, Western democracy, humanism, secularism, and feminism" (Aqababaee and Razaghi 2022, p. 250). These scholars highlight that contemporary Islamic revivalism is a defensive reaction to modernity and is against secularism more specifically.

For Islamic revivalists, secularism, both as an idea and practice, concentrates on "this-worldly" realm in contrast to the sacred and "other-worldly" domain and separates religion from civic affairs and sees the state diminishing the values and roles of religious institutions in the temporal affairs of the nation-state (Asad 2003). They point to some cases in the Muslim world to demonstrate that secular Western hegemony in Egypt, for example, and "colonised, submissive and servile Islam that accepts its confinement to the private sphere" (Soage 2008, p. 27) such as that of Kemalist Turkey has produced a serious decline of "true Islam" (Mulcaire 2016). Contrary to the promises of secular modernity, many Muslim societies experience ongoing widespread socio-cultural, economic, and political discontents (Esposito 1983; Onapajo 2012; Munabari et al. 2022) and there is a

holding back on investment in employment opportunities, education and the economy and an endless Western exploitation of non-Western countries (Bukarti 2020). They consider this to be the bane of modernity and the chief cause of its crisis (Ali 2012b). Removing secularism from modernity and replacing it with Islam as a complete way of life in which religion and state are intertwined is, therefore, their priority (Al-Banna 1999d). Similarly for Muslims in general, for them also, Islam founded on the teachings of the Qur'an and the lifestyle of Prophet Muhammad is the perfect blueprint for the way individuals should be in the society. In light of the prevailing Muslim situation, one of the great pioneers of Islamic revivalism, Hasan al-Banna (1906–1949), argued that "This required the *ummah*'s purification of its existing beliefs and practices, which, al-Banna stressed, must be facilitated through the gradual establishment of a creed-correcting, reform-inducing Islamic state that fully implements the *Shari'ah*" (Mulcaire 2016, p. 1). Al-Banna's revivalism of Islam is rooted in his commitment to Islam being a "perfect" (Al-Banna 1999c, p 59) "all-embracing system" (Al-Banna 1999d, p. 87) that "covers all aspects of this world and the next one" (Al-Banna 1999b, p. 173). For Al-Banna, together religion and the world is an "all-pervading system" (Al-Banna 1999a, p. 2) of Islam which "should control all matters in life" (Al-Banna 1999b, p. 175). Far from being restricted to the domestic sphere and mere personal spiritual rituals and practices, Al-Banna asserted that "Islam is an ideology and worship, country and nation, religion as well as government, action as well as spirituality and Holy Qur'an as well as sword" (1999b, p. 173).

As far as Islamic revivalists are concerned the "modern society rewards them with material gain and consumer goods but robs their soul" (Dorraj 1999, p. 227). They "consider that in the final analysis modernism produced by reason without God has not succeeded in creating values" (Kepel 1994, p. 4). Islamic revivalists view modernity to be in need of saving and to achieve that, it must be transformed or, what is often described in the literature, to be Islamized (Jung 2016). Islamization of modernity, from a contemporary Islamic revivalism perspective, will involve the removal of secularism as an idea and practice and replaced it with Islam as both religion and state and a dominant and widespread force pervading the entire pattern of modern everyday living. From their viewpoint, the world must shift towards the religion of Islam with a return of the individual to Muslim values, dress codes, Islamic legal code, and a feeling of a universal Islamic identity and a sense of community and belonging (Dorraj 1999; Al-Banna 2009). It is an all-encompassing process of increasing the influence of Islam in all spheres of life and state policy and practice including instilling a sense of community based on Islamic values and the reordering of society according to Islamic scriptural teachings (Rahman 2021).

This is a conceptual paper which seeks to sociologically address the question why contemporary Islamic revivalism is a growing phenomenon in secular modernity particularly when the prediction by secularism that by religion being forced away from the public sphere and into the private sphere, it would overtime die out. The aim of the paper, therefore, is to review the current state of knowledge of contemporary Islamic revivalism and to then contribute to the broadening of the scope of our understanding of and develop a sociologically logical insight into the phenomenon. What is important about this paper is that it provides a logical and detailed sociological insight into the contemporary phenomenon of Islamic revivalism by using the crisis of modernity as an analytical tool, that is, identifying the determinants and consequences of the crisis of modernity. In doing so, I propose to examine in some detail three key concepts, namely modernity, crisis of modernity, and Islamic revivalism, and then move to demonstrate that modernity's failure to deliver on its promises has evoked a response from concerned and activist Muslims who have coalesced into groups or movements resulting in the creation of a global phenomenon of contemporary Islamic revivalism. I posit that these movements claim that modernity's failure to fulfill its promise is because secularism as a key component of modernity is by nature a destructive force that has led modernity into a crisis. Thus, my argument is as follows. The contemporary Islamic revivalism is a global phenomenon which is internally diverse and is a religiously based attempt by Islamic revivalists to steer modernity out of

its crisis through finding in Islam the universal blueprint of life. Islamic revivalists are not anti-modernity but are a collective revolt against the cultural and social dislocations of modernity and strive to carve out a space for themselves in modernity. Islamic revivalist movements collectively are "a response to the conditions of modernity—to the centralization of state power and the development of capitalist economies—and a cultural expression of modernity" (Lapidus 1997, p. 1). Islamic revivalists seek to achieve this by planning to remove secularism from modernity and replace it with Islam through an all-encompassing process of Islamization—a culture building process which enables Muslims to Islamically redefine and reorient themselves to changes in their surrounding world. Islamic revivalist movements are reactive in that secular impact and a perceived cultural threat play a critical role in their ideological development, political struggle, and the remaking of the modern world. Re-introducing Islam to Muslims—proselytization—is one among many ways Islamic revivalists claim they can actively contribute to reordering modernity. Furthermore, they seek to create ways and opportunities by employing other revivalism means such as education in all spheres of life to make Islam flourish, and whenever and wherever possible build a theocracy, an Islamic state constitutionally based and operated in full light of *shari'ah* as the guiding principle reflecting the Will of Allah.

2. Modernity

The term modernity was first coined, according to Martinelli, in circa fifth century because:

> It was used in an antinomic sense compared to antiquus, particularly by St Augustine to contrast the new Christian era with pagan antiquity. More generally, it was used as a means of describing and legitimizing new institutions, new legal rules, or new scholarly assumptions. (Martinelli 2005, p. 5)

However, Hunt (2008) disputes this, noting that the term modernity was first coined in the 1620s and Ossewaarde (2017) asserts that the term was first coined by Charles Baudelaire in 1864. Based on this, it is not clear when exactly the term modernity was coined but it is reasonably safe to infer based on the literature on modernity (Pascoe et al. 2015; Berman 2010; Wagner 2008, 2012; Bauman 2006) that by the late seventeenth century the term had entered common usage in the context of the squabble of the Ancients and the Moderns within the French Academy, debating about the superiority of the "Modern culture" over the "Classical culture" (Græco–Roman) (Lewis 2007). The historical epoch following the Renaissance or the Age of Reason, in which the achievements in various fields in variety of forms were made that could not be matched by the achievements of the antiquity, is when modernity as a concept and a phenomenon became part of the European lexicon and life (Gay 1998; Everdell 1997).

The root of modernity is the late Latin adjective modernus (modern) which is a derivation from the adverb modo meaning "at present" or "at this moment" or "now" (Demir and Acar 1992). It is closely associated with the spread of individual subjectivity, the rise of rationalization, rapid development in science and technology, the emergence of bureaucracy and growth of urbanization, the rise of nation-states, the development of capitalism, and a decline in emphasis on religious worldviews. Modernity accounts for the transition in the society from feudalism to a modern system. For instance, modern societies usually have capitalist economies, a democratic political system, a stratified social structure, and uses technology and machinery to enable mass production. Scholars differ in their articulations as to when this process started and when exactly the societies in the West became modern. Abercrombie and his colleagues note that:

> There is disagreement about the periodization . . . of modernity, some writers associatingit with the appearance and spread of capitalism from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, some with the religious changes of the fifteenth century onwards which provided the basis for rationalization, others with the onset of industrialization in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and still others with cultural transformations at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of

> the twentieth century which coincide with modernism . . . . (Abercrombie et al. 1994, p. 270)

There are numerous definitions and explanations of modernity and varying versions of its history, with scholars attempting to address the question regarding modernity in many ways without a convergence in answers. As a distinct global phenomenon or condition of social existence, modernity is founded on a new form of human self-consciousness in which:

> Human rationality will pre-dominate, subordinating irrationality, custom, and superstition, with the efficacy to plan for and attain progressive improvement in all social institutions through the free exercise of will. Humans have the ability to understand nature as it is—real, solid, and lawfully dependable—which diminishes dependence on theological or transcendental concepts. (A. Berman 1994, p. 2)

Wagner offers further elucidation on the concept of modernity suggesting that:

> Modernity is the belief in the freedom of the human being—natural and inalienable, as many philosophers presumed—and in the human capacity to reason, combined with the intelligibility of the world, that is, its amenability to human reason. In a first step towards concreteness, this basic commitment translates into the principles of individual and collective self-determination and in the expectation of everincreasing mastery of nature and ever more reasonable interaction between human beings. (Wagner 2012, p. 4)

Modernity is not modernism or modernization (Hunter 2008; Demir and Acar 1992) and, I would like to suggest, it is best understood as a global phenomenon or condition of social existence in which a hastened and socially compelling process of conceptual transformation forms the central component rather than as the description of a specific epoch or process (Bendix 1967). In other words, it is a novel form of human existence with different constitutions of the domestic and global domains and a sharp separation between traditional community and modern society. It also includes a new cultural formation in which new social relations under a free market economy called capitalism and attitudinal transformation under the processes of secularization, liberalization, modernization, and industrialization materialized. In this conceptualization of modernity, the condition of social existence is constantly different to all past forms of human experience. This is, from a sociological point of view, a more palatable conceptualization of modernity because it enables us to understand modernity as a social reality in which human social life undergoes constant transformation and cultural, economic and political processes are in an endless motion (Maxwell 2020).

Armed with new scientific forces, technological innovations, industrial development, and rationality, modernity is pro-secular and anti-sacred phenomenon that draws the modern individual far away from the sacred to the profane. With its inventions in science and technology, acceleration in economic transformation and urbanization, creation of the nation-states, the democratization of societies, and the bestowal of equal rights to citizens; modernity is a complex forward looking global system.

Modernity rejects anything "old" or "traditional" and renders "new" a criterion for truth making with de-sacralization of knowledge as one of its key features (Lash and Friedman 1992; Martinelli 2005). It is a broad array of interrelated social and cultural phenomena as well as the subjective experience of the conditions produced by them and their continuing effect on cultural values, institutional processes, economic developments, and political activities in the society (Asad 2003). It is not an abstract idea but a system within which exists a collection of diverse tangible attitudes prominent among which is that for everything in existence there must be a cause and a reason and that nothing happens by chance or supernaturally (Soyan 1993; Brugger and Hannan 1983).

In sociology, the term "modernity" has been used to explain the rise of industrial civilization in Europe which produced a new conception of society and the social changes

occurring by differentiating the "traditional" from the "modern" or the "old" from the "new". In the works of classic sociologists, namely Marx, Weber, and Durkheim "modernity" meant a new experience of the world. For Marx, modernity was intimately associated with the emergence of capitalism and the revolutionary bourgeoisie, which facilitated the extraordinary expansion of productive forces and the creation of the global market (Morrison 2006). In Weber's work, modernity meant increased rationality where a traditional worldview was replaced with a rational way of thinking, explaining modernity's close connection with the processes of rationalization and disenchantment of the world (Symonds 2015). Durkheim had a different view about modernity which, for him, was a new form of thinking that would transform the way individuals functioned in society and was basically driven by industrialism accompanied by the new scientific forces (Seidman 1985; Parsons 1972). Given these descriptions, it can be said that modernity is a reconstituted world made possible by people themselves with the new sense of self through their active and conscious intervention in the reconstitution process. The new world is the modern society, which is experienced as a social construction, that is, an experience that makes people feel an exciting sense of freedom and makes them think of unlimited possibilities and an open future (Bickel 2018).

One very important fact in this account of social transformation and its impact on social relations and processes are the ideas of "freedom" and "autonomy" and thus the birth of the new "individual"—the emergence of subjectivity and individuality through a new sense of self. Individual interests have assumed greater importance than the collective interest of a community which was considered as an important contributing source to the development of personal identity (Tobera 2001). This idea of the "individual" or "self" contrasts the traditional individual with the modern one and, as we will see later on, Islamic revivalists find this particularly problematic. The sociological explanation of this difference is based on changes in the understanding of the human experience, social relations, the human relationship with the environment and the supernatural, the changes in economic and political relationships, and population growth and its transformation under the process of industrialization.

Industrialization involved more than just the development of the new means of production of goods and services. In fact, it involved the centralization and coordination of the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and drawing large numbers of individuals from rural communities and farming areas to work in urban centers (M. Berman 1982). The result was both positive and negative. On the one hand, the new urban workers were able to earn an income by selling their labor and feeling liberated and on the other hand, there was the uprooting of relatively stable populations, the breakup of social bonds, and feeling of alienation. Whatever way liberation and alienation were interpreted and experienced in overall scheme of things they inevitably involved a physical as well as psychological separation from the rural, agrarian, and family-based community (Lash and Friedman 1992). This meant that the established social bonds and networks that provided the source of social identity were slowly diminishing in the lived experiences of the new urban dwellers. Alienation from the traditional mode of living and its forms of identity meant that the alienated individual was suddenly under the influence of new set of values and processes. The alienated individual was undergoing a series of social transformations linked to modernity which facilitated the formation of new social relations and networks and political identities (Featherstone et al. 1995; Anani 2016; Ataman 2015).

The separation from traditional, rural, and family-based community meant the disappearance of historic values, age-old securities, and a departure from relying on established forms of social authority—religion or theology, tradition, and seniority. With regards to religion specifically, this separation manifested itself in secularization—the liberal separation of church and state into private and public spheres (M. Berman 1982; Toulmin 1990; Hafez 2011). The new urbanites liberated from being governed by theology and religion as forms of social authority and from the old traditional mode of living were now presented with new opportunities, new sources of wealth, and freedom to remake themselves and to

re-create their world. However, the conditions under which this occurred were of not their own choosing and the social transformations associated with modernity including the processes of industrialization and urbanization were taking place independent of individual input (Featherstone et al. 1995). Although these shifts created new possibilities, individuals were not instigators in this but captives because individuals were now part of something much bigger than themselves. They were, in fact, part of a new social world—society which had an impersonal structure with attributes or principles of its own. The 'free association of free human beings' in a hierarchically structured society leads to disaffection and commodification, human beings relate to one another as objects, the institutional mediation of the church between the faithful and God is eliminated, and a rationalized conduct of life is imposed on the citizens (Dahrendorff 1964; Bauman 2006).

With this, modernity promised to transform life by positively bringing about easily produced wealth, improved education and health, and better living conditions all through an advanced socio-economic system, widespread scientific and technological advancements, profound innovation, and good governance. Modernity, it seemed, delivered on its promise as there seemed to exist the material plenty, intellectual fulfilment, and social emancipation. Also, the development in individual subjectivity, the increase in scientific explanation and rationalization of things (Brush 1988), the emergence of bureaucracy, rapid urbanization, the rise of nation-states, and accelerated financial exchange and communication all seem to point to a successful modernity.

However, this promise of modernity and its numerous benefits have neither been fully fulfilled nor universal as we will see in some detail in "The Crisis of Modernity" section below. This is the key claim of Islamic revivalists and thus their grievances. We still have today the world divided into First World (developed, capitalist, industrial countries), Second World (communist-socialist and less industrialized countries), and Third World (underdeveloped agricultural countries). There are still people in wealthy countries such as USA and the UK who are undereducated or uneducated and homeless (Finley 2003; Kennedy 1997), there are areas, for instance in Sudan, where there is no running water and electricity, and poverty in some countries such as Somalia due to collapse of the economy and Yemen due to militant conflict remains rampant (Assessment Capacities Project 2017; Bukarti 2020).

Alongside this, there are number of other dark sides of modernity identified by sociologists and other social scientists (Alexander 2013; Conrad 2012; Eisenstadt 2003; Maxwell 2020; Tobera 2001). The technological development achieved in the military saw the dropping of atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II and the subsequent nuclear arms race in the post-war period are evidence of the danger human mismanagement of technologies pose. Stalin's Great Purges and the Holocaust are another example of modernity's rational thinking and rational organization of social order leading to social exclusion and human extermination. Not to mention the environmental crises such as rising air pollution, industrial waste, and declining biodiversity and climate change resulting from industrial development.

Then, there are psychological and moral hazards of modern life, namely alienation, marginalization, feeling of rootlessness and hopelessness, loss of social bonds and shared values, hedonism, suffering of discrimination and injustice, absence of opportunity and future, and frustration and disenchantment of the world (Tobera 2001; Ali 2012b). Since there are people who suffer from one or a combination of these factors, it raises serious questions not only about the promise of modernity but modernity itself. Does modernity in pursuit of civilizing and development lapses into dehumanization of humanity as an inevitable outcome? Does it humanize as well as dehumanize? Is crisis innate to modernity? Thus, Scambler (1996) characterizes modernity as a failed project which has been unable to fulfil the principles of the Enlightenment. He asserts:

> Two types of critique calling for the abandonment of the project have been pre-eminent of late. The first focuses on the undeniable failure of the project to honour its promise, most evidently concerning the rational construction of the

> good society. And the second points to philosophical flaws in the explication of reason on which the project of modernity is founded. There is truth in both. (Scambler 1996, p. 568)

For those who suffer the negative consequences of modernity, modernity is an instrument of dehumanization and is in crisis and, as such, it evokes a reaction in them. Islamic revivalists are one example who we will see later are reactionaries religiously responding to modernity and its various pursuits. Islamic revivalists or Islamic revivalist movements are generally neither anti-modernity nor seek its destruction but reactionaries responding to what I would like to call the "crisis of modernity" demonstrating that Islam and modernity are mutually compatible, and it is not about choosing one or the other but about Islam inserting itself in modernity or carving out a space in it for itself.

From the perspective of Islamic revivalists, modernity itself needs to be reformed or remade. In other words, it needs to be transformed by progressively removing secularism and systematically inserting Islam into modernity to save it from self-destruction. For them, modernity, which is falling apart, does not need to be returned to a pastoral primitiveness but step-by-step must be replaced by a new pattern of life—Islam. They want Islam to facilitate individual self-actualization along with heightened community values, greater satisfaction and enchantment, which will put in motion a process of personalization of humanity and existential experience (Ali and Sahib 2022). The contemporary Islamic revivalism, which is constituted by Islamic revivalist movements, therefore, as inept, political and apolitical, splintered as is, is not merely a romantic activism of sort or a "phase" but a real, genuine, and a long-term endeavor to gradually and definitely transform (replace secularism with Islam) modernity. Although contemporary Islamic revivalism is made up of movements with divergent ideologies, distinct methodologies, and varying directions, they are all in one way or another not totally satisfied with modernity and look up to Islam for greater level of satisfaction, salvation and solution (Ali 2012a). The principal source of their dissatisfaction is secularism, which they consider to be the bane of modernity. They claim that once secularism is replaced with Islam, the crisis-ridden *jahiliyya*-saturated modernity will be permanently healed; there will be no crisis of modernity. So, what exactly is secularism? I address this question in some depth in the following section.

3. Secularism Explained

Secular refers to the worldly realm and secularism is understood to be a system or ideology that places heavy emphasis on this-worldly rather than the other-worldly realm based on the creed that there should be a realm of knowledge, ideals, and actions that is free from religious influence and directives, thus, what is often called, politically speaking, the "separation of church and state". Taylor (2007) defines secularism as a humanist mindset with a total focus on this world in pursuit of an ideal human gratification deemed to be achievable by no assistance from God or transcendental force but by mere human effort. Secularism denotes full engagement in socio-cultural, economic, and political life without ever encountering God. It is "a variety of utilitarian social ethics and sought human improvement through reason, science, and social organization" (Monshipouri 1998, p. 10). Wu notes that secularism advocates "that religion and state should be separated from one another" (Wu 2018, p. 59). In other words, religion is not being a part of both private and public life and there is no reference to religion when it comes to making decisions, to designing and developing socio-economic, cultural and political policies, to shaping and living life, and to ordering social relationships, and exclusive reliance is put on human reason to make sense of the world. Keddie says that secularism "is, the belief that religious institutions and values should play no role in the temporal affairs of the nation-state" (Keddie 2003, pp. 14–15). She goes on to say that in the last few hundred years, many scholars and writers in the West have described secularism "as a one-way street toward modernization" and in the contemporary social science works she noticed that "secularism is often interpreted as a natural concomitant of the spread of science, education, and

technology all of which seem to undermine the need for religious explanations of the world and, ultimately, for powerful organized religions in modern society" (Keddie 2003, p. 16).

Secularism separates religious institutions from state institutions and religion is not permitted to dominate the public sphere. Monshipouri asserts that:

> In the twentieth century, secularism is generally known as an ideology that advocates the eradication of religious influences in political, social, and educational institutions. As a worldview, secularism has generally emphasized separation between the religious and political spheres. (1998, p. 11)

As a result, the social, cultural, economic, and political institutions throughout the modern society are removed from the influence and control of religion. A decline is witnessed in religious influence over government, institutions, ideas, and behavior, and increasing state control of both public and private spheres. Secularism enables the liberation from religious control of all vital spheres of civil society and nonreligious institutions such as education, social welfare, law, and forums for the expression of belief and action. There is an increase in the outgrowth of conviction in the supernatural, the privileging this-worldly considerations and bringing an end to religious doctrinal influence on the vital processes in modern society namely legislation and education. This entire process marginalizes and pushes religion away from the public realm to the private sphere, making it practically ineffective, particularly the religion of Islam, which is a complete way of life practiced in private sphere as well as in the public domain (Esposito 1988).

Secularism is linked to secularity and secularization. Whilst secularity is often described as a condition in which religion is absent from certain specific areas of society such as the public sphere and the state and may be the outcome of the interaction among various social factors or caused by the need of political intervention, secularization, however, is a complex process of separating religion from politics and where the overarching and the transcendent religious system is rendered insignificant and is marginal in a functionally differentiated progressive society (Riesebrodt 2007). The consideration that Islam is a complete and comprehensive way of life is critical for Islamic revivalists who argue that it is this kind of religion which is needed to transform modernity and resolve its crisis but noxious secularism obstinately stands in its way. By nature, secularism is a destructive force according to Islamic revivalists and is the principal cause of modernity's crisis and its removal, therefore, is necessary. Islamic revivalism is the process through which revivalists propose to accomplish this and overcome the crisis of modernity. Let's turn our attention to modernity's crisis and learn more about it.

4. The Crisis of Modernity

There is no doubt that modernity has:

> led to many positive outcomes but . . . [it has] also stimulated threat and crisis, uncertainty and risky behaviour. Human kind has managed to control many natural processes successfully and yet of all the biological species, *homo sapiens* is one of the most threatened with extinction due to its destructive tendencies (e.g., the drive towards incessant economic growth). (Tobera 2001, p. 1)

The crisis of modernity which is a complex, multifaceted, and unfolding phenomenon is certainly worthy of a robust sociological analysis. I want to concentrate not so much on how modernity articulates anew the age-long developmental problems of humanity, problems linked with the process of transformation brought about by individuals themselves as well as produced by nature which often occurs suddenly and takes us by surprise and therefore form a critical part of social dynamics, but instead on the problems of modernity facing humankind today. This is critical for our understanding of the emergence of Islamic revivalism as a global phenomenon. Islamic revivalism is a responsive phenomenon which faces diverse complex interaction with modernity and Muslims. The responsive factors of Islamic revivalism strive to develop a sustainable solution to the crisis of modernity which is socially efficient and psychologically conducive to the wellbeing of the global population.

Modernity has always been seen as the antithesis of conservatism, stagnation, underdevelopment, orthodoxy, religion, and all-things old, in short, the opposite of the progressive, developed, civilized, and industrialized world. However, many contemporary debates not only give us a different perspective on modernity, they, in fact are challenging modernity's claims arguing that modern features such as capitalism and nationalism have generated a toxic mixture of disenchantment, pomposity, and developmental unsustainability and directing us towards the preservation of cultural specificities (Chiozza 2002; Nabholz 2007) and "dialogical transcendence" (Duara 2015) to re-enchant modernity. Thus, instead of embedding my analysis of the crisis of modernity in a traditional context of modernist epistemology and philosophical ontology, I have opted to transform the conceptual ground by looking at the sociological reality of modernity and socio-economic and sociological explanations for the crisis. Therefore, in this section I intend to offer a sociological description of the crisis as a backdrop to better understand the emergence of contemporary Islamic revivalism. I will elaborate on the concept of contemporary Islamic revivalism in the next section but, in passing, note here that it is a reaction to the negative consequences or crisis of modernity. Contemporary Islamic revivalism sees that the acceleration of social, cultural, economic, and political connections over the last several decades has produced a persistent drive for resource and territorial expansions and material capitalism and secularism are driving people apart and into a state of disenchantment with multiplier negative effects—crime, divorce, drug addiction, depression, poverty, heath issues, and so on. Islam's re-emergence on the backs of Islamic revivalist movements is to assert its pre-eminence on the international stage and address the crisis of modernity. Islamic revivalists such as the *Tablighi*s (members of the Tabligh Jama'at) claim to be involved in turning modernity as a *dar al-harb* (abode of war) to *dar al-Islam* (abode of peace). Some such as the *Tablighi*s claim to be working at the micro level through reforming nominal Muslims through their preaching model that involves members going on *khuruj* (preaching tour), knocking on doors of fellow Muslims and inviting them to their public lectures and learning and remembrance circles (Ali 2012a) and returning them to the "true path" and some such as *Tahriri*s (members of Hizb ut-Tahrir) claim to be working at the macro level planning and striving towards establishing the caliphate (Islamic state) in their overall journey and endeavor (Ali and Orofino 2018).

To start, we must ask what is meant by the "crisis of modernity". The crisis of modernity is associated with the idea that there is an ill-conceived thinking about and around modernity that ultimately leads to a crisis, that is, with some exceptions, there is a general state of existential disenchantment in the modern world (Everdell 1997). Before 1900, there was a general confidence in Europe (allegedly original home of modernity) among its population that European technology, innovation, science, logic, and rationality will lead the European continent and the world to ongoing progress, prosperity and a blissful life for all (Heraclides and Dialla 2015). However, by 1900 there was a shift in European attitude when many from upper- and middle-class groups began to feel dissatisfied with and apprehensive about the European civilization and began to question its doctrine, claims, promises and direction (Outram 1997). To their dismay, they realized that the promise of modernity to create an everlasting utopia, the megalopolis of humanity, will never be achieved. They found themselves feeling that there was something fundamentally deficient in European civilization and started feeling doubts about Western culture and anxieties began to emerge about some of the ideas in sciences and humanities which were further compounded by World War I (Pagden 1993). These and many other factors were collectively characterized as the "crisis of modernity". All of this resulted in new yet darker ways of understanding humanity where many started doubting the existence of progress and began thinking that reason and science does not necessarily lead to progress, prosperity, civility, and good life (Alexander 2013).

In recent times the crisis of modernity manifests itself in high levels of meaninglessness, de-rootedness, futurelessness, hopelessness, depravity, and material and spiritual deprivation. There is evidence of rampant social injustice, acute immorality, political cor-

ruption and the despotism, and intellectual crisis (Girling 1997). Many individuals find that there is a serious destruction of nature and many problems associated with human induced climate change (Shiva 1994), that there is a prevalence of large scale conflict/wars, that economic inequality is unrelenting, that homelessness and poverty is pervasive, that there is an absence of government and corporate accountability and transparency, that corruption is widespread, that there is a dearth of food and water security, that the lack of education is growing, that human wellbeing is declining, that the lack of economic opportunity and unemployment is worsening, and injustice and discrimination are on the rise (Loudenback and Jackson 2018; Duara 2015). Ali (2020, p. 81) asserts that "The last several decades have seen the world experience deindustrialisation, the decline of the nation-state, falling productivity, growing unemployment, poverty, marginalization, inequality, violence, and the expansion of neoliberal political economies." This is compounded by meaninglessness afflicting life, people "waiting without hope"—the pervasiveness of bleakness and hopelessness, the individuating conditions of modern life bringing people apart, and modern men and women are caught up in a perpetual "tension of existence" (Etzioni 1975).

Modernity promised individuals "the good life", one which was to be blissful with democracy flourishing everywhere, women enjoying total freedom, rights for workers and improved living conditions for the masses assured, widespread prevalence of equality and social justice, and with technological advances the distance being annihilated making mobility fast and easy and communication become immediate and large-scale. It further pledged unlimited progress, plentiful unconditional trust in instrumental rationality, limitless trust in expert knowledge and in the transformative capacity of technical and scientific progress (Giddens 1991), and lastly the commitment to strategic planning and control of nature, institutional operations, and social processes assuring the smooth operation of the system (Taleb 2007). However, if we look around, we find that the "system" is anything but stable and we continue to wrestle with the fact that some of the chief promises of modernity remain unfulfilled. Amitai Etzioni, using America as a case study to examine "the crisis of modernity", eloquently summarizes the situation, stating:

> True, beyond doubt, that the citizenry at large is increasingly concerned with quality and not just quantity, with the human and environmental cost of progress rather than merely the statistics of GNP, with public goods (education, health, safety) and not just personal materialism. There is a genuine and widespread yearning for a quality of life ... What the overwhelming majority yearns to achieve is a life of more freedom, less alienating work, more cultivation, beauty, "quality," sensitivity to others and openness to self, on top of and not instead of the material comforts (though not necessarily all the gadgets) and high standards of health that modernity acquired. (1975, pp. 12–13)

I acknowledge that there will be always some level of problem in the world and in individual societies, as Durkheim (1997) and Parsons (1951) point out that some level of social dysfunction in society is inevitable. However, given the scientific, technological, medical, and communication advancements and the enormous growth in instrumental rationality achieved by humans, for example, it is worrying to see that modernity is still faced by a multitude of growing problems. From war and genocide to terrorism; from nuclear holocaust to election violence; from biodiversity loss and deforestation to economic collapse and resource depletion; and from slavery and colonialism to human trafficking and child labor and abuse: humanitarian crises have appeared in all forms over the last hundred years. Take, for instance, World War I, between fifteen and twenty million deaths occurred (Mayhew 2013) and in World War II, the most deadliest military conflict in history, between seventy and eighty million people perished (Dear and Foot 2005); the Holocaust from 1941 to 1945 when Nazi Germany killed approximately six million Jews across German-occupied Europe (Bauer 2002); the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986; the Rwandan genocide and the unraveling of Congo in 1994 when Hutu and Tutsi groups wreaked havoc for hundred days in Rwanda killing around eight hundred thousand Tutsis and moderate Hutus (Powers 2011); the civil war in Liberia from 1999 to 2003 when quarter of a million people died

during the conflict destabilizing a wider region made up of Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Ivory Coast (Moran 2008); the hunger in Zimbabwe from 2002 to 2020 resulting from climate change with the country struggling with a series of droughts and floods since 2000 creating a string of food emergencies and the whole situation further compounded by a corrupt and deficient government (Cavanagh 2009); the Kenyan election violence in 2007 when Kenya's Electoral Commission hurriedly and impetuously declared incumbent Mwai Kibaki the winner of a close-run election and mass protest followed which turned into violence killing around one thousand two hundred people and displacing around six hundred and fifty thousand people (Johnson et al. 2014); the Syrian civil war in 2012 creating a major refugee crisis when more than five and a half million Syrians fled the country in search of shelter in nearby countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan and even taking dangerous journeys across the Mediterranean to Europe as refugees (Pearlman 2017); the Venezuela implosion from 2016 to 2017 due to years of economic mismanagement, growing authoritarianism, political turmoil, and extrajudicial killings plunging the country into hyperinflation forcing people to scavenge for food through garbage and creating a condition for increase in disease, crime, and mortality rates (López 2018); and the deforestation crisis negatively affecting natural ecosystems, biodiversity, and the climate, with the heaviest levels of deforestation taking place in tropical rainforests (Runyan and D'Odorico 2016).

In addition, the 11 September 2001 terror attacks; 2003 invasion of Iraq and Darfur genocide; 2007–2008 global financial crisis (GFC); the 2010s Arab Spring across much of the Arab world; the rise of Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in 2020; the 10 May 2021 Israeli–Palestinian violent outbreak; the global refugee crisis; child marriage and racial discrimination; world hunger; poverty; mental health issues; global terrorism; Lebanese liquidity crisis; North Korea and weapons of mass destruction; Iran–Saudi Arabia proxy conflict; Ukrainian crisis; territorial disputes in the South China Sea; Rohingya genocide; Indo-Pakistani wars and conflicts; Uyghur genocide; financial statement fraud; corporate crime, thuggery, and failure; excess CEO-to-worker pay ratios; obstructed nationalist aspirations; unstable or illegitimate state institutions; pervasive corruption and acute economic dislocation; increase in divorce, domestic violence, suicide, drug use and trafficking; cybercrime; organization and institutional mismanagement and dysfunction; bureaucratic inefficiency; and COVID-19 pandemic continue to plague modernity.

Also, the "commodity crisis" of recent times is another example of modernity in crisis despite ever increasing industrialization and technological advancement (Bauman and Bordoni 2014). For example, the 1973 oil crisis pushed up the price of oil by nearly 300% with serious long-term effects on global politics and the global economy (Painter 2014) and Igan et al. (2022, p. 1) observe in the context of recent global situation that:

> High and volatile commodity prices pose significant risks to the global economy. The effects will be felt on both inflation and growth, and will fall unevenly across countries, depending on whether they are exporters or importers of affected commodities and how higher prices affect household and corporate income. On net, higher commodity prices are likely to erode growth and lift inflation in the short term.

Socially, the 2008–2009 financial and economic crisis, produced multiple crises setting back the progress numerous states had made towards achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. From this, there has been continuous adverse social consequences of the crisis with widespread negative social outcomes for individuals, families, communities and societies. The impact on social progress in areas such as education and health is clearly evident. In terms of health and nutrition outcomes, this has the potential to lead to lifelong deficits for the children affected and consequently continue the intergenerational transmission of poverty (Dahrendorff 1964). "The increased levels of poverty, hunger and unemployment will continue to affect billions of people for years to come" (Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2011, p. iii).

5. Why Is Modernity in Crisis?

Scholars and experts entertain different ideas about the causes of the "crisis of modernity". The divergence in views is illustrative of the multi-variousness of the discourse of "modernity" itself reflecting the scholarly disagreement regarding the nature of "modern society" and of modern individual including different nuances of human values, ideals, commitments or excellence. One way of addressing this question, however, is to examine the philosophical underpinnings of modernity. At a philosophical level, the crisis of modernity is the "crisis of ideas" manifesting itself in the loss of its founding ideas, ideals and beliefs in the hearts and minds of people. The project of modernity was believed to be possible and provide people with life and vitality, but this is no longer the case for many people and so they doubt the project of modernity, and this doubt has, many argue, not been removed or replaced with a better alternative and in fact has entrenched itself and turned into nihilism (Childs 2000).

Another explanation for why modernity is in crisis can be found in Auguste Comte's (1798–1857) narrative about modernity in which he entertains the idea that industrial technology defines and makes "modernity" and is a great human achievement and progress of human civilization. In other words, industrialization and technologization are good for humanity and they make societies modern in which engineers and technocrats are the main figures who ensure that industrialization and technologization continue unabated. For Comte, if there was any crisis of modernity, it is only at the temporary revolutionary stage towards industrial and technological modernity. The revolutionary stage, Comte found, was unnecessarily prolonged by old, antiquated dogmas, and prejudices of the traditional and faith-based ancient world as well as pointless politicking that are obstacles to the inevitable industrial and technological development (Ossewaarde 2017). For him, industrialization and technologization guarantees liberation, bringing an end to chaotic politicking and revolutionary disruptions. To put it differently, according the Cometean line of thinking, there is no "crisis of modernity" as such only "obstacles" (tradition, religion, political squabbles, etc.) to progress that modernity is facing but will overcome overtime. This in itself is a crisis of modernity, that is, the denial of it all and also the attempt to remove tradition and religion in particular from modernity rather than facilitating their coexistence which Duara (2015) argues is much needed now.

In Tocqueville's (1805–1859) narrative, which offers yet another explanation, "modernity" denotes democracy with the full provision for equality of living conditions without aristocratic or bourgeoisie privileges. The modern world is constituted by citizens, civil, and political associations who are to work cooperatively and strive for common good promoting "Liberty", "Equality", and "Fraternity" and thereby shaping a true democratic culture. Tocqueville found "modernity" in crisis because the modern ideals such as "Liberty", "Equality", and "Fraternity" have not been consistently applied in key institutions of society including in the government and instead, the political arena in particular has been used and dominated by political agitators not to bring about positive outcome for all but for vested interests (Sclove 1995). For Tocqueville, therefore, technology—one of modernity's most cherished prizes—is not a strength and liberating force but a quandary and an instrument of human enslavement and modernity's disenchantment.

The crisis of modernity denotes modernity has become uncertain of its purpose. The purpose of modernity was to create a prosperous society embracing equally all human beings—men and women, black and white, poor and rich, young and old—a universal union of free and equal nations each comprising liberated citizens with equal rights. In other words, good and fulfilling life for all through collective and cooperative efforts involving individuals from all walks of life from all sections of the society. Modernity no longer believes in either the nobility or the feasibility of its own project (Strauss 1979), and it was only a matter of time before it was to find this out, because it was originally premised on an ill-conceived ideal. This discovery was of course bound to create, which it did, nihilism, hopelessness, and decline (Childs 2000). From philosophical and sociological

perspectives, these are discerned as the "crisis" of modernity. The crisis is not the same as defeat or annihilation, but degeneration from within. Drury asserts:

> It is a set of ill-conceived ideas that ultimately lead to that crisis . . . the crisis of our time is the result of our loss of faith in the modern project. Western civilization [as the creator of modernity] . . . no longer believes in the nobility of its own project. It has sunk into despair and nihilism. (Drury 2005, p. 151)

Although Islamic revivalists agree with what we have discussed about modernity so far, what they find particularly troubling and most destructive about modernity and the major source of the "crisis of modernity" is secularism. From their perspective secularism is from which emanates all of modernity's problems and leading humanity towards self-destruction.

For Islamic revivalists, whether secularism means the separation of religion and politics or confining religion to the domestic sphere or totally liquidating religion through state coercion and institutional regulation, secularism as a doctrinal framework and secularization as a process cannot be allowed to flourish any further. They seek to religiously counter and overwhelm secularism so Islam can dominate both the private as well as public domains because Islam is generally seen as a complete way of life practiced in private sphere as well as in the public domain. Their plan is to bring all vital spheres of civil society, legislation, and education under Islam by measuredly utilizing all modernity's instrumental mechanisms including science and technology, but not secularism. Contemporary Islamic revivalism, therefore, is a process through which revivalists seek to completely embed Islam with all its rituals, practices, and institutions in modern private and public everyday living. It is not an anti-modernity phenomenon but one that seeks to employ many of modernity's tools such as its science and technology and modern inventions in combination with Islamic worldview, principles and values to reform modernity and give it a renewed enchantment. In the following section, I discuss how contemporary Islamic revivalism proposes to achieve this.

6. Analysis: Contemporary Islamic Revivalism as a Response to the Crisis of Modernity

Contemporary Islamic revivalism is a complex multifaceted reactionary force, which using a distinct interpretive reading of Islam and armed with a huge army of members and supporters, aims to remove what it sees as the existing global predicament and remake the modern world in the image of an "authentic Islamic order". The predicament is perceived as the result of what is considered in Islamic revivalist circles as gross discrepancy with the standards of the bona fide Islamic tradition based on the Qur'an and *hadith*s (a record of the words, actions, and the explicit and tacit approval of Prophet Muhammad). It is a significant upsurge in Islamic consciousness particularly in nominal Muslim individuals across the globe. Constituted by a suite of disparate Islamic revivalist movements, contemporary Islamic revivalism manifests itself in a multiplicity of forms as a defensive reaction to the crisis of modernity. Its hallmark is a planning for the return to Islamic origins—the basics of the faith and legal framework (*shari'ah*) as enshrined in the Qur'an and the *sunnah* (the sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad) and to strengthen Islamic influence in all spheres of life. Contemporary Islamic revivalism has a defensive reactionary ideological character and represents a defensive reaction to the crisis situations prevailing in various Muslim societies as well as in other parts of the world where there is deep ongoing socio-cultural and economic disaffection, dislocation, discontent and diminished Islamic observances (Ali 2012a; Hamid 2016; Munabari et al. 2022).

As a term, contemporary Islamic revivalism is highly contested in its meaning. Scholars are yet to come up with an agreed definition of the phenomenon and this is mainly due to the fact that it is internally extremely heterogeneous constituted by movements with diverse ideologies, interpretations of Islamic scripture and law, missions, and revivalist methods. It has been examined as a form of an increased Islamic cognizance under various umbrella terms as diverse as "awakening", "fundamentalism", "Islamism", "pietism",

"radicalism", "reassertion", "reformation", "reformism", "renewal", "resurgence", "revitalization", and "revivalism" (Ali 2012a). Many scholars define contemporary Islamic revivalism by basing their understanding of it on different types of revivalist movements, including their nature, ideology, method, and aims, and so Al-Gannoushi notes that:

> by the Islamic movement we mean the aggregate emitted activity motivated by Islam to achieve its objectives and constant revival for so as to control and direct reality constantly. This notion takes into account that Islam is for all time and place, which makes it imperative for its message to be revived in pursuant to the variation in time and place and development in science, knowledge and art. Accordingly, the Islamic movement's objectives, strategy and action methods will vary in correspondence to the time and place. (Al-Gannoushi 2000, p. 11)

Abu-'Azzah remarks that:

> by 'Islamic movements' we mean the collection of the different organizations associated with Islam; they function in the field of Islamic activism within a framework of a comprehensive vision of human life; they struggle to re-form the latter in conformance with Islamic instructions; they await the events of the Islamic peoples' sweeping awakening both individually and collectively, through this Islamic perspective. They strive to influence every aspect of the social life so as to repair and reform it according to the Islamic principles. (Abu 'Azzah 1989, p. 179)

Abu Al-Sa'woud asserts that what he means by Islamic movements is:

> the convergence of Muslim individuals in a commission that has its own governance system. Deep in their hearts, they believe in Islam, its practices, regulations and laws. They implement the Islamic teachings in their daily lives and within the limits of their power and perception . . . [They] draw on *Shari'a* (Islamic law) and their role model for the frameworks of their lives which they accomplish via 'structures' they found in accommodation of their needs and the developments in their surrounding environment. (Abu Al-Sa'woud 1989, p. 354)

In this paper I rely on Ali and Sahib's definition of Islamic revivalism, which they say is:

> Muslim investment in scripture-based socio-cultural, economic and political processes, institutional development and faith renewal through systematic incorporation of scripture-defined rituals and practices and the rules of the law into the pattern of everyday living and at the same time shedding all foreign accretions in normative and ritualistic Muslim practices. The idea is to employ every peaceful means to make "good Muslims" who will work for Allah and not only represent a natural beacon of hope and light but be the re-makers of a just, successful and wholesome society. (Ali and Sahib 2022, p. 5)

There are a number of Muslim thinkers worth discussing albeit briefly and that is because they are collectively the inspiration behind contemporary Islamic revivalism. I will put these thinkers in two categories and will call one category of Muslim thinkers as modernist revivalists, thus modernists, because they prescribed modernization of Islam and the other I will call simply Islamist revivalists, thus Islamists, because their prescription was Islamization of modernity.

The modernist revivalists were thinkers such as Jamal al-Din Afghani (1838–1897) of Persia, Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1898) of India, and Muhammad 'Abduh (1849–1905) of Egypt who shot to prominence as Muslim activists, modernists, and intellectuals responding to the decline and degeneration of the Muslim world brought about by the wickedness of Western colonialism and secularism. Despite minor differences in their ideas on modernity and the reading of Islamic sources—Qur'an and *hadith*s, they stood united on the question of Western intrusion and activities in the Muslim world and agreed that Muslims should understand and practice Islam on the basis of reason as this will enrich them intellectually as well as materially and enable them to effectively meet the

changing circumstances of Muslim society. They wanted education to be the means of Muslim learning about their faith using the tool of rational thinking in contrast to *taqlid* (blind and unquestioned following of theological teachings). It was in the education they saw the solution to Muslim degeneration and the capacity to rescue Muslim societies from their decline. Through education, they also wanted to demonstrate the compatibility of Islam with much of modern Western thought and values.

I call these thinkers modernists because they sought to bridge the gap between Islamic traditionalists and secular reformers. The strategy they contrived to achieve this was one of combining the internal community concerns of their time with the need to respond paradigmatically to the destruction caused by European colonialism and the challenges of modernity. Muslims continued to show internal weaknesses and the usurpation of Western colonialism which permanently damaged the local industry, changed agriculture and industrialized the economy, transformed the political processes and system, replaced key institutions such as education and judiciary with Western ones, and spread secular Western ideals and cultural values across the Muslim world (Ali 2012b; Ali and Sahib 2022).

Modernists criticized Muslim elites and rulers who opposed reform and failed to put up a fight against Western encroachment (Arjomand 2002, 2003; Ismail 2004; Ali 2012b; Ali and Sahib 2022). Harnessing political and intellectual force, they actively engaged in opposing the imperial power and worked very hard for constitutional liberties and struggled for liberation from foreign control. They presented a strong and persuasive argument for reformation by combining Islamic principles with "useful" Western institutions, values, and achievements in all areas of life—social, economic, intellectual, and political, across the Muslim World. They wanted to modernize Islam not only so it could be relevant and important in the modern world but so it could benefit from modernity.

The other category, the Islamists, includes thinkers such as Sayyed Abul Ala Maududi (1903–1979) of India, Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966) of Egypt, and Hasan al-Banna (1906–1949) of Egypt. Their activism, intellectual thinking, and revivalist paradigm originates from the profound crisis of the Muslim world during and after Western colonialism and imperialism. Their Islamist ideology is linked with achieving international liberation from Western hegemony and influence and the development crisis resulting from Western modernization and secularization of not only the Muslim world but the globe at large.

Within the Muslim world, Maududi, Qutb, and al-Banna sought the removal of Western-style modernization, which also involves secularization, and prescribed the path of development with Islamic characteristics. They saw Western values and the way of life decadent and inherently destructive, besieging the entire world overtime and plunged it into crisis. From their perspective, Western modernity ruins traditional structures and pattern of living, destroys the sacred, undermines age-old habits and inherited languages, and leaves the world as a composite of broken up elements in need of reconstruction rationally. To develop Muslim societies, they offered what may be called Islamic communitarianism as an alternative to capitalism and communism. For them, secularized (Godless) Western system cannot produce moral and ethical virtues, universal social justice, and shared well-being. It is scriptural Islam which is a full-proof system which can provide this according to them and, therefore, they invited Muslims towards Islamization of the modern world; it involves the re-establishment of Islamic institutions, re-invigorating Islamic socio-cultural, economic, and political processes, and realizing a true Islamic identity.

To put all this in motion, they did not want to work on building the modern nation-state with a nationalist identity, but an *ummah* (community of believers) based on Islamic faith and Islamic identity that transcends parochiality, ethnicity, and race. It "refers to the concept of the Islamic Umma . . . the Islamic government based on Islamic law—Sharia is to safeguard its existence" (Roberts 1988, p. 557). At a political level, they strongly opposed the secularist national sovereignty and nation-states and call for all Muslims to contribute to establishing an Islamic state with "divine sovereignty" where Allah exercises efficacy, universality, and control over all things. They are clearly against secularism and oppose any separation of politics and religion and advocate for the establishment of a theocratic

Islamic state where "the rule of the state must be consistent with Sharia law", . . . "the executive and legislative functions and authority must obey and assist Sharia law" (Roberts 1988, p. 557).

For them, not only the Muslim world but modernity as a global system is in crisis. This crisis, according to them, can only be resolved with Islamization of modernity. This, according to them, will bring about harmony, justice, and universal wellbeing to all citizens of the modern world; something not only many Muslims are longing for but many oppressed and demoralized around the globe are aimlessly searching for.

Contemporary Islamic revivalism occupies a prominent place, particularly in the Western imagination and Western-based scholarship about Islam as a religion. Western scholars have warned against the danger of "contemporary Islamic revivalism" directing attention to a world-wide clash between Islam and the West, which they described as a "clash of civilizations". Samuel Huntington, for instance, have suggested that "A west at the peak of its power confronts non-wests that increasingly have the desire, the will and resources to shape the world in non-western ways" and the future conflict will be between " . . . the west and the rest, the west and the Muslims . . . " (Huntington 1993, pp. 26 & 39). From this perspective, contemporary Islamic revivalism is simply a revival of the old religious tradition which is anti-modernity and antagonistic and intolerant Muslim attitudes toward the West and non-Muslims. It is seen to be threatening to Western interests, civil order and political security, socially conservative, and geared towards establishing a *shari'ah*-based Islamic state. The military conflicts in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Sudan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Central Asia and the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers, and the bombings of civilians in Madrid, London, and Bali are seen as some of the examples of the threat Islam poses to the West (Ali and Amin 2020). The establishment of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2014 is another example of the threat and concern (Ali 2018). With the downfall of the Soviet Union and the perceived elimination of communist threat, Islam, particularly in its revivalist guise, is being viewed as a new international danger (Tamim and Esposito 2000). It is considered as a wildfire spreading across the world, damaging the legitimacy of Western values and threatening the national security of Western countries and their allies.

However, not all Muslim revivalists harbor such an attitude and the support for contemporary Islamic revivalism in Muslim communities and countries, and it is not universal and unidimensional. Muslims generally and Islamic revivalists in particular differ from each other on sectarian, ideological, doctrinal, cultural, and political grounds. They also differ on many basic issues and inspired by different visions and politics and have different policies and methods to effect social transformation and improve the situation in their respective communities and societies.

The dynamics of contemporary Islamic revivalism must be understood against the ongoing dialectic of the modernization of Islam and the Islamization of modernity as it is experienced by Muslims who either materially or spiritually have become marginalized by the effects of modernity. Despite the many shades and shapes of contemporary Islamic revivalism and diversity in political attitude, Islamic revivalist movements have some commonality. These movements in different Muslim communities and Muslims societies are partly a reaction against indigenous corruption, economic stagnation and uncertainty, and the politics of tyranny and repression (Firth 1981). In the Middle East, for example, despite great economic gains made in many oil-rich countries, the benefits have not been enjoyed by all but by only elite few making material inequities and social imbalances ongoing and highly noticeable. The governments of these oil-rich countries are found to be often run by small cliques of insiders, such as the military regime of Algeria, holding the reins of power behind a civilian façade and diverting the country's oil wealth into personal accounts (Abdelhadi 2021) or the family regime of Saudi Arabia, which benefit only a small number of the population (Momayezi 1997). Sema Genç says that, "The Islamic world in Asia and Africa is blessed with abundance of natural resources. Yet, 50% of the most impoverished people around the globe reside in the Islamic world. SubSaharan Africa is amongst the

worst hit" (2019, p. 223). The growing economic difficulties, increased unemployment, and lack of educational and occupational opportunities, have made large sections of the population disillusioned and resentful, particularly young people who constitute the vast majority of the population in many cities including in the major Middle Eastern cities such as Cairo, Tehran, and Baghdad, many of which are currently overflowing with unemployed youths (Genç 2019). Many Muslim youths who are excluded from the productive sector of the economy and shunned from the mainstream society have become the general feature of the urban space in modern cities and are the main target of the revivalist campaign (Esposito 1988; Ali and Orofino 2018). Their distress, alienation, disillusionment, and dissatisfaction with political leadership and the ideological alternatives have made them opt for Islam as a means to express their overall disenchantment (Ali 2012b).

Islamic revivalists are not only concerned with the plight of Muslims but all citizens of the world who suffer under modernity. So, when they learn about suffering being experienced by others generally they point to modernity for its failures. Failures that Genç articulates as follows:

> The reality of the contemporary world separates the global human population between the small minority of people who control 99% of the world's wealth and the large base of poverty stricken people who are forced to scrap a living on less than USD 1 per day. The state of appalling poverty in the world today is a serious indictment on the global leadership. It is a shameful act that belies the so-called advancements in the field of science and technology, bioinformatics, food production and lightening speed communications. All these advancements breed abject poverty. These glittering inventions, smart technologies, brand labels and artificial intelligence controlled real estate fail to address the most basic of social evils, poverty and hunger. None of these advancements matter to over a billion people around the world who go to bed hungry each day. (2019, pp. 222–23)

Islamic revivalists say that this has occurred under modernity where the society has essentially departed from a religiously authorized blueprint of how individuals should behave and the values that should be upheld by society as a whole. Hence, in modernity, they say the ideals of the modern self, with its emphasis on self-actualization and consumption, are spiritually empty. They see that modernity is governed by reason without God and has failed to create values and reneged on its promise of a better living standard for all or what Horkheimer and Adorno say that whilst modernity may have delivered "the disenchantment of the world; the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy', it has also rendered the world that 'radiates disaster triumphant' (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, p. 3) or what Griffin observes in Charles Baudelaire's work that "modernity as a world . . . has lost its ordering principle and mythic centre" (Griffin 2007, p. 92) or as Jameson observes of modernity being a product of philosophical modernism criticizing that "the scientific ethos of the philosophes is dramatized as a misguided will to power and domination over nature, and their desacralizing program as the first stage in the development of a sheerly instrumentalizing worldview which will lead straight to Auschwitz" (Jameson 1998, p. 25). It is in light of this that the Islamic revivalists seek the re-establishment of tradition, that is, Islam offering a way to regain a sense of purpose, meaning, and spiritual fulfilment. Thus, in their programmatic revivalism, the remaking of modernity expresses itself as a mission to change society. Islamic revivalists believe that through the rehabilitation of the authority of religion, social institutions will once again have clear and high moral standards, politics will have a sacred expression, and the "true believers" will have a full membership in the *ummah* (Muslim community). All aspects of life will then be influenced and governed by the comprehensive implementation of the fundamentals of Islam and the *shari'ah*.

Contemporary Islamic revivalism, then, is an attempt to directly confront modernity which is considered to be producing all of the hardships and thus its crisis through material secularism. Secularism, which removes religion's influence in public and civic affairs, infuses society with Godlessness, resulting in widespread corruption and immorality,

diminished ethical standard, and general decadence (Ali and Sahib 2022). Islamic revivalists do not see the need to replace modernity, but rather seek to reform it by removing secularism and infusing it with Islamic values. In other words, contemporary Islamic revivalism is about Islamization of modernity involving the popularization of Islamic symbols, principles and institutions in the society, and collapsing the sacred and profane domains into one. It is for this reason that movements such as Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation) strive towards the establishment of the caliphate (Islamic state) or the Tabligh Jama'at (Convey the Message of Islam Group) working at grassroots level proselytizing nominal Muslims. In a more general sense, the works undertaken by Islamic revivalist movements are resulting in greater level of Islamic observance among Muslims particularly in youths (Ali 2012b).

For the revivalists, the idea is that Islam should be the global order (Ingram 2018; Minardi 2018; Onapajo 2012). Islam, they say, is the God's prescribed complete way of life and *shari'ah* is an immutable divine law (Pall 2018; Rock-Singer 2020). They believe that Islam reinforces group norms and provides for the institution of moral sanctions for individual behavior. They argue that it provides universal goals and values that in turn offer a sense of stability and unity to the *ummah* and contribute to its security and the maintenance of social equilibrium.

All Islamic revivalist movements, despite difference between them, are involved in promoting such a cause in their own way dictated by their ideology, aims, and methods as well as by the prevailing conditions in their community or society. They seek to contribute to the transformation of modernity as part of the larger project of contemporary Islamic revivalism. Their aim is to transform modernity. One key aspect of the transformation process is to rid modernity of its secularism. In other words, to enable religions such as Islam to assume a key role in both the public life and in the private setting.

Under revivalism, Islamic growth means an increase in the number of adherents and also an escalation in spirituality and religiosity in all Muslims. Islam would become influential in other spheres of life such as economic, social, cultural, and political and seeks intervention in legislation and policy making (Nasution 2017). This is considered as a "higher form" of Islamic development particularly noticeable in the public sphere with growing display of Islamic symbols, for example, Muslim men wearing head caps and Islamic attire and women wearing *hijab* (head scarf) or *niqab* (face veil) or *burqa* (a garment which covers the hair, neck and all or part of the chest); practices, for instance, Muslims praying at work such as in city offices or manufacturing factories and eating *halal* (permissible) food in restaurants; and policies, for example, Muslim men permitted to drive taxis wearing their Islamic attire rather than taxi uniform in global cities such as Sydney and Dhaka. Also part of the process is the provision of prayer facilities and services, evening and weekend meetings, scripture teaching, and public lectures particularly in urban spaces and saturating the public sphere with all types of Islamic activities such as Muslims praying in parks and holding barbeques and symbols such as halal signs and mosques with *minaret* (a balcony from which a *muezzin* (caller to prayer) calls Muslims to prayer). Importantly, under the efforts of revivalism, the Muslim world and other parts of the world where Muslims reside have witnessed the burgeoning of mosques, Islamic schools and *shari'ah* and Islamic studies programs, Islamic banks, health centers, nursing homes, *madrassas* (Islamic seminaries), guilds and associations with similar functions (Sullivan 1994). These establishments operate in parallel with state-run organizations and institutions as some scholars say as the "nucleus of dual power"—a state within the state (Dodson and Montgomery 1981) as is the case of Jama'at-e-Islami in Bangladesh (Ali and Amin 2020). In the context of the impersonality of modern life and the penetrating force and lure of free-market neoliberalism, these communal-based establishments also offer "a new consciousness, sense of self-worth, and capacity for action among the poor people" (Levine 1988, p. 241). In enlisting in these establishments, the dispossessed and de-rooted Muslims not only find themselves being compensated for their low social status by feelings of increased piety and religious superiority but also discover their power among

overwhelming feelings of weakness and powerlessness (Ali 2012b). Through collective action, they bring hope and resolution to a crisis situation.

Islamic revivalists link otherworldly salvation to worldly transformation. They see themselves as workers of Allah, as divine instruments of righteousness, morality, and justice with a vocation for salvation and deliverance. They work towards developing a general attentiveness to Allah's guidance, provide for family members, the relatives, and the community and improve and change the qualities of personal character by developing new desires, new affections, new sources of happiness, and new purpose and goals, all in an attempt to reorder and remake society and culture more similar to Allah's Will being carried out on earth. They see themselves to be tasked with Islamizing the secular and religiously sanctioning their religious activities by overturning the separation of religion and politics. Another salient aspect of Islamic revivalist movements is their emergence as an alternative to the dominant ideology of the secular state and secular authority.

We can see from this the fact that Islamic revivalist movements as part of a larger phenomenon of contemporary Islamic revivalism are integrative movements. They are also reactive movements of political awakening and faith building involving the members in a process of redefining and reorienting themselves towards transformation in their personal lives and in their surrounding spaces. Since secularism poses a threat to Islam, the revivalists as the new guardians of their faith resort to self-defense reviving and revitalizing ever stronger ties with Islam by undergoing proselytization in their respective movements. They believe that they can became good examples for other Muslims and fellow citizens who can then try to emulate them and at this grassroots level, modernity will gradually and surely transform for the better. Through spiritual elevation and moral regeneration and the introduction of scripture-based Islamic ritual and practices, socio-economic and political processes, and institutional development they attempt to bring the *ummah* together on the basis of a new way of pursuing life in modernity. All of this is for the purpose of reenergizing Islamic teachings and rituals and attempting to make *shari'ah* and scriptural Islam (based on Qur'an and *hadith*s) a dominant mode of existence in modernity.

7. Conclusions

Modernity is a complex global phenomenon. It is an intricate composite of particular socio-economic and politico-cultural norms, attitudes and practices pervading the entire globe. Characterized by technological innovation, scientific advancement, medical discovery and inventions, predominance of rationality, the emergence of bureaucracy, rapid urbanization, the rise of nation-states, accelerated financial exchange and communication, and an expansion of secularism, that is, a decline in emphasis on religious worldviews, modernity over the ages has brought about monumental transformation in the society making the patterns of living distinct from the past and life more "modern" and "progressive". With these provisions, modernity promised humanity a life of prosperity, wellbeing, and justice.

From the viewpoint of contemporary Islamic revivalism modernity's promise came to fruition only in certain parts of the world, largely in the West and as a result Muslim world in particular was left out and is yet to enjoy modernity's promise. The unfulfilled promise of modernity is captured in the following characterization of modernity. For Bradbury and McFarlane "in the modern human condition [there is] a crisis of reality, an apocalypse of cultural community" (Bradbury and McFarlane 1991, p. 27), or for Ann-Catherine Nabholz modernity is "the disconcerting experience of rupture which is intrinsic to the concept of modernity" (p. 12), and for Adorno "its origins are more the negation of what no longer holds than a positive slogan ... the new is akin to death" (Adorno 1997, p. 21). Thus, according to Islamic revivalists, modernity's promise cannot be fulfilled universally because it's one of the key features—secularism—is a major obstacle to worldwide prosperity, wellbeing, equality, and justice and is the bane of modernity, leading it to its own crisis such as a widespread poverty and lack or absence of investments in education, employment opportunities, and the economy in many countries.

Contemporary Islamic revivalism is not anti-modernity but anti-secularism and anti-Westernism and, therefore, is a religious based response or reaction to the crisis of modernity. It is as much a reaction against modernity as is part or an expression of modernity (Lapidus 1997). It is internally a complex and diverse phenomenon. The crisis of modernity not only impacts on Muslims but affects people all around the globe. Even in the wealthiest of countries such as the United States of America and Australia, many ordinary citizens are not spared from the crisis of modernity who battle for employment, education, social justice, health care, medical service, equality of opportunity, and general contentment.

Islamic revivalists explain that the crisis of modernity is the direct outcome of choosing to desacralize the world through popularization of the principles of secularism and through the process of secularization—separating religion from politics. Material capitalism as a macro-economic and macro-cultural system and secular values have led to great prosperity and brought about substantial benefit to well-being, providing high levels of personal and political freedom and well-produced infrastructure, health, and social provisions. However, at the same time, there are growing levels of inequality not only in poor countries but most affluent nations alongside economic stagnation and constraints that have produced diminished opportunities and increased insecurity for many citizens. It has also undermined religious spirituality which is for many people a source of enlightenment, purpose, belongingness and offers a sense of psychological and social wellbeing.

From Islamic revivalist perspective this collectively characterizes the crisis of modernity and, therefore, cannot be allowed to persist and they have taken it upon themselves to save the world, for themselves and for others, from what they see as the unfolding of self-destruction and a global catastrophe through the crisis of modernity. In respons, they have contrived a plan and that is to give the world what they call Islam—a complete comprehensive way of life based on Qur'an and *hadith*s (Prophetic Traditions) and governed by divine law—*shari'ah*. Islamic revivalists assert that through the reformation of key institutions in society such as the family, education, and courts, Islamization of the pattern of everyday living, and the establishment *shari'ah*-governed caliphate, modernity can be saved from self-destruction and that is what they are striving for.

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Article

Extremism(s) and Their Fight against Modernity: The Case of Islamists and Eco-Radicals

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Abstract: Extremism in both its vocal and violent forms is a core topic of research, as well as a priority issue standing at the top of national and international security agendas. While most of the literature is still focused on violent forms of extremism, an emerging research trend is looking at vocal extremism and radicalisation as crucial steps to understand, as Neumann said "what happens before the bomb goes off". Within this new trend, scholars are interested in exploring the ideology of extremist groups (rather than just their methods) and the frames (schemata of interpretation) they disseminate in order to win more followers and fidelise their members. Based on the author's previous research, as well as on relevant data extracted from the manifestos and relevant publications of emblematic groups of both ideologies, this paper compares Islamists and Eco-radicals as two forms of extremism fighting the Western-sponsored modernisation process. By exploring the meaning of "modernity", as well as the role played by frames, this research sheds light on three common frames present in both ideologies, i.e., the enemy to fight, the victims to protect, and the change to achieve. These three frames are the linchpin of the discourses of both forms of extremism. By innovatively unpacking these frames from a comparative perspective, this research offers new insights into the impact of modernity on the development of alternative and extremist ideologies.

Keywords: extremism(s); Islamism; eco-radicals; modernity; frames

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1. Reactions against Modernity

The term "modernity" is generally intended as a positive term in the Western world and is usually associated with progress, emancipation, and evolution (Hroch et al. 1998). Modernity stands as both a historical era (the Modern era) as well as the specific socio-cultural norms and practices that emerged during the Renaissance in the late 17th century and the Enlightenment (18th century), mostly in Europe, where the individual and his post-material needs started to gain prominence over other priorities of the past (Wagner 2012). When looking back at the 1960s, the modern era appeared to be characterised by a wealthy First World (Western countries) marked by the development of individualism, capitalism, urbanisation, and a belief in the possibilities of technological and political progress (Goody 2013; Ihde 2009).

Modernism has marked a complete revolution in common thinking and in the principles and codes of conduct, as well as producing several ethical questions for those embracing it. These ethical questions have created frictions in the choices of several individuals on how to identify their priorities, on how to deal with the problems arising during the journey of life, as well as on their identity. As Bruce Lawrence concluded in his book *Defenders of God*, modernism stands as "the search for individual autonomy driven by a set of socially encoded values emphasising change over continuity; quantity over quality; efficient production, power and profit over sympathy for traditional values or vocations, in both the public and private spheres" (Lawrence 1990, p. 1).

If this rationalisation and striving for change led to important conquests of the modern world, they also led to a deep crisis investigated by prominent intellectuals across social

sciences. In different ways, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Sigmund Freud, and the evolutionist tradition in anthropology and sociology represented by Herbert Spencer and Edward Tylor, were anxious with the social and historical revolutions which led to the secularised, industrialised nation-states of Western Europe and North America (Woodward 2002). Although it started as a mere Western phenomenon, modernisation was exported all over the world, in different cultural contexts, accompanied by a high degree of opposition.

Modernisation has triggered and continues to trigger extreme reactions around the world. The term extremism is often associated with fundamentalism, which stands as a major adverse response to modernity, strongly rejecting all concepts associated with it, e.g., capitalism, individualism, and materialism (Lawrence 1990). While the term fundamentalism was initially associated with the evangelical Protestant movements emerging in early 20th century, preaching the return to core principles of Christianity and defending verbal inerrancy of the Bible, fundamentalism has been increasingly associated with the Muslim world after 9/11 (Ataman 2015). As the word itself suggests, fundamentalism stresses the need to go back to the "fundamental(s)", the "essential(s)" of a religion, which is something that is regarded positively by many Muslims, as it is good and acceptable to refer to the fundamentals of Islam, such as the belief in the unity of God (*Tawheed*), in Prophet Mohammad, and the *Qur'an*.

However, soon after 9/11, Western discourses have started portraying fundamentalism as a bad word, often associated with terrorism and violence. Islamic fundamentalism[1] is today intended as an umbrella term including several groups, movements, organisations, and ideologies willing to implement an Islamist social order and often an Islamic state, i.e., the Caliphate (Piscatori 1991; Orofino 2020b). Fundamentalists see Islam as a *deen* (a way of life), not just as a religion, and therefore strive to fight (verbally and sometimes even physically) everything that clashes with the fundamentals of Islam, giving voice to strong anti-colonial arguments that often overlap or complement anti-imperialistic and anti-American stances. Given the boldness of such stances, fundamentalism and extremism are often conceptualised as synonyms.

Fundamentalists are notably against modernity and all related concepts (such as materialism, individualism, and hyper-rationality) that push men far away from God and the spiritual dimension. However, religious fundamentalists are not the only ones opposing modernity and all its effects on society. Eco-fundamentalists (or eco-radicals) have also emerged as a reaction against modernisation and the intensive exploitation of natural resources in the name of progress. As is the case of Islamist fundamentalism, eco-fundamentalism also stands as an umbrella term encompassing different groups and solo actors fighting the side effects linked to the use of technology and industrialisation on the environment, as well as fighting a society they perceive as being made up of "agents of modernisation that are emphatically caught in the maelstrom of hazards that they unleash and profit from" (Beck 1992, p. 37).

This article explores organised group action against modernity by using Islamist and Eco-fundamentalist groups as case studies. Previous research by the author has shown many commonalities between different kinds of fundamentalism causing extreme behaviours.[2] This article innovatively compares Islamists and Eco-fundamentalists as two reactions against modernity, and it sheds light on three common frames (schemata of interpretation) across these umbrella groups, present in both their vocal and violent expressions. This paper will first explore the significance of creating meanings and frames within a specific organisation. It will then progress by exploring specific case studies (Islamists and Eco-radicals) and will conclude with a discussion comparing the frames and highlighting the several commonalities across these two extreme ideologies.

2. "Constructing" Meanings to Fight against Modernity

"The transmission of the meaning of an institution is based on the social recognition of that institution as a 'permanent' solution to a 'permanent' problem of the given collectivity" (Berger and Luckmann 1966, p. 87).

Institutions play a pivotal role in the definition of priorities within the lives of individuals and strongly influence their behaviour. Although there are different definitions of institutions within relevant scholarship in social sciences, anthropology, and beyond, some of the most agreed-upon are Keohane and Murphy's (1992) and Hodgson's (2015). Keohane and Murphy asserted that "institutions are persistent and connected sets of rules (formal or informal) that prescribe behavioural roles, constrain activity, and shape expectations" (Keohane and Murphy 1992, p. 871). Hodgson opted for a more straightforward definition stating that "institutions are integrated systems of rules that structure social interactions" (Hodgson 2015, p. 501).

Both definitions comfortably sit within the constructivist theory—a meta-theoretical label that explains actions and human behaviour in light of their identification of specific sets of rules and values (Andresky 2008; Orofino 2020b). These elements are powerfully conveyed when an individual is a member of a group. To use Berger's and Luckmann's words, groups can be regarded as a "permanent solution to a permanent problem of the given collectivity" (Berger and Luckmann 1966, p. 87). Groups are indeed institutions, as they rely on a specific set of rules and ideological tenets as well as being established to address specific problems within a certain community. Groups represent a form of organised action that is able to address a pressing issue while providing a meaningful purpose and a sense of belonging to the members.

Constructivists scholars would concur on regarding groups as hubs where individuals are exposed to a system of beliefs and new concepts which—through continuous culturing,[3] use of symbols, images, and practices—they end up internalizing (Eggen and Kauchak 1999; McInerney 2013; Woolfolk 2010). Vygotsky, one of the main contributors of social constructivism, has greatly theorised about the learning processes of individuals within a group, arguing that individuals learn concepts and construct meanings because of their interaction with other individuals and with their environment (Vygotsky 1978, 1994).

From a constructivist perspective, groups can shape the social reality the individual perceives by providing him/her with a new lens through which he/she interprets the world. Groups work as structures providing an ensemble of rules, bonds, processes, and means to which the individual is subject, which can limit but also empower his/her actions (Giddens 1984). Individuals place significant importance on their membership to a specific group as it comes with relevant emotional value (Tajfel 1972, p. 72). Individuals identify themselves with the group to which they belong, as the group usually is able to provide a purpose in life, giving significance to the actions of the individuals as noble actions for a noble cause. Groups often enhance the self-esteem of individuals and play a pivotal role in defining who the person is and for what she/he stands (Guan and So 2016).

Groups convey meanings through specific frames, i.e., "schemata of interpretation that enable individuals 'to locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences within their living space and the world at large" (Benford and Snow 2000, p. 614) Frames heavily impact the members' interpretation of reality, as well as constructing precise values and priorities. Frames stand as a powerful tool used by the leadership of groups to attract new members and mobilise adherents and strengthen their loyalty. Frames are also employed to identify problems or who or what is to blame and to suggest a viable solution (Orofino 2020a).

This paper implements these theoretical assumptions using Islamic fundamentalists and Eco-fundamentalists (or radicals) as case studies for this analysis. This paper shows how common frames between the two umbrella organisations (including both non-violent and violent expressions) impact the interpretation of reality for their members and how reality appears to be filtered by three frames, i.e., the enemy to fight, the victims to protect, and the change to achieve.

2.1. Islamists Frames against Modernity

The manifestos of Islamist groups are the first place to identify specific frames against modernity. Non-violent groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), and Tabligh Jama'at (TJ) all stress the decline of the Muslim world as the product of Western

influence in various areas of life (Ali and Orofino 2018). The dissolution of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924 (after more than four centuries) is regarded by Islamists as the result of the European colonial presence in the Middle East and the subjugation of the Muslim lands during the 19th and 20th centuries. European-imported "modernity" in the *Dar al-Islam* (Land of Islam, the Muslim world) is regarded as the beginning of the decline of Islam as a *deen* (a way of life). The hostility towards the West as an immoral, materialistic, and individualistic civilisation dates much farther back than the emergence of Islamist terrorism in the early 2000s. These narratives have been circulated since the early 1900s in the Middle East through influential intellectuals, such as Hasan Al-Banna, Sayyd Qutb, and Taquiddin Al-Nabhani.

These three thinkers were impactful activists, forefathers of contemporary Islamic activism, and creators of specific frames that are narrated today almost unaltered. All these three men had experienced oppression by their contemporary political authorities and witnessed the decline of Islam in favour of a modern society based on materialism and seeking physical pleasure (Orofino 2021). The rejection of modernity– as strongly associated with Western influence—worked as a trigger for the creation of specific groups. Two of the most long-living Islamist organisations still active today were established as the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT). The MB was established in Egypt in 1928, and Al-Banna and Qutb have been the symbols of the organisation over the decades. An-Nabhani founded HT in Palestine in 1953. Both groups were characterised by a difficult relationship with national authorities and the desire to restore the glory of Islam as the only saving grace for which humanity (including non-Muslims) could hope.

The experiences and the convictions of Al-Banna, Qutb, and An-Nabhani led to the construction of specific frames that still work today as the lenses through which Islamists interpret the world. As mentioned above, these frames are: (1) the enemy to fight; (2) the victims to protect; and (3) the change to achieve. The enemy of Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Boko Haram in recent years is exactly the same as the MB and HT in the early 1900s: the West as a system. As forefathers of Islamist activism (and fundamentalism/extremism), the three intellectuals set the grounds for understanding the West as a monolithic system of oppression (cultural, military, economic) against the Muslims. Islamists are strongly convinced of the existence of a Western agenda to annihilate the Muslims (An-Nabhani 1998), on their will to exploit resources in the *Dar al-Islam*, as well as on the will to force Muslims to adopt a Western version of Islam (Suarez-Murias 2013). For all the reasons mentioned above, Islamists in the early 1900s, as well as contemporary Islamists, are engaged in a continuous fight against the West that can be both vocal (an intellectual war) and physical (jihadi terrorism). However, as discussed, the frames motivating this perpetual fight are the same, regardless of the method used.

Moving onto the second element, the victims that Islamists strive to protect are the *ummah*, i.e., the global community of Muslims all over the world. The dismantlement of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924, the Muslim diaspora after the occupation of Palestine, and the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 are regarded as the main factors that have caused dangers and insecurity for Muslims around the world. Islamists move from the assumption that the Caliphate was the only system of government based on Islamic law (*shari'a*) and therefore able to protect the morality of the *ummah* and to ensure fairness and accountability through a pious leader, i.e., the *Khalifa* (caliph) (Ataman 2015; Orofino 2015). The consequent advent of political modernisation with the emergence of Western-imposed nation-states stands in the eyes of Islamist groups as a further step towards political decline, moral corruption, and economic subjugation, evident in the following excerpt:

> Ideologies do not end by the downfall of the states which embrace them, even if this downfall leads to the break up and fragmentation of the states, rather they terminate when their nations and peoples renounce them and embrace other ideologies and start moulding their lives on their basis. (Hizb ut-Tahrir 1996, p. 5)

This extract from HT's publication *The American Campaign to Suppress Islam* (Hizb ut-Tahrir 1996) is emblematic of the Islamist thinking behind the fall of the Caliphate and the political re-organisation of the Middle East into nation-states, which have fragmented the unity of populations under the banner of Islam and jeopardised the primary role played by Islam as a *deen* by replacing it with new ideological concepts (Western-imported) all relating to capitalism, materialism, and individualism, which are all products of modernity (Iqbal and Zulkifli 2016).

Furthermore, Islamists around the world concur on the fact that the *ummah* is in danger, both in Muslim majority countries as well as in the West. Groups like HT (non-violent) and ISIS (violent) base an important portion of their propaganda on depicting the *ummah* as in a state of perpetual threat where the only way to feel safe is to join the group (Baran 2005). While in the West, Muslims are threatened every day as they are seen as a "suspect community" and therefore victimised and vilified, in the Muslim world—allegedly controlled by corrupt leaders—"true believers" are persecuted and therefore not allowed to practice Islam (Buzan et al. 1998; Orofino 2020b).

The uncertainty and fear disseminated through Islamist discourses around the enemy and the victims lead to the third element of this analysis, i.e., the change to achieve. In a logical line of thought, the enemy (the West as a system) is persecuting the victims (the *ummah*); therefore, something needs to change, and this is a priority. The desired change within Islamist discourses is related to the re-establishment of the Islamic State (Caliphate). Whether they strongly believe the Islamic state in the contemporary world to be a viable political system (HT, ISIS, Boko Haram) or they consider participation in electoral politics as a way to promote Islamic law (Muslim Brotherhood, Jamaat-e-Islami), Islamist groups stress the need for all Muslims to go back to Islamic law in order to purify their hearts and mind from Western *kuffar* (unbelievers) thoughts (Taji-Farouki 1996; Hizb ut-Tahrir Global 2017; Shepard 2003).

The Caliphate is regarded with a romantic outlook by Islamists as it constitutes the (ideal) place where Islam reigns in all spheres of life and where the political and social dimensions do not need to be separated. Whether it should re-emerge as the product of an intellectual revolution (HT) or by means of war and coercion (ISIS, Boko Haram), the Caliphate is still a core frame in the discourses of fundamental Islamists (Ali and Orofino 2018; Rahnema 2008). The Caliphate is regarded by the Islamists as the change for which all Muslims should work to improve their lives and their security and to be on the right path as abiding by divine law.

2.2. Eco-Radical Frames against Modernity

Eco-radical groups (or, more broadly, the radical environmental movement, REM) have far deeper roots than the recent rise of Extinction Rebellion (XR) and Earth First! (EF) on the global scene. Eco-radicals' activities became prominent in the late 1960s with Greenpeace, for decades the icon of the fight against whaling ships and nuclear weapons testers (Seaman 2004). As in the case of Islamists, eco-radicals emerged as a protest-for-justice umbrella group opposing Western modernisation and related concepts (capitalism, materialism, and globalisation) and advocating for the need to reconnect with nature and preserve it (Manes 1991). Also, within this umbrella group, different organisations[4] co-exist, having different methods but—as in the Islamist case—common frames.

In terms of methods, eco-radicals appear to be leaderless resistance organisations engaged in the defence of Mother Earth through a variety of actions, which include civil disobedience, ecotage, and monkeywrenching.[5] Besides the prominent XR, iconic eco-radical organisations at present are the Earth Liberation Front (ELF), Earth Liberation Army (ELA), and the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). Given the leaderless nature of these organisations, recruitment and mobilisation campaigns often happen online, through social media, or dedicated websites (Menteş 2019). For instance, XR messages inundate the web, and the official website of the group has a specific section, "campaign", where members and sympathisers can learn more and get organised.[6] The XR website also has another

section called "digital rebellion", where they provide guidelines on how to rebel digitally if people cannot join the cause physically.[7]

Users can access several resources—including publications and press releases—that work as evidence for the claims of the group. XR also works as a good example to show how important "self-organisation" is for eco-radicals. As mentioned above, in the absence of structured leadership, organisations promote forms of spontaneous aggregation that are intended to produce specific forms of activism. In the case of XR, their official website provides a comprehensive section on their "self-organised system" (SOS) where users can access information regarding how the group operates and why they chose this particular method:

> The XR UK Self-Organising System (SOS) is designed to shift power out of people and into the processes of the system so that no single person has power over another person or the system itself. The system is modular and can be used as individual parts depending on the needs. It is used closer to its entirety by more stable and core teams. (Extinction Rebellion n.d. b, "Self-Organising System")

As highlighted by the above statement regarding XR SOS on their official website, eco-radicals are very much in favour of light forms of bureaucracy and are strong advocates of spontaneous aggregation mechanisms that will eventuate into collective action. On this subject, the online space works as the best scenario to foster spontaneous aggregation. As discussed above, the actions may vary across various organisations, but the ideological frames are mostly the same across all groups. They all fight against a common multifaceted enemy that is represented by capitalistic societies and their extreme anthropocentrism, implying the superiority of humans above all other nonhuman beings (Alberro 2020). Anthropocentrism and the non-regulated quest for profits over the last century—together with the industrial and technological revolutions—led to the extreme exploitation of natural resources and nonhuman beings who are considered by eco-radicals as the victims that require protection and advocacy (Cafaro 2015).

In order to ensure this protection, eco-radicals are determined to dismantle capitalism and anthropocentrism and replace the current emphasis on the exploitation of natural resources with a culture based on renewable energies and sustainable development (Hernandez 2007; Glasser 2011). As in the case of Islamists, discourses encouraging the desired change are entrenched with apocalypticism focused on the view of an imminent widespread ecological collapse. This vision fosters an urgent sense of action and moral obligation to intervene and join the cause, which is what motivates activists to join the activities of Eco-radical organisations both online and offline (Cassegård and Thörn 2018; Alberro 2021).

3. Discussion

Frames play a pivotal role in influencing the behaviour of individuals, especially within collective action. The above overview of Islamist and Eco-fundamentalisms has provided useful insights into common frames across multiple ideologies and groups and how these frames impact people's understanding of the world. Furthermore, it is a fact that modernisation and the connected notions of capitalism, materialism, and anthropocentrism have triggered different reactions around the world and throughout the decades.

In the case of Islamists, the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate and the restriction of the role of Islam as a mere religion—rather than a *deen* (a way of life)—created important grievances that were heavily associated with Western interference in the Muslim world. Discussions above have elucidated how the economic, political, and cultural alleged subjugation of the *ummah* by the West has been perceived as the result of the modernisation process, which heavily impacted political institutions and economic progress.

The quest for profit, the shift of attention from the spiritual dimension to the material one, as well as the implementation of democracy as a Western-imported concept in the Middle East all worked as elements to enhance the alleged "clash of civilisations" highlighted by Islamist intellectuals decades before Samuel Huntington (2000). More specifically, An-

Nabhani—HT's founder—conceptualised the incompatibility between Islam and the West in the early 1950s, although the full volume, including his thoughts, was published by the organisation in 2002, *The Inevitability of the Clash of Civilisations*. Thinkers like An-Nabhani see a civilisation (*hadhara*) as a "collection of concepts about life" (Hizb ut-Tahrir 2002, p. 5). These concepts derive from the core set of beliefs that the individuals have adopted and have a major influence on his/her way of interpreting the world. This means that a civilisation determines the kind of frames that are propagated within a certain society and within an organisation. As mentioned above, these frames impact individuals' priorities in life, their behaviours, and also shape the purpose of their existence.

Therefore, Islamists believe that the main problem with Western civilisation is the fact that it is praising man-made concepts instead of God and also has opposite goals to those of Islam. In fact, while Western societies' ultimate aims are mostly related to profit and power, a genuine Islamic society should be focused on the afterlife and on works that please God (Ahmed and Stuart 2010). Islamists are convinced that civilisations are either spiritual or man-made, and they clearly identify Islam as the spiritual one and Western civilisation as man-made (Hizb ut-Tahrir 2002).

> When we say clash, we mean Muslims and their deen . . . and Christians and their religion and the Capitalists and their civilisation, on the other side. It is a malicious attempt by the leaders and intellectuals of the Capitalist civilisation to differentiate between Islam and its followers, i.e., between Islam and Muslims. So they claim that Islam is great, but Muslims are backward, and some of them are terrorists. They are liars in their view, for if Islam was really great in their view, then they would have embraced it. However, they attempt to delude the naïve from amongst Muslims, attempting to reduce the rancour against them when they strike a Muslim people or when they attempt to spread the concepts of their civilisation among Muslims. (Hizb ut-Tahrir 2002, p. 9)

As highlighted by HT's extract above, Islamists see a clear separation between Islam and the West, standing as two opposing civilisations that would never come to an agreement as their nature (divine vs man-made) is incompatible. This is a common thought among both non-violent and violent Islamist groups, who would all agree on their role as blessed leaders for a change aimed at restoring the Islamic glory and to fight (intellectually or physically) the *kuffar*. This extract also highlights two core Islamist frames discussed above: the West as the enemy and the *ummah* as the victims. The West is depicted as a corrupted system, made up of liars who aim to jeopardise Muslims' faith and replace it with their concepts about life. At the same time, Muslims are depicted as *naïve*, and they see it as a priority to raise awareness of Western corruption among the *ummah* so that they do not get deluded.

Although the specificities of the frames are completely different, eco-radicals' claims mirror the Islamists' ones as they have the same points to raise against capitalism and Western civilisation, especially after modernisation.

> This is our darkest hour . . . the science is clear: we are in the sixth mass extinction event and will face catastrophe if we do not act swiftly and robustly. The wilful complicity displayed by our government has shattered meaningful democracy and cast aside the common interest in favour of short-term gain and private profits. When Government and the law fail to provide any assurance of adequate protection, as well as security for its people's well-being and the nation's future, it becomes the right of its citizens to seek redress in order to restore dutiful democracy and to secure the solutions needed to avert catastrophe and protect the future. It becomes not only our right, it becomes our sacred duty to rebel. (Extinction Rebellion n.d. a, "Declaration of Rebellion")

This extract from XR UK "Declaration of Rebellion" works as an emblematic example of the frames disseminated by eco-radicals and their similarities with the Islamist ones. Although quite short, this extract includes all three relevant frames object of this study:

(1) the enemy; (2) the victims; (3) the change. The enemy is the UK government in this instance; however, when analysing other documents and manifestos of other Eco-radical groups, they blame Western governments in general for the environmental decline we are all experiencing presently.

It is easy to grasp that the European expansion and the various stages of the modernisation process caused some decline, which appears to be quite hard to reverse. The industrial revolutions and the *great acceleration* (the dramatic growth in human activities started in the second half of the 20th century) have altered the human relationship with nature and deeply damaged it (Steffen et al. 2015; Shoshitaishvili 2021). Not only Eco-radicals but also eminent scientists refer to the "epoch of anthroposcene" as the present, where human activities have not only increased, but they have had a massive impact on the environment.[8] The prominence of profit in all policies sponsored by Western governments as well as extreme expressions of capitalism (such as consumer capitalism)[9] characterising modern society is regarded as the main enemy by Eco-radicals. However, this is exactly the same enemy Islamists are fighting against: both ideologies identify the West as a corrupt system based on an endless quest for profit and the extreme satisfaction of material needs.

XR UK's extract also pointed out who the *victims* are in their view. Eco-radicals see humankind as both victims and perpetrators: the victims are future generations who will be forced to live in a devastated world moving towards mass extinction. The perpetrators are current and past generations, especially politicians and ruling elites who allegedly "fail to provide any assurance of adequate protection, as well as security for its people's well-being and the nation's future".[10] As in the case of Islamists, eco-radicals portray an apocalyptic setting where the need for action to defend the specific target group is urgent. Furthermore, just like the Islamists, Eco-radical groups present themselves as blessed leaders who are able to drive the victims towards a change. This desired change is also elucidated in XR UK's Declaration of Rebellion: they aim to "restore dutiful democracy" in order to avoid a catastrophe and safeguard the future (ibid.). Whether it is a sustainable (dutiful) democracy or a Caliphate, both ideologies present an alternative form of government as the best option to avoid the decline that the contemporary world is unavoidably navigating.

4. Conclusions

This study has originally discussed the frames against modernity common among two of the most prominent extremist ideologies today, i.e., Islamism and Eco-radicalism. After focusing on the importance of frames as schemata of interpretation of reality—and therefore core concepts propagated by groups to their members—this study highlighted how, as different as they can be, Islamists and eco-radicals have three core common frames that are the same across all their expressions, i.e., both violent and non-violent forms of extremism.

The three frames explored were the conceptualisation of the enemy, the victims, and the desire for change. This study demonstrated how these three concepts are present in both ideologies and how they clearly define the messages of the groups, their actions, and the behaviours of their members. This study innovatively concludes that although very different in terms of contents, Islamism and eco-radicalism stand as two forms of extremism that emerged as a response against the modernisation process and the shift it implied towards materialism, capitalism, and anthropocentrism. By reading the groups' manifestos and publications, it becomes evident that both ideologies emerged as a way to counter the Western expansion as well as the unregulated capitalism-based economic progress, which were (and still are) creating different sorts of harm worldwide.

As the Islamists expose Western colonial occupation and the introduction of *kuffar* concepts in the life of Muslims (steering them away from Islam), eco-radicals denounce the misbehaviours of governments and companies who are turning a blind eye to the consequences of their profit-oriented policies. In both cases, the grievances against the Western modern political, economic, and cultural system are what motivates the actions of these groups. As this article showed, more research is needed on this topic, as understanding the narratives of extremist groups across multiple ideologies stands as a key step to building

counter-narratives and creating a middle ground where the clash of civilisations—as well as the simple clash of opinions—can be attenuated.

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Notes

1 This study differentiates between the terms "Islamic" and Islamism". While "Islamic" is an adjective that refers to everything related to the religion of Islam, Islamism stands as a powerful encompassing ideology inspiring thoughts, actions and groups all over the world. Emerging as a protest-for-justice ideology claiming freedom against Western colonisation of the Muslim world, Islamism has triggered both individual and collective action worldwide since early 1900s (Mozaffari 2007; Rahnema 2008). This study uses the terms "Islamism" and "Islamic fundamentalism" intercheageably.

2 Here, Orofino and Allchorn (2022) is made to the forthcoming ground-breaking first Handbook on Non-Violent Extremism, which will be out by the end of 2022.

3 The term "culturing" is here intended as the process initiated by an organisation/group to instruct its affiliates on specific values and meanings, making the members familiar with the organisation's culture (Orofino 2020b, p. 52).

4 This paper considers the terms "organisation" and "group" as synonyms.

5 "Civil disobedience" stands as a form of non-violent resistance/peaceful protest against certain laws. "Ecotage" is a form of sabotage carried out for ecological reasons. Named after Edward Abbey's novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1975), on a group of "environmental warriors" in the USA, "monkeywrenching" is a form of ecotage motivated by preservation of life and is normally restricted to two forms: non-violent disobedience or sabotage not directly endangering others (Moraro 2007).

6 See Extinction Rebellion. "Campaigns" [Website]: https://extinctionrebellion.uk/act-now/campaigns/ (accessed on 12 June 2022).

7 See Extinction Rebellion. "Digital Rebellion" [Website]: https://extinctionrebellion.uk/act-now/campaigns/digital-rebellion/ (accessed on 11 June 2022).

8 Among the most prominent researchers on the Anthroposcene is Prof Jan Zalasiewicz, a geologist at the University of Leicester and chair of the Working Group on the Anthropocene (WGA), which started work in 2009. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/aug/29/declare-anthropocene-epoch-experts-urge-geological-congress-human-impact-earth (accessed on 25 June 2022).

9 Consumer capitalism is intended as the manipulation of consumers to buy a product moved by desire rather than an actual need for it. Consumer capitalism as mass marketing. The beneficiaries of the consumer capitalism are the sellers.

10 See Extinction Rebellion. "Declaration of Rebellion" [Website]: https://extinctionrebellion.uk/declaration/ (accessed on 12 June 2022).

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Tajdid (Renewal) by Embodiment: Examining the Globalization of the First Mosque Open Day in Australian History

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Abstract: The concepts of *tajdid* (renewal) and *mujaddid* (renewer) in Islam are discussed mainly in scholarly works. Although all Muslim scholars agree on the necessity of *tajdid*, they differ regarding the scope of *tajdid*, who the *mujaddids* are, and their primary role. Most scholars agree that the primary duty of the *mujaddid* is to restore or lead to restore correct religious knowledge and practice and eradicate the errors from the past century. Renewal of correct religious practice can be local or global. This article first briefly discusses the notions of *tajdid* and *mujaddid*. Secondly, it examines the first "mosque open day" initiated by the Australian Intercultural Society (AIS) and Affinity Intercultural Foundation (AIF) in 2001 before the September 11 terrorist attacks in the US. A mosque open day gradually has become a common practice of most mosques in Australia and has been globalized by Muslim minorities worldwide. This paper examined about 240 pages of results via the Google search engine and 500 pages of results via the Yahoo search engine, and the AIS's and AIF's archives about mosque open days. This paper argues that the globalization of mosque open days can be considered a renewal of an Islamic tradition.

Keywords: *Tajdid*; renewal; Australian Muslims; Said Nursi; Hizmet Movement; mosque open day; Muslims in the West; Australian Intercultural Society; Fethullah Gülen; Affinity Intercultural Society

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1. Introduction

The concepts of *tajdid* and *mujaddid* have been discussed since the second century of Islam, particularly during the Muslim world's social, spiritual, and political crisis. The discussion about *tajdid* has evolved through the prophetic tradition. Prophet Muhammed said, "Allah will raise for this community at the end (or beginning) of every hundred years the one who will renovate its religion for it" (Abu Dawud n.d.). Although there is an agreement about the authenticity of the hadith, there are various opinions among Muslim scholars on what the *tajdid* is and its scope, who the *mujaddid* (renewalist/revivalist) of every century is, and the criteria of being a *mujaddid*. The attributes of the *mujaddid* and their role in *tajdid* have been extensively discussed. This research will contribute to the field of renewal in Islamic studies by focusing on how the mosque open day began in Australia and then gradually became a practice in the Western world. Historically, the mosques were not just places of worship but also functioned as the centres for education, welfare and unity of the society, regardless of ethnicity or religious background. However, after colonization, mosques gradually reduced in scope and eventually became merely places of worship. This article first will briefly discuss the concept of *tajdid*. Secondly, it will shed light on Said Nursi's (d.1960) renewal approach to Christian Muslim relations and how his view was applied globally by the Hizmet Movement. Finally, it will examine the first mosque open day in Melbourne and Sydney by Hizmet affiliates before the September 11 terrorist attack. However, how other mosques or Islamic organizations worldwide have become pillars of inspiration, requires further research.

2. *Tajdid* and *Mujaddid*

Tajdid and *mujaddid* is a well-discussed topic by the scholars. Kamali argues that *tajdid* is a broad and comprehensive concept that he calls "civilisational renewal" (Kamali 2018, p. 144). Muhammed al-Ghazali (d.1997) states that *tajdid* is a divine sunnah (Al-Ghazali and Musa 2009, H1430/2009). According to Turner, *tajdid* happens when necessity dictates (Turner 1998 in (Yilmaz 2003)). *Tajdid* can be categorized as *amm* (general), which consists of the entire renewal as Kamali calls civilisational renewal, or *khass* (specific), which consists of part renewal, such as *tajdid* in education or *tajdid* in spiritual life. *Tajdid* can also be classified as internal, which aims for spiritual renewal, and external, which proposes societal renewal.

Most scholars agree that the responsibility of *mujaddid* is to renew the *sunnah* and eradicate the *bid'a*, innovations. They also agree that "the function of the *mujaddid* is the restoration both of correct religious knowledge and of practice, and act as its corollary the refutation and eradication of error" (Algar 2001, p. 295). Doi asserts that "the ultimate purpose of *tajdid* is to establish the truth and remove falsehood and overthrow tyrannical order and establish the justice in the land" (Doi 1987, p. 213). However, most of the *mujaddids* in Islamic history did not get involved in politics and avoided taking any position in the government except Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d.720), who is considered the first *mujaddid*. In my view, the *mujaddids* primarily aimed for a spiritually healthy society and preferred people's happiness in the hereafter, over worldly happiness. This primary aim of *mujaddids* is less discussed in academia than the renewal of the worldly affairs of society.

While some scholars view *mujaddid* as a single person in each century, others argue that *mujaddid* is not one person but a group. Said Shabbar views "renewal as a movement initiated by one or more individuals, while others view it as a movement initiated by an entire community" (Shabbar 2018, p. 12). His view is based on well-known scholars such as Ibn al-Athir (d.1233), Imam Nawawi (d.1277) Al-Dahahabi (d.1348) and al-Suyuti's (d.1505) interpretation of the above-mentioned *hadith*. Al-Nawawi asserted that "it is possible that the emergence of mujaddid in every century to be in the form of a group of people from various backgrounds and areas corresponding to their grandeur and expertise such as in worship, *fiqh, hadith, tafsir* (interpretation)" (Ismail et al. 2017, p. 188). Although there is no unanimous agreement among the scholars, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d.720), Imam Shafi'i (d.820), Imam Bukhari (d.870), Imam al-Ghazali (d.1111), Ibn Taymiyyah (d.1328), Jalaludin al-Suyuti (d.1505), Uthman Dan Fodio (d.1817), Muhammad Ilyas Kandhlawi (d.1944) and Said Nursi are considered to be *mujaddids*. Al-Suyuti asserts that the *mujaddid* exercises wide influence through his person, students, and followers. He also asserts that *mujaddid* should come from the *Ahl Al-Bayt* (offspring of the Prophet) (Algar 2001). However, some mujaddids, such as Imam Shafi'i (d.820), Imam Bukhari (d.870) and Ahmad al-Faruqi al-Sirhindi (d.1624), are not from *Ahl Al-Bayt*. The determination of *mujaddid* is based on "predominant opinion (*galabat al-zann*) among scholars contemporary with him and by means of the benefit is had from him, his companions and from his writings" (al-Suyuti cited in (Algar 2001, p. 296)).

Al-Qaradawi also asserts that *tajdid* cannot be performed by a single person but by a group that works together in the interests of truth (Shabbar 2018). "There is consensus also that the *mujaddid* must be a scholar" (Algar 2001, p. 295). He is not just a scholar in religious sciences, but should also have knowledge in secular sciences at an encyclopedic level. After examining the scholarly sources regarding the *mujaddids*' biographies, it can be said that *mujaddids* were 'walking sunnah' who reflected the time they lived in. Furthermore, they were bestowed with *ilm mawhiba* (gifted knowledge). It is the knowledge of the inner dimension that can be gained through devotion, compassion, love, suffering, tears, worship, and *dhikr* (remembrance of God), besides acquiring traditional knowledge. It is an inspiration (*ilham*) that manifests in the heart, mind, and action.

Muslim scholars paid more attention to the notion of *tajdid* after the collapse of the Islamic civilization and colonization of the Muslim world, which caused various types of crises (Ali 2003, 2014). During this period, there was an emergence of many Islamic leaders or faith groups aiming for the salvation of faith, the restoration of Islamic law and ethical

principles in Muslim lands. "Their emergence is deeply embedded in the sociological reality of the Muslim world" (Ali and Orifino 2018, p. 48). While some leaders and scholars blamed external powers for the crises, others focused on society's social, spiritual, and political illnesses.

Said Nursi was an Ottoman and Turkish Republican scholar who is considered a *mujaddid* (Algar 2001; Nursi 2007a; Voll 1999; Keskin 2019; Ansari 2017)[1]. He viewed the causes of crises as coming from within Muslims. To him, the main reasons for the collapse of the Islamic civilization were the literalistic and scholastic approaches to the Islamic sciences that caused people's weaknesses in faith. Nursi believed that for a successful external *tajdid*, the internal *tajdid* was necessary. Without internal *tajdid*, religion would be a dry theology and a non-practice, a set of dogma such as human ideologies. He also identified major reasons for the collapse of the Islamic civilization: the lack of hope, truthfulness, and unity in the Muslim society, and despotism or a lack of freedom in politics and preference for individual interest over the common good (Nursi 1996a). Nursi viewed ignorance, poverty, and disunity as the major enemies of the Muslim world (Law 2017).

In his Friday sermon at the Umayyad Mosque in 1911, Said Nursi indicated the importance of renewal regarding Christian–Muslim relations when Christians occupied almost half of the Muslim lands. He validated the difference between the two religions. He proposed to abstain temporarily from the discussion and debate of points of difference to strive against irreligiosity or absolute unbelief, which harms both faiths' moral values (Nursi 1996a). Nursi foresaw the impact of globalization in the early 20th century.

While most Islamic movements in the modern era primarily focused on the renewal of Islamic law, economy, and politics according to *Sharia* principles, Nursi persistently centered the renewal and reinterpreting of the issues of Islamic faith in the modern era. He aimed first to embody the perfections of Islam and the true faith with virtuousness in the individual conscience. His renewal methodology is more "embodied-spiritual" rather than externalizing the religion in appearance only. Nursi calls this *tamsil*, which means the inadvertent overspill of genuine practice (Keles 2014). He wanted to form a spiritually and socially healthy society through this methodology.

Nursi focused on *imani* (faith-related) *tajdid*, which he believed was under attack from materialistic philosophy, behind the mask of sciences since the late 19th century. He theorized the renewal principles in his magnum opus, *Risale-i Nur*. For Nursi, "the *Risale-i Nur* provides irrefutable, rational, and convincing evidence against claims of materialistic philosophy" (Nursi 2007b, p. 257). It also enables the believer to gain faith by investigative certainty (*tahkiki iman*) from blind faith by imitation (*taklidi iman*) (Algar 2001). Nursi suggests that "*Risale-i Nur* is a product of *fayz* (a sublime effusion) and he is the spokesperson or interpreter of it" (Nursi 2007a, p. 24). Due to 34 years of Jacobin secularists inflicting oppression, persecution, imprisonment, and exile, Nursi could not put his philosophy of renewal into practice. This was not the destiny of Nursi only but almost all *mujaddids* in Islamic history. They became influential after their deaths, just as Nursi did.

Influenced by Nursi, Fethullah Gülen,[2] a Turkish Islamic scholar, also validated the difference between two faiths and historical conflicts. However, bringing the differences, historical conflicts, and polemics to the table, will not necessarily prevent conflict. Gülen proposed cooperation between civilizations as an alternative to the clash of civilizations. Like Nursi, he wanted Muslims to focus on common points regarding Muslim and non-Muslim relations.

3. Gülen's Approach to Renewal

Fethullah Gülen, the founder and spiritual leader of the Hizmet Movement reads the Prophet's life as comprising 90% *tamsil* or role modelling. To him, religious values can be carried out through *tamsil* (Yucel 2011). Under his spiritual leadership, the Hizmet Movement put Nursi's renewalist philosophy into practice in spirituality, education, and social life but did not, or could not, do so in politics. Yilmaz (Yilmaz 2003, p. 208) argues that "the movement that has evolved around the ideas of the charismatic figure of Fethullah

Gülen provides an example of a renewal with a potential for influencing the Muslim world". He also suggests, "Gülen has reinterpreted Islamic understanding in tune with contemporary times and has developed and put into practice a new Muslim discourse with respect to some traditionally sensitive issues" (Yilmaz 2003, p. 209). Gülen took Said Nursi's principles of theoretical foundations and applied them in his own life (Sarıtoprak 2011). He also put these principles into practice in the Hizmet Movement's social and educational activities. Like Nursi, Gülen believed that without inner *tajdid*, establishing a morally and socially healthy society was impossible.[3] When commenting on this, Gülen said that "people's ears are full but their eyes are hungry for role models" (Yucel 2011, p. 65) in all areas of life, including educational institutions. In his philosophy, representation comes before communication or *tabligh* preaching.

Gülen grew up and lived in a Jacobin secular state where every public and educational activity related to religion was under (and remains under) state control and the scrutiny of the Turkish intelligence services. Teaching religion was initially banned in public education until the 1980s and then limited to one or two hours in public schools. Promoting irreligiosity was the state policy. Girls or women wearing headscarves were not allowed to study in schools or universities. Oppression and persecution were common for those who wanted to serve the religion.

While other Islamic groups and Muslim scholars established mostly unofficial religious institutions as the regime allowed them, the Hizmet Movement started opening private secular educational institutions such as tutoring centers, schools, and universities in the early 1980s and continued to do so until 2015. The Jacobin secularists, particularly the army, scrutinized the Hizmet Movement's educational and social activities. Due to a lack of freedom of religious education, the Hizmet affiliates aimed to teach Islamic moral values through role modelling in their *dershanes* (student houses), dormitories, tutoring centers, schools and universities, on top of the secular education they provided. It is estimated that over sixteen million students (mostly lower and middle class) were educated in these institutions between 1980–2016, according to the educational coordinator (personal communication, Yavuzlar 2021). Such types of education have led to intellectual and moral renewal in Turkey. Yilmaz calls this "*tajdid* by conduct" (Yilmaz 2003).

In light of Nursi's theory of renewal and Gülen's interpretation, the Hizmet Movement has internalized religion and successfully applied social and educational activities in more than 160 countries (Yucel 2011). Embodying or internalizing the religion was not an option but was necessary in the Jacobin secularist state of Turkey and the secular world, where religion, especially Islam, is mostly seen as a threat or at best, a private issue. It can be said that the Hizmet Movement affiliates have focused on Islamic moral values, which are universal more than *Sharia* law.

Based on Nursi's theory and Gülen's explanation, Hizmet affiliated individuals initiated interfaith relations with non-Muslims in Turkey in early 1992 and then throughout the world, including Australia. Local non-governmental organizations were established to build bridges between Muslims and non-Muslims in 2000. These included the Australian Intercultural Society (AIS) in Melbourne and Affinity Intercultural Foundation (AIF) in Sydney. These organizations were established before the 9/11 terrorist attacks, an incident that created more fear of Islam and Muslims, as well as distrust, suspicion, and violence against Muslims. At this point, there were some scholarly arguments that Islamic values contradict democracy, pluralism, and secularism, thus, Muslims in the West could not integrate into society. The AIS aims "to serve as a catalyst in enhancing mutual understanding and respect in this multicultural nation of ours" (AIS 2000). To date, the AIS and AIF have implemented countless events and projects aimed at fusing the Australian community around the concept of "understanding through interaction"(AIF 2000).

4. Limitations

This paper examined online English sources on Yahoo and Google between January 2001 and March 2022. It is possible that there could have been other mosque open day

attempts prior to 2001 in non-English speaking countries, or the organizers might not have publicized it online. The author attempted to reach out to the Islamic Shura Council of Southern California about their first mosque open day in 2002. However, the author was unsuccessful. The aim was to find out who inspired them for such a project. Hizmet affiliates have discussed the benefit of mosque open days in their global interfaith dialogue meeting. Whether there were other mosque open days throughout the rest of the world that was inspired by the mosque open day in Australia requires further research.

5. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this article will be based on an analysis of Nursi's theory of renewal through "persuasion" not force and the data analysis of a mosque open day. To Nursi, persuasion should be used to convince people in the modern age via *tamsil*, which can be called embodiment of religion. Thus, he proposes using persuasion over force, proactive responses over aggressive reactions, and peace over disorder (Vahide 2005). Having witnessed the horror of the first and second World Wars, Nursi believed that time had abrogated using power. Nursi also believed that since almost 90% of Islamic values are universal, this could be conveyed with the embodiment of the religion, which can be called *tamsil* in Turkish. Nursi discussed the embodiment of religion in the early 20th century. He applied it himself and with a small group in his study circle. Due to the lack of freedom of teaching and practising religion in the newly established Republic of Turkey in 1923, he could not reach out to wider society.

Embodying religion for social changes has been discussed in the academic literature in the last two decades. Mellor and Shilling (2010) examine Max Weber and Emile Durkheim's works regarding the embodiment of aspects of religion in a secular and modern society. Mellor and Shilling argue that "religiosity is not just a matter of beliefs and values, but is to do with lived experiences, practical orientations, sensory forms of knowing and patterns of physical accomplishment and technique that impact upon day-to-day lives in far-reaching ways" (Mellor and Shilling 2010, p. 217). Jones (2019) analyses embodied religiosity in human understanding mainly from Christian and secular perspectives. Although his work focuses on the embodiment of other religions, particularly Christianity and Buddhism, it neglects Islam. Nikkel (2019) discusses a theory of the embodied nature of religion from various philosophical perspectives, which Islam considers the primordial state (*fitrah*) of the human being.

For Nursi, embodying the religion is more important than proselytizing. One of the best examples of embodying the religion is mosque open day. Based on the author's data, the mainstream media coverage was quite positive regarding mosque open days worldwide. It was attractive and welcomed by the politicians, faith leaders and the local people. According to the organizers, it contributed to the reduction of fear of Islam and Muslims. Furthermore, it built bridges between different faiths and communities and somewhat placed Islam on the centre stage with the Mosque open day, and this, therefore, is a form of Islamic revivalism because it brings both Muslims and non-Muslims towards better and greater recognition of Islam and gives Islam a boost.

6. The First Mosque Open Day in Australia: A Local Renewal

6.1. Can a Non-Muslim Enter a Mosque?

Similar to every place of worship, there are rules and ethics regarding using mosques. Authentic *hadiths* tell us that the Prophet Muhammed received non-Muslim individuals and Christian delegations from Najran in his mosque (Salama 2018). Muslim jurists set the rules for Muslims and non-Muslims entering and using mosques. Whoever enters it should be in a state of purity. Scholars have different opinions regarding non-Muslims, menstruating women, and a Muslim adult who has not performed ablution or is not wearing the appropriate dress code. The jurists discussed the issue in detail based on each case. There are three major points of view. The first group of scholars expressed the view of not allowing polytheists but allowing Christians and Jews with appropriate dress codes.

The second group allowed all if they would like to learn about Islam or see how Muslims perform the ritual prayer, how they treat each other, and learn about their character. The third group, which is the minority view, does not allow the entering of non-Muslims or adult Muslims without ablution, and views the entering of menstruating women as *makruh* (disliked) (Al-Qurtubi 2014). Most scholars gave *fatwa* (edict) for allowing them to enter mosques, except for *Masjid al-Haram* (*Ka'bah*).

Although there is no unanimous agreement among the Muslim jurists regarding the entering of non-Muslims into mosques, most of them allowed non-Muslims to enter, subject to certain conditions. Hanafi, Shafi'i and Hanbali scholars hold that non-Muslims can enter all mosques except for the *Ka'bah*. Some Maliki scholars maintain that non-Muslims should not enter a mosque except for a necessity (Dar al-ifta.org n.d.).

During the classical period in Muslim lands, churches, mosques, and synagogues were places where Muslims, Christians, and Jews interacted with each other. For example, in Cyprus, Muslims, Christians, and Jews would cook food and take it to each other during their holidays such as *Eid*, Christmas, and Hanukah (Yucel 2010b). This was a custom in Jerusalem as well when it was under Ottoman rule.

Muslims performed their ritual prayer side by side with Christians in Syria for centuries (Ibn Ḥawqal cited in Carlson 2015). The cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Damascus had a portion set aside for Muslim prayers. In some villages in the eastern part of Anatolia, half of a building would be used as a mosque while the other half as an Armenian church before the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. There was interaction between the worshipers. In 638, Caliph Umar visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where Jesus was baptized (Yucel 2013). Interaction can be observed in Lebanon where almost half the population is Christian, and the other half is Muslim. Such customs contributed to social harmony. However, this practice has been neglected or forgotten in Muslim lands over time.

6.2. The First Mosque Open Day in Australia

Living in Australia since 1987, the author did not witness or hear of any mosque open day until 2001. None of the Islamic organizations attempted to have a mosque open day. Research shows that there were no mosque open days in Australia prior to 2001 (Sneddon 2021). This paper examined about 240 pages of results via the Google search engine and 500 pages of results via the Yahoo search engine, as well as the AIS and AIF archives regarding mosque open days. The author did not find any news items regarding mosque open days in any English-speaking country before September 11, 2001, except an AIS mosque open day in Melbourne, which was covered by the local Turkish Zaman Australia. The second one was on September 2, 2001, at Gallipoli Mosque in Sydney organized by the Affinity Intercultural Foundation. (Dunn et al. 2015; Polat 2001). The State Minister of Turkey Sukru Sinai Gurel who was on an official visit to Australia also visited Gallipoli Mosque and was briefed about mosque open day. The third mosque open day was organized at a Turkish mosque in Broadmeadows, Victoria. Local members of parliament, councilors from Hume City, non-Muslim clergies and neighbors participated. Hizmet affiliated educated members of the community provided tours and responded to the questions of attendees (Polat 2002, January 28). After September 11 terrorist attack, the mainstream media began to cover mosque open days in Australia. In my view, there were three possible reasons that Muslims did not consider mosque open days. The first was due to a lack of necessity. Muslims did not feel a need for it. The second was a lack of role modelling. The first generation of Muslim immigrants in the West came from countries where mosque open days did not exist. The third reason is the neglect or misunderstanding of the majority view of jurists who allow non-Muslims to enter mosques, but preferring the minority jurists' view who did not permit non-Muslims to enter a mosque without ablution in the classical period.

I discussed the first mosque open day with a Hizmet affiliate Orhan Cicek who was the executive director of the AIS between 2000–2010 via Zoom, phone calls and emails (personal communication with Cicek 2022, March 22–29). I asked about the origin of the

idea for a mosque open day project. Inspired by Nursi's above mentioned Damascus Sermon and Gülen's interfaith dialogue philosophy, he held that the political, social and religious conditions of the world at that time compelled them to hold an open day. In addition, they aimed to strive against prejudices and misconceptions of Islam and Muslims. The mistrust and fear of Muslims grew after the collapse of communism and the Iraq war in 1991. After the collapse of communism in 1990, Bernard Lewis' clash of civilizations theory was further developed by Samuel Huntington, then institutionalized and politicized with media support throughout the world. The actions of some Muslim extremist groups further fuelled mistrust and increased the fear of Islam and Muslims, particularly in the West. On the one hand, fighting against growing radicalism had become state policy in many countries, including Australia. On the other hand, prejudices and physical attacks towards Muslims were increasing. Gradually, it had become a threat to social harmony. Muslims were seen as a threat, particularly in Western countries. According to Cicek, the second motivation behind the idea was Said Nursi's new theory on Christian-Muslim relations, which is set out in his work, *Risale-i Nur*, and applied by Hizmet affiliates in Turkey in the early 90s and onwards when there was political tension between secularists and Muslim groups, including the Hizmet Movement. During this tense and divided period, the Movement organized *iftar* (breakfast) dinners during Ramadan and reached out to non-Muslims (who were scapegoats) and secularists in order to build social harmony. The motto was 'the art of living together'. It can be said that the Hizmet affiliates saw the benefit of reaching out to non-Muslims and secularists in light of Nursi's philosophy about Christian-Muslim relations.

Nursi had once been posed a question in relation to returning to the glory days of the Ottoman Empire before its collapse. Nursi said, "I will say one thing; perhaps you could memorize it (which means is very important in Turkish culture): the previous state is obsolete; it is either the new state or total annihilation (İşte, eski hâl muhal; ya yeni hâl veya izmihlâl), which means that it is not possible to return the glory days of the Ottomans. There is a need for renewal and it is essential. Otherwise, it will be total annihilation" (Nursi n.d.). His renewal philosophy included a new approach to Christians- Muslims relations as mentioned above.

In the mid-1930s, Nursi also wrote about the importance of collaboration between Muslims and Christians. He said,

> It is even recorded in authentic traditions of the Prophet that at the end of time, the truly pious among the Christians will unite with the People of the Qur'an and fight their common enemy: irreligion. And at this time, too, the people of religion and truth need to unite sincerely not only with their own brothers and fellow believers, but also with the truly pious and spiritual ones from among the Christians, stop temporarily from the discussion and debate of points of difference in order to combat their joint enemy: aggressive atheism. (Nursi 1996b, p. 204)

According to Cicek, Nursi realized the impact of globalization. He foresaw that irreligiosity and debauchery would be harmful to humanity and there would be a great need for collaboration between adherents of different faiths, particularly Christianity and Islam. After the September 11 attacks, there was a risk of radicalization of some Muslims due to their vulnerability in Western countries. He added how Nursi believed that "persuasion" was necessary for renewal instead of force (Nursi 1996a, p. 79).

According to Cicek, after moving to the US in 1999, Gülen felt the necessity of interfaith dialogue, not only as a remedy against Islamophobia and misconceptions about Islam and Muslims, but also to prevent radicalization. Based on all these reasons, the board members of the AIS agreed to organize the mosque open day. However, initially they had little idea on how to do it. After a lengthy discussion, the board identified university open days as a model and adopted it for the mosque open day.

The AIS approached many mosques' administrations in Victoria, but they were not interested or were against the idea due to juristic or cultural reasons. Initially, they faced

considerable resistance from the Muslim community. Cicek pointed out that Muslims immigrated to Australia with their traditional and cultural understanding of Islam. Some were reactionary to having non-Muslims in mosques due to non-Muslims' lack of ablution, hence a state of spiritual impurity; it is a requirement to have *wudu* (ablution) for entering a mosque for spiritual and physical purity. Many Muslims lived in lower socioeconomic suburbs with other migrants and may not have had strong relations with their non-Muslim neighbors due to language barriers, as well as cultural and religious differences. Cicek continued,

> On the other hand, Australians had a negative conception about Islam and Muslims because of the conflicts between Christians and Muslims for many centuries. The September 11 terrorist attack and Iraq war triggered that historical mindset. This caused more mistrust and prejudice against Muslims. (Cicek 2022, Personal communication, 23 March 2022)

Whenever there was a terrorist attack or conflict within Muslim countries, the *hijab* wearing women were attacked and mosques were vandalized. According to Cicek, the mosque open day aimed to foster a greater understanding of the Muslim religion and culture. It would help Muslims integrate into the society and reduce radicalization among the Muslim youth, which was important for social harmony. On the other hand, it would help alleviate Islamophobia, overcome mistrust and prejudices against Muslims, and build rapport with a wider community.

Cicek and his colleague approached Ibrahim Dellal (d.2018), a leading figure in the Muslim community and board member of Sunshine Mosque in Victoria. Ibrahim talked to the mosque board members but there was resistance due to the high possibility of disapproval and a negative reaction from the mosque's congregation. After discussion with the board members for weeks, they agreed to have a mosque open day at Sunshine Mosque outside of Muslim prayer times. The open day preparation took months. Twelve young Australian-Turkish men and women who were to serve as guides, were educated about the mosque architecture as well as being prepared for the possible questions by participants.

The AIS invited senior Christian leaders, Jewish leaders, the consul generals of the US, UK, and some consul generals of Muslim countries, as well as locals. Flyers about the open day were distributed to the neighbors of the mosque as well. Members of the media were invited, including those from ABC and SBS. However, before September 11, 2001, the media was not interested in covering a mosque open day. The author could not identify the exact date of the first mosque open day but found that it was sometimes in July 2001.

More than 300 non-Muslims turned up for the first mosque open day. The visitors were divided into groups of 10. Each group was guided by a mosque tour guide and informed about the mosque architecture, the place of the mosque in Islam, the basics of what Islam is and who Muslims were. The organizers answered questions at the end of the tour. The *adhan* (call to prayer) was called and two *rakats* (units) of *nafila* (supererogatory) prayers were performed to allow non-Muslims to observe how ritual prayer is performed in a mosque. Some Muslim families had prepared and brought finger food to display their hospitality.

According to the stories I have collected from the organizers, it seemed that many participants harbored negative thoughts. Some feared the threat that Islam and Muslims posed to society and to civilization overall. One visitor said that when she passed by the mosque and saw the minarets, she thought they resembled Saddam Hussein's missiles. Another visitor thought Muslims prayed to a different God than Christians. A student came to the door of the mosque and was hesitant to enter. She thought Muslims prayed to the devil. Some people were suspicious that Muslims hid something in the mosques. Seeing people with beards around the mosque reminded some of Osama bin Laden. They thought women were forced to serve their husbands and wear the *hijab*. One participant who lived near the mosque indicated that she was suspicious about Muslims. Most of them were not aware of what happened in a mosque. They asked why Muslim men can have

four wives. There were questions about whether Australian Muslims practiced female genital mutilation. One of the non-Muslim neighbors shared this:

> The construction of this mosque began 15 years ago. I would pass by and was curious about what was going on in the mosque. The people would come for the prayers and park their cars in my street. Every Friday, many people would attend. Twice a year, there would be a huge gathering with hundreds of attendants. I was very curious about this mosque and what Muslims were doing in the mosque. When I saw Muslims with beards and turbans, I was afraid. Now, I know what the mosque is and who Muslims are. (personal communication, March 22, 2022)

According to the mosque open day guides, many people were relieved that Islam had peaceful teachings and that Muslims were opening to them, showing their faith, and sharing their culture. Overall, it successfully bridged the gap between Muslims and non-Muslims and reassured many people in an era of fear.

Some Muslims harshly criticized the AIS and AIF mosque open days. They thought it was an innovation (*bid'a*) that contradicted the tradition of the Prophet. Some literalists argue that any practice that was not undertaken by the Prophet and four rightly guided caliphs is innovation and, therefore, must be rejected. They even argued that the AIS and AIF were watering down Islam. According to the organizers, some fundamentalists and political Islamists accused the AIS and AIF of creating an ecumenical new religion that combined Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Ironically, those Muslims who criticized AIS and AIF for the mosque open day project, began to have mosque open days in their places of worship after 2010.

The organizing of mosque open days before the September 11 terrorist attack shows the event as being proactive, instead of reactionary. The AIS Executive Director encouraged thirty-five Hizmet interfaith dialogue organizations to organize mosque open days when they had a global consultation meeting in Germany, before September 11 terrorist attacks. According to the AIF data, the mosque open days in Melbourne and Sydney inspired other Muslims. The AIS invited Imam Fahmi al-Naja (d.2016), the former Grand Mufti of Australia, and some local *imams* and presented the positive results of the mosque open day. All were convinced to have mosque open days for their respective mosques. The Lakemba and Penhurst Mosque's administration in Sydney approached the AIF and asked for their support to host a mosque open day. After the September 11 attacks, other Islamic organizations were compelled to reach out to their non-Muslim neighbors. Mosque open days have become a vehicle for striving against the fear of Islam and Muslims. The mainstream media have also started to cover mosque open days positively. This paper found that mosque open days have gradually spread across Australia. After the killing of a police accountant, Curtis Cheng, by a Muslim terrorist in Parramatta, there were anti-Islam rallies over the following weekend. Approximately one week later, subsequent to the rallies, a group chanted anti-Islam slogans where the Friday prayer was held in Parramatta. To reduce the tensions, the Lebanese Muslim Association set up the National Day of Unity at the Federal Parliament House where fifty representatives from different faiths participated, which occurred on 13 October 2015." The National Mosque Open Day was launched by the Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull at Parliament House as part of National Day of Unity. The Opposition Leader Bill Shorten and the Greens Leader Richard Di Natale also participated" (Ireland 2015). The Islamic Council of Victoria officially began promoting and coordinating mosque open days Victoria, in 2017.

7. Discussion

Tajdid means renewal in Islam, but it does not mean introducing something that contradicts the core principles of the religion. It is rediscovering a neglected tradition, or an issue related to the faith and presenting it according to the needs of the age. It is akin to purifying the water and serving it in a nice new glass instead of an old cup. Gradualism is a divine tradition. Some may call it a natural law that is reflected in the universe. The renewal of the issues related to faith and their application occur gradually. The *mujaddid*

plants the seed of renewal and asserts that this seed will grow and become a fruitful tree in the future. Watering the seed of renewal, fertilizing the growing plant, pruning the sapling, and offering the fruits to people are the duties of future generations. If the biographies of *mujaddids* are examined, it can be noticed that renewal takes decades, sometimes centuries. For example, the impact of the works of the great jurist Imam al-Shafi'i, who is considered the *mujaddid* of the second century of Islam, was greatly felt after his death, and continues to this day. The same thing can be said of Imam Bukhari's (d.870) work.

Nursi planted the seed of renewal in his work *Risale-i Nur*, primarily when covering faith and some social issues, including Christian-Muslim relations. The Hizmet Movement has taken his theory of renewal and applied it to education and relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. As mentioned above, Nursi's methodology is based on persuasion and convincing people, not using force. This paper shows that the AIS and AIF were established in light of Nursi and Gülen's works, leading to the initiation of the first mosque open days in Australia. The aim of the open days was to address prejudices, misconceptions, and radicalization, as well as to defuse the possible tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Based on data in this study, the second documented news about a mosque open day appeared in California in 2002 (Islamic shura Council 2022), after the one in Australia. This was followed by numerous New York mosques that had mosque open days in 2003. Cologne Central Mosque had its the first mosque open day appear on social media in 2004 in Germany. Mosque open days spread worldwide over the next decade, including in the US, UK, Japan, Germany, France, India, Hong Kong, South Africa, and Sri Lanka. Almost all global media outlets such as the BBC, CNN, ABC, NBC, CBS, Fox News, al-Jazeerah, Asia News, and Deutsche Welle covered these events. Sites such as the New York Times, Boston Globe, The Guardian, The Age, Sydney Morning Herald, Boston Globe, Huffington Post, Hindu Times and more, also covered the mosque open days. Some organizations such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the Dialogue Society (2011) in the UK prepared online guides for mosque open days. The media coverage was quite positive and helpful for alleviating prejudices against Muslims. Innumerable non-Muslims and local religious leaders and dignitaries have participated in mosque open days.

In the long run, Islamic organizations in Muslim minority countries realized the significant contribution of mosque open days for building bridges with non-Muslims and promoting Islam. Interestingly, even some conservative Muslim groups such as *Jamiatul Ulama* in South Africa who may not have been happy to see non-Muslims entering a mosque without ablution, ended up organizing a mosque open day in 2019. They too felt the necessity of reaching out to their neighbors. Such projects have been developed to be family friendly. For example, the Islamic Centre of North Texas made the mosque open day a social event. There was a *henna* designer for women, face painting for children, an Islamic arts table, and a *hijab* trial area for non-Muslim women. Islamic organizations marketed the event with phrases such as "Visit my mosque", "Working together with other faiths", "Hope not hate", "Open mosque day — next door!", "A day at the mosque", and "A tour of the mosque". Muslims in the UK established a website (https://visitmymosque.org/) for mosque open days. Also, many traditional ethnic foods were served at mosque open days. Interestingly, some organizations in the Muslim majority countries such the University Malaysia Pahang organized mosque open days for non-Muslim citizens (pimpin.ump.edu.my n.d.). Pakistan based *Minhaj ul Quran* International, an Islamic Movement that is led by Tahir-ul-Qadri, held mosque open days all over the world in their mosques in 2007 (Mosque Open Day 2007). In 2019, Egyptian based *Quwwat ul-Islam* Society also organized mosque open days in Cairo for non-Muslim citizens (Quwwat ul-Islam 2019).

Based on an examination of information about the mosque open days on the mosques' websites, media coverage and YouTube videos, they appear to have been well prepared and professionally conducted. However, some seem poorly organized due to a lack of professionalism and resources. This study found positive feedback based on testimonials covered by the media and people on YouTube. However, measuring the contribution of

mosque open days to social harmony could be another research topic, as it is beyond the scope of this paper. Most of the open days embodied the Muslim faith through warm and welcoming hospitality rather than proselytizing. On the other hand, this research found that a small number of the open days were used as an instrument for the proselytization of the religion.

The success of mosque open days becoming a globalized phenomenon is based on several reasons. First, the war on terror created curiosity about Islam and Muslims in Western society. Second, Muslims felt compelled to reach out to the wider society due to political and social conditions in the first two decades of the 21st century. Third, telecommunications and information technology helped the spread of mosque open days faster than expected. Finally, the theological and educational background of board members of the AIS and AIF inspired them to initiate such a timely project, which was later adopted by other Hizmet affiliates and Islamic organizations throughout the world. Furthermore, the mosque open day project triggered some faith based or Islamic schools to take their students to non-Muslim places of worship in Western countries to learn about other faiths, ensuring the flow of knowledge was taking place both ways.

Based on the collected data, some marginal groups and anti-Muslim individuals harshly criticized the mosque open days. Far-right groups were suspicious about non-Muslims being educated about Islam and Muslims at mosque open days. Jihad Watch, Meforum and the Global Muslim Brotherhood Daily Watch are a few of them. This is beyond the scope of this study.

Tajdid is a renewal, not reform. It is not inventing something new that has no foundation in the religion but reasserting a neglected or forgotten Islamic tradition. *Mujaddid* is '*ibn zaman*' the son of his time who digests the knowledge for renewal and presents it according to the needs of the time. Inspired by Nursi's renewal philosophy, the Hizmet Movement reasserted Islam through the embodiment of the faith and institutionalized it in a religious, social and educational context in secular Turkey. Hizmet has also become globally influential to a certain extent. While most Islamic movements have engaged in Sharia, Islamic schools, Qur'an courses, and mosques, the Hizmet Movement has opened private educational and health institutions and humanitarian aid organizations without labelling them as Islamic. Instead of proselytization, the Hizmet affiliates embodied their faith. Mosque open days can be considered *tajdid khass* (a specific renewal) that has contributed to striving against misconceptions about Islam and prejudices towards Muslims in the West.

8. Conclusions

Historically, all *mujaddids* theorized the principles of *tajdid*. Their students and followers of the students took these principles and applied them in their spiritual and social lives through *tamsil* or role modelling. The mosque open days as the *tajdid*, began with baby steps in Melbourne and Sydney in 2001, before the 9/11 terrorist attacks but later became a common practice in Australia and worldwide. Nursi theorized the renewal in the early 20th century regarding Christian-Muslim relations. Under the spiritual leadership of Fethullah Gülen, the Hizmet Movement developed it further and put it into practice in many countries. The mosque open days are one example. To overcome prejudices and mistrust, Islamic organizations saw the social benefit of mosque open days and have globalized them. This study found that the initiative of AIS in Sunshine Mosque and AIF in Gallipoli Mosques before September 11, 2001, gradually influenced Islamic organizations to organize mosque open days in Australia.

The followers of Said Nursi's students believed in the social and spiritual benefits of his principles of Christian-Muslim relations and applied them when opportunities arose. When the AIS and AIF board members and volunteers initiated the mosque open day project first in Melbourne and then in Sydney, before the September 11 terrorist attacks, they would not have imagined that it would be applied nationwide and then globally. They faced great challenges. Some Muslims accused them of watering down Islam or creating an

ecumenical new religion, but they did not quit. The political and social conditions of the world that were created by the war on terror at that time, compelled them to initiate such an initiative.

Historically, mosques were visited by individuals or small groups out of curiosity or to learn about Islam and Muslims. Some groups or schools visited for excursions. Based on data collected online and to my knowledge, as an active and connected member of the Muslim community, there were no organized mosque open days in Australia before 2001. It is possible that there could be some unrecorded mosque open day attempts in the world previously. However, they might not have found an environment and sufficient support to grow.

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[1] For the detail of Nursi's renewal philosophy see Muslim World special issue on Said Nursi, issue 82 no $\frac{3}{4}$, 1999 and Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations, Vol 19, issue 1 2008.

[2] Fethullah Gülen is "one of the most influential Muslim scholars in the world. His philosophy of combining Islam and modernity, together with religious tolerance, has attracted millions of followers who have established hundreds of educational and cultural institutions all over the world. Influenced by Sufi masters and contemporary Turkish Muslim scholar, Said Nursi, Gülen puts spirituality in the centre of everything. While he is a prominent advocate of interreligious dialogue and an admired religious leader, he has been accused by some secularists of being a fundamentalist with a hidden agenda to apply Shariah law to Turkey and religious fundamentalists for compromising religion. Gülen rejects these claims pointing to his past and current activities" (Yucel 2010a, p. 1). The current political Islamist government of Turkey accused him of being the mastermind behind the failed military coup on July 15, 2016. Gülen persistently rejected this accusation.

[3] For the detail of his renewal philosophy see Muslim World (special issue on Fethullah Gulen) V 93, issue 3, 2005.

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Moving beyond Binary Discourses: Islamic Universalism from an Islamic Revivalist Movement's Point of View

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Abstract: The resurgence of religion worldwide proved that secularization is not a de facto reality of modernity and the initial chaos that came along with the birth of postmodernity evolved into uniquely developing combinations that recognized cosmopolitan, multicultural, and hybrid (i.e., fluid and hyphenated) identities. Universal values became more instrumental than ever to connect members of hyper diverse societies while ethnocentric, nativist and exclusivist patriotism expired (and only recently starting to attract far right and white supremacist groups alone). Most Islamic revivalist movements emerging from this context have had minimal interactions with non-Muslims and influence on mainstream societies. Being in search of a solution to respond to the overwhelming effects of the West on Muslim societies, these revivalist movements could not change (and maybe contributed to) the binary positioning of Islam and the West. On the contrary, the Hizmet movement, inspired by Muhammed Fethullah Gülen and his predecessor Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, appeared in the global arena as an Islamic revivalist movement whose discourse resonated with the commonly shared universal values of every culture, ethnicity, and religion. The Hizmet movement did not position itself as an antithesis to Westernization, secularism, and modernity; the movement adopted a universalist and all-inclusive attitude, which re-introduced to the world that Islam is universal religion with the capacity to accommodate people of diversity and meet the needs of every age. This paper explores the Hizmet movement's historical, theological, and social roots as a transnational Islamic revivalist movement. It analyzes the movement's outreach across multicultural societies and its capability to adapt to a changing world through its educational and interfaith and intercultural activities across the globe. While unpacking thirty years of the Hizmet movement's activities and the contribution to the literature, the paper also addresses some of the criticisms that have emerged regarding the movement and its activities, particularly in the wake of the 2016 failed coup attempt in Turkey. It should be noted that much criticism toward the movement emerged in recent years, and the movement did not face much backlash in its early years of development. With this in mind, this paper explores the development of the Hizmet movement and how much of its initiatives rapidly left a positive mark on diverse societies around the world. The paper is thus structured chronologically, tracing the birth, growth, stagnation, and transition (or according to some collapse) of the movement. The paper, by extension, too, positions the Hizmet movement within the phenomenon of contemporary Islamic revivalism as this movement is born out of similar conditions as are other Islamic revivalist movements but taking a slightly different direction, which is that it challenges the prevailing binary 'us and them' discourses produced mostly in ethno-centric political discourses.

Keywords: Hizmet; Fethullah Gülen; Said Nursi; revivalism; modernity; revivalist movements; education; interfaith dialogue; intercultural dialogue; Islamic movements; multiculturalism; cosmopolitanism

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1. Introduction

Islamic revivalism is a concept borrowed from a *sahih hadith* (authentic Prophetic Tradition) that promises the revival of the Muslim community every hundred years through a 'reviver' of the religion (Sunan Abi Dawud 4291, Book 38, Hadith 4278). This *hadith*

encouraged charismatic religious leadership to counter the pressuring socio-political as well as spiritual crises of Muslim societies, especially in the turn of the twentieth century. During this time, Muslim nations witnessed the collapse of the Ottoman empire, the abolishment of the Caliphate, the rise of nation-states based on the notion of nationalism, western modernity, and secularization. Islamic revivalists during this time wanted Islam to be the social and global order.

Revivalist movements are characterized by a shared basis of three central elements: the need to return to the Qur'an and the *sunnah* (the prophetic way) set by the Prophet; and a reaffirmation of authenticity (Hirschler 2005). Yet, each of these three central elements are subject to contending theories influenced by local traditions, cultural, socio-political, and economic conditions, as well as differing levels of human reasoning which may affect Islamic understanding and practice (Esposito 2005). Even so, all revivalist movements aimed to rejuvenate the Islamic community by referring to Islam. Revivalists also strongly rejected orientalist judgements that degraded Islam and its representation while recognizing the shortfalls of Islamic societies; they suggested a flexible and adaptable Islam that complied with the needs of modern times (Esposito 2005). Some early Muslim revivalists included Shah Wali Allah of Delhi (1702–1762), Muhammad bin Abd Al-Wahhab (1703–1793), Sayyid Ahmad Barelewi (1786–1831), and Mahdi Sudani (1844–1885).

Much like early revivalists, Islamic modernists rose to respond to the cultural and political waves of Western colonialism and imperialism. Islamic modernists attempted to "form modernity in Islamic terms" rather than turning back to the past in nostalgia, asserting that there was no clash between Islam and modernity because Islam, originally, appealed to rationality and reason (Lapidus 1997). While they believed in the necessity of reinterpretation and reform, their goal was to provide "a parallel response to the deeper forces transforming the world order in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (Lapidus 1997, p. 455). They stressed Islam's capacity to adopt modernity without much difficulty, particularly as Islam itself has once managed a growing civilization for some centuries prior to Western development and influence (Esposito 2005). Some notable Islamic modernists included Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905), Rashid Rida (1865–1935), and Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938).

There is a third, politically motivated, strand that has gained momentum with the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979. The onset of this revolution in 1979 saw an immediate rise in Islamic insurgencies across the Middle East. For example, the seizure of the Grand Mosques in Saudi Arabia in 1979, the assassination of Anwar Sedat in Egypt in 1981, the Hama Uprising in Syria in 1982, and the 1983 United States suicide bombing in Beirut, Lebanon. These insurgencies desired to fix the failure of secular governments by strengthening Islamic influence in political, economic, and social life (Momayezi 1997). Their motives also included opposition to Western influence, imperialism, and intervention, much like Islamic modernists, however, their defensive reactions to modernity (Esposito 1999) were in response to the belief that there is no need to import Western beliefs and values found within modernity; Islamic thought is self-sufficient and has the capability to create a modern pattern for Muslim societies, including Muslim minorities living in the West (Esposito 2005). Within this strand, only a few tended toward radicalism (Esposito 1999), whereas the majority adhere to a more purified Islam seeking "purification from foreign accretions and the securing of a political authority in an attempt to form an Ummah (Muslim community)" (Ali 2012, p. 61).

Despite Islam being the main drive for all, revivalist movements are molded by local and/or national circumstances. For instance, Esposito notes that these movements emerge in countries where modernization has been the strongest; the most powerful manifestation of Islamic resurgence has occurred in more 'modernized' secular Muslim countries, such as in Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, and Algeria (Esposito 1999). In contrast, the revivalists of ethno-religiously diverse societies such as Indonesia opted for collaboration rather than confrontation with the government. While *Muhammadiyah* (founded by KH Ahmad Dahlan in 1912) appeared to be a modernist movement promoting education, *Nahdlatul Ulama*

(founded by Hasyim Asy'ari in 1926) developed a traditional path in response to their modernist tendencies. Likewise, pro-Islamic rulers in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore negotiated with the Islamic revivalists which eventually gave Muslims the confidence to live with and reconcile their customary, ethnic (later national) and religious identities in multicultural societies (Mutalib 1998; Khalil and Haddad 1995). In countries such as Thailand, the Philippines and Myanmar, where Muslims are a minority and where religious intolerance by the state and aggressive tendencies by Islamic revivalists are present, tensions and conflict abound (Mutalib 1998).

Besides socio-political revivalist movements, a few movements have focused on reviving Islamic spirituality through traditional Islamic education for decades. For instance, the Deoband Movement founded in India in 1867 by Muhammad Qasim Nanautavi and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, which committed to spreading *Darul Ulum madrasas* (Islamic schools) that provided purely religious education centers worldwide. They held public morality by classical Islamic education and knowledge (Ingram 2018). Maulana Muhammad Ilyas (coming from the Deoband stream) founded the *Tabligi Jamaat* in Mewat India in 1927—an apolitical movement whose priority was to teach Islam and renew one's commitment to the religion (Ali 2003). Sufi movements managed to survive in the revivalism era without altering Sufi customs. However, all these movements that prioritized the revival of Islamic knowledge and spirituality merely targeted Muslim populations. Even while spreading their message in the Muslim minority countries, they had minimal interaction with non-Muslims and minimal influence on mainstream societies. Furthermore, being in search of a solution to respond to the overwhelming effects of the West on Muslim societies, most of these revivalist movements inevitably reproduced the binary positioning of Islam and the West.

However, resurgence of religion worldwide proved that secularization is not a de facto reality of modernity (i.e., desecularization), the close interaction of the global with the local in the age of interconnectedness gave rise to glocalization (Karpov 2010). Western societies accommodating second, and third generations migrants also rhetorically moved away from ethnocentrism to multiculturalism. The initial chaos that came along with the birth of postmodernity evolved into uniquely meaningful combinations that recognized cosmopolitan, multicultural, and hybrid (i.e., fluid and hyphenated) identities. Universal values have become more instrumental than ever to connect members of hyper diverse societies while ethnocentric, nativist and exclusivist patriotism expired (only just recently attracting far right and white supremacist groups).

At the turn of the millennium, the Hizmet movement appeared in the global arena as an Islamic revivalist movement whose discourse resonated with the commonly shared universal values of every culture, ethnicity, and religion. For some groups, this new discourse was a mere appropriation to be accepted by mainstream societies. For the followers of the movement, these universal values are a part of Islam, and are thus informed by Islamic principles, and should therefore be genuinely followed. Because of this, the movement aimed to reach out to a broad range of audiences both in local and global contexts.

The Hizmet movement of Turkey was inspired by Said Nursi (1877–1960) and founded by Fethullah Gülen. Unlike some other revivalist movements, the Hizmet movement did not position itself as an antithesis to Westernization, secularism, and modernity. Moving beyond binary concepts, the movement adopted an all-inclusive attitude, which re-introduced to the world Islam as a universal religion, with the capacity to accommodate people of diversity and meet the needs of every age by interpreting the immutable verses of the Qur'an according to the social and cultural conditions of the time.

This movement focused *not* on how Muslims can better practice their religion and survive in this challenging world as Islamic societies and communities, but rather how they could reach out to all corners of the world through Islam's universalist principles. These principles include notions of peace and tolerance to overcome internal and external as well as local and global major problems, which are formulated in Said Nursi's Damascus Sermon as ignorance, fragmentation, and poverty. Inspired by Nursi, Gulen formulated his

movement based on three solutions: education, dialogue, and charity activities in Turkey first and then around the world.

This paper thus explores the Hizmet movement's historical, theological, and social roots as a transnational Islamic revivalist movement. It analyzes the movement's outreach across multicultural societies and its capability to adapt to a changing world through its educational and interfaith and intercultural activities across the globe. While unpacking thirty years of the Hizmet movement's activities and the contribution to the literature, the paper also addresses some of the criticisms that have emerged regarding the movement and its activities, particularly in the wake of the 2016 failed coup attempt in Turkey. The result of this failed coup has left the movement in limbo.

It should be noted that much criticism toward the movement mostly emerged in recent years, and the movement did not face much backlash in its early years of development, which is perhaps why, for example, one senior U.S. government official stated that the movement and its activities are "too good to be true" (Hansen 2013). With this in mind, this paper explores the development of the Hizmet movement and how much of its initiatives rapidly left a positive mark on Muslim societies around the world. The paper is thus structured chronologically, tracing the birth, growth, stagnation, and transition (or according to some collapse) of the movement. The paper, by extension, too, positions the Hizmet movement within facing other Islamic revivalist movements as a movement born out of similar conditions but taking a slightly different direction: the universalism of Islam, which challenges the prevalent binary 'us and them' discourses produced mostly in ethno-centric political discourses.

2. The Historical Development of the Hizmet Movement

Although founded in the 1960s on the ideas of Fethullah Gülen, the Hizmet movement was shaped in response to the socio-political and economic circumstances that fashioned much of Turkey throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Sunier 2014). Arising as a religious innovative force, the movement rapidly became known for its shared ideals and teachings of universal principles as well as its intense web of formal and informal networks. Following the spirit of the Ottoman millet system in which every faith community had freedom to run its own institutions (Barkley 2005), the Hizmet movement aimed to be "faith-inspired in motivation, yet faith-neutral or inclusive in manifestation" (Keles 2016, p. 5). Gülen himself regards the movement as a cultural activity whose spirit is based on the voluntary cooperation of many people who may not have organic ties or mutual acquaintances, much less know each other, but who all share the faith of Islam (Koyuncu-Lorasdağı 2010).

While the core principles of the movement are self-evidently spiritual and theological, the socio-political realities that took place since its founding were influential in molding the dynamics that would define the movement and its practice. Despite coming from religiously vigorous circles of an Eastern city, Erzurum, Gülen first began speaking to the masses upon his official appointment as an *imam* (religious leader) to Edirne, on the border of Eastern Europe, where alcohol consumption was relatively high and religious observance was neglected among the locals. Gülen was then appointed to Izmir, a Hellenistic city with a multi-religious population, but one where religion attracted little interest. Because of this, the city became known as *gavur Izmir* (infidel Izmir)—a label that also indicated the ancient Greek city's failure to assimilate into contemporary Anatolia's conservative country culture.

During this time in the early 1960s, Turkey found itself under the influence of adverse secularization and materialism. Schools were taught by teachers who stressed evolution and questioned the existence and belief in God. This epidemic was also present during Nursi's time. When a group of high school students complained about the 'poisonous ideas' spread by their teachers, Nursi provided commentary on faith related verses by examining the verses with science and reason (Nursi, Bediuzzaman Said n.d.). Gülen would also deliver conferences on Darwin's theory of evolution in the early 1970s to the youth at the time of great doubt and would tie together religion and science in his talks to show the

compatibility between the two (Gülen 1971). As a result, science and reason became the core teaching of Hizmet inspired schools; students were encouraged to become teachers to raise a 'Golden Generation' of Muslims in Turkey and abroad.

Being an *imam* (religious leader) in a highly secular city like Izmir where religious observance was ignored and where locals did not attend mosques, Gülen had to deliver his talks in coffee houses where men gathered and gambled for hours (Pandya 2012). In these casual gatherings, Gülen would gradually warm people up to the idea of religion and the observance of religious practice and abstinence from sin such as gambling. When the Hizmet movement was founded in the late 1960s, this circumspect activism became its key strategy. In a time of illiberal secularism that dominated Turkey during the Cold War, the movement's adherents could only engage in cautious activism and dialogue, much like Gülen himself, to protect themselves from being made outcasts by the Kemalist bureaucracy (Balci and Miller 2012). Such discreteness became a characteristic of the Hizmet movement's general approach so much so that followers who lived through the democratic periods and military regimes of Turkish history had to deliberately conceal their Islamic dynamics while engaging with the public, and at the same time, meet their expectations, such as delivering high quality education to prepare the youth for the competitive university entrance exams (Balci and Miller 2012).

In the 1990s, however, Gülen and his followers broke the paradigms about religion, religiosity, and religious leaders in Turkey, by opening university tutorial centers throughout the country and starting dialogue activities between different streams of the society. But it was the discreteness due to military occupation and the rise of secularism that forced the movement to put their Islamic narrative on the forefront of their mission.

The movement's thought and practice highlight the dynamism and diversity of not only the Islamic faith, but Muslim politics, as its activities and values contest the categories set by Western liberal history—due to orientalist attitudes—onto Islam and Muslim societies. Their model shows that there is no 'template of ideas'; Islam, as well as its Muslim societies and faith-based organisations, "are influenced by a number of factors, which, while including scripturally defined precepts, also include national identities, economic circumstances, and social status" (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996, p. xi). Aside from proactively showing the dynamism of Islam and Muslim politics, they also challenge modernization theory—a theory that centers on the sharp and artificial contrast between 'modernity' and 'tradition', whereby tradition is construed "in negative terms only" (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996, p. 23). Tradition, as the movement shows, helps to "facilitate development and social and political changes *because* they are cast in terms of the traditional framework" (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996, p. 25).

The movement has a successful history of activism which has fashioned a distinctive response to the questions posed by modernity. Its contemporary interpretation of Islam has allowed not only Turkish Muslims, but Muslims from around the world to develop their own institutions to engage with modernity and its challenges. By the 1980s, the movement evolved into a nationwide education-focused community. It had successfully developed the biggest charity and philanthropy organization (called *Kimse Yok Mu*), several publication houses that publish magazines, books, and journals in several areas, and had the most selling Turkish newspaper (called *Zaman*) with a circulation of one million. Thijl Sunier (2014) writes that global conditions have generated new and diverse forms of sociability that has led to new Muslim self-understandings, whereby Muslims increasingly use Islam as a propositional model for civility, responsibility, and civic engagement. As a non-political movement investing its capital into establishing civil organisations, the Hizmet movement is frequently addressed in the literature as a form of 'civil Islam', whereby its practices and theological groundings are, in fact, seen as having explicitly cosmopolitan underpinnings (Sunier 2014).

From the 2000s, however, the movement evolved into a transnational entity concentrated on dialogue and non-denominational education. Focusing on the Hizmet movement in Germany, Araks Pashayan argues that in instances where separatist withdrawal take

place among Muslim communities across German towns and cities, the Hizmet movement encourages integration based on cultural exchange and enrichment rather than assimilation. They have built centers and schools to build a bridge between the two communities. This integration model allows the German population to understand and accept the values and experiences of Turkish and other ethnic Muslim minority groups who feel isolated from the rest of German society (Pashayan 2012).

It is the movement's depth and breadth that allows it to root itself to a variety of contexts, making it and its practices "an 'outward-looking' rather than an 'inward-looking' form of organization, which constitutes the dominant mode of religious and interest-based organizations" (Krause 2012, p. 57). Wanda Krause writes that because of its dynamism and diversity, the Hizmet movement is uniquely positioned to tackle instances of terrorism and Islamophobia, for example, as it embraces a 'common good' and emphasizes the universality of values, spirituality, and principles of justice—goals that directly challenge dominant dualistic perceptions of religion, particularly Islam, as being a source of conflict in a modernized, secular world of 'war on terror' era (Krause 2012).

3. The Spiritual Dynamics of the Hizmet Movement since Its Inception

A former Secretary General of the United Nations once stated that peacebuilding is "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict" (Boutros-Ghali 1992, p. 204). What he meant here is that peacebuilding stems from an active civil society that generates social capital in the form of cooperation over religious and ethnic divisions, trust, and open debate which is conducive to peace and harmony between all sections of society. As civil society is an important space where pluralism and diversity can be fostered, it therefore can play a positive role in sustaining peace (Hampson 1996). The most notable and effective method of peacebuilding by a civil society, however, is preventative peacebuilding—for instance, community capacity building and fostering collaborative relationships amongst different groups within societies.

It is instrumental to stimulate each community's own local, cultural, and religious dynamics to be able to foster effective long-term peace. The Hizmet movement has strategically utilized some spiritual dynamics to become a civil society and a transnational faith-based movement, focused on love and tolerance through education and dialogue. The movement mobilized its followers with "strong faith-based motivation, long term commitment, religious, spiritual and moral authority and ability to facilitate constructive social relations between different groups of population" (Esposito and Yilmaz 2010, p. 4). In this instance, it is not so much religion that is influential, but rather "the ways in which it has been interpreted and practiced" (Esposito and Yilmaz 2010, p. 4) by the movement to create a stable yet dynamic and diverse civil society.

While most leaders of other revivalist movements fixated on the problem of the West, Fethullah Gülen avoided such discourse. He concerned himself primarily with peacebuilding in highly diversified modern societies where internal conflicts and fragmentations would be the more real, urgent, and upfront issue in the twenty-first century, rather than a mere paradigm like the Islam-versus-West discourse. As such, Gülen emphasized the need for a new generation of Muslims to equip themselves with agreeable qualities, like wisdom, compassion, faith, and knowledge, for them to rise above the structural inequalities and the socio-political circumstances they faced (Agai 2002). In fact, Gülen's ideas were inspired by his own time and circumstances. Upon examining his own generation, he found that lack of proper education was the essence of the problem that many young believing people faced. Using this observation as a guide, Gülen then inspired his followers to found educational institutions to develop a more knowledgeable and inclusive generation—one that can integrate their Muslim identity and morality with modern realities and positive sciences (Çelik 2010). He called this dream generation *Altın Nesil* (the 'Golden Generation').

Unlike some revivalist movements which seek to erect a caliphate under a capable political leader and unlike some revivalist spiritual movements who promote their leaders

as spiritual saviors, the Hizmet movement promoted an embodiment of a leadership by an entire generation called the Golden Generation, which was to change the image of Islam in the entire world. This dream young generation aimed to cultivate "an intellectual and spiritual enlightenment drawn from the traditional sources of Islam" (Çelik 2010, p. 61). But even though the Golden Generation bases itself around religion, Bekim Agai argues that it has been transformed from being, initially, a so-called Turkish form of civil Islam to a more universal ideal (Agai 2002). Part of this transformation is the result of Gülen's conviction that, although there are certain aspects of Islam that are not open to interpretation, there are other areas within Islam that can be subjected to disparate settings, historical conditions, language, sociocultural characteristics and so forth, and are thus open to interpretation (Çelik 2010). For example, the Islamic conception of life in Morocco "came to mean activism, moralism, and intense individuality", while the very same concept in Indonesia "emphasized aestheticism, inwardness, and the radical dissolution of personality" (Çelik 2010, p. 62). And so, when political scientists spoke of a 'Clash of Civilizations', Gülen fervently urged the building of 'breakwaters' to prevent such a clash (Saritoprak 2010).

Gülen's Golden Generation, in some way, exemplifies Ibn Khaldun's emphasis on the establishment of peace in society. For both Gülen and Ibn Khaldun, peacebuilding is a sacred task. But unlike Ibn Khaldun, whose theology on peace rested on the notion of *asabiyya* (group solidarity)—thus carrying its own risks of excessive group loyalty which can be detrimental to the maintenance of a harmonious society—Gülen based his peace theology on the integrity of the individual where peacebuilding is one of 'bottom-up' social change (Saritoprak 2010; Sykiainen 2006). In this way, the Golden Generation, through the quality of its individuals, should be able to practice and spread justice and compassion in their societies. Gülen (2006, p. 110) says:

> . . . maybe in the near future some selfless people, who sacrifice themselves to make others live, with united hearts and minds through their efforts . . . These selfless people will discover the interconnectedness of the divine command and the laws of nature. People will repent of the previous meaningless fights with one another . . . Everyone will love human beings as a duty towards God. It is exactly this time when the world, which is a corridor to Paradise, will become a paradise-like place that will always be enjoyed.

Here Gülen stresses the importance of dedicated, selfless individuals in the establishment of peace. Without them, or without a 'Golden Generation', such peace would not be possible. To maintain these ideals of peace and ensure the flourishment of these individuals, Gülen placed an emphasis on educational institutions whereby these institutions would help "bring up such individuals from the realm of imagination to the realm of realization" (Saritoprak 2010, p. 181).

Gülen's theological ideas can be collated under three main areas: service; positive action; and *tamthil* (representation), which can be reframed as the "tongue of conduct" (Ozubuyuk 2013). These three areas—or 'spiritual dynamics'—have mobilized followers of the Hizmet movement and shaped the movement's outlook since its inception, along with, of course, Gülen's 'Golden Generation' and peacebuilding strategies. All three spiritual concepts are related to 'viceregency'. As a Qur'anic term, it reminds human beings that their role in this world is to live as 'divine representatives' (Qur'an, 2:30). This concept, according to B. Jill Carroll, loads the movement's followers with a sense of social responsibility (Carroll 2007). For Gülen (2005), viceregency is an action and determination to make a positive change in the world:

> In fact, we need genius minds with iron wills that are able to carry the role of vicegerent of God on Earth, and which are able to intervene in events and challenge the orphan spirit and puny thought which attach no importance to the consciousness of responsibility, humane values, knowledge, morality, true contemplation, virtue, and art in such a vast territory, we need refined minds and

> an iron will which will embrace and interpret creation in its depth and entirety and humanity in all its worldly and other-worldly vastness.

Gülen organically connects the social responsibility of the vicegerent human being with service to humanity as a spiritual performance. Salih Yücel elaborates on this concept by referring to a renowned Prophetic saying: "the master of the people is the one who serves them" (Yücel 2018, p. 95). Gülen systematizes this leadership-servanthood interaction with a spiritual backdrop through education, humanitarian aid, and dialogue in the service of humanity—no matter their religious, cultural, ethnic, economic, political, or social background (Yücel 2018).

Moreover, instead of limiting the Hizmet movement's social responsibility to their home country Turkey, Gülen envisions to spread the service throughout the world by following the Qur'anic prospect of 'viceregency on Earth' and employing the concept of *hijra* (migration on the path of God) (Yücel 2018). Through these two concepts, Gülen was able to inspire the movement to become transnational as they 'migrated' and settled from Turkey to other parts of the world, and actively and confidently interacted with the host societies without feeling inferior. Furthermore, their effective interaction with the host society since the early years of their migration has broken the migrant versus host society, and assimilation versus alienation debates, which have been in force in multicultural western societies for decades.

Apart from their social capital, which will be addressed in the following sections, the movement's spiritual motivation behind migration was influential in their quick and effective integration and contribution to mainstream societies. Although the idea was to represent Islam, the movement did not preach the faith nor conducted forced conversions. They instead focused on highlighting Islam's universal values to the worldwide community, particularly as Gülen considered representation to be a Prophetic method and therefore a valuable essence of the movement and its goals (Yücel 2018).

This spiritual goal and method worked well to overcome prejudices against Islam and Muslims. Personal interactions with real and presentable Muslims demystified old orientalist dichotomies while proving anti-Muslim arguments wrong. This was made effective due to, not only the movement's belief in its social responsibility to act as viceregents on Earth, but also the movement's transnational reach, personal interaction, and institutional collaborations in the host societies that allowed the movement to effectively demystify all imaginary stereotypes toward Islam and Muslims.

Along with their focus on social responsibility through viceregency and migration, the Hizmet movement has also placed a focus on positive action. Both positive action and service are mutually inclusive since both discharge self-interest for the sake of public interest (Walton 2015). Positive action includes being proactive rather than reactive and "engrossing oneself in the constructive actions of building and repairing rather than engaging in destructive behavior" (Yücel 2018, p. 109). Gülen's action-oriented approach is inspired by Nursi who lived under surveillance by an adverse secular system yet said: "Our duty is to act positively; it is not to act negatively [. . .] We are charged with responding with patience and thanks to all the difficulties we may encounter in this positive service of belief which results in the preservation of public order and security" (Walton 2015, p. 43).

The followers of the Hizmet movement have upheld positive action by occupying themselves with altruistic services and treating positive action not only as an end goal, but as a method of achieving the desired positive outcome in any given situation or circumstance (Walton 2014). Are these core ideas and values of the Hizmet movement practicable for everyone, especially in times and places when, and where, totalitarianism is in force? Despite not enforcing its high standard to lay people, Gülen instructed his followers to show unconditional positive action. For example, the movement showcased positive action when it faced political allegations and persecutions orchestrated by the Turkish President, Tayyip Erdogan. The movement was accused of plotting against the state by conducting a failed coup in 2016, which has, since that time, faced "intense and massive hate crimes and severe persecutions, some of which concluded with deaths and

suicides while in custody" (Alkan 2019, p. 212), the purge of thousands of Hizmet followers, and international defamation campaigns. On the one hand, Gülen sought justice from the authorities and demanded international inquiry of the failed coup by a judicially independent international body, and on the other, he encouraged his followers to show patience and positive action in the face of intensifying oppression against the movement after the coup attempt (Shalal 2016). Gülen deliberately utilized religious dynamics to curb emotional eruption and any potential rebellions within the movement to preserve peace and fulfill the movement's positive action motto.

Cemil Alkan's textual analysis of Gülen's sermons delivered within the first two months after the coup attempt found that Gülen focused on holding oneself accountable; acknowledging the hardship of the Prophetic path; and showing patience and positive response with mannerisms (Alkan 2019). Accordingly, while publicly challenging injustice and seeking civic ways to reinstitute justice, Gülen did not allow frustration to overcome the movement as it could easily turn into social discord and contradict with the existential pillars of the movement (such as peace, positive action, and dialogue).

In his post-coup sermons, Gülen reminds his followers of Nursi's formula of abstaining from "the cruel principle of giving a similar response" and encourages oppressed followers of the movement to be forgiving just like the Prophets were in times of hardship (Alkan 2019). For example, the Prophet Muhammad had said "no blame on you" as the conqueror of Mecca, while Prophet Yusuf forgave his brothers for their wrongdoing when he became the ruler of Egypt. Gülen also moves beyond religion and reminds his followers to not ruin the positive reputation of the movement, but "maintain the legacy of the movement in the face of hardship" (Alkan 2019, p. 224). On the first anniversary of the coup, while persecutions were still on the rise, Gülen declared: "The power is embedded in the truth and the truthful one is merciful" (Alkan 2019, p. 225). Gülen's call for patience during a time of turbulence does not stem from despair, or even passivism, but rather "a determined strategy to prevail to the end with endurance" (Alkan 2019, p. 225). Evidently, positive action is infused in Gülen's discourse style, including the movement's response to negative stereotyping of Muslims. Without referring to Orientalism or anti-Muslim discourses, Gülen undermines Islam-versus-West dichotomy by focusing on universal values that are adhered by everyone, deliberately straying away from binary terminology which would inevitably produce an oppositional 'Other' in relation to oneself.

There are two key streams where the Hizmet movement has implemented these spiritual dynamics and has shown how their historical development influenced much of their ideals and practice: dialogue and education. Both streams directly challenge binary 'us and them' discourse through their use of inclusive language and espousal of universal values for they show that religion and modernity can co-exist—or more specifically, that Islam is dynamic and diverse and as a universal religion, the values promoted by Islam can be implemented to reach solutions to both global and local problems.

4. The Hizmet Movement and Its Dialogue Institutions

To effectively overcome fragmentation, which was diagnosed by Nursi as one of the overarching problems of the society, the Hizmet movement facilitates 'a dialogue of civilizations' whereby civilizations are thought to be built through interfaith dialogue and education, rather than inter-communal and inter-religious rivalries and conflicts (Bozkurt and Yildirim 2012). The movement therefore "synthesize[s] tradition and modernity, religion and science" in a proactive attempt to oppose essentialist Orientalist and exclusivist Islamist claims that Islam and Muslim politics are monolithic (Hefner 2005, p. 5). Akbar Ahmed (2007, p. 6) points out the timely and much needed response of the movement to a 'perceived' clash, which has sometimes been reinforced by both parties:

> In a world where the most prominent Muslim leaders speak of conflict and confrontation, Gülen provides us with a 'new voice' that calls people of all faiths to the 'divine table'. Through his guidance we can create a world where dialogue is our first course of action and confrontation is our very last.

The Hizmet movement's advocacy for dialogue through dialogue institutions navigated by Gülen's extensive discourse of peaceful coexistence has subsequently led to the establishment of interfaith and intercultural practice models across the world community. By emphasizing the universal values people share, and thus de-emphasizing their differences, Gülen finds diversity and tolerance to be a natural phenomenon—people can coexist peacefully despite differences in cultures and religions (Gülen 2004).

Universal dialogue has become the "main tool of social innovation and conflict resolution for social inclusion, coherence and peaceful co-existence" for the Hizmet movement (Yilmaz 2007, p. 25). This is rooted in Gülen's effort to promote dialogue and tolerance across all groups in society, in Turkey and abroad. Prior to September 11, the movement established the Journalists and Writers Foundation—a foundation that sought to "support strategic public intellectual initiatives in the promotion of dialogue" (Barton 2007, p. 4). The Journalists and Writers Foundation is an example of the Hizmet movement's proactive approach in tackling anti-Muslim discourse, particularly as it was founded prior to September 11 where Islamophobia became a critical issue. The foundation is also an example of the movement's willingness to extend their dialogue not just into schools, but across other platforms, such as the media, arts, sport, academia, and religious streams.

The Hizmet movement entered the post-9/11 era with interfaith dialogue and a focus on education already developed and implemented. In fact, the movement's first dialogue centers, established in major Western cities, predate 9/11. For example, in 1999, the Dialogue Society was established in London and the Rumi Forum in Washington. Accordingly, the movement's pre-9/11 interfaith activities were not a mere response to, nor a defense of, Muslims in the face of the 9/11 attacks. The dialogue activities, as Paul Weller (2012, p. 18) concludes, have "offer[ed] resources that engage with the secular; are ready for dialogue with Christians; are confident of what Islam can offer: and yet also acknowledge the current reality of the situation for Muslims and Islam in Europe [and elsewhere] rather than promoting only an idealized vision of the past or the future". Because this type of dialogue was neither defensive nor responsive, and was developed confidently from within long before 9/11, it has effectively been able to dispel the doubts about Islam and Muslims represented by the movement.

Co-existence and diversity are apparent within the movement's own organizations; on its board were prominent members of mainstream western societies and members from different religious, political, and philosophical backgrounds, seen in their dialogue organizations like the Rumi Forum and the Australian Intercultural Society (Rumi Forum 2019a, 2019b). By including ethno-religiously diverse members, students, and teachers in their dialogue organisations and in their schools, the movement—as a minority group—has confidently expanded beyond its comfort zone to amalgamate with the mainstream population. This was a common practice especially in countries where the Muslim population was scarce, such as in Russia, Mongolia, Burma, Nepal, Vietnam, Korea, and Cambodia.

The movement overtly celebrated diversity in schools by organizing the International Festival of Language and Culture, held every year in the countries where Hizmet inspired schools operate (International Festival of Language and Culture (IFLC) 2019a). During these festivals, students from Hizmet schools across their respective countries come together, irrespective of their religious, cultural, or ethnic identities, to perform local, English, and Turkish songs, dances, poetry, and other performative arts. Through their performances, the students deliver universal messages and showcase those values through the building of friendships during the preparation stages (International Festival of Language and Culture (IFLC) 2019a). Several people have expressed their awe of the movement's initiative, with some stating, "events that encourage young people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to share their experiences are very important. Because each generation has to rediscover and get to know itself, so that peaceful co-existence remains a matter of course" (International Festival of Language and Culture (IFLC) 2019b). The International Festival of Language and Culture is an example of how an ideal world could come about through positive dialogue initiatives. Without putting religion or religiosity to the foreground,

such practical encounters facilitated by the Muslim founders of these schools indicates Islam's appreciation of indigenous cultures. This gesture, in the context of underdeveloped countries, also meant a clear deviation from the footsteps of those hegemonic, missionary, and colonial foundations which exploited and undermined local people, their languages, and their cultures.

In the context of Western societies, the movement's "practical global effort for peace and understanding" (Wright 2012, p. 171) shaped an example of "how migrants [. . .] can adapt and integrate into a host society dominated by a very different culture [which shows that] peaceful coexistence is possible amongst different ethnic groups [. . .] in a European context" and within other Muslim minority countries (Lacey 2010, p. 229). As these various examples have illustrated, the movement has successfully managed to operate confidently as a global phenomenon in different geographies of the world, including the West.

5. The Hizmet Movement and Education

Education has become another means for the movement to reach wider society via parent communities. According to Gülen, education is key for the development of inter-civilizational dialogue and collaboration. This is because it is only through education that one can establish peace; education breaks the barriers produced by stigmatization, racism, discrimination, and conflict. Nursi's diagnosis of ignorance as one of the main problems in our society inspired Gülen's educational activities—a vital requisite for economic, social, and political advancement. Accordingly, "individuals will respect democratic law and human rights only if they receive a sound education", since social justice and peace "are achieved by intellectually enlightened people with strong moral values and a sense of altruism" (Ebaugh 2010, p. 34). Gülen continually emphasized Islam's universal values to reach wider society in a way that aligned with the ethical principles behind the movement's foundations.

While prominent Islamic scholars of Western academia, such as Isma'il Al Faruqi, Naquib al-Attas and Sayyed Hossein Nasr were heavily involved in philosophical discussions on Islamization of knowledge in the 1980s, Gülen did not show any particular interest in this debate (Al-Faruqi 1987; Dzilo 2012). Problematizing distinctively two different epistemological sources was an intellectually valid, but equally binary, discussion. Instead of Islamizing knowledge, Gülen opted to show how science and religion are intrinsically connected through the movement's quality educators and educational institutions. This allowed Hizmet schools to tie science and religion with their 'service for humanity' concept and encouraged students to engage in the love of learning. However, Gülen did not start up these educational institutions himself; these were taken onboard by the Hizmet movement who wanted to put into practice Gülen's emphasis on the importance of education and of creating environments in which young people, Muslims and non-Muslims, could expand their knowledge. For Gülen,

> . . . school is essentially the 'theater' in which all the scattered things of the universe are displayed together. It provides its pupils with the possibilities of continuous reading and speaks even when it is silent. Because of that, although it seems to occupy one phase of life, the school dominates all times and events. Every pupil re-enacts during the rest of life what he or she has learned at school and derives continuous influence therefrom.
>
> (Kurtz 2005, p. 380)

The Hizmet movement has established a variety of initiatives, such as charities, foundations, media, television channels, radio, business associations, and schools, to build and maintain a peaceful civil society (Kayaoglu 2010). But it is the educational institutions that take up most of their effort and operate worldwide as non-denominational and independent schools.

Within the schools, the movement offers an integrated education model where technical and moral training are combined—namely, the integration of science and faith-inspired values. This decision was shaped by the historical experience of Turkish society—a society

that has "gone through violent ideological and political conflicts during the last one hundred years" (Bozkurt and Yildirim 2012, p. 50). Moreover, competition between the secular and the religious educational systems in Turkey "lay at the heart of the social tensions and crises, because the graduates of these schools with such restricted focus lacked an integrated perspective for the future of society" (Michel 2003, p. 72). And so, Gülen inspired to develop an educational system that offered solutions for local and global problems, and a system that imparted humanitarian as well as moral values in students while also preparing them for the competitive world of science and technology.

The movement began with a few schools in Turkey in the 1990s, expanding to Central Asia and the Balkans shortly thereafter. But by the end of 2014, these schools flourished across more than 160 countries around the world primarily because they preserve a modern, secular curriculum to "lay the foundations for a more humane, tolerant citizenry of the world where people are expected to cultivate their own faith perspectives and promote the well-being of others" (Kurtz 2005, p. 380). Most schools have produced highly educated individuals who have taken on high-ranking positions with the power to change the fabric of their countries through their knowledge and activism (James 2017). This initiative, where schools provide a science and universal values-based education, challenges contemporary notions that science and religion are irreconcilable. It also challenges the belief that Islam and Muslims are outdated and inferior, who do not want to make a positive contribution to their societies.

The reconciliation of science and religion has been proactively introduced in Hizmet-inspired schools not through the act of preaching but through the "the tongue of conduct" (Ozubuyuk 2013). As Thomas Michel wrote, "secular educators saw religion as at best a useless expenditure of time and at worst an obstacle to progress", but for Gülen, and by extension the Hizmet movement, science and religion are not only compatible forces, but they also complement one another (Michel 2003, p. 69).

As Gülen (2002) asserts,

> . . . we no longer have any other way of escaping from the cloudy atmosphere of illusions enveloping us, or any other way to reach Truths and, more importantly, the most manifest Truth. To achieve this, we must become unique representatives of scientific knowledge combined with religious spirit.

Gülen's vision for the education model is not to impose an understanding of Truth through faith and science, but rather to help raise individuals with a balanced worldview. In his view, the education and training of a new generation of Muslims—the 'Golden Generation'—should be holistic; the aim is to raise "ideal people", individuals of "thought, action and inspiration" who are able to negotiate themselves through a rapidly demanding and changing world (Graskemper 2007). These students would then use their knowledge and training for the service of humankind, bringing harmony and understanding between different peoples as the material and spiritual realms were reconciled in their educational upbringing (Yavuz 2013).

Writing about the importance of education in modern society in general, Robert W. Hefner (2005) argues that education has "a greater democratic benefit when it conveys a spirit of intellectual 'bridging' rather than exclusive 'bonding'". What Hefner means here is that education that generates a bridging of multiple ideas in the form of collaboration is more important than exclusivity because it is the bridging of ideas that creates a natural bond between different people, and this, in turn, fosters an environment of harmony, tolerance, and diversity—and even espouses dynamism. Hefner also writes that "education is the most paradigmatic of modern cultural institutions. Today no society can compete even in the lower rungs of the global order without a well-run educational system [. . .] higher education is a shimmering example of all that is best about modern freedom and civic decency" (Hefner 2005).

Indeed, educational institutions, when offering a combination of faith-based, science-based, and other based knowledge—much like those established by the Hizmet movement—can foster 'sustainable development' by connecting local values and cultures with inter-

national values, preparing specialists through capacity building to promote a sustainable future, and creating public spaces through civil society associations (Vargas 2000). The Hizmet movement, therefore, provides intermediary networks that contribute to the integration of individual citizens and the state (Özdalga 2005).

The integration of individual citizens and the state is a method of peacebuilding; in Hizmet inspired schools, "young people from different religions, languages, and cultures study, are educated, and admired in the same educational institutions. Loving and understanding each other is the main principle" (Sevindi 2008, p. 75). For example, in Kenya, Hizmet-run schools have not only been functioning as secular alternatives to religious Christian missionary and Islamic schools, but "also as barriers to potential ethno-religious conflict between Kenya's local Christian tribes and its politically empowering Muslim minority" (Kalyoncu 2008, p. 350). The movement has helped locals in Uganda to take a pragmatic approach to development by "instill[ing] in them the notion of relying on their own resources instead of international aid" (Kalyoncu 2008, p. 350). In the Philippines—a country with communities stigmatized by Muslim-Christian battles—the Hizmet-led schools have brought together Christian and Muslim students, not by taking part in the conflict, but by identifying "common grounds where they get together and cooperate to tackle their common problems" (Kalyoncu 2007, p. 605). According to Zeki Saritoprak (2007), the movement's educational institutions, overall, have contributed to the "building of peace in many areas of conflict", including Kosovo, Albania, northern Iraq, Northern Ireland, Macedonia, and Banda Aceh.

The Hizmet movement ensures that all educational institutions are run by quality educators and thus emphasizes the importance of addressing "all aspects of a person's mind, spirit, and self" (Bozkurt and Yildirim 2012, p. 55). An educator is comprehensive and incorporates universality in their teaching methodology. They provide guidance and implement it with flexibility according to the circumstances of the school and its students (Agai 2003). Gülen also stresses that the educator's role is to "fill science with wisdom so that it will be applied usefully to society" (Agai 2003, p. 58). In Albania, for example, the Hizmet educators, due to their focus on universal values, science, and quality education, gained approval by both the government and the Albanian public. But when the movement began their activities from as early as 1992, there was resistance, partly because of strong Albanian nationalist sentiments, and partly because Albania had "formed its national identity in opposition to the Ottoman Empire" and thus did not want Islamic or Turkish nationalism to be promoted in its schools (Agai 2003, p. 66). As the movement slowly began to take influence, they engaged in activities that allowed the students to develop a "joy of giving" while also teaching them discipline and providing them with guidance (Agai 2003, p. 66). One teacher viewed this initiative in a positive way, admiring the movement's delivery of a "vision of humanity" to a society that had lost its "human dimension during its communist era" (Agai 2003, p. 66). Through this example, one can see how the Hizmet movement constructs its ideals around local concerns. This is made possible because of religious values being "transformed into a language of ethics" and it is this belief in shared values that prompted Gülen's and by extension, the Hizmet movement, efforts at dialogue (Agai 2003, p. 66).

The movement's emphasis on universal values, and educational and civic activities, also helped overcome the Turkish-Kurdish conflict (Gurbuz 2015; Kalyoncu 2008). As such, the movement's commitment to principles of universalism, tolerance and positive action in their educational institutions allowed them to overcome political conflicts embedded in their own history, like Turks and Albanians since the Ottoman era, and the Turkish government and its Kurdish citizens since the 1920s.

In the global context, Hizmet-led schools have helped to break down misunderstandings around Islam's incapacity to offer a modernized education model, and misunderstandings about Islam's incapacity to align itself with scientific values and principles. In the meantime, the movement developed a unique Islamic revivalist approach by reaching out and fixing the problems of not only Muslim but a global audience by providing education

to remove ignorance, dialogue to remove fragmentation, and charity and social upward mobility thought high quality education to remove poverty, not only among Muslims but also around the entire globe.

6. Criticism of the Hizmet Movement

While the Hizmet movement's inclusive humanistic attitude has been appreciated by their audience, some have expressed skepticism, finding the movement—as one senior U.S. government official said—"too good to be true" (Hansen 2013). Some of these criticisms were a reaction toward 9/11 by neo-conservatives and far right circles accusing many Muslim groups, including the Hizmet movement, of having hidden agendas and Islamist intentions (Hudson 2008). A similar criticism was echoed by some secular Kemalist circles of Turkey. Unlike other Islamic movements in Turkey, Gülen's discourse was surprisingly not at odds with the Kemalist secular state, which triggered suspicions about the authenticity of his leniency (Cagaptay 2010; Hudson 2009).

Some Islamic groups criticized the movement for staying away from Islamist rhetoric and agenda. The movement, neither seeking an Islamic state nor problematizing a secular state (if the state does not interfere in the groups' legal religious activities), was found to be un-Islamic by some circles and was accused of interacting with Christian and Jews more than Islamic groups. Gülen's dialogue initiatives, especially in its early days when he met with Pope John Paul II in 1998, were severely criticized and some conspiracies were generated, such as Gülen being appointed by John Paul II as a secret cardinal (WRM 2016). The movement's international language and culture festivals were also found by some to be un-Islamic; Turgul Keskin (2009, p. iv) defined Hizmet as an "Islamic movement without Islam". The movement evidently drew criticism because it did not fit into existing categories of Islamic revivalist movements and religious organizations in the Muslim world, with the movement's "rapid expansion" also being questioned (Pew Research Center 2010).

Most of the recent political criticisms of the Hizmet movement are driven from pro-Erdogan circles due to the 2016 failed coup attempt in Turkey which, according to Erdogan, was plotted by the movement. Still, despite being exclusively two different Islamic movements (i.e., one is a politically motivated Islamist party, and the other is a spiritually motivated interfaith and education driven movement), Ergodan and Gülen developed a temporary "mutually beneficial relationship" in the 2000s (Sandal 2021). Yet, it quickly started to crack in 2010 with the Mavi Marmara flotilla crisis. The Turkish aid flotilla set off to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza, which resulted in the killing of ten Turkish activists. In contrast to AKP's condemnation of the Israeli attack, Gülen criticized the initiative as being counterproductive. Breaching the Israeli authority by not seeking a legal permission was a naïve and uncalculated move. This friction grew further in a series of political crises in the following years. Upon the arrest of Erdogan's crew consisting of senior bureaucrats, businessmen, and sons of ministers on corruption charges in Turkey's covert gold-for-oil trade with Iran on 17 and 25 December 2013, the movement was declared by Erdogan to be a "parallel state" which allegedly infiltrated in the police and judiciary in the service of "dark alliances" (Erkoyun 2020). Afterwards, Erdogan waged an open war on the movement by closing the movement's schools, tutorial centers, newspaper, television channel and seizing the movement's income generating channels like banks, publishing houses, and the businesses owned by Gülen's followers. Officers from the police and judiciary were sacked due to an alleged relationship with the movement. Furthermore, affiliating the failed coup attempt on 15 July 2016 with the movement, Erdogan declared the movement a terrorist organization and issued a state of emergency. Soon, more than 110,000 people were detained and nearly 50,000 imprisoned. Calling the coup attempt a "gift from God", Erdogan purged all his opponents including the pre-existing lists of profiled public employees from the movement (Gol 2016).

The political turmoil stirred by the Erdogan government overshadows the reputation of the movement, inviting controversy. But Gülen's message to his followers and the world did not change; he called his followers to show patience and peace. Still, the movement's

educational, interfaith, intercultural, and charity institutions and activities have decreased significantly due to Erdogan's efforts to finish the movement in Turkey and overseas; however, the movement's institutions are still in force in those countries where Erdogan's political pressure is not influential.

Like in all Islamic revivalist movements, Gülen—as the movement's founder—played a central role in the dynamics and direction of the movement. Indeed, some academics referred to the movement as the 'Gülen movement' in recognition of his efforts (Ebaugh 2010; Esposito and Yilmaz 2010; Krause 2012; Lacey 2010; Michel 2003; Agai 2003; Kalyoncu 2007). However, Gülen's charismatic leadership and his direct association with the movement has raised some questions about whether there is sufficient internal criticism within the movement itself, and to what extent the movement would have the capacity to address new challenges once Gülen is no longer around to inspire its mission.

The movement has attempted to address these questions, to some extent. For example, its website and its followers' websites, social media, and YouTube channels have increasingly shown the movement's willingness to engage in some internal self-criticism on past mistakes, such as close affiliation with politics, rigid hierarchies, misuse of loyalties by intermediary persons, structures and systems bounded by strong personalities in power, weakened check and balance system, man-oriented nature of the movement, and the like. According to the discussions on their YouTube channels, some ex-members of the movement have fervently criticized Gülen and his close circle, while some of the movement's followers have directed their criticism not toward Gülen, but the executive members in his consultation team. Weller's recent book *Hizmet in Transitions*, especially the "New Foci for Old Questions" captures these post 2016 discussions (Weller 2022, pp. 131–90). But Gülen himself did not shy away from self-criticism. He publicly confessed that close interaction with politics was a forbidden affair (referring to the movement's close relationship with Erdogan's political party) (Alkan 2019) because the movement's core principles centered on the renewal of faith rather than political affairs—the same message Said Nursi spread through his teachings and sermons.

While criticisms toward the movement across media platforms and their social media pages have become increasingly diversified following the failed coup attempt in 2016, some critics interpret this new phase of the movement as counteractions for rebirth, while others yet see it as a sign of collapse.

7. Conclusions

Although being a product of similar circumstances, the Hizmet movement displayed some different features than politically revivalist Islamic revivalist movements of the time. Like other movements, the Hizmet movement was built upon a strong spiritual and theological basis. For instance, Gülen has been motivating his followers for decades with a Prophetic *hadith* which promised that the name of Prophet Muhammad will reach every place where sun sets and rises (Sahih Muslim 2889a, Book 41, Hadith 6904). Migrating to different corners of the world with this mission, the followers of the movement could flag the name of Prophet Muhammed by offering service to the host countries through education, interfaith/intercultural dialogue, and charity. These areas of service were strategic moves to solve the shared problems of the time which were ignorance, fragmentation, and poverty according to Said Nursi.

While most of the movements prioritized local problems and the revival of the *ummah* (Islamic community), the Hizmet movement aimed to reach out to non-Muslim populations in its early stages and prioritized connecting with non-Muslims based on service and other universal values like peace, love, tolerance, and dialogue—much needed assets to overcome local and global conflicts. The movement's long-term strategy, especially as a minority group within its countries of migration, showed how the movement based its operations on not converting nor controlling, but co-existing with other members of society. The mission of service to achieve the same shared goals by speaking the same shared (universal) language helped the acceptance, accommodation, and appreciation of

the movement in most of the corners of the world regardless of ethno-religiously and culturally differing contexts. The movement's co-existence framework also helped to subtly change the distorted image of Islam and Muslims in different corners of the world.

The adverse secular circumstances and long-lasting conflicts between religion and science as well as tradition and modernity greatly shaped the movement's objectives since its inception, which made it more attuned to the needs of the world community. The movement's vision, mission, and strategy has also proactively countered binary dichotomies such as science and religion, Islam and West, and the Clash of Civilizations by combining science with religion in its educational institutions and fostering dialogue to counter various types of conflicts through dialogue centers. As such, its interaction with real people in more than 160 countries through the 'language of conduct' effectively defeated centuries-old imaginary biases against Islam and Muslims.

In the meantime, the movement showcased that an Islamic revivalist movement can still be authentically Islamic without keeping *sharia* (Islamic law) and the Islamic state at the forefront of its mission and by adhering to democratic and secular systems which do not interfere in any legal religious affairs of the religious groups. By doing so, the movement's revivalism aimed for a renewal—a new interpretation of the Qur'anic verses—in tandem with the demands and values of the contemporary world, rather than a puritanical withdrawal from the existing world in attempt to escape to the dreamed time of the Prophet and *salaf al salihin* (pious ancestors) (Ali and Orofino 2018).

Instead of creating its own dream island, the movement opted to negotiate with existing challenges. Like other revivalists of ethno-religiously diverse societies such as Indonesia, the Hizmet movement also opted for collaboration rather than confrontation with authorities. The movement operated and interacted actively across the globe on a personal and institutional level, providing up to date, applicable, and effective solutions to the local and global post-colonial world through its educational, dialogue, and charity institutions. While being engineered by philosophically sound and well-grounded universal values, the Hizmet movement strictly adhered to its theological roots. Like Muhammadiyah, the Hizmet movement promoted education; like many other Islamic movements operating in the West in the wake of 9/11, the Hizmet movement also accelerated its interfaith activities across Western societies; like spiritual revivalist movements, the Sufi tradition laid the foundation of the Hizmet movement. Currently, the Hizmet movement finds itself in a significant transitional period (Weller 2022) due to being restricted by adverse political, economic, and social circumstances, which may challenge the movement's future progress and its prospects.

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Emotion Work in Tabligh Jama'at Texts

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Abstract: This study examines the emotional dynamics of the written and oral texts of Tabligh Jama'at—respectively, *Faza'il-e-A'maal* (Virtues of Good Deeds) and *bayan* (religious sermon). In them, the study identifies emotion work—the attempt to generate certain emotions. The study discusses how the texts' emotion work relates to Tablighi discursive ideology (framing) and also posits several emotions that the emotion work might generate. From these findings, the study offers the idea that Tablighi emotion work contributes to transforming Muslims' emotional sphere by attaching them emotionally to ultimate religious concerns. By enchanting Muslims' emotional sphere and attaching Muslims to Islamic social actors, values, practices, and Islamic revivalist goals, Tablighi emotion work contributes to the social transformation of individuals and society.

Keywords: Tabligh Jama'at; emotion work; emotions; framing; social transformation

1. Introduction

Emotions are "complex mental phenomena" (Ben-Ze'ev 2009, p. 42) that inspire motivation and agency (Gecas 1991). Emotions are pervasive in our everyday lives (Harris 2015, p. 3). In fact, any behaviour of a social nature or within a social context has some sort of emotion mixed in it (Bericat 2016, p. 496). In turn, sociologists find that emotions are inherently social (Lively and Weed 2016).

These characteristics of emotions make them an important factor to consider for our purposes, which is to gain a better understanding of the Islamic revivalist movement known as Tabligh Jama'at (Convey the message of Islam group). While emotions have been mentioned in studies of Tabligh Jama'at, no study yet has dedicated empirical and analytic attention to the emotional dynamics that play a role in the movement's goals and methods. The present study addresses this lacuna by exploring what sociologist Hoschchild (1979) terms "emotion work"—the attempt to evoke and shape emotions—in Tablighi written text *Faza'il-e-A'maal* (Virtues of Good Deeds) and oral text *bayan* (religious sermon).

The study aims to answer the following questions: (1) What kind of emotion work do Tablighi texts perform? (2) What emotions does Tablighi emotion work attempt to generate? (3) What are the implications of this emotion work for Tabligh Jama'at as an Islamic revivalist movement that aims for the social transformation of society through individual reform? Exploring these questions, the study aims to contribute to the field of Tabligh Jama'at research by lending an analytic eye to its emotional dimension to gain a better understanding of how the movement achieves its goals of individual and social transformation.

In what follows, the study provides information about the Tabligh Jama'at as an Islamic revivalist movement. It then reviews literature on Tabligh Jama'at that speaks to factors that enable it to achieve its transformation goals. That review identifies the movement's emotional dimension as lacking investigation. The study then accounts for what has been observed about the movement's emotional dimension, and in doing so identifies emotion work as a suitable area of inquiry. The subsequent two sections give an overview of the theoretical and methodological approaches the study uses to pursue this area of inquiry. The results section describes the five kinds of emotion work in Tablighi texts

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and offers a discussion around which emotions this emotion work might generate. The discussion section then interprets those findings. The study concludes with suggestions for future work on emotions in Islamic revivalist movements.

2. Tabligh Jama'at as an Islamic Revivalist Movement

Contemporary Islamic revivalism took hold of Muslim communities in certain parts of the world during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Among the several movements and organisations (for example, Jamaat-i-Islami; Muslim Brotherhood; Hizb-ut-Tahrir) that originated in those times is Tabligh Jama'at—which Jan Ali (2012) translates as 'Conveying the Message of Islam Group'. The Tabligh Jama'at was founded in the Delhi region of India by a Deobandi trained scholar named Muhammad Ilyas Kandhlawi (1885–1944). Ilyas attempted the Islamisation of Mewat—an area outside Delhi—in the early 1920s by establishing religious schools called *maktab* or *madrasa* (Marwah 1979, p. 94). However, he soon noticed that the schooling system he had helped set up there was not having the desired effect (Ahmad 1991, p. 512). This situation concerned Ilyas so greatly that in the late 1920s he moved to Basti Nizamuddin in the Mewat region to begin missionary work in the form of *khuruj* (preaching tour). The initial thrust of the preaching activity Ilyas established was so successful that the Tabligh Jama'at conference held in Mewat in 1941 was attended by twenty-five thousand people (Ahmad 1991, p. 512). After Ilyas' death, his son Muhammad Yusuf became the leader of the Tabligh Jama'at. Yusuf expanded on his father's success by sending preaching parties outside India to numerous countries (Gaborieau 2000, pp. 127–30). This expansionary intent resulted in Tabligh Jama'at today being a transnational phenomenon.

The name 'Conveying the Message of Islam' refers to the Tabligh Jama'at preaching to Muslims the importance of Islamic faith and praxis. Ilyas believed that preaching is a duty for a group of Muslims. Muslims must revive *iman* (faith) and Islamic praxis because another prophet would not be coming to Earth (Ali 2012, p. 125). To revive *iman* and Islam in Muslims, Tablighi preaching tours provide participants with much opportunity to learn about the rituals and etiquettes of Islam. Three-day, ten-day, forty-day, and four-month preaching tours are a holistic education environment where one can implement straight away what one learns through oral instruction. Tabligh Jama'at hopes that an individual's transformation into a pious person is sustained on his return home, and that over time, the transformed individuals will encourage his immediate social circle to also become more religious—in this way, society will be gradually transformed.

3. Factors Underpinning Tabligh Jama'at Social Transformation

In terms of what facilitates the individual and social transformation goal of Tabligh Jama'at, the literature on the movement has focused mainly on three factors: political freedom to travel and preach; social networks and organisational resources at the movement's disposal; and the movement's ideology or ideas (for a review of this literature, see Ali and Sahib 2022, pp. 51–53).

While each of these factors are important for a movement's ability to engage in activism, in the past few decades, social movement scholars have researched the emotional dynamics of mobilisation (for a review of this literature, see Van-Ness and Summers-Effler 2019), exploring emotions that lead to participation (Pickard and Bessant 2018; Hu and Wu 2021; Weiss 2021; Asún et al. 2022; Nikolayenko 2022; Petrini and Wettergren 2022), emotions that sustain commitment (Feigenbaum et al. 2013; Ransan-Cooper et al. 2018; Pirkkalainen 2021), and emotions that hinder mobilisation (Summers-Effler 2010; Østbø 2017). These studies support Jasper (1998, p. 407), who observed, early on, that emotions play a role in individuals being drawn to a particular movement, and in their subsequent decision to remain in the movement and to participate in its activities. These implications of emotions in social movements are also observed also by Bericat (2016, p. 504):

> Many emotions, such as indignation, moral shock, anger, fear, shame, pride and humiliation, condition and inspire social movements, whether in their origin,

> recruitment of members, maintenance of organization or in the struggle to achieve their objectives.

In view of these observations, we may posit that even where other factors exist, a movement may not be able to achieve its goals for social activism and transformation if it cannot arouse in people certain emotions. Without emotions people may not move from the balcony to the barricade, or in the case of Tablighis, from their own homes to other Muslims' front doors. The next section explores why emotions are an important feature of Tabligh Jama'at, and therefore worthy of closer examination.

4. Emotions in the Tabligh Jama'at

Research on the Tabligh Jama'at emphasises emotions as a key element of its outlook and existence. Timol (2022, p. 16) notes the group's "anti-intellectual yet emotionally charged ethos . . . " and that "For large numbers of devotees, participation in TJ clearly is an emotionally satisfying experience" (ibid., p. 15). Pelkmans (2017, pp. 115–19) says of the contents of Tablighi *bayan* and storytelling that they create an "emotive energy". Marcia Hermansen (2008, p. 83) describes the movement's call as not to an abstract set of jurisprudential rules, but "Rather, the appeal is more personal and emotional". Gugler (2013, p. 72) sees the Islamic revivalism of the Tabligh Jama'at as "seemingly anti-intellectual, or rather, emotional". Talib (1997, p. 45) reports that the Tabligh Jama'at's "enduring symbols, moods, and activities" have an intense "emotional reality". Pieri (2019, p. 367) comments that "TJ's goal was to reignite a passion for Islam among lapsed Muslims". His observation is echoed in Pool (2021) who identifies in Tablighis cool (for example, conviction) and uncool (for example, excitement) emotions—or what he calls "passions".

The emotional impetus of the Tabligh Jama'at derives from its key texts the *Faz'ail-e-A'maal* and *bayan*. Barbara Metcalf (1993, p. 593) notes of *Faza'il-e-A'maal* that its "stories are meant to engage the listener—or reader—not only intellectually, but emotionally . . . " She goes on to describe the stories in the *Faza'il-e-A'maal's* main pamphlet which is titled *Hayaat-us-Sahabah* (The Lives of the Companions) as "emotional dramas" that the reader has to "respond [to] with feeling" (Metcalf 1993, p. 595). As regards *bayan*, Rashid (2006, p. 366) and Sikand (1999, p. 45) comment on its "forceful" and "emotive style". In his observation of *bayan*, Horstmann (2009, p. 120) says, "During Friday prayers in the *markaz* (prayer hall), during prayers in the local mosque and during missionary tours, preachers virtually cry out their sermons in a very emotional way, raising piety for and fear of God". Talib's (1997, p. 47) description of *bayan* is also important: "The actual presentation is punctuated by the listeners' deep sighs and the narrator's show of emotion". This observation points to the emotional effects that the content of the *bayan* can have on an audience.

Together, these observations are important in that they create a picture of the Islamic revivalism of Tabligh Jama'at as generating and generated by emotions. These emotional dynamics are pointed to more closely in other studies. Talib (1997, p. 47) reports the following statement from a Tablighi in India: "In the work of *da'wa* emotions are shaped and given direction". Jan Ali (2012, p. 178) says, "the selected hadiths in the *Faza'il-e-A'maal* generate a sense of concern and even fear and motivate the participants towards their implementation". Commenting on an invitation a Tablighi gave to a Muslim during *jawla* (preaching round) in which the former spoke about death and the grave, Ali (2012, p. 195) says that it:

> . . . demonstrates that an appeal to emotion is used to arouse religious consciousness. By positing this world as ephemeral and a testing ground which one day everyone will abandon, the Tablighis make a direct emotional appeal to the 'heart'.

These observations: that Tablighis *shape*, *give direction to*, *generate*, *appeal to* emotions show that Tabligh Jama'at's preaching tries to shape the emotions of individuals in a way that accentuates the appeal of participation in its preaching tours.

These observations open up an avenue to examining the emotional dimension of the Tabligh Jama'at through Hoschchild's (1979) concept of "emotion work"—which refers to the shaping of people's emotions. While the above findings from the literature are perhaps enough to justify using Hoschchild's concept, the study particularly takes a cue from Horstmann (2009, p. 113), who poignantly observes in Tablighi circles "emotional work [which] includes the hagiographic telling of the sufferings and endless pains of the first travellers who are widely regarded as martyrs". The idea he puts forth is that the Tablighi method of conveying its message is emotive, and it seeks an emotional outcome. This is exactly what emotion work, conceptually speaking, seeks to unpack.

As will be seen later, emotion work as a concept and analytic approach is useful not only for conceptualising the emotional dimension of Tabligh Jama'at, but also in gaining a clearer understanding of the movement's transformative potential.

5. Theoretical Background

5.1. Emotion Work

Arlie Hoschchild (1979, p. 561) defines emotion work as "the act of trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling". Emotion work is illustrated through phrases such as "I *psyched* myself up", "He *killed* their hope", "She *tried hard* to make me feel grateful". The italicised verbs indicate the *work* involved in producing, respectively, the emotions of determination, hope, and gratitude.

The act of managing emotions may occur in three ways: (1) on oneself by oneself; (2) on others by oneself; (3) on oneself by others (Hoschchild 1979). This study explores the third type of emotion work in the sense of how Tablighi texts attempt to generate emotions in Tablighis and potential recruits.

The term emotion work was originally applied to conceptualising the everyday, ordinary management of emotions by individuals at home and in the workplace. More recently, social movement scholars have examined how activists manage their own and others' emotions in social movement contexts (Maney et al. 2009; Gould 2015; Hagemann 2015; Jacobsson and Lindblom 2016; Kleres and Wettergren 2017; Santos 2020; Marquez 2021; Siegel 2021; Tuomola and Wahl-Jorgensen 2022). For instance, Hagemann comments:

> Emotion work, defined as active practices to regulate emotions, is . . . an important strategy for social movements in order to motivate and legitimize collective action and to induce group cohesion (Hagemann 2015, p. 13)

Jasper (1998, p. 405) indicates the centrality of emotion work to social movements by observing that "It is affects and emotional responses that political organizers appeal to, arouse, manipulate, and sustain to recruit and retain members". *Appealing to, arousing, manipulating*, and *sustaining* all signify emotion work.

5.2. Frame Theory

Emotion work does not occur alone; it coincides with another important mobilising activity: framing. Frame Theory (Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Benford 1988, 1992; Benford and Snow 2000) has developed our understanding of movements' meaning making activity. Specifically, movements construct or identify a problem and a target of blame for the problem occurring (diagnostic framing); they offer a solution to redress the problem (prognostic framing); and try to persuade people to act through vocabularies of motive that focus on the urgency and severity of the problem, the efficacy of the proposed solutions, and the moral propriety of undertaking action (motivational framing). The ideational constructs that result from these framing tasks are called collective action frames.

As regards framing in Islamic movements, Quinton Wiktorowicz's (2004) exploration of the framing strategies of the Salafi movement is useful for our purposes. He identifies four key strategies—vilification, exaltation, credentialing, decredentialing—that Salafi Muslim activists deploy to legitimise certain Muslim intellectuals as sacred authorities (ibid., pp. 162–64). This study is similar in that it explores the emotional framing strategies

that Tablighi texts use to legitimise *tabligh* and self-reform as the means to avert the Muslim crisis.

5.3. Tabligh Jama'at Framing

Ali and Sahib (2022), recognising the lack of conceptualisation of the ideational aspect of the Tabligh Jama't, draw on Frame Theory to explain the structure of Tablighi ideas and their resonance for Muslims in the modern world. Analysing the *Faza'il-e-A'maal* and several Tablighi bayans that were commonly performed in the Friday night Tablighi gatherings in Sydney, Australia, they identify the following collective action frames: Muslim crisis, *iman* (faith), self-reform, *tabligh* (preaching), Allah, urgency, severity, responsibility, and rewards (Ali and Sahib 2022, pp. 72–82).

To take a few examples of Tablighi framing, diagnostic framing can be seen in Hasan's (1994, p. 24) statement that "The current disease in the body of Muslims has sprung from the extinction of the true spirit of Islam in our hearts". Identifying contemporary Muslims as culpable for the Muslim crisis is a key aspect of the Muslim crisis frame. Another example of framing in a Tablighi text is the following *bayan* statement that exemplifies the *tabligh* frame:

> Prophets came and made this effort [*tabligh*]. And they made this effort by visiting people, going to the people, and knocking on every door. And the Prophet Muhammad, he came, and he also did the same effort. Went and visited people, knocked on every door. (Ali and Sahib 2022, p. 75)

The speaker here legitimises *tabligh* by connecting it with the practice of the Prophets.

Ali and Sahib's (2022) findings advance our understanding of the meaning making activity of Tablighi texts. The present study draws on these findings in conjunction with a sociology of emotions approach—that is, the concept of emotion work—to better understand the transformative potential of Tablighi textual discourse.

5.4. Emotions and Framing

Emotions are important components of framing (Schrock et al. 2004; Eyerman 2005; Snow et al. 2018; Raffaeli et al. 2019; Dzhengiz et al. 2021). Snow et al. (2018, p. 397) point out that "the appeal to or use of emotion appears to be a central feature of motivational framing". They also identity anger and guilt (and fear and disgust) as accompanying "shock framing" (ibid., 2018, p. 483), which is exposure to an emotionally arousing stimulus. Additionally, commenting on the close relationship between framing and emotions, Eyerman (2005, pp. 44–45) says, "Movements are often spurred into existence by cognitively framed emotions, anger, frustration, shame, guilt, which move individuals and groups to protest, to publicly express and display discontent". In their study, Schrock et al. (2004) examine how in a transgender support group emotion work and motivational framing combine to create "emotional resonance" or "emotional harmony" between activists' collective action frames and recruits' emotional lives.

Considering these points, this study holds that emotion work corresponds closely to framing, therefore, in the Results section, the different kinds of emotion work will be discussed in reference to the collective action frames identified in Ali and Sahib (2022).

5.5. Method

The main tenets of the history of emotions are that emotional experience and expression change across time and place; societies value, define, and judge certain emotions in different ways; and that emotions have been known by various terms corresponding to different bodily and mental states (Frevert 2016, p. 49).

In the academy, scholars study emotions from a variety of theoretical perspectives, including developmental, sociological, personality, biological, cognitive, and health-related (for essays on each perspective, see Barrett et al. 2016). The concept emotion work arose from the sociological approach to emotions, in particular the idea that people's emotions

are shaped and constrained via emotion management practices (Lively and Weed 2016, pp 69–70).

This study focuses on examining emotion work in Tabligh Jama'at texts. Texts are important sources of emotion work as "We interpret texts, buildings, gardens, rituals, and other human artifacts for the emotions displayed or aroused in audiences" (Jasper 2011, p. 298). The texts that this study analyses to identify emotion work are *Faza'il-e-A'maal* (Virtues of Good Deeds) and *bayan* (religious sermon).

The *bayan* statements mentioned in the Results section are taken from Ali and Sahib (2022). For more detail on the data collection for that study, see Ali and Sahib (2022, pp. 59–63). The method of participant observation Ali and Sahib (2022) used to collect *bayan* data aligns with Van-Ness and Summers-Effler (2019, p. 419), who include participation and observation as methods through which "Social movement scholars can capture emotion"; and with Goodwin et al. (2004, p. 424), who say, "Participant observation is another method that can be used to study the everyday emotional culture of movements".

In addition to *bayan*s, this study examines the contents of the pamphlets that comprise *Faza'il-e-A'maal* (for an overview of these pamphlets and their contents, see Masud 2000, pp. 83–85). These pamphlets were written to create in their reader a desire for piety and preaching. Tablighi founder, Muhammad Ilyas, saw the pamphlets as useful for motivating Muslims for preaching (ibid., p. 80). Therefore—and because their contents are elaborated on in Tablighi *bayan*—the pamphlets are a potentially rich source of emotional framing.

5.6. Results

From my reading of the pamphlets of *Faza'il-e-A'maal* and *bayan*, I identify five kinds of emotion work that correspond to the collective action frames found in Ali and Sahib (2022). I also identify several emotions that this emotion work might generate in individuals. The corresponding relations between Tablighi framing, emotion work, and emotions are illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Tabligh Jama'at Framing, Emotion Work, and Emotions.

Framing Task	Collective Action Frame	Emotion Work	Emotion Generated
Diagnostic Framing	'Muslim Crisis'	Reflexivity	Shame; Guilt
Prognostic Framing	'Tabligh'	Entrustment	Elevation; Pride; Determination
	'Iman'	Entrustment	Elevation; Pride; Determination
	'Self-reform'	Transcendence	Interest
Motivational Framing	'Urgency'	Micro Shock	Concern; Compassion
	'Severity'	Micro Shock	Concern; Compassion
	'Allah'	Transcendence	Hope; Optimism; Love
	'Responsibility'	Entrustment	Elevation; Determination
	'Rewards'	Compensation	Anticipation; Excitement; Desire

5.6.1. Reflexivity

For the Tabligh Jama'at, not all Muslims are aware of the crisis afflicting Muslims around the world. The movement's texts attempt to make Muslims aware of their lowly state in material and spiritual terms. They do this through the Muslim crisis frame and emotion work of reflexivity. According to the Muslim crisis frame (Ali and Sahib 2022, pp. 72–73), Muslim lowliness is marked by apathy, lack of faith and religious praxis, and

lack of political, economic, and social power. This assessment is illustrated in the following statement: "Muslims of today [are] sunk in misery and disgrace, a people who possess no real strength or power, honour or dignity . . . completely demoralised, apathetic, shallow and helpless" (Hasan 1994, p. 4).

Through this discursive work the Muslim crisis frame awakens individual Muslims to the plight of Muslims as a whole. In doing this, the frame produces the emotion work reflexivity which may generate self-directed feelings of shame and guilt. Take the following statement from the pamphlet titled *Faza'il-e-Tabligh* (The Virtues of Preaching): "Millions of Muslims have indulged in manifest false-worship, not to speak of neglecting prayers and fasting; yet they are never conscious of their practices . . . " (Zakariyya 1994a, p. 5). The Muslim hearing this statement may feel ashamed of his neglect of Islam and preoccupation with worldliness, and the words "they are never conscious of their practices" may prompt him to feel culpable for the Muslim crisis having arisen. Such guilt is illustrated in the following Tablighi's statement: "Today the Muslims are at the receiving end and it means that there is something wrong with us. It is the result of our karma" (Chakrabarti 2017, p. 162).

Reflexivity prods Muslims to compare themselves to the Muslims who came before, namely the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions. By such comparison, Muslims today will see themselves as lowly. This discursive move is evident in a *bayan* where the speaker says:

> All the *barakah* [blessing] and the greatness that was seen in the Sahabah [companions of the Prophet Muhammad], why this is not being seen in the lives of the Muslims here? Because we've left that duty, we've left that responsibility that Allah has given us. (Ali and Sahib 2022, p. 80)

Ihtishaamul Hasan (1994, p. 8) also makes the comparison between Muslims before and Muslims now:

> History proves that the early Muslims had been able to reach the highest summit of honour and glory, whereas the present-day Muslims seem to have moved in the opposite direction.

These statements urge Muslims to reflect on how they have let down Islam and Prophet Muhammad and his Companions. The guilt that might arise as a response to this emotion work will make Muslims feel that they are "part of the problem". Importantly, shame and guilt are moral emotions (Haidt 2003, pp. 859–61). Therefore, reflexivity lends to the Muslim crisis frame a layer of moral seriousness which increases the salience of the Muslim crisis to Muslims today.

5.6.2. Entrustment

Tablighi texts offer emotional relief from shame and guilt in the form of redemptive framing. This framing comes as the idea that the Muslim crisis can be reversed into Muslim flourishing if only Muslims apply themselves to a revival of *iman* through *tabligh*. Through participating in these activities Muslims can go from being part of the problem to being part of the solution.

This framing is captured in the prognostic and motivational framing of the "*iman*", "*tabligh*", and "responsibility" frames. *Iman* and *tabligh* frames speak to the most important things in the world in the eyes of Tabligh Jama'at: faith in God and the tactic of *tabligh* to revive it (Ali and Sahib 2022, pp. 74–75). The responsibility frame posits that implementing preaching and reviving *iman* is the duty of all Muslims today (Ali and Sahib 2022, p. 80). A few examples of these frames in *Faza'il-e-A'maal* and *bayan* are the following:

Iman frame:

> The way to regain to honour, grandeur, exaltation, glory and virtues by Muslims, lies only in their being strictly faithful. (Hasan 1994, p. 7)

Tabligh frame:

> Real sentiments and love for Islam are practically dead in us and our belief in it has dissipated. Obviously, when the very source becomes dry, the channels of virtue, good deeds and fine attributes, which can flow from it, are not to be seen any longer . . . the only means for the building up of this source, and maintaining a constantly proper flow of religious benefits from it, is the act of "Tabligh [i.e., preaching]," which really and truly is the life-blood of Islam. (Hasan 1994, p. 24)

Responsibility frame:

> Allah has given us a big responsibility! . . . There is no Prophet to come. This is our responsibility. That's why the elders say, this is our biggest sin! [that we do not make effort]. We have not taken up this responsibility. . . . The past year 90 million people have gone without *iman*. We are responsible. (Ali and Sahib 2022, p. 80)

> We have been given the responsibility of the *ambiya* [Prophets] . . . All the *barakah* [blessing] and the greatness that was seen in the Sahabah [companions of the Prophet Muhammad], why this is not being seen in the lives of the Muslims here? Because we've left that duty, we've left that responsibility that Allah has given us. (Ali and Sahib 2022, p. 80)

These framings together produce the idea that reviving *iman* or calling to *iman* is something passed down from the eminent Muslim personalities of the past. The emotion work corresponding to these framings is what this study defines as entrustment. Entrustment is the idea that *iman* is a trust, and that Muslims today have a mission to protect that trust through conducting *tabligh*. This sentiment is seen in Aashiq Ilaahi (1994, p. 12), who says in his pamphlet *Six Fundamentals*:

> To call the wrong doing and negligent people to Allah, and to instruct them with His commandments, was really the duty of the Ambiyaa [i.e., Prophets], which has now been entrusted to the Muslims.

What kinds of emotions may entrustment generate? One emotion that may arise is pride, which is a positive feeling of having achieved something valued or virtuous (De Hooge and Van Osch 2021, p. 2). People become proud when they appraise themselves as being responsible for accomplishing something seen as socially valued (Mascolo and Fischer 1995). For Tablighis, pride may arise as a feeling of pleasure or satisfaction from participating in the socially important deed of preserving *iman*. Pride may come from having *iman*, as *iman* is something that is most pleasing to Allah. Pride may also come from one being a caller to Allah or a worker for Allah, and that one is following in the footsteps of the eminent Muslim personalities of the past. Pride may come from the image of *tabligh* as a mission. For example, Muhammad Zakariyya (1994a, p. 14) says, "The main cause of our [i.e., Muslims] decline is that we do not pay attention to Tabligh nor do we help those who devote themselves to this sacred mission". Balci (2012, p. 70) alludes to pride which he calls "self-esteem"—as something created by being on a mission: "Being given such responsibilities, like da'wa missions for the stray sheep of the Muslim community to keep on the straight and narrow, increases young people's self-esteem".

Tabighis may also experience what psychologists call "group pride". Group-based pride occurs when one identifies with a social group that has achieved something socially valuable (De Hooge and Van Osch 2021, p. 2). Tablighi texts offer Muslims a collective identity with those eminent Muslim personalities of the past—the Prophets and their disciples and companions. Tablighi texts tell Muslims today that by undertaking *tabligh* they are undertaking the "work" or "occupation" that the Prophets and their disciples and companions undertook. Ihtishaamul Hasan (1994, p. 30) says about *tabligh* that "it was exactly this type of work which every prophet of Allah Ta'ala had to do as his sole occupation". Thus, being a Tablighi is to inherit the special work of preaching from the Prophets mentioned in the Qur'an. The following statement in one *bayan* illustrates this discursive move: "Allah has given us the work of the prophets" (Ali and Sahib 2022, p. 83).

The main pamphlet of *Faza'il-e-A'maal—Hayaat-us-Sahaabah* (Lives of the Companions)—speaks to the exemplary struggle and hardships the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions endured in cultivating *iman* and Islam, and in preaching. For example, Muhammad Zakariyya (1994b, pp. 15–18) tells the story of Prophet Muhammad's journey to a town outside Mecca called Taif to call its people to Islam. The local chieftains rejected the Prophet upon his invitation to them to convert to Islam. Zakariyya (1994b, p. 16) describes the Prophet in this situation as "a rock of steadfastness and perseverance". Reading or hearing such stories may encourage Muslims to also do whatever it takes in terms of time, effort, and finances to call people to Islam. This consideration is illustrative of the emotion of elevation. Elevation is a feeling of upliftment and desire to do good upon witnessing another person undertaking a morally beneficial act towards others (Haidt 2003, pp. 863–64). Elevation ties in with the reason Muhammad Zakariyya wrote *Hayaat-us-Sahaabah*, that is, for mothers to read its contents to their children so as to "create in them an Islamic spirit of love and esteem for the Sahaabah, and thereby improve 'Imaan'" (Zakariyya 1994b, p. 12). Here, I interpret love and esteem as elevation. Muhammad Zakariyya (1994b, p. 13) goes on to say that the stories of the Companions "serve as a beacon of Faith and Practice". Therefore, if a Muslim wants to be inspired or elevated to practice *iman* and Islam, he/she may turn to *Hayaat-us-Sahaabah*.

Finally, entrustment, in combination with the responsibility and *tabligh* frames, may generate the emotion of determination (also called "challenge"). The psychology literature defines determination as "a positive, energized feeling stemming from the believed ability to overcome actual and potential obstacles to achieve one's goals" (Kirby et al. 2014, p. 383). Indeed, Tablighis are known for their tenacity, resourcefulness, and commitment to preaching, sometimes in very difficult circumstances. Tablighi commitment to preaching aligns with the notion that the action that stems from the emotional state of determination is effort (ibid., p. 384). In Tablighi circles much discussion contains references to the term "effort". Ali and Sahib (2022, p. 84) document a few instances of this framing. I mention one example here where a speaker elaborating on *tabligh* said:

> This is the effort on which Prophet Muhammad made effort, and He made every Sahabah [Companions of Prophet Muhammad] to stand up with this effort. And Sahabah did the effort (Ali and Sahib 2022, p. 84)

By hearing about the sacrifice and effort made by the Muslim personalities found in *Hayaat-us-Sahabah* and mentioned in *bayan*, Muslims today may become determined—i.e., make effort—to overcome obstacles in their day-to-day preaching adventures.

5.6.3. Micro Shock

Fellow feeling is not only the domain of entrustment, but also results from another facet of Tablighi emotion work called micro shock. Jacobsson and Lindblom (2016, pp. 71–72) use the term micro-shock to describe the practice of animal rights activists looking at films and pictures of animal abuse, for example, in fur farms. Watching these stimuli generates anger and outrage, which then spurs individuals towards activism.

In the case of Tabligh Jama'at, micro-shock occurs through shocking ideas of Islam being destroyed or people going to hellfire as punishment for lacking *iman* and Islam. Micro-shock thus corresponds to the motivational frames "urgency" and "severity" (Ali and Sahib 2022, pp. 76–78). Severity and urgency framing are illustrated in the following statements in *Faza'il-e-A'maal* and *bayan*:

> Today . . . every particle of Islam is being destroyed one by one before our very eyes. (Hasan 1994, p. 31)

> The time is moving fast and so is the pace of deterioration in the religion of Islam. The situation demands a strong, quick, and determined effort by one and all for arresting the rot and stopping further degeneration. (Hasan 1994, p. 20)

> If we see a burning fire, we will go to stop the fire. So, what about the millions of people who have already died and are going to *jahannam* [hell]? It is our fault! We have failed to do this work. (Ali and Sahib 2022, p. 83)

> The Prophet is not here today. His companions are not here today. So, who is going to worry about the *ummah*? Everyday hundreds of thousands of people pass away. How many of them die without *iman*? (Ali and Sahib 2022, p. 77)

In Tablighi discourse dying without faith is the ultimate ruin of a human being. By forwarding the alarming proposition that everyday hundreds of thousands or millions of people are headed towards this ruin, Tablighi texts perform the emotion work of shocking the audience into giving emotional attention to this situation. When the speaker prefaces the shocking statistic of hundreds of thousands of people passing away without faith with the words, "who is going to worry about the *ummah*?" he is prodding the audience to have other-oriented feelings: to *worry*, to *care*, to *empathise*, and to have *sympathy*. For simplicity, I subsume these feelings into the emotions of concern and compassion.

First, concern refers to the disquietedness one may feel due to worry or anxiety about something (Roughley and Schramme 2018, p. 15). In Tablighi circles, concern is denoted by the commonly heard Urdu or Arabic term "*fikr*". Tablighis always encourage each other to have *fikr* for *din* (religion) or *fikr* for *akhirah* (afterlife). For example, Jan Ali relates a Tablighi in Sydney saying about the benefits of *khuruj*: "Everyone comes with same fikr [concern] with same niyat [intention] and with same aim to do the same thing together, that is, to become good God-fearing Muslims" (Ali 2010b, p. 167). Second, compassion is "the feeling that arises in witnessing another's suffering and that motivates a subsequent desire to help" (Goetz et al. 2010, p. 351). For some Tablighis it may be the imagined suffering of others in the afterlife that creates a tender-heartedness and subsequent desire to save people by conveying the message of Islam to them. The following statement by a Tablighi in England illustrates compassion:

> It is not enough to give those in need food or clothes. If a man is starving and you give him food he will be hungry again. If you give him clothes then he will have them until they wear out. But true mercy is to inform them of Allah. True mercy is to teach them *salat* [prayer], because *salat* will last for life! (Pieri 2015, p. 144)

5.6.4. Transcendence

The central frame around which the other Tablighi collective action frames revolve is the Allah frame. Ali and Sahib (2022, pp. 78–80) describe the "Allah frame" as calling Muslims to remember that Allah is almighty and to heed Allah's promises of aid and rewards for those that work for him. The Allah frame urges Muslims to have trust in Allah when embarking on preaching. The following *bayan* by a Tablighi in Sydney illustrates this framing:

> *Da'wah* [calling people to belief in Allah] has an effect on the heart of the *da'i* [propagator]. This is because he has strong certainty that for whom He is calling He is listening. He is with him. Every single thing in the universe moves with the permission of Allah. Nothing can harm, nothing can benefit except with the permission with Allah. . . . The *da'i* must have certainty that every single thing in this world is going to support me because "I am a caller of Allah". The ocean will not go against me. . . . Every single thing is supporting me. . . . The power is with Allah. (Ali and Sahib 2022, p. 79)

The emotion work found in this framing is transcendence. Transcendence aims to attach one emotionally to Allah by instructing one to seek Allah's aid. Muhammad Zakariyya (1994a, p. 23) says in *Faza'il-e-Tabligh*, "Asking from Allah, even if it be the mending of a shoe is in itself part of religion". The following words from a *bayan* also prompts Tablighis to rely on Allah:

> Believe in the power of Allah, and the mountains will move. . . . This thought has to be in your hearts. . . . If you have this thought then the effect is there. We have the way, we have the structure. We do not need anything else. We need to implement. (Ali and Sahib 2022, p. 80)

Emotional framing like this attaches the heart to Allah through the emotions of hope (in Allah's aid) and optimism (in the potential success of preaching efforts). Transcendence tells the Muslim that she need only implement preaching and Allah will take care of the rest. Transcendence may thus counter any negative emotions such as disillusionment and frustration that may arise in preaching activity that does not result in positive responses by potential proselytes.

The focus on Allah's aid and Allah's rewarding one may also generate love for Allah. This idea is supported by Jan Ali's (2010a, p. 110) observation that Tablighis adopt an "Allah-friendly attitude" and that for Tablighis "The attitude of the faithful towards Allah should be inspired by love, gratitude, patience, self-sacrifice, and complete devotion". Love for Allah is encouraged by Tablighi texts. For example, in the pamphlet *Six Fundamentals* contained in *Faza'il-e-A'maal* the author connects *zikr* or remembrance of Allah with love of Allah: "The true believers should remember Allah most often, and by contemplating the wonders of His creation, they should glorify Him, and thereby strengthen their love for Him" (Ilaahi 1994, p. 7).

Transcendence expands the emotional world of the Tablighi by generating in him an interest for the religious life over a worldly or purely material existence. Interest is an emotion that motivates humans to expend effort and brainpower to do things that they are curious about or that fascinate them (Silvia 2008, p. 57). Interest underpins much of human motivation to learn and explore (ibid.). Tablighi texts attempt to generate interest in the religious life by making it seem fascinating. They achieve this by framing the religious life as self-cultivation and self-improvement. This discursive move represents what Ali and Sahib (2022, pp. 75–76) call the "self-reform" frame. The following statements from Tablighi texts illustrate this frame:

> [When people have changed their condition] only then can we derive full benefit from the existing religious institutions which, in turn, can serve the community in a befitting manner (Hasan 1994, p. 23)

> Say to yourselves that we are going on the path of Allah externally to reform ourselves internally (Ali and Sahib 2022, p. 76)

Self-reform can be interesting in the sense of it being an exploration into the spiritual potential of human life. Ihtishaamul Hasan (1994, pp. 28–30) outlines five practices that Muslims can perform that will contribute to their self-reform: (1) memorising and correctly reciting the Muslim testimony of faith; (2) punctuality in performing the five daily canonical obligatory prayers; (3) daily recitation of the Qur'an; (4) daily time for *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah); (5) and good relations with and attitudes towards all Muslims. These acts provide an interesting way of life that lends meaning to one's day-to-day existence.

This facet of Tablighi teaching should not be underestimated for its potential impact on people's lives. If we consider, with Charles Taylor (2007, p. 307), that in modern secular societies "our actions, goals, achievements . . . have a lack of weight, gravity, thickness, and substance. There is a deeper resonance which they lack, which we feel should be there", pious living offers a lifestyle that has a metaphysical significance and therefore pious living carries a certain gravity. Because of modern society's lack of meaningful pursuits, as observed by Taylor, pious living becomes interesting for its very meaningfulness and consequence for one's afterlife.

5.6.5. Compensation

Aside from a meaningful existence, Tablighi texts posit pious living as beneficial for one because *iman*, Islam, and *tabligh* are rewarded in the afterlife. This idea draws on the

motivational "rewards" frame (Ali and Sahib 2022, p. 81). The following *bayan* statement illustrates this framing:

> A person who spends his life building up his faith, even if it is only so much as a mustard seed's weight, this effort will be rewarded with a space in Paradise which will be bigger than the universe. In this space he will be gifted a mansion which will be so amazing it will dumbfound the owner. (Ali and Sahib 2022, p. 81)

This message entices the audience with the image of a paradisical mansion that will be so immense that it will dumbfound its recipient.

Such framing is illustrative of the emotion work of compensation. Compensation is the attempt to attach Muslims to pious living and preaching through the emotions of anticipation, excitement, and desire. These emotions are interrelated, as the more an individual feels anticipation and excitement about heavenly rewards, the more she/he would desire to live a life of piety and preaching. Tablighi texts do well to encourage this kind of emotional attachment. Take the following statement from Aashiq Ilaahi (1994, p. 12) in *Six Fundamentals*: "Leaving one's home and family for the cause of Allah has great rewards for the subject in the next life, just as Rasulullah [Prophet Muhammad] has clearly told us". The emotion work here is to attach the reader to preaching by creating anticipation, excitement, and desire due to the great returns or rewards that preaching gives its doer.

To sum up this Results section, we point to Tablighi texts as performing five kinds of emotion work: reflexivity, entrustment, micro shock, transcendence, and compensation. This emotion work is intricately connected with Tablighi framing. Together this emotional framing lends to Tablighi message an immense emotional potential as seen in the several emotions mentioned above. The next section discusses the implications of this dynamism for Tabligh Jama'at as a transformative phenomenon in the modern world.

6. Discussion

Tablighis have invested in the social transformation of the modern world through individual reform and self-development (Ali 2012). They aim for transformation because, like all Islamic revivalists, they face the challenge of "an overwhelming modern society whose effect is unambiguously corrosive to totalistic religious belief and practice" (Azmi 2000, p. 236). Because of this feature of the modern world, Tablighis have feelings of indignation, moral outrage, disdain, and contempt towards it. These feelings are seen, for example, in the following Tablighi's observation that the world is "a house of dishonour" that "poisons its lovers in their trance" and that on the Day of Judgment the world will manifest as "an old hideous woman" (Talib 2000, p. 72). Additionally, another Tablighi describes Western society as a "polluted and dirty environment" which preaching will cleanse (Masud 2000, p. 108).

Social transformation is "qualitative change in the nature and character of human societies" (Groenewald 2000, p. 18). Historians Will and Ariel Durant (Durant and Durant 1968, p. 32) point out that "Society is founded not on the ideals but on the nature of man". Therefore, transformation of society is intertwined with transformation of individuals that make-up society. For this reason, this study has given close attention to an important facet of human life—the emotions. Considering that individual human beings are the building blocks of a society, and that emotions or feelings are a core element that constitutes the human, social transformation of society pertains—to some degree—to change within the emotional sphere of human life. Additionally, it is here that Tablighi emotion work contributes to social transformation—by enchanting the Muslim's emotional sphere.

To explain this point, if we take secularisation (a hallmark of the modern world) as "the decline in the proportion of their time, energy, and resources which men devote to super-empirical concerns" (Wilson 1982, p. 149), then Tablighi emotion work defends against this process by generating in Muslims an emotional attachment to ultimate religious concerns such that they might expend energy for pious, spiritual pursuits. This strategy of Tabligh

Jama'at is seen in Ihtishaamul Hasan's (1994, p. 23) statement that "[Muslims must launch a] counter-effort, where we are able to revive the dead spirit of each and every Muslim and rekindle in him the love and attachment for Islam". I offer here a brief explanation of how the emotion work mentioned in the Results section of this study contribute to this process of attachment for Islam.

Transcendence, for example, may generate emotional attachment to Allah in the form of hope and optimism. Thus, a Tablighi writing a letter from the United Kingdom to the second Tabligh Jama'at leader Maulana Muhammad Yusuf, says " . . . those who believe in Allah have proved by their actions that this environment can be changed" (Masud 2000, p. 108). Here, the individual affirms his attachment to Allah rather than attachment to his own or other material means of changing society. Such is the importance of attachment to Allah in Tabligh Jama'at that Ali (2012, p. 242) says, in the movement "All human emotions are concentrated and directed towards Allah as a matter of priority".

The emotion work of micro shock—the use of impactful language (for example, "eternal punishment") and images (for example, people burning in hellfire) to awaken people to the destruction of Islam and people's future punishment—may attach Muslims to Islam and their fellow humans in the form of concern and compassion. Such emotional framing may cause those for whom Islam and people's future have low salience, to begin to have concern and compassion for Islam and people's faith.

Reflexivity emotion work for its part prods Muslims to reflect on their deficiencies in material power, religious character, and failure to work for Islam. Such reflection may result in shame and guilt, as seen in one Tablighi's reflection while on *khuruj* (preaching tour) in the United States:

> Arriving here, we realize how much wrong we have done to the faith of the Prophet, how we have neglected the spreading of this faith. The whole Umma [i.e., Muslim community or nation] is now suffering for it. The whole Umma is humiliated . . . We have attracted God's punishment because of our bad deeds . . . . The situation calls for serious deliberation and weeping. (Masud 2000, p. 117)

The shame and guilt in this statement show that reflexivity has caused him to become attached to existential concerns, namely the state of the Muslim *umma* and religious faith.

These facets of Tablighi emotion work contribute to the Tabligh Jama'at being what Peter Berger (1999, p. 4) calls a religious subculture, which is a means for people to reject modern ideas and values found in the society outside the religious group. Tablighis see the modern world as having corrupted the emotional sphere of human life by replacing love of God and religion with love of *dunya* (worldliness) along with fascination, hope, and pride in temporal things. Therefore, in their preaching, Tablighis attempt to detach Muslims from love of these things. Gilles Kepel (2000, pp. 196–97) reports on the theme of a Tablighi *bayan* he attended in Paris: "A gradual detachment from the connections with this world, by means of prayer, dhikr [i.e., remembrance of God], 'ilm [i.e., knowledge of God], and 'going out' will lead the true believer finally to the peace that the spirit longs for".

Tablighi emotion work is central to this detachment process by directing Muslim attention and emotions to ultimate religious concerns. For example, where once there was desire for a high-salaried job and status amongst peers, now there is desire for Allah's pleasure and status amongst the eminent Muslim personalities of the past.

In view of these points, emotion work to some degree underpins the Tabligh Jama'at being what Bryan Wilson (2010, p. 89) calls "religious community", which is an "ongoing local group" set against society which is "essentially secular". The Tabligh Jama'at aims to defend against secular society by forming local groups in which *iman* and Islam are considered signs of one's flourishing. *Iman* and Islam may be things that modern society deems inconsequential or even detrimental to human flourishing; hence, the contrasting nature of the religious community and secular society, and that the formation of the former becomes a defence against the latter. By re-directing Muslim emotions to ultimate religious concerns, emotion work contributes to the formation of an anti-secular, or at the very least, un-secular, community culture.

Tablighi emotion work and its emotions make Tablighi communities into an emotional haven from the travails of the modern world outside. This idea is illustrated in one Tablighi's comment that spending time with a Tabligh Jama'at results in one having "emotional poise"—that is, "if *akhirat* [i.e., Afterlife] is one's real purpose, then Allah bestows upon such a person an emotional poise that cleanses the heart from worldly worries" (Talib 2000, p. 64). Time spent in a Tablighi community provides what Kinnvall and Svensson (2017) describe as "ontological security" which is an emotional response (i.e., feelings of spirituality, solidarity, and purpose) to the negative feelings of ontological insecurity and existential anxiety produced by a modern world marked by secular global governance, transnationalism, and national security.

The above discussion allows us to opine that Tabligh Jama'at participates in the social transformation of the world by detaching people emotionally from a purely material and secularised way of life and attaching them emotionally to a pious life such that pious living becomes a deeply satisfying and serious affair. Exploring the emotion work performed by Tablighi texts has allowed this study to make this analysis of the Tabligh Jama'at. Emotion work, therefore, is not only a key action of Tablighi texts, but a window into the nature of the Tabligh Jama'at as a transformative phenomenon in the modern world.

7. Conclusions

Tabligh Jama'at's preaching parties and Tablighi communities are characterised by a religious subculture infused with certain emotions engendered by the emotion work performed by its literary and oral texts *Faza'il-e-A'maal* and *bayan*. Tablighi emotion work attempts to re-enchant the individual's emotional sphere by re-orienting his/her aspirations, fascinations, loves, and concerns for purely material, vain matters to religious matters. This re-orientation or detachment/attachment process is achieved by Tabighi texts through five different kinds of emotion work: reflexivity, entrustment, micro-shock, transcendence, and compensation. This emotion work may potentially generate the emotions of shame, guilt, interest, pride, elevation, concern, compassion, anticipation, excitement, desire, hope, optimism, and love for Allah.

Through generating these emotions, Tabligh Jama'at participates in the transformation of people's emotional dimension such that they become emotionally attached to Allah, Islam, Prophet Muhammad and his Companions, *iman* (faith), *tabligh* (preaching), Muslims, and the afterlife. Tablighi emotion work instructs Muslims to feel passionately about these things, and in doing so, increases their attraction and commitment to the Islamic revivalist cause. By attaching Muslim hearts to religious concerns, Tablighi framing and emotion work aims for an emotional awakening in Muslims that reverses or protects against the corruption of human emotional sphere by the secular modern world. By enchanting human emotional life, Tablighi emotion work contributes to the enchantment of society—one person and local Tablighi community at a time.

This study is a preliminary attempt to introduce the sociology of emotions into Tabligh Jama'at research. Several avenues remain open for further research using this approach. For example, we may explore the Tablighi participant side of the movement to see how the emotion work of Tablighi texts is received by participants and potential recruits. Future examination of emotion work in Islamic revivalist movements could designate a space to exploring the personal, cultural, social, and political factors that impact the resonance of a movement's emotion work for Muslims from different backgrounds. Such research avenues open up a place for emotions in our understanding of Islamic revivalism in the modern world.

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An Islamic Revivalist Group's Unsuccessful Attempt to Find Meaning on WhatsApp: A Case Study of Understanding Unsustainable Asymmetrical Logics between Traditional Religion and the Digital Realm

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Abstract: The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted society in myriad ways, but how the pandemic has changed traditional forms of religion has been relatively understudied. Addressing this caveat, in this paper, I try to understand how adherents of an Islamic revivalist movement, the Tablighi Jamaat, turn to WhatsApp for meaning-making at the onset of the pandemic in Pakistan. The adherents are unable to sustain the use of the digital space due to incompatibility between the logic of the movement and the online platform. Without structural authority and organization, communication is chaotic and, at times, combative. The mixing of pure and impure ideas is also detrimental to communal cohesiveness. This study provides a counterexample to previous claims of symbiosis between online and offline religion and their inevitable merger.

Keywords: Tablighi Jamaat; COVID-19; WhatsApp; traditional; Islamic revivalist movement; digital religion; Pakistan; netnography; logics; authority

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1. Introduction

"(It's the) time of (a) big test . . . what we think and what we say . . . what we do and why we do," reads the WhatsApp message of one of the informants of my study. It captures the heart of the situation I am trying to understand. Pakistani society is in a state of chaos as the COVID-19 pandemic punctures the spirits of many. Additionally, while the traditional Islamic revivalist movement, the Tablighi Jamaat, is typically calm in Pakistan's inherently volatile socio-cultural and political environment, this time I realize a noticeable rise in the temperature of the discussion. As the group is typically offline for most of its events, the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic have pushed much of this group's discourse to the digital format. The WhatsApp platform had previously been mainly used for the coordination of events and meetings but has now suddenly turned into a hotbed of discussion and debate as a result of unreliable and obfuscating information. In times past, such conversations, if they ever occurred, were left for one-on-one or small group physical interactions. However, with new norms being set by the pandemic—of which arguably the prickliest for this group had been social distancing—there seemed little choice but to turn towards social media for sensemaking of religious belief and conduct in the face of conflicting scientific information.

Modernity is imagined as the improvement of physical, political, and social life through a number of changes in society, e.g., the rise of free-market capitalism, urbanization, technological advancement, especially in communication and financial exchange, and scientific explanations (Ali and Sahib 2022). Among the myriad forces that comprise our understanding of modernity, one such force is that of digitalization, or the "[i]ntegration of digital technologies into everyday life by the digitization of everything that can be digitized" (Ochs and Riemann 2018, p. 506). The move toward digitalization across fields of social life

has increasingly been witnessed over time and in particular during the dramatic onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The need for social distancing (or at least physical distancing) has introduced alternate modes of behavior, e.g., increased online shopping (as opposed to in-store shopping), increased use of digital communication in workplaces as employees work from home, and physical distancing in queues and on public transport (Bapuji et al. 2020; Scott and Martin 2020; Viswanathan et al. 2021). One of the more profound effects of the pandemic has been its impact on social relations. In fact, it is perhaps in social contexts where physical proximity is constitutive to social existence that the impact of the pandemic has been most severely felt (Sheth 2020).

With the advent of social distancing, people in the modern world have increased their digital modes of communication in order to make sense of the disorder. In a quest to find meaning, people indiscriminately share with the best intentions (Islam et al. 2020). Others spread information to please others so that they can establish and strengthen social connections (Aditya and Darke 2019). However, the reality is that such information is doubtful or untrue even when sourced from ostensibly credible sources (Chaxel and Laporte 2021; Goldsmith and Lee 2020; Jun and Johar 2022). As a result, rumors and false news spread rapidly under such circumstances of risk and low trust (Fine et al. 2005; Rosnow 1980; Shahsavari et al. 2020). Fake news, unconfirmed reporting, and biases in the presentation of data are all challenges that information consumers face. Hence, along with the health crisis, COVID-19 also brought with it an 'infodemic' (Alam et al. 2021; Depoux et al. 2020; Patwa et al. 2020).

While previous research has argued that reckless dissemination of information occurs pervasively, particularly in a digital world, we are yet to realize the full social implications of such acts, particularly at a time of heightened risk such as the pandemic. For instance, as shown above, while we know why digital citizens may share such information and when such news may be deemed credible, we are yet to understand what implications spreading unverified information has on social understanding, practice, and relating. This is of particular importance to certain groups, such as those based on Islamic tradition, where communal harmony is central to meaning-making and progression. In this vein, I ask how do members of a movement which is based on reviving Islamic tradition respond to the effects of digitalization?

In this paper, I consider the site of an Islamic revivalist movement, the Tablighi Jamaat, whose everyday social and consumption behavior relies on physical proximity and is disrupted due to the social restrictions of the pandemic. As a result, the community is forced to converse digitally given the extraordinary situation of the pandemic. I draw my data mainly from a netnographic study of a WhatsApp group comprising participants who are members of Tablighi Jamaat. I observe that the onset of the pandemic fundamentally upsets the social principles of the movement, creating discord online. More specifically, I find that the digitalization of the traditional movement's activities upends hierarchy, creates a cacophony of verified and unverified information sources, and fundamentally alters the norms of communication. This creates mistrust in the movement's own authority and members.

This article unfolds in the following manner. First, I revisit the literature on digital religion. I then review the work conducted on Islamic revivalist movements and the Tablighi Jamaat. These literature streams form the basis of the theory that this study aims to contribute to. I then share the methods used for this study and the research context. This is followed by the findings section, where I draw on some major conclusions. I follow this with a discussion of the implications of these findings.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Digital Religion: An Overview

Helland (2000, 2005) put forth the idea of *religion online* and *online religion*. The former encompassed the idea of religious authorities moving to the online space but maintaining the one-to-many paradigm in which religious experts could speak to adherents but not

vice versa. On the other hand, online religion envisaged religion coming to the digital space but also using the potential of the internet to allow for cross-communication between religious leadership and laypersons and laypersons with one another. In addition, it permitted followers to be creative in praxis e.g., perform virtual prayer and meditation (Helland 2016).

Campbell (2012, p. xx) presented a more formal explanation of digital religion; she conceived it as "the technological and cultural space that is evoked when we talk about how online and offline religious spheres have become blended or integrated". The author extended the view that digital religion incorporates influences from both online culture and traditional religion. The former implies dynamics such as interaction and convergence, while the latter points to belief systems informed historically. The online religious culture, nevertheless, is shaped by both the developments in new media as well as the religious system in the offline world. Hence, offline and online are not bifurcated. Moreover, digital religion addresses issues of modernity that underscore the uneasy relationship between religion and secularization, shifts in authority, and freedom of religious choice and practice.

Grieve (2013) argued that three features comprise digital religion. One component is the variety of technological tools in which religion is embedded digitally. These include audio, video, websites, games, etc. These media characterize the interactivity, hypertextuality, and communicability of digital content. The second characteristic of digital religion links the economics, politics, and culture of new media to establish a new religious vision and set of novel practices that liberate adherents from dogma and tradition (Grieve 2013, p. 109). The third facet is a means to negotiate liquid modernity. This idea elucidates that digital religion is not simply a repackaging of traditional religion; instead, it speaks to apprehensions of the liquid modern world by combining new media with religious narratives (Grieve 2013, p. 110).

Examples that support the ideas of Campbell and Grieve are rich. For instance, Kim (2005) explored online Korean Buddhist communities and found that online religion serves interpretative, relation-building, and instrumental functions. Golan and Stadler (2016) noted that even in ultra-orthodox Jewish communities, authorities worked with webmasters to foster solidarity, preach Judaism, and negotiate the apparent divide between modernity and religion. Islamic examples also exist. Becker (2009) found Salafi Muslims use digital media to debate authentic religious sources. In other work, researchers have documented how religious authorities such as *shaykhs* (religious leaders) and *imams* (prayer leaders) and religious practices such as Sufism transit to the digital sphere (Rozehnal 2019, 2022). Fakhruroji (2021) unveils how Indonesian consumers use new forms of media, such as apps by celebrity preachers, to engage with Islamic rulings.

In these interventions, researchers have taken an approach that points to the inevitability of the merger between religion and the digital (Siuda 2021). Helland (2016, p. 179), for instance, posits that researchers need to ask "how *has* digital religion become part of my lived religious experience?" rather than whether or not it has. Campbell and Evolvi (2020) declare that the pervasiveness of digital media makes it progressively onerous for religious authorities to retain solitary interpretations of religious teachings. More significantly, these arguments allude to an almost laudatory and compatibility between the two realms, indicating seamlessness in integration.

However, one domain that requires empirical attention in the aforementioned discussion is that of traditional religious movements, i.e., those that are intrinsically anti-secular modern. To explore this facet, I now move to discuss Islamic revivalist movements and the Tablighi Jamaat in particular.

2.2. Islamic Revivalist Movements

Almost as a response to the secular modernity that had begun to pervade globally in the 1800s, Islamic movements of various kinds responded to the changing social landscape (Robinson 2008). Mainly, the responses varied from adapting religion according to modern-day requirements to being resistive and strongly holding on to belief structures and identity-

forming values. Traditional Muslims were forced to either resist secular modernity or succumb to the pervasive new lifestyle. In a sense, the advanced onset of modernity catalyzed Islamic revival. This is buttressed by the fact that in about the last two centuries, a number of revivalist movements (e.g., the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Nahda in Tunisia, Tablighi Jamaat, and Jamaat-e-Islami in the Indian subcontinent) sprung up at the same time modernity spread its proverbial wings globally (Ali 2003; Lapidus 1997).

The rethinking of Islam in the Indian subcontinent included new ways of interpreting religious texts such as the Qur'an and *Hadith* (Prophetic sayings) by Islamists and modernists to align with modernity (e.g., Ahl-e-Hadith and Ahl-e-Qur'an); selection of and working with portions of traditional knowledge to suit modern needs (e.g., Deobandi school disbanding Persian streams to focus on Qur'an and *Hadith*); institutionalization and spread of networks of knowledge using schools and publications (particularly in the Deobandi stream of thinking); focusing on transforming the spiritual self (Tariqat movements) (Robinson 2008). These changes helped bring rationality to traditional Islam and reify its roots. Based on the latter line of thinking, one of the movements that aimed to revert Muslims to orthodoxy, the Tablighi Jamaat, is the subject of this investigation. To bring the Tablighi Jamaat into a socio-historical perspective, I will now present a review of the major events that transpired before and after the founding of the Tablighi Jamaat.

2.3. Tablighi Jamaat from Its Advent to Today

Maulana Muhammad Ilyas (1885–1944), a religious scholar trained in the traditional Deobandi Islamic way, was concerned about the lamentable spiritual state of Muslims in late colonial India (Ali 2003). Maulana witnessed the lives of the Muslim Meos of Mewat on the outskirts of Delhi. Living side by side over centuries, there was little difference in the lifestyles of Muslims and Hindus (Nadwi 1983). This observation was recorded in the Alwar Gazetteer of 1878 by Major Powlett (1878, p. 38) as follows:

> All the Meos are, now, Muslims, but only in name. Their village deities are the same as those of the Hindu landlords, and they celebrate several Hindu festivals. Holi is a season of special rejoicing among the Mewatis and they observe it like their own festivals, such as Moharram, Id and Shab-i-Barat. The same is the case with Janam Ashtami, Dusschra and Diwali...Very few of them know the *Kalima* (basic testament to oneness of God and Messenger of God Muhammad [peace be upon him]) and fewer still observe *namaz* (prayer) regularly. About the hours and rules of *namaz*; their ignorance is complete. This is the state of the Meos of Alwar.

Maulana aimed to help Muslims revert to traditional Islam by re-enacting preaching behavior from early Islam as shown by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Instrumental was Maulana's two-pronged approach that not only revived the teachings and practices of Islam but also in the manner of reviving the very work and ambience that were used in seventh-century Arabia. He believed that lay preaching under the supervision of *aalims* (religious clerics) was the route to establishing pious lives.

Maulana's mission included uniting every person of the *ummah* (Muslim nation), scholars and laypeople, the pious and impious, and the rich and poor classes of society. He thought of sending out *jamaats* (group missions) consisting of varied individuals from one area to another, as was the norm at the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The first *jamaat* set out in 1927–1928. By 1941, the annual 25,000 people took part in the annual Tablighi Jamaat *ijtema* (congregation). In 1947, at the partition of the Indian subcontinent, the Pakistan Chapter was set up in Raiwind, a town near Lahore.

Tablighi Jamaat, literally meaning preaching group, is an Islamic revivalist movement that has today mushroomed into a global presence (Rauf et al. 2019). Estimates claim that Tablighi Jamaat today has more than 80 million adherents (Taylor 2009). Pakistan, with its headquarters in Raiwind, is one of the largest bases for Tablighi Jamaat and the epicenter for guidance for many countries. Many international Tablighi Jamaat participants travel to Raiwind annually to learn and practice *dawat* (preaching).

In recreating the practices and atmosphere of early Islam, Tablighi Jamaat uses a number of methods. These include participative communication both oral and written (Metcalf 1993, 2004); seclusion from everyday environments (Gaborieau 2006; Rauf 2022), social community and participation (Ali 2003), mythologizing (Metcalf 1993), egalitarianism (Rauf and Prasad 2020), and inculcating etiquettes and values (Reetz 2004; Rauf et al. 2018). Many activities are carried out in participants' local *masjids* (mosques) on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.

Other aspects that are integral to moral development include rituals and (physical) social community (Masud 2000; Metcalf 1993). Tablighi Jamaat activities reinforce social belonging through traveling as a group, congregational programs, and meetings at Tablighi centers and at local mosques. The movement advocates community by encouraging Muslim congregations for prayer, religious education circles, sleeping, and eating. Social decorum is sustained through peer pressure and group discussion. Social activities by themselves also foster acceptable norms. A council of elders guides community life by publicly meeting to discuss and decide on matters of administration and importance (Reetz 2004).

2.4. Summary of the Tablighi Jamaat Program

One of the conspicuities about the Tablighi Jamaat is the repetitive, cyclical nature of the different discourses and practice routines that adherents perform. One of the main excursions is the *khuruj* (preaching tour outside one's locality). The *khuruj* takes place as a collective or *jamaat*, with usually 8 to 12 persons comprising the sojourn. The duration of *khuruj* may range from 3 to 360 days, but the format for every day in each version is the same. All activities, whether in *khuruj* or the local mosque, try to gear toward the six principles of Tablighi Jamaat (for a detailed explanation of the daily activities and six points, please see Ali (2021)). The atmosphere in the *jamaat* maintains a congenial, brotherly atmosphere.

Another key instrument in this moral development through physical proximity is that the participants of Tablighi Jamaat understand preaching to be an act that requires submitting to the authority of pious elders or other participants in a hierarchical fashion (Khan 2016). One of the key vehicles to achieve this is *mashwara* (group consultation), whereby a designated leader guides other participants on matters pertaining to social and religious life. It is the very physical, social, and masjid-based nature of this movement that makes it an appropriate site for the present investigation. Tablighi Jamaat participants are discouraged from using digital technology for their activities.

Tablighi Jamaat activities, including congregational prayers, take place in the environment of the mosque. Hence, when the Pakistani government announced that masjids would not allow more than five persons for prayer at the height of the pandemic, it dealt a severe blow to Tablighi Jamaat activities.

Given the above backdrop of digital religion and the traditional revivalist mode of the Tablighi Jamaat, the following question arises: how do members of a movement that is based on reviving Islamic tradition respond to the modern force of digitalization? This is a question that arose upon my reading of the literature and understanding of the site of fieldwork, which I describe next.

3. Research Context: COVID-19 in Pakistan

Pakistan is a country with a population of more than 220 million, making it the second largest Muslim nation in the world (Population Reference Bureau 2020). Born in 1947, Pakistan was a post-colonial state conceived as a homeland for Muslims (Dhulipala 2014). It has had a fraught relationship with religion and has experienced historical tensions between its identity as a Muslim state and its effort to become a progressive socio-economic player in line with Western standards (Zaman 2018).

The 2020 World Population Data Sheet noted Pakistan's "population density in urban areas, household size, and population aging contribute to . . . vulnerability to pandemics" (Population Reference Bureau 2020). The first coronavirus case in Pakistan was officially

detected on 26 February 2020 (Worldometers 2021). I conducted this investigation from the start of the pandemic to when its first wave began to recede. That effect was also noticeable in the social media data collected. Hence, the end date for this study is 30 June 2020, when the number of deaths in the country dramatically fell and stayed below 100 per day for the next several months (Worldometers 2021). At this time, the total number of cases in Pakistan had swelled to 209,337, out of which 2825 were daily new cases. The peak number of daily new cases recorded in Pakistan was 6825 on 14 June 2020.

Shortly after a month into the pandemic, the government of Pakistan announced a national lockdown from 1 April 2020 that would extend to 9 May 2020. Before this, two individual provinces had declared a local lockdown. While some commercial activity, industrial activity, and necessary consumer shopping continued with precautions, the government encouraged the general public to stay at home and observe social distancing (GardaWorld 2020). The administration shut down restaurants, malls, public transport, local, and (eventually) international flights. For a few weeks, only congregational prayers in masjids (mosques) were permitted while observing protocols. In a few cases, mosques were shut down completely.

4. Research Method: Netnography

To understand how the use of a social media platform influences the behavior of members of a traditional religious group, I used netnography. Netnography is the online version of ethnography. It is defined as "a form of qualitative research that seeks to understand the cultural experiences that encompass and are reflected within the traces, practices, networks and systems of social media" (Kozinets 2019, p. 14). Borrowing from the lineage of anthropology and sociology, netnography has been used in a number of research areas, including marketing, consumer research, and communications, to access naturalistic online data (Kozinets 2019). It is particularly useful for answering our research question since we would like to comprehend how online consumers of religious knowledge make sense of the various sources of information presented to them. In addition, this research is particularly interested in the social interaction transpiring through social media platforms, for which netnography is again particularly well suited.

5. Data Site and Analysis of a Private WhatsApp Group

I conducted a netnographic study on the social media platform WhatsApp. WhatsApp enables online relationships to play out through frequent communication. The platform is ideal for sharing news and stories, commenting, and entertaining. In a large group such as the one for this study, a few participants are observed to be more active than the rest. While occasionally the conversations can be personal, generally they are meaningful to the entire community. Relationships are developed and constructed over time; the threads can be joined or suspended at any time, creating an atmosphere of informality (O'Hara et al. 2014). The participants' discussions are often related to their real relationships with the community at large or with specific members. The collective, public display of threads also tempers the conversation. There is a degree of intimacy with relatable humor being shared, but also a degree of formality as senior and as some unknown members may be present. In this investigation, I noted that text messages, photos, audio, and videos were shared, creating opportunities for debate, critique, analysis, teasing, and sarcasm. In addition, other emotions were either texted or shown through emoticons. These exchanges developed the narrative over days, weeks, and months (O'Hara et al. 2014). Hence, the ongoing social construction of member relations on the platform was of key interest in this study.

At the same time, belonging to a traditional religious community also means that members are supposed to live up to the ideals of the community, observe propriety in communication and espouse the values and beliefs of the Tablighi Jamaat in their perspectives. Interestingly, as I note later, the platform-based communication exposes how the participants are tussling to live by the ideals of the Tablighi Jamaat with the plethora of other information sources, which may be held incompatible with traditional Islam.

I used netnography to study the group for four months at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in Pakistan. The WhatsApp group comprised 70 faculty members and alumni of a university in Pakistan who were affiliated with Tablighi Jamaat activities and had spent considerable time on Tablighi Jamaat sojourns (see Table 1 for selected member profiles).

Table 1. Selected Profiles of WhatsApp Group Members.

Serial No.	Pseudonym	Age	Education	Occupation	Years Since Graduation From Relevant University	Years since 4 Months in Tablighi Jamaat Sojourns	WhatsApp Group Role	Number of WhatsApp Posts in Research Period
1	Haris	40	Postgraduate	Professor	10	18	Admin	135
2	SeniorGrad	27	Postgraduate	Phd Student	0	5	Admin	369
3	Ismail	25	Postgraduate	School Administrator	2	3	Admin	61
4	Ehsan	25	Graduate	Business Owner	9	8	Admin	25
5	Professor	55	Postgraduate	Professor	NA—faculty (only taught)	29	Member	22
6	Ibrahim	44	Postgraduate	Government Employee	19	22	Member	27
7	Furqan	42	Postgraduate	Professor	19	19	Member	47
8	Nauman	34	Postgraduate	Phd Student	11	11	Member	18
9	Adnan	31	Postgraduate	Business Owner	8	8	Member	10
10	Talha	30	Postgraduate	Phd Student	8	8	Member	18
11	Usman	25	Graduate	Business Owner	3	3	Member	27

The description of the group stated that it was a group for old Tablighi Jamaat participants affiliated with the university. The members were spread apart globally. Two of these members left and rejoined the group within four months (one of them accidentally exited the group and rejoined immediately, while the other exited when they left on a Tablighi Jamaat sojourn and was added back when he returned). Three other members were added during the four months and three other members left during the four months. It is also important to note that some adherents who were eligible to join the group opted not to join the group for fear of the dangers of the Internet in polluting their beliefs and values (Rosenberg et al. 2019).

After experiencing the discussions live during the netnography, I then downloaded the posts from the group and analyzed them qualitatively. I determined the start time for the data as the time when the first Coronavirus-related post was reported in the group and the end time as the time when the Coronavirus cases had dropped significantly from their peak such that there was little discussion in the group on them. The timespan for the data is from 27 February to 30 June 2020. The data comprised a total of 1543 posts, which included 59 voice messages and 189 images and videos. Immersion notes were kept where I tried to interpret the feelings, events, and conversations in light of the overall context at the time. The textual data amounted to 25,864 words. The multimedia audio and video messages ranged from 3 s to roughly 45 min.

Since the data used for this study has been gleaned from a private online platform, research ethics was instrumental to the integrity of the investigation. I obtained Institutional Review Board approval for the project. Institutional Review Board is a university panel that checks for the ethical soundness of any project. No objections were raised by the Institutional Review Board with regard to the use of the project's methodology. I have been a member of the WhatsApp group since April 2019, while the group itself started in 2015. I was well-known in the community as an academic. Nevertheless, I also mentioned this on my profile in the group. In addition, the profile picture clearly mentioned "Researcher"

and was visible not only on the group member page but also in any messages that I posted on the group. Moreover, I sent a message to the group stating that I was conducting a research project on the impact of COVID-19 on religious communities and would be using the posts made on the group as data for the project. I also clarified that the data would be anonymized, and I could be contacted if there were any issues.

6. Findings

6.1. Online Activity during the Pandemic: From Indifference to Excitement to Dysfunction

The findings indicate that members of the WhatsApp group initially exhibited an indifferent attitude towards the pandemic, then experienced anxiety and conflict, and finally normalized and consolidated their views and accepted the reality of the pandemic. At the end of the study period, it was realized by the group at large that the online mode of Tablighi Jamaat operations was not materializing sustainably. Hence, the group returned to a sedate state, such as in pre-COVID times, with no meaningful Tablighi Jamaat activity being carried out. In the findings that follow, I explain why digitalization is not conducive in the case of the Tablighi Jamaat due to certain logics that are asymmetric to the inherently physical nature of the Tablighi Jamaat orthopraxy. Before that, I unravel the dynamics that change when the transition from physical to digital is made.

6.2. How Do Community Dynamics Change When Transitioning from Physical to Digital?

Interaction between members is an important part of religious communal relations. In physical communities, interaction between all members at most times may not be possible. However, digital communities eliminate restrictions of time and space so that information is accessible to communities and interaction is open. Moreover, in tightly knit, homogenous communities, communication in the digital space may be more facile and frequent. In addressing the structural dimensions of communities, Thomas et al. (2013) offered a classification of the dynamics undergirding consumption communities. They delineated communities according to nine characteristics: focus, duration, appeal, access, dispersion, marketplace orientation, the structure of resource dependency, collective belonging, and heterogeneity. In this particular study, I extend the dimensions presented by Thomas et al. (2013). In addition to the nine original characteristics of the authors, I find that the Tablighi Jamaat community varies in its physical and digital form as per the following eight additional attributes:

Purpose of Interactions: This refers to the motivations members have when joining and participating in community activities;
Attention during Interactions: This tells us how concentrated the interactions of the community members are. It also shows how much attention members are paying to community activities as they transpire;
Pace of Interactions: This identifies how quickly the group, as a whole, responds to or can respond to any situation;
Frequency of Interactions: This identifies how much the group interacts or can interact with each other during a given situation;
Mode of Interactions: This tells us how sensory the interactions are (visual, auditory, etc.);
Rules of Conduct: This indicates whether or not there are rules governing community interactions and behavior, how specific these are, and how they are implemented;
Effects on Identity: This implies how the community proceedings shape consumer identity and behavior;
Relations between Members: This indicates how clear members are on their own goals and roles and cohesive the community is.

How these attributes play out for the physical and digital versions of Tablighi Jamaat activities are depicted in Table 2 (attributes 1–9 are adapted from Thomas et al. 2013). These characteristics are inter-related and come together to influence community dynamics.

Table 2. Dimensions of Community.

Sr. No.	Communal Dimensions (Adapted/Extended from Thomas et al. 2013)	Tablighi Jamaat Physical Community Attributes	Tablighi Jamaat Digital Platformized (WhatsApp) Attributes
1	Focus	Ideology	Activity tending towards Ideology
2	Duration	Enduring at the mosque level; temporary at the sojourn level	Enduring
3	Appeal	Limited	Limited
4	Access	High barriers to entry and high welcoming	High barriers to entry and high welcoming
5	Dispersion	Local: Geographic proximity	Dispersed: Globally spread
6	Marketplace (of ideas) Orientation	Oppositional: Less access to external information/ideas	Synergistic: Full access to external information/ideas
7	Structure of Resource Dependency	Simple: Unidirectional flow of ideas from top to bottom	Chaotic: Any member contributes ideas at any time
		Clear chain of authority; hierarchical	No chain of authority; democratic, flat
8	Collective Belonging	Prominent	Limited to Prominent: Some members are active; others join but hardly participate
9	Heterogeneity	Homogeneous	Homogeneous
10	Purpose of Interactions	Gathering for performance of religious rituals and consumption	Gathering for discussion of external events and how they impact the community
		Ritual participation is the main activity	Posting messages is the main activity
11	Attention During Interactions	Devoted, focused interaction	Distracted, chaotic interaction; too many extraneous issues to deal with
		Physical presence/no dropping out	Easy to drop in/drop out
		Usually no multi-tasking	Can multitask
12	Pace of Interactions	Decelerated	Accelerated
13	Frequency of Interactions	Temporal	All the time
14	Mode of Interactions	Everyone sees and hears each other	No seeing, not necessarily listening to others
15	Rules of Conduct	Prescribed rules to follow	No rules
16	Effects on Identity	A particular identity enacted	Open to all sorts of identities
		Singular interpretation	Each person to interpret information personally
17	Relations Between Members	Clarity on roles and prescribed beliefs, behavior	Myriad news sources give little direction
		Members physically meet	Members may never have met
		Harmony and brotherhood between members	Incites acrimony and difference of opinion; demotes intracommunity respect

For the Tablighi Jamaat community's transition from physical to digital, I now underscore some of the more important characteristics that disorient Islamic revivalist movement members.

6.2.1. From Hierarchy to a Flat Structure

While generally viewed to be a boon for mainstream marketplace communities, a democratic flat structure in which every community member has a voice is detrimental to

the functioning of a traditional community. This is because traditional religion operates in a hierarchical structure that allows for a unidirectional flow of information and ideas. Tablighi Jamaat operations require a clear understanding of who is in control and whose command to follow.

When news broke out of the COVID-19 pandemic and messages from UNICEF on the characteristics of the virus and that the government had shut down important institutions were shared, the group administrator asked, "Any letter from Raiwind (i.e., Tablighi Jamaat Pakistani headquarters)?" As physical access to religious authorities was severed, official messages from the headquarters were traditionally slow and infrequent when compared to other media since they were usually handwritten letters from the *Ameer* (leader) of Tablighi Jamaat. Hence, despite the outbreak and chaos, instructions from Raiwind were eagerly anticipated. When no instructions were quickly forthcoming, one of the group administrators gave the following advice to reach out to regional headquarters or local senior Tablighi Jamaat members: "We cannot formulate our opinions here. Please find out from your local *markaz* (regional center) and its responsible brothers on how to do the work during these times". This post also retorted the tendency for members to formulate their own opinions as time elapsed and the lack of information continued. Time and again, especially at the apex of the pandemic, members challenged each other's opinions. In the physical world, an *Ameer* of a group would have been looked up to and obeyed. However, in the WhatsApp forum, there was no ostensible leader.

Further panic ensued when Raiwind *markaz* was shut down by authorities to prevent the spread of infection. Without *markaz* instructions and the ability to travel and reside in the *markaz* (since Tablighi Jamaat sojourns originate and end at the *markaz* many times), many *jamaats* (groups) were stranded without directions on how to proceed and where to go. This desperation is depicted in the following post by Ismail:

> Latest news:
>
> A [name of university] junior who is currently in Multan doing 4 months [sojourn time] [name of student] called. They have sealed Raiwind and now he is stuck there. @SeniorGrad *bhai . . . aap ki dili khawahish tou puri hui* [brother your wish is fulfilled].

While the tone is one of panic, the post above ends with an accusatory note on SeniorGrad, who started the debate on whether sojourns should be halted. Several members expressed divergent opinions on whether travelers should continue with their sojourns or not, and how big the travel groups should be. Different members shared information from various sources. No conclusion was drawn, despite some posters thinking they had the authoritative solution captured in an audio or message from someone in authority. A blame game and this-vs-that solution argument ensued, leading to friction. One person dropped out of the group altogether as a result of being disappointed with the seemingly unending debate.

Relatedly, another issue was that each member's decision-making was shaped by the consumption of what they viewed as authoritative information. Hence, there appeared to be some customization of behavior depending on how information was interpreted, with each member thinking for themselves what was the truest way forward in their own circumstance. When these conflicting interpretations were discussed, they created bitterness. Hence, the medical advice taken, the religious practices performed, and day-to-day consumption varied and created acrimony.

6.2.2. From Pure to Impure

The authority of the WhatsApp Group Administrators was apparently symbolic, and despite their requests to refrain from sharing news and updates and keep the group restricted to Tablighi Jamaat-related matters, the other members diverged from the core purpose of the group. One of the group administrator's posts refers to this issue as follows:

> We are in different regions and countries and the situations are different. Our elders have given us *targheeb* (motivation) and encouraged us to keep doing the work of *Dawa* (preaching) but keeping the guidelines from the government and

> local authorities in front. The effort of *Dawa* will continue but the *tarteeb* (order) will change from time to time and region to region. . . .
>
> (also on a sidenote we are already receiving enough posts on other groups and social media about the ww (worldwide) situation, fear factor and recommendations, please avoid posting here, and lets stick to the original purpose of this group).

The above excerpt from the data shows how transitioning online has been problematic on several fronts. One issue was that members from globally diverse areas had been brought together through WhatsApp in what was traditionally a geography-specific movement. Hence, with different leaderships in different areas and different instructions for each area, the sharing of area-specific information on WhatsApp puzzled those who inhabited different areas.

The second issue identified in the post is that there was a tendency to bring in unrelated (impure) posts to the group (Douglas 1966). This attended to a lack of focus by the posters on the core purpose of the group. A number of posts on scientific facts, possible fake news, rumors, the spread of the disease, number of deaths, closure of institutions, etc., found their way into the group, adding to the confusion. Rumors spread because they were not to be considered facts or because they needed to be verified (DiFonzo and Bordia 2007).

As opposed to the singularity of thought in the physical space, the digital introduces a multiplicity of thoughts as follows: diverse sources of ideas and expertise create confusion, arguments, and mistrust. The irony was that people were turning to WhatsApp to find clarity. The administrators were keen to maintain purity by reminding the members of the purpose of the group—discussion of Tablighi Jamaat-related matters. Extraneous ideas created a debate on what expertise should be viewed as sound, as follows: scientific/medical advice versus religious advice versus government orders. One faction understood this event as a conspiracy, another took the side of science, while another was in the middle or toggled between. Each faction tried to sway others toward its argument by presenting evidence, often with proof of authenticity, so that it might not be rejected as fake news. At the pandemic outbreak, the disease was dealt with non-seriousness by the majority. However, this later turned into anxiety as the community became divided, and there was some semblance of reality sinking in as most members came to believe that the pandemic was not a hoax, especially when close family members died or the disease's devastation was experienced firsthand.

This virtual impurity leads to debates that are detrimental to group cohesion and individual spirituality. The ease of posting or trigger-happiness was problematic as people said stuff that they later regretted. One member seemed to joke that he had lost his faith because of the things he said. In another incident, poster Ismail revealed upsetting details of a senior university professor's grievances in the hospital when he took his father for treatment. After the post, some community members started calling the professor to obtain more details. Ismail notes the aftermath as follows:

> Ismail: Already being very sensitive, he [university professor] became further upset. It has been requested not to further share this and make a similar request on forums it has already been shared on. (As it is not possible to recall or delete on WhatsApp).

One of the reasons for discord was a seemingly lack of trust in ideas being shared. Some participants provided proof for whatever they posted. For instance, poster Farhan quickly asked the following when an edict emanating from a cleric was posted: "This is *Mufti* (cleric) Sahab's official account? Just wanted to confirm the authenticity". There was an air of skepticism as different kinds of ideas were bandied about. There was no way to determine the trustworthiness of such ideas unless they came from Raiwind *markaz* itself. This skepticism came with a lack of clarity generally (both in the physical and digital space) and the chaos that occurred via other social media, which I discuss next.

6.2.3. From Organized to Chaotic Space

I saw the transition from physical to digital as a transfer from a structured space to an unstructured space. Since the Tablighi Jamaat participants were used to physical interaction, members generally desired physical interchange. The purpose of interacting in the digital space seemed to be to obtain clarity and stay up-to-date. For some, it seemed that the WhatsApp conversations were a spectacle to see how things unfolded. This contrasted with the physical space where participants connected to perform spiritual activities together. One of the elders' messages read that "we are being closed down, but the work is not being closed down". Members argued that the Tablighi Jamaat effort should continue despite the hindrances and perhaps take alternate forms, such as abiding by restrictions, forming smaller preaching groups, and preaching individually rather than in large groups. However, this diluted the experience for many. For instance, when the issue of offering congregational prayer (normally performed with shoulders touching side by side inside a mosque) with social distancing came up (standing three feet apart), some members were irritated. Moreover, when some mosques were closed for prayer altogether, including the alma mater mosque, members expressed sadness and dissent as follows:

> 5:45 PM—Professor: [Name of university] masjid [mosque] closed for Namaz as from yesterday
>
> 6:25 PM—Usman: That is Sad :(
>
> 10:34 PM—Ismail: No staff is there. Faculty comes but they have closed masjid [mosque] as if corona ne namaz mein hi sirf 'katna' hai. [as if corona only attacks during prayer].

This news also angered some participants since in the physical space many public areas (such as the checkout lines of shopping centers) did not follow social distancing rules. As Ismail's comment suggests, it seemed to some that some administrators deliberately target religion.

WhatsApp also brought chaos due to casual user behavior. Sometimes, a lack of attention was being paid by participants. For example, Adnan posted a message in French intended for another WhatsApp group. He was quick to apologize as follows: "Sorry message sent in the wrong group". A little while later though he repeated the following error:

> 10:13 PM—Adnan: Something similar was also being discussed on the [X] Brothers group
>
> 10:30 PM—SeniorGrad: isn't this the [X] Brothers group? 🤔
>
> 10:31 PM—Adnan: Sorry same error again :).

Such mistakes would not occur in the physical world as the attention of members would be focused.

The general lack of order was complemented by the capacity to make disrespectful interruptions in an informal (as opposed to a formal physical) environment. Respect for elders and authority are important facets of physical Tablighi Jamaat work. In the aforementioned post where a senior professor noted that the university mosque is closed down, his message was soon commented on by Usman who was a recent fresh graduate. In normal, physical spaces, such comments would not be made just out of sheer respect for elders; such posts would be met with silence.

A final issue is one of time. With the rapidity of events and changing situations, members felt a need to respond quickly. Some were quick to respond than others and at odd hours. Some members were active, others less so. Some members followed the group conversations closely, others less so. At times, there was a repetition of points made earlier as members did not follow what was said before. The speed of information access, both credible and unreliable, made the transfer of information from a YouTube clip or from one WhatsApp group to another just a few taps away. Moreover, as activity on social media increased, the chaos was also exacerbated with the lockdown, giving participants more time to interact on social media.

7. Discussion

This case study explored how an Islamic revivalist movement responds to digitalization. A group of physically active Tablighi Jamaat members became disoriented when they shifted to the digital space. To this end, we have been able to gather that the Islamic revivalist movement community disintegrates due to multiple dynamics that are transposed on the online format, notably change in a hierarchical structure, speed of relating, and the merging of impure, unreliable, off-topic and pure, reliable, on-topic information.

While previous studies have looked at other forms of religion, this investigation is a relatively novel look at an Islamic revivalist movement experiencing a foray into the digital. In line with Campbell and Vitullo's (2016) stance that online communities need to be understood in relation to their offline versions, we see that an Islamic revivalist movement's resistance to transformation occurring in modernity figures heavily in its lack of success in the digital space. This exposition also goes counter to the relative ease of transition that other types of religious groups have experienced with the digital realm (e.g., Kim 2005; Golan and Stadler 2016; Fakhruroji 2021). Fakhruroji (2021), for instance, presents the claim that digital Islamic learning is a form of religious engagement as it extends knowledge seeking in a new format, is an expression of Islamic identity, and is an effort to maintain global religious connections. However, in this study, we see these points refuted. The digital could not be conceived as a true extension of Islamic practice nor a presentation of identity, as for the Islamic revivalist movement did not abide by the way of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Previous scholars have portrayed a rather symbiotic relationship and a blended approach to the physical and the digital (Campbell 2012; Siuda 2021). However, here we see that by virtue of its very foundation, the Tablighi Jamaat conversion to the digital platform is unsustainable due to its resistance to some uses of modern technology. Traditionalists value the past (Graham 1993), and Islamic revivalist movements specifically try to recreate it and reconnect to it.

This study also concurs with Neumaier's (2016) conclusion that people turn to the digital realm when they are dissatisfied with offline proceedings. The extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic resulted in Tablighi Jamaat adherents' transition to the digital. However, additionally, this study finds that the digital itself may not be a panacea to offline problems.

Foundational to the mismatch of logic is the case of authority (Whyte 2022). Traditional Islamic revivalist movements such as the Tablighi Jamaat are dependent on religious leadership for guidance on commonplace and macro issues. Bunt (2018) claims that cyber spaces provide access to myriad leaders and their guidance through forums, *fatwa* (edict) sites, celebrity cleric sermons, blogs, and the like, but he also recognizes the difficulty for lay adherents in picking authentic and credible authorities. This problem was also witnessed in this study as the Tablighi Jamaat moved online and incidentally derailed one of the value propositions of Tablighi Jamaat's offline dynamics—reliable, structured, and trustworthy authority without the strife of using self-judgment (Timol 2019; Whyte 2022).

The Tablighi Jamaat, as an Islamic revivalist movement, prides itself on trying to replicate a life that is close to the Golden era of Islam. However, the use of technology in itself goes counter to the purpose of the movement. It may be noted that technology is actually discouraged in physical Tablighi Jamaat events. Using the case of digitalization, this study reinforces Ali and Sahib's (2022) thesis that modernity's apparent benefits remain unrealized. It is through following the rulings of religion in its pristine form that Islamic revivalist movement adherents find solace and meaning. Secular modernity, as digitalization shows, can be a new *jahiliyah* (ignorance) and chaotic. The digital space is bereft of the ritual and ordered performances that sustain community. The sacred also entails respect for others and dealing with ideas in a patient and silent manner; these very attributes are overridden in the online world. It is these very issues that Islamic revivalist movements such as Tablighi Jamaat resist.

Social connection is a fundamental need that can be replaced by a virtual format if not a physical one. However, the dynamics of the online world create new conditions that disturb

the nature of relationships. With the forced conversion of the Tablighi Jamaat community to an exclusively online format, the WhatsApp community members had instantaneous access to multiple sources of information and corresponding data, which could be transmitted unfiltered into the community for consumption. This unique context in which a traditional religious community transits to an online community brings with it challenges that are counter-intuitively brought to the fore by the ease of access to information, a democratic and flat structure of operations, and an anytime, all-the-time mode of (possibly distracted) communication.

Fader (2020) discusses a digital space where Jews gather to discuss their doubts about religion. She finds other people telling them they are not alone in their hereticism. In my netnography, I see adherents wanting to reify their faith, increase their affiliation with a religious institution, and find ways to become more pious and more obedient in the face of adverse conditions. Their taking up of the digital is under conditions of extreme stress, unlike Fader's subjects, who basically take refuge on the Internet. Hence, it is not surprising that as soon as COVID-19 restrictions were relaxed, my informants cut down on their socialization on WhatsApp.

Finally, Douglas (1966, p. 37) notes, "shoes are not dirty in themselves, but it is dirty to place them on the dining-table, . . . our pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications". With the adjacency of pure and impure ideas on the platform space, I found pollution corrupting pure ideas. Here I see the case of virtual impurity—the impurity of ideas and thoughts. While Durkheim's notion of sacred contagion—the belief that spiritual properties pass on by contact or physical proximity—has been commented on by other scholars, I note the effect of virtual profane contagion. While social media corporations have been blamed elsewhere for inciting vices through their platforms in exchange for profiteering (Rauf 2021), this study brings to light another example of harm inflicted by online community facilitation.

This in-depth case study compromises the breadth of the variety of Islamic revivalist movements that abound with presumably differing logic. Future research may wish to investigate how the digital realm is negotiated by movements such as the Jamaat-e-Islami or the Muslim Brotherhood (Ali and Orofino 2018). Since many, if not all, of Tablighi Jamaat's activities are dependent on physical proximity and interaction (such as *mashwara*), digitalization seems to have limited promise for this group. However, this may not be applicable to other Islamic revivalist movements due to differences (Ali and Amin 2020).

Moreover, the onset of the pandemic created an extraordinary situation where an immediate lack of satisfactory solutions to the disease and conflicting messaging created an environment of chaos both online and offline. Future research may wish to examine how the digitalization effect plays out in more sedate environments post-pandemic.

8. Conclusions

Traditional Islamic revivalist movements are premised on the grounds of resisting the forces of secularization that are antithetical to the traditional foundations of Islam. One noteworthy aspect of secular modernity is the digitalization of physical aspects of social life. The digital space offers speed of access, instantaneous global communication, a space for democratic participation, a platform for airing multiple viewpoints, and other affordances. While it may seem plausible to many that traditional Islamic revivalist movements should follow suit in digitalizing the norms and protocols of their operations, the present case study rebuts this stance. It appears that, at least in the case of traditional religion, the sacred is undergirded by an array of facets that are necessary to uphold its prestige, some of which cannot be transposed from the physical onto the digital realm.

In this case study, I examined how the move towards making sense of an exigent situation such as the COVID-19 pandemic in a traditional Islamic revivalist movement context floundered as a result of the asymmetrical logics of the digital platform and the Islamic revivalist movement in question. In particular, the very foundations of the movement—authority, trust, and communal harmony—were upset in the digital realm. A change in

hierarchical structure upended sensemaking for participants in the WhatsApp context. Moreover, it created discord by not having the leadership to look up to for direction, through which participants attained the capacity to debate with more or less equal others. The asynchronous logic problem was exacerbated by the speed of information collection and its dissemination that social media platforms afford. With more viewpoints at faster speeds from unverified or irreligious sources, chaos and mistrust increased. Finally, a casual, unfocused rather than a serious, rule-abiding approach by group members also added to the strife. It was only by curtailing digital activity that a semblance of normality was achieved.

Such a case study presents further evidence that Islamic revivalist movements, due to their resistance to secular modernity, cannot easily accommodate particular modern forces as they present a salient conflict with a movement's ideals and operations. This study brings to the fore the importance of carrying out further research on religion's place and operationalization in modernity, especially as conceived by Islamic revivalist movements.

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Religious Authority, Popular Preaching and the Dialectic of Structure-Agency in an Islamic Revivalist Movement: The Case of Maulana Tariq Jamil and the Tablighi Jama'at

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Abstract: This article provides the first academic analysis of the popular Pakistani Islamic scholar and Urdu-speaking preacher Maulana Tariq Jamil. Drawing on years of ethnographic study of the Tablighi Jama'at, the revivalist movement to which Jamil belongs, as well as content analysis of dozens of his recorded lectures, the article presents a detailed biography of the Maulana in five stages. These comprise: (a) his upbringing and early life (1953–1972); (b) his conversion to the Tablighi Jama'at and studies at the Raiwind international headquarters (1972–1980); (c) his meteoric rise to fame and ascendancy up the movement's leadership ranks (1980–1997); (d) his development into a national celebrity (1997–2016); and (e) major causes of controversy and criticism (2014–present). Tracing his narrative register within the historical archetypes of the *quṣṣāṣ* (storytellers) and *wuʿʿāẓ* (popular preachers), the paper identifies core tenets of the Maulana's revivalist discourse, key milestones in his life—such as the high-profile conversion to the Tablighi Jama'at of Pakistani popstar Junaid Jamshed—and subtle changes in his approach over the years. The article deploys the classical sociological framework of structure-agency to explore how Maulana Tariq Jamil's increasing exercise of agency in preaching Islam has unsettled structural expectations within traditionalist *ʿulamāʾ* (religious scholar) circles as well as the Tablighi leadership. It situates his emergence within a broader trend of Islamic media-based personalities who embrace contemporary technological tools to reach new audiences and respond to the challenges of postcolonial modernity.

Keywords: Maulana Tariq Jamil; Tablighi Jama'at; Raiwind; Deoband; Islam in Pakistan; ulama; religious authority; popular preachers; Islamic televangelists; *da'wa*; digital religion

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1. Introduction

In 2020, the Islamic scholar and preacher Maulana Tariq Jamil once again topped YouGov's national poll for Pakistan's most admired man. Beating off competition from Prime Minister Imran Khan, Jamil's popularity percentile was more than triple that of American billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates and more than five times that of Portuguese footballing superstar Cristiano Ronaldo.[1] His two official YouTube channels ('Tariq Jamil' and 'AJ Official') boast a combined 16.6 million subscribers with individual videos having garnered, at the time of writing, a collective total of 1.92 billion views.[2] Such metrics indicate an unprecedented popularity in Pakistani public life which few, if any, other religious figures can hope to match. Through his life-long affiliation with the Tablighi Jama'at, widely regarded as the largest movement of Islamic revival in the world today (Ahmad 1991; Ali 2010; Metcalf 1994), the Maulana has also travelled tirelessly over several decades to countries around the world. Events at which he speaks invariably attract packed audiences from diverse backgrounds including cultural elites, rural magnates, wealthy entrepreneurs, feared gangsters, religious scholars, secular-educated professionals and coarse rustics. Uniquely, Jamil has also been successful in attracting followers of rival sectarian groupings such as the Barelvi and Shia. Beyond his Pakistani homeland, Jamil has also developed huge fanbases across India's 210 million Muslim population and

Bangladesh's 150 million population—both important bulwarks of the Tablighi Jama'at. Additionally, through large-scale audiocassette and CD ministries during the 1990s and, more recently, the broadcast of televised programs on cable and satellite channels, he has become a household name in the global South Asian Muslim diaspora including countries such as Britain, South Africa and Canada. Maulana Tariq Jamil, it may plausibly be argued then, is the most popular Urdu-speaking Islamic scholar in the world today. According to Pakistani anthropologist Zaigham Khan writing in June 2021:

> Not many can match his influence and following. The subscribers on his two YouTube channels exceed 13 million. He has his own official apps on the Google Play Store and Apple's App Store. The Maulana's services have also been officially recognised and he received the President's Pride of Performance Award this year. In a way, he has become the Maulana Laureate of Pakistan. (Z. Khan 2021).

This article proposes to do two things. First, to fill a gap in the extant literature on contemporary Islamic religious personalities. While detailed studies of leading global figures such as the Egyptian jurist Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi (Graf and Skovgaard-Petersen 2009), the Indian polemicist Dr. Zakir Naik (Kuiper 2019) or the American convert Shaykh Hamza Yusuf (Korb 2013) have been published, virtually nothing to date exists on Maulana Tariq Jamil—certainly in Anglophone spheres. This paper ventures a first step in this direction by sketching an in-depth biographical profile of the Maulana, including key influences, milestones and controversies in his life, as well as analyzing core tenets of his revivalist discourse and reasons for his mass appeal. Secondly, the article examines Jamil's increasingly complex relationship with the Tablighi Jama'at through the classical sociological lens of structure and agency. Maulana Tariq Jamil is a direct product of the Tablighi Jama'at movement which facilitated his powerful 'intra-religious conversion' experience in 1972 aged 18 (Timol 2022). His subsequent devotion to the movement coupled with his rhetorical panache and magnetic personality resulted in a meteoric rise to fame and a rapid ascension through the movement's leadership ranks. Yet there is some evidence that his methodological innovations in preaching Islam and more recent venture into market capitalism have led to raised eyebrows among some elders of the Tablighi Jama'at as well as the broader fraternity of Deobandi *ʿulamāʾ* (religious scholars). In unpacking this, the article argues for the need to recognize the internal heterogeneity of mass movements and their leaders as they attempt to assuage the discontents of postcolonial modernity and respond to the challenges of a rapidly shifting digital landscape:

> As popular preachers and movements multiply in the Muslim world, there is a need for thoughtful scholarship on such figures and movements—scholarship which views them as movers of historical change, which understand them within the contingencies of their historical contexts, and which takes their theological discourses seriously. (Kuiper 2019, p. 261).

By presenting a fine-grained analysis of a single leader within a single movement, this article sheds light on the operational and evolutionary mechanics of an important strand of Islamic revivalism in the modern world. Conceptually, the article locates Maulana Tariq Jamil at the interface of structure and agency within the Tablighi Jama'at or at the point which sociologist Anthony Giddens (1986) has termed 'structuration'. While proponents of structural functionalism have posited the overwhelming power of social systems in determining human action—as exemplified in Durkheim's ([1897] 1951) paradigmatic study of suicide—phenomenologists emphasize the meaning-making capacities of human beings—as exemplified by Weber's notion of *Verstehen*—to guide individual choices (Morrison 1995). Giddens' attempt to synthesize these contrasting viewpoints suggests that though the hegemony of structure may be reinforced by the compliance of social actors to rule-based behavioral patterns, such actors simultaneously possess the ability to reflexively redefine structural expectations by operating outside of the rules. This article thus teases out the symbiotic relationship between institution and individual; while the Tablighi Jama'at benefits from the widespread popularity of charismatic figures such as Maulana Tariq

Jamil for its ongoing appeal in society, it is simultaneously obliged at times to curtail their autonomy to maintain its own self-identity. The power of individual charisma in challenging institutional norms may thus be viewed as a subversive force which requires careful management so as to prevent the ultimate disintegration of the institution and its values; though equally it possesses an incipient potential to precipitate change in the wider organizational trajectory. The paper therefore contributes to the sociology of religious organizations and the literature on charismatic leadership in Islam.

The article proceeds along the following lines. First, it outlines the historical contours of religious authority in Islam highlighting perennial tensions between classically trained scholars—the *ʿulamāʾ*—and popular preachers and storytellers (*wuʿʿāẓ* and *quṣṣāṣ*) to form an important backdrop to Maulana Tariq Jamil's own narrative register. Such tensions, I argue, have been exacerbated by the onset of a widespread digital revolution which has significantly altered human modes of living and interaction. A detailed biographical profile of Jamil is then presented in five stages: (a) his comfortable early life as the scion of a wealthy landowner; (b) his conversion to the Tablighi Jama'at and years of grueling study to qualify as an Islamic scholar; (c) his spectacular success as a compelling orator and rapid ascendancy up the Tablighi Jama'at's leadership ranks; (d) his development into a national celebrity and concomitant subtle shifts in discourse and approach; and (e) his points of departure from classical Tablighi policy and controversies thus provoked. In conclusion, I examine the implications of Maulana Tariq Jamil's story of personal evolution for the Tablighi Jama'at as a whole and extrapolate the significance of his *da'wa* (revivalist message)—and the media through which it is delivered—for methodologies of Islamic revivalism and social transformation in the modern world.

2. The *ʿUlamāʾ*, Popular Preachers and Contestations of Religious Authority in a Digital Age

Nearly a thousand years ago, a charismatic preacher named Ardashir bin Mansur al-Abbadi, while returning home from the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, stopped awhile at the great Nizamiyya university in Baghdad and began to preach. His sermons, attended by no less than the famed Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, caused something of a stir eventually attracting crowds of up to thirty thousand people: " . . . the congregation filled the courtyard, the building's upper rooms, and its roof . . . women apparently were even more strongly drawn to the *shaykh* than were men" (Berkey 2001, p. 53). Al-Abbadi's dramatic style moved his audience deeply: " . . . attendees would shout aloud; some abandoned their worldly occupations in order to take up the *shaykh's* call to piety and pious action. Young men cut their hair and began to spend their days in mosques, or roamed through the city's streets spilling jugs of wine and smashing musical instruments" (Berkey 2001, p. 53). Clearly this itinerant preacher, traversing dusty paths in a long bygone era, exercised a charismatic power over those who listened to him. Yet how, one wonders, would al-Abbadi fare in today's globalized, digital world? What sorts of followings would he attract on contemporary social media platforms and what types of reactions would his sermons provoke via online streaming websites such as YouTube?

Figures like al-Abbadi abound in the annals of Islamic history. Part of a distinct register of Islamic public discourse inhabited by those Berkey (2001) terms *wuʿʿāẓ* (popular preachers) and *quṣṣāṣ* (storytellers), they form a large amorphous cloud around the more rigorous 'establishment' scholars—the *ʿulamāʾ*—more concerned with maintaining the textual integrity of the Islamic tradition. Passionate homilies delivered by skilled orators could sway the emotions of dense crowds, inspiring repentance among many, grand gestures of largesse from the rich or, if political circumstances so dictated, even riots and armed revolt. Kuiper (2019, p. 65), discerning a basic proselytizing impulse at the core of the faith, suggests that: " . . . with its urgent eschatology, demand for ethical self-improvement and stock of familiar tales, Islam is a "preachers' religion" *par excellence*."

The power of such figures derived from their mass appeal, a charismatic persona combined with an evocative yet accessible idiom and an ability to tap intuitively into

the emotional dynamics of diverse audiences. Yet their popularity did not go unchallenged. Most significantly, the *wuʿāẓ* and *quṣṣāṣ* would frequently provoke the ire of more scripturalist scholars for their less than stringent adherence to the conventions of Islamic scholarship. A genre of disapproving rebuttal literature thus emerged which, while acknowledging the popularity and good work of many preachers, nevertheless lamented their shortcomings. Ibn al-Jawzi's *Kitāb al-quṣṣāṣ wa'l-mudhakkirīn*, al-Suyuti's *Taḥdhīr al-khawāṣṣ min akādhīb al-quṣṣāṣ* or Ibn Taymiyyah's *Aḥādīth al-quṣṣāṣ* are all examples of such works (Berkey 2001). This contestation of authenticity and authority in medieval Islam goes to the heart of an intrinsically decentralized and egalitarian religious tradition lacking a stratified hierarchy or formal ecclesiastical structure. Who, in the final analysis, has the most right to speak for Islam and on behalf of Allah? The formally trained *ʿulamāʾ*—preservers of what Graham (1993) has termed the '*isnad* paradigm' and, according to a well-known hadith (prophetic tradition), revered 'inheritors of the prophets'—certainly appear historically to have been the most authoritative representatives of the religion. Yet the persistent mass appeal of figures such as al-Abbadi, many of whom gain affectionate, even hysterical, acceptance among widespread fanbases (to use a modern term), indicates an inherently centrifugal tendency in the historical configuration of religious authority in Islam.

To be sure, the boundaries between such Weberian ideal types—the *ʿulamāʾ*, the *wuʿāẓ* and the *quṣṣāṣ*—have never been clear-cut. To take an example, ibn al-Jawzi, author of perhaps the best-known critique of popular preachers, was himself an accomplished orator who would routinely pull large crowds (Berkey 2001, p. 27). Yet the onset of modernity and its attendant technological revolutions have only served to exacerbate the fragmentation and diffusion of religious authority in Islam. As Robinson (1993) argues, the printing press, though initially resisted by the *ʿulamāʾ*, was eventually deployed by them as a key means of disseminating religious instruction in an increasingly competitive, pluralized religious marketplace. An unintended consequence of this, however, was the undermining of their own authority. Whereas religious tracts had hitherto been copied by hand and meticulously transmitted orally from teacher to student, the impact of print led to both the democratization and vernacularization of knowledge (Kuiper 2019, p. 92). Combined with rising literacy rates and mass education across Muslim societies, increasing numbers of Muslims were now able to access religious texts directly, bypassing the interpretive medium of the *ʿulamāʾ*. To put this differently, every Tom, Dick and Abdullah, potentially, was empowered to speak on behalf of the faith.

For Zaman (2002), the transition of Muslim societies from colonial to postcolonial cemented two further challenges to the authority of the traditionalist *ʿulamāʾ*, namely those posed by 'modernists' and 'Islamists'. To crudely distinguish between them, modernists seek to reconfigure key tenets of Islam so as to bring them in line with Western sensibilities while Islamists seek to reconfigure the political apparatus of the state so as to bring it in line with a perceived Islamic blueprint (Zaman 2002, pp. 7–8). Unlike the *ʿulamāʾ*, modernist or Islamist reactions to modernity were usually incubated in thoroughly secular institutions of learning; their purveyors were therefore permutations of the 'new religious intellectuals' identified by Eickelman and Piscatori ([1996] 2004, p. 13) in their seminal work *Muslim Politics*. Alongside this, the continual development of new mass media technologies provided preachers, scholars and activists of all stripes with novel ways to complement the impact of print in disseminating their messages to ever-widening circles of influence. To take an influential example, Hirschkind's (2009) detailed analysis of the proliferation of audiocassette sermons across the Middle East in the 1990s demonstrates how the power of such technologies were successfully harnessed into ubiquitous units of acoustic religious consumption which helped shape the ethical and affective sensibilities of countless men and women as part of the broader Islamic revival.

The twenty-first century has witnessed a full-blown digital revolution which has significantly altered human modes of living and interaction in unprecedented ways. The implications for religious authority in Islam have been manifold. Eickelman and Anderson ([1999] 2003) suggest that a confluence of 'new media' (i.e., new methods of producing

and consuming information), 'new people' and 'new thinking' have, ultimately, led to the emergence of 'new religious public spheres' in Islamic societies while Bunt's several books document the proliferation of 'Cyber Islamic Environments' engaging disparate Muslim sensibilities in diverse ways (Bunt 2003, 2018). For the purposes of this article however, I will narrowly focus on the rapid rise of media-based religious personalities in contemporary Islam as a prelude to examining Maulana Tariq Jamil's emergence in South Asian public spheres.

Following in the footsteps of well-known Christian televangelists such as Jimmy Swaggart or Pat Robertson, the development of satellite broadcast networks catering to Muslim-majority audiences—such as the Saudi-funded Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC), the Qatari-owned al-Jazeera or Geo TV, Pakistan's most popular privately owned channel—launched the careers of numerous 'Muslim televangelists'. Floden (2016) contests this term, preferring instead the phrase 'media *du'ā*', in his study of three particularly popular preachers in the Arab world—Amr Khaled (Egypt), Ahmad al-Shugairi (Saudi Arabia) and Tariq al-Suwaidan (Kuwait)—to argue that rather than fragmentation, the engagement of such figures with technological modernity has led to both a proliferation *and* differentiation of Islamic religious authority. Other studies have examined the appeal of celebrity Muslim preachers in Indonesia (Aa Gym), Mali (Cherif Haidara) and, most significantly for our purposes, Pakistan (Watson 2005; Schulz 2006; Ahmad 2010).

Ahmad (2010) examines the impact of four prominent Islamic evangelists in Pakistan's contested public sphere: the liberalist thinker Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, the female Salafi scholar Farhat Hashmi, the Maududi-inspired Dr. Israr Ahmad, and the Barelvi revivalist Shaykh Tahirul Qadri, founder of the international movement Minhaj-ul-Quran. Like the three famous Arab preachers studied by Floden, these figures—with the sole exception of Qadri—are not classically trained *'ulamā'* lending credence to the thesis that the contemporary efflorescence of digital technologies has empowered nontraditional, often secular-educated, personalities to disseminate religious messages to mass audiences. In fact, part of their appeal stems from their self-conscious positioning as *alternative voices* to the *'ulamā'*, more attuned to the needs of youth, women and the intellectual and cultural challenges of pious living felt more keenly by educated middle-classes in postcolonial Muslim societies. Beyond their popularity in Pakistan, Ahmad also documents how these four figures have developed considerable followings among Pakistani diaspora communities through regular cable and satellite transmissions; both Qadri and Hashmi having actually migrated to Canada where they extend their ministries to global audiences via online broadcasts.

Other than a passing nod to his booming audiocassette ministry (Ahmad 2010, p. 25), the subject of this paper, Maulana Tariq Jamil, is conspicuous by his absence in Ahmad's report probably due to the fact that his own embrace of digital technology has been a relatively recent phenomenon. The metrics cited at the beginning of this paper, however, coupled with recent fieldwork undertaken by the author in Pakistan, indicate that for some time now he has been by far Pakistan's most popular Islamic personality. Unlike the majority of contemporary Muslim media celebrities however, Maulana Tariq Jamil is firmly a member of the establishment *'ulamā'* having completed a traditional Dars-i-Nizami seminary education at the Dar al-Uloom Madrassah Arabiyyah seminary attached to the international Tablighi Jama'at headquarters in Raiwind, near Lahore. In this respect, his ubiquitousness across various Urdu-Islamic mediascapes today most closely resembles that of the 'global mufti' Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi's pervasiveness across multiple Arabic-Islamic mediascapes (Graf and Skovgaard-Petersen 2009). Further, like al-Qaradawi, Jamil has had to balance the proclivities of his own pursuits with the demands made on him by pre-existing religious structures. As Skovgaard-Petersen (2009) and Tammam (2009) have shown, al-Qaradawi has maintained a respectful deference to the scholarly institution of al-Azhar where he studied and worked during the 1950s—though he has not been averse to voicing criticisms regarding curriculum, pedagogy and a perceived lack of independence from the state—as well as a lifelong association with the Ikhwan al-Muslimeen (Muslim

Brotherhood), while simultaneously establishing his credentials as an independent and formidable Muslim scholar. Maulana Tariq Jamil, similarly, has maintained a respectful deference to the broader Deobandi orientation of Islamic scholarship—though he has not been averse to voicing criticism of its perceived development into a polemical sectarian identity[3]—along with a lifelong service to the Tablighi Jama'at, while establishing his credentials as an independent and formidable Muslim preacher. Unlike al-Qaradawi, however, Jamil's output has been almost entirely oral and, calling to mind the dramatic impact of the erstwhile Mansur al-Abbadi on his Baghdad audiences, based principally on passionate homilies delivered to gargantuan audiences across the length and breadth of Pakistan; his written oeuvre is virtually non-existent. It is perhaps for this reason that he has escaped the attention of scholars such as Zaman (2002) who focused largely on the textual productions of *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*. In what follows, and in much the same vein as the several studies of other prominent contemporary Islamic media personalities cited above, I venture a first step in filling this lacuna by sketching a detailed biographical profile of Maulana Tariq Jamil, identifying key tenets of his revivalist discourse, and attempting to locate him within the broader parameters of Tablighi-Deobandi reform.

3. Methods

According to Floden (2016, p. 18), academic studies of Muslim televangelists as a group are "remarkably absent" as are the examination of "modern media tools that extend preaching beyond the mosque." As a consequence, many famous and influential preachers such as Maulana Tariq Jamil "in English language sources . . . remain primarily confined to journalistic pieces and short mentions or asides in scholarly works" (Floden 2016, p. 21). In addressing this gap, this article draws upon sustained academic examination of the Tablighi Jama'at conducted by the author in various international settings over the previous decade. This has involved ethnographic fieldwork in the UK, across Europe and, most recently, a trip to Pakistan over March and April 2022 during which time I stayed at the movement's Raiwind headquarters and visited key cities including Lahore, Gujranwala and Islamabad. Over this period, multiple interviews have been conducted with senior Tablighi leaders, rank-and-file activists and various first-hand observers of Islam in South Asian and diaspora contexts. For the purposes of this article, I have also been able to consult with several personal acquaintances of Maulana Tariq Jamil, including a family member and a student at one of his Dar al-Ulooms (Islamic seminaries), which has assisted greatly in verifying certain biographical details. In a similar vein to scholars such as Kuiper (2019, p. 202) and Floden, I also deploy a "method of using multiple sources—the televangelists' publications, speeches, interviews, and television programs—to capture and analyze their ideology" (Floden 2016, p. 42). Consequently, content analysis of dozens of Jamil's Urdu-language lectures was conducted from which various details, biographical and otherwise, have been extrapolated and organized into a systematic and coherent narrative. As well as several Urdu-language publications about Jamil, such as those by Akhtar (2008) or Abdul Qadir (2018), I have accessed numerous news articles published about him in the Pakistani media, the most detailed of which is an English-language feature piece by Zaigham Khan (2021). In what follows, I directly translate excerpts of speeches and writings from Urdu into English when necessary and meticulously cite online sources. Unless otherwise specified, all URL links referenced throughout this paper were accessed and checked as working on 8 July 2022.

4. Maulana Tariq Jamil: A Biographical Sketch

4.1. Upbringing and Early Life (1953–1972)

Maulana Tariq Jamil was born in the small Pakistani town of Tulamba, Punjab in 1953. By all accounts, his upbringing was a privileged one; his father, an aristocratic Rajput landholder (*zamindār*) with acres of orchards and scores of workers, was an intimidating figure who wielded considerable local influence. Like scions of other wealthy families, Jamil was sent for education to Lahore where he attended the Central Model School from

the age of 11. Subsequently, he completed a course in medical science at the British-established Government College, where he enrolled aged 16, before gaining admission into the prestigious King Edward Medical College to train as a doctor (Figure 1). Though complying with his father's wishes, Jamil had no real inclination for medicine and, by his own admission, would spend most of his time merrymaking with friends. In a 2021 speech delivered to a packed audience at his former college in Lahore, he laughingly recounted how he would secretly read film magazines or novels sneaked into class within textbooks and how he fumbled his way through exams by reciting *bismillah* ('in the name of God') the night before, opening his textbooks on random pages and memorizing what appeared before him (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qpc6uiYwwak). He has also described himself as an avid cinemagoer, an amateur singer and a banjo enthusiast, and recalls being punished regularly by teachers for assorted misdemeanors (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGnvInLnIG4). This period in his life was characterized by a generally lackadaisical attitude towards religion; he was not regular in his daily prayers and shared many of the anticlerical attitudes exhibited by the secular liberal classes in which he was raised.

Figure 1. Maulana Tariq Jamil as a college student, prior to his profound conversion experience. Source: https://dawaeasy.blogspot.com/p/maulana-tariq-jameel.html.

4.2. Conversion to the Tablighi Jama'at and Studies at Raiwind (1972–1980)

At the age of 18, Maulana Tariq Jamil experienced a profound 'intra-religious conversion' experience facilitated by the Tablighi Jama'at (Blom 2017; Timol 2022). Though initially hostile to approaches by fellow Tablighi students on campus, Jamil was eventually convinced to participate in a three-day *khurūj* (Tablighi outing) which proved life changing. During this weekend trip, he heard, for the first time, a lengthy hadith describing how the Angel of Death extracts the souls of sinners which, quite literally, put the fear of God in him. Impulsively, he extended his weekend trip into a continuous four-month *khurūj* so as to consolidate a nascent sense of religiosity. Yet this was not an easy journey. For thirty days during this trip, Jamil joined a group of simple, impoverished peasants who constantly argued over petty issues, a far cry from the upper-class company he was accustomed to. On several occasions, he contemplated a premature exit:

> I did not desire to stay with those people for one single minute. Because I had left college and when I saw them, all illiterate rustics [*anpar dihāti*], I thought to myself what will they teach me? I already know more than them, my mentality was one of learning new information whereas Tabligh cultivates qualities [*ṣifāt*] . . . But I stayed with them and I disciplined myself to live against my desires. In my future life, I was destined to face many, many hardships so Allah made this my foundation from my first journey. I was left decimated [*mai pis kar reh gaya*], every day I thought I'll run away. On one occasion, I even wrapped my *bistar* [baggage], tied the knot and bent down to lift it but then I remembered the reality of my state and suddenly an invisible force moved me back . . . (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lPuDzSiLcWk).

Returning from this journey, Jamil met a young man from Peshawar who convinced him, despite the radical shift in social standing it would entail, to abandon his medical

career and, instead, train to become an *ʿālim* (religious scholar). Displaying his penchant for hyperbole, a hallmark of his rhetorical style, he reflected in a 2019 speech: "A doctor was a person of high stature in those days while a maulvi was *past-tareen gandagi ka keerra* [the lowliest worm of garbage] in society" (Z. Khan 2021; see https://youtu.be/ZFf_6K9qUdw for the original clip from which this quote is derived). Returning to his hometown in Tulumba to seek parental consent, his new-found ambitions caused a deep rupture with his father and, eventually, he was turned out from his home. Many years later, a sobbing Jamil recounted:

> I wanted to learn religion . . . I wasn't going to become a thief or a bandit! But if your aspirations collide with even your parents, then they [may] disown you. 23 November 1972, 9 a.m. in the morning has forever been etched onto my heart! At the age of 18, if your father evicts you from your home [saying]: "Get out! If you want to become a religious scholar [*maulvi*], then get out of my house!" [then how can one forget?] . . . (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2oWErAFILg).

Jamil's mother took pity on him however, providing him with a cash sum and her blessings. He therefore made a beeline for Raiwind and commenced his religious training in the same week.

Jamil's subsequent years as a student at the Raiwind madrassa were characterized by a single-minded dedication to acquiring deep Islamic knowledge: "For the first three years, I studied like a madman. I had a luxurious life prior to that, but I subject myself to such rigor that in the fourth year I fell ill" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWf1V6xkJDE). Blessed with a photographic memory and a keen ear for linguistic beauty, he quickly learned Arabic and threw himself into memorizing entire books of hadith and poetry; other than eating, sleeping and prayer, he has stated he would never be found without a book in his hand (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0-P-weAQoY). It seems his new-found devotion functioned as something of a penance for his previous years of easy living: " . . . in a willing act of renunciation, he would use a brick for a pillow and not change his dress for weeks in the hot month of June" (Z. Khan 2021). Unsurprisingly, and unlike his college days, he excelled as a student and caught the eye of his teachers who recognized his natural talent and gifts of oratory; though, to prevent pride, he would regularly rise at 4 am to prepare food for and serve (*khidma*) the constant stream of poor missionaries who visited the Raiwind headquarters on Tabligh tours (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZe8yR7Hl4U). After an intense eight-year study regime, Jamil completed the traditional Dars-i-Nizami curriculum in 1980 acquiring *ijāzāt* (authorization) in hadith from numerous teachers and, immediately, embarked upon a year-long tour with the Tablighi Jama'at across Pakistan (Figure 2).[4]

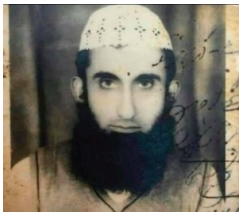

Figure 2. Maulana Tariq Jamil as a young relatively unknown religious scholar. Source: https://photos.hamariweb.com/pakistan/oldest-photo-of-maulana-tariq-jameel_pid16375.

4.3. A Rising Star (1980–1997)

The next stage in Jamil's life is characterized by utter devotion to the work of the Tablighi Jama'at, both nationally and internationally. Other than brief visits home, most of his time would be spent at the Raiwind Tablighi headquarters or out on various *khurūj* (preaching) trips as he systematically prioritized the movement's *da'wa* (proselytization/invitation) over everything else in his life:

> I had donated [*waqf*] my life to Raiwind . . . Even after two months if I requested some time off, I'd get admonished "You want to leave so soon!" After marriage, when I returned to Raiwind after two weeks, Abdul Wahhab Sahib took me to task [saying] "You spent two weeks, such a long time!"[5]

Embarking on his career as an Islamic preacher, Maulana Tariq Jamil's rhetorical panache and the emotional weight of his talks quickly distinguished him from fellow *ʿulamāʾ* and other Tablighis. As word about his mesmerizing style spread, people began flocking to his speeches in ever greater numbers. Large-scale Tablighi *ijtimās* (mass gatherings) became a favorite venue where he would encourage huge crowds to undertake lengthy *khurūj* outings and adopt the Tablighi Jama'at's method of Islamic revival as a permanent lifestyle. His international travels with the Tablighi Jama'at commenced in March 1982 when he stayed for two months at the global Nizamuddin headquarters in India and, in December that year, he also undertook a *chillah* (40-day outing) to the UK (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyX_eOdjdvo). Though not yet meeting Raiwind's requisite criterion for overseas travel, his inclusion within the group of Karachi elders was personally approved by Hajji Muhammad Abdul Wahhab (who would become *amīr* [leader] of Raiwind in 1992). Reminiscing about this latter trip in an informal 2017 gathering with his own students, Jamil recalled:

> I was newly graduated, every speech of mine would be different to another . . . I had a passion for knowledge, the temperament [*mizāj*] of *da'wa* had not overwhelmed me, I had a knowledge-seeking temperament. So, I did around 80 speeches [on that trip to the UK] and every one was different to another . . . and I became very well-known there. And from 1982 till now . . . 2017, I have continuously travelled. Allah takes me through His grace and kindness. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0-P-weAQoY).

Over the coming years, as the demands of *da'wa* progressively consumed him, Jamil established a basic repertoire of themes and topics—or what Kuiper (2019, p. 210), with reference to his analysis of Dr. Zakir Naik's public lectures, terms "a set of discursive motifs or building blocks that can be arranged in different ways according to need"—which characterize his revivalist message. In keeping with the Tablighi Jama'at's emphasis on a relentlessly apolitical bottom-up mass spiritual revival, the Maulana's discursive building blocks across countless lectures may principally be identified as *tawhīd* [monotheism], *risālah* [prophethood] and *ākhirah* [the Afterlife] (refer to Akhtar 2008 for a detailed compendium of transcribed lectures). Drawing both on scriptural sources and scientific descriptions of the natural world, Jamil would expound for hours on the incomparable majesty of Allah as sole sovereign of the universe who alone deserves the worship and allegiance of human beings. The Prophet Muhammad, as the seal of Allah's messengers, represents the quintessence of divine guidance whose personal example and habits must be followed by Muslims to achieve success. And, a favorite of Jamil as with countless other *wuʿʿāẓ* past and present (Berkey 2001; Hirschkind 2009), were fiery disquisitions on the thanatological and eschatological dimensions of Islam—including the inexorability of death, the transience of worldly life, graphic descriptions of the grave (*barzakh*), the terrors of Judgment, the pleasures of Paradise and pains of Hell, and the urgent need to repent—which would frequently move his audience to tears.

Other key themes which surface are the crucial importance of establishing daily prayer (*ṣalāt*), the emulation of the Prophet's companions (*ṣaḥāba*) as role models, the need to consistently make sacrifice [*qurbāni*] for acquiring religion, and the implacable global responsibility of *da'wa* that the ummah has inherited due to the finality of Muhammad's prophethood (Akhtar 2008). Jamil's photographic memory helped him to fire out Qur'anic verses in rapid succession—interspersed with choice quotations of Urdu, Persian, Arabic and Punjabi poetry—and, over the course of what frequently became three-hour long marathon sermons, he would lead his audience to an emotional crescendo, peaking with a passionate call to embark on lengthy Tablighi *khurūj* outings (*tashkīl*) followed by a long, tearful supplication (*du'ā*) filled with pathos (Figure 3). Such events became spectacles,

high-profile rhetorical feats delivered in mass gatherings which would entertain as well as inspire, and clearly displayed Jamil's penchant for drawing upon the narrative registers of the *wuʿāẓ* and the *quṣṣāṣ* as well as the *ʿulamāʾ*. After listening to one of his speeches, the notable Indian scholar Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, biographer of the Tablighi Jama'at's founder Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhalawi (Nadwi 1983), remarked, "Observing Tariq's memory, eloquence and rhetorical arrangement of words I have been reminded of the personalities of the pious scholars of old" (Akhtar 2008, p. 9), and once reportedly likened his heart-rending style to the great early preacher of Islam Hasan al-Basri.

Figure 3. A typical crowd gathered to listen to Maulana Tariq Jamil under makeshift tents. Source: Daily Jang (accessed 8 July 2022).

Key Influences

This phase in Maulana Tariq Jamil's life may be characterized as one of 'hard' Tabligh and his devotion to the cause saw him swiftly embedded into the upper echelons of the movement's global leadership. Despite his relative youth, he began to accompany the elders of the Pakistani chapter on their annual Hajj pilgrimage where they would meet with Tablighi leaders from around the world and he became intimate with the Kandhalawi family, based at the Nizamuddin Markaz in India, who had originated the movement (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hUztFDCsbA). Interestingly however, up until 1986 there seems to have been no single charismatic or inspirational figure who decisively influenced Jamil. This contrasts with the trajectories of other prominent contemporary Islamic personalities such as Dr. Zakir Naik, for whom a meeting with the South African Ahmed Deedat was a decisive turning-point in his life (Kuiper 2019, p. 205), or Shaykh Hamza Yusuf whose sojourn in the Saharan desert with the Mauritanian Shaykh Murabit al-Hajj proved transformative (Al-Hajj and Yusuf 2001, pp. 3–5). The trajectory of Jamil's personal formation, rather, seems to reflect the broader ethos of the Tablighi Jama'at in which individual charisma is absorbed within the broader dynamic of the movement: "As Tablighis say, 'The movement is the shaykh, and *tazkiya* (self-rectification) comes from involvement in its programme'" (Birt 2001, p. 376). Certainly, Maulana Tariq Jamil enjoyed close relations with leading Tablighi Jama'at figures, such as the global *amīr* from 1965 to 1995 Hazratji Maulana Inam ul-Hasan Kandhalawi or the head of the Pakistani chapter Hajji Abdul Wahhab, but it was the movement itself that converted and sustained him in his formative years, not any particular person. Ironically, as we shall see, it is Jamil's own charisma and tremendous personal appeal which is today perceived by some as unsettling these historical configurations of religious authority in the Tablighi Jama'at.

Nevertheless, in 1984, Jamil did encounter a saintly personality who would significantly shape his religious outlook:

> When I saw Maulana Saeed Ahmad Khan sahib, then I was like [awestruck facial expression]. You know, when someone sees an amazing thing and he's [startled] . . . By Allah! Watching that bondsman [*banda*] I was like, wow [awestruck facial

> expression]! What is this? What is this? . . . [and after our first interaction] an intense desire arose in my heart, if only I could remain in the company [*ṣuḥba*] of this bondsman [of God]. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCJu9cIp86I).

Khan was an Indian expatriate who had been resident in the Hijaz for several decades at the time of their meeting. A traditionally trained *ʿālim* (religious scholar), he had become attached to Tablighi Jama'at's founder Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhalawi soon after graduating from the distinguished Mazahir-e-Uloom seminary in Saharanpur in 1941. Subsequently, he devoted himself to the Tablighi Jama'at and was *amīr* (leader) of the third delegation to be dispatched to the Hijaz from India in 1947 (Muhammad 2012, p. 307). Building on the work of Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi and the alumni of the cosmopolitan Nadwatul Ulama institution in Lucknow, who had initiated the spread of the movement in the Arab world (Gaborieau 2000, pp. 132–33), Khan was subsequently posted to the Hijaz on a permanent basis by Ilyas' son and successor, Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Kandhalawi, with the express aim of establishing networks of Tablighi activism among the Arabs; soon after he was appointed *amīr* of the movement in Saudi Arabia. In 1986, however, the Saudi government demanded that Khan commit in writing to the immediate cessation of all Tablighi activities which he refused to do. As a result, his citizenship was revoked and, quickly obtaining Pakistani citizenship, he took up residence in Raiwind initially in the same room as Hajji Abdul Wahhab (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCJu9cIp86I). Though personally pained at being separated from the City of the Prophet (where he eventually died during an *ʿumrah* pilgrimage in 1999), his arrival in Pakistan was, for Jamil, a blessing in disguise:

> He remained grieved all his life that my Medina has escaped me, but I benefited a great deal . . . My understanding is that Allah sent him here only for me. I stayed twelve years with him . . . two, three, four months I'd spend with him [each year]. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCJu9cIp86I).

At Saharanpur, Khan had been a student of Tablighi Jama'at founder Maulana Muhammad Ilyas' nephew, the renowned hadith teacher and Sufi master Shaykh-ul Hadith Maulana Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhalawi, who conferred the Sufi mantle of *khilāfa* (spiritual successorship) upon him. Consequently, Jamil's time with Khan was spiritually transformative:

> When I came into the *ṣuḥba* [companionship] of Maulana Saeed Ahmed Khan sahib, then I saw that this person was a walking, talking *dhikr* [remembrance of God], at every opportunity he performed litanies . . . then, after that . . . through the grace of Allah . . . I began giving more importance [to my own *dhikr*], it was only after seeing him I [gained this] (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lPuDzSiLcWk) . . . The gentleness Allah has created in my temperament, the forgiveness, love, abhorrence of backbiting, whatever Allah has given me . . . though what have I to boast about, it's all from observing that bondsman. These things cannot be acquired through study. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCJu9cIp86I).

Khan's sagacity had earned him the title of the "Ghazali of Tabligh" among his peers, and his lengthy sojourn in the Hijaz and extensive interaction with Arabs helped nurture a universalist outlook in the much younger Jamil. Further, Jamil's own mastery of Arabic allowed him to directly address indigenous audiences in Gulf, Middle Eastern and various African countries during his frequent international tours and he also became the translator of choice for the sizeable flow of Arab Tablighi Jama'at delegations visiting Raiwind. His language of choice, however, remained Urdu and, now augmented by Khan's mentorship, he continued his tireless schedule of constant travel, delivering speeches in every major town and city in Pakistan as well as addressing South Asian diaspora communities across Europe, the Americas, and countries such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Fiji Islands. His talks were phenomenally popular and effective, and he may be credited during this period with expanding and strengthening the Tablighi Jama'at's national

infrastructure across Pakistan, raising the profile of the movement overseas, and touching many thousands of individual lives in the process. Recognizing the marketability of his speeches, media-savvy entrepreneurs started to sell recordings which resulted in a booming audiocassette ministry from the late 1980s. In a country characterized by a cacophony of Islamic sounds continually impinging on public spaces (N. Khan 2011), Maulana Tariq Jamil's voice could henceforth be heard blaring out of cassette players at various Islamic storefronts from Lahore to Karachi—and indeed further afield from Dhaka to Delhi. This, as Ahmad (2010, p. 25) points out, had real-world commercial impact; a speech delivered by Jamil in a packed *ijtimāʿ* (mass Tablighi gathering) could line the pockets of cassette manufacturers and shopkeepers for weeks to come. Though there is no indication that Jamil himself, or the Tablighi Jama'at in general, profited from such cassette sales, this interplay of religion, technology and market forces clearly highlights the incipient potential of a lucrative 'MTJ brand' which, as we shall see, the Maulana would actualize in future years.

By the end of this period, Maulana Tariq Jamil had become the most popular and sought-after speaker in subcontinental Tablighi circles and was firmly ensconced in the highest levels of the movement's leadership (Figure 4). In a brief message of condolence delivered upon the death of Maulana Zubair ul-Hasan Kandhalawi (son of the third global *amīr* Hazratji Maulana Inam ul-Hasan) in 2014, Jamil reminisced:

> When he [Maulana Zubair ul-Hasan] would come to Pakistan, there would be great expressions of love. He would specially call me, and his children had great love for me too . . . In the Hajj of 1997 we were together and he called me over saying, "Brother, all the ladies of our household listen only to your speeches so do this, go . . . to their tent in Arafat and deliver a lecture." So I went there and delivered a lecture. And just now, when he attended the [annual Raiwind] *ijtimāʿ* his eldest son said, "My young son would like to talk to you" and he talked to me over the phone . . . a five-year-old child . . . saying, "Please pray that I too become someone who delivers speeches like you." I said, "Son, may Allah make you like your grandfather" . . . Allah has taken such work from this family as rarely occurs in centuries. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hUztFDCsbA).

Figure 4. Maulana Tariq Jamil with Hafiz Muhammad Patel, the late *amīr* of the Tablighi Jama'at in Europe and the Americas, at the movement's European headquarters in Dewsbury, England. Source: respondent's photo.

4.4. Development into a National Celebrity (1997–2016)

I have selected 1997 as the beginning of the next phase of Jamil's life as that is when he first met the famous Pakistani singer and cultural icon Junaid Jamshed. Jamshed was the lead vocalist of the enormously popular band Vital Signs, best known for their 1987 song *Dil Dil Pakistan* which became the country's unofficial national anthem. The story of Jamshed's conversion to the Tablighi Jama'at is lengthy but what concerns us here is the crucial role played by Maulana Tariq Jamil. Up until this point, Jamil was something of a

sensation in Tablighi-Deobandi circles only; my argument is that his successful recruitment of numerous high-profile celebrities to the Tablighi cause from 1997 onwards—of whom Jamshed is just one—was a key catalyst for his own journey to national stardom.

According to cultural critic Nadeem Paracha (2009), the 1990s were a time of ferment in the Pakistani middle classes. The impact of General Zia ul-Haq's Islamization policies of the 1980s, endemic subsequent political instability, a gradual drifting from their mainly Barelvi ancestry due to urbanization and increased social mobility, the rousing of pan-Islamic sentiments in the wake of the anti-Soviet Afghan-jihad, and the proliferation of Islamic revivalist messages through various audio and videocassette ministries all combined to predispose the Pakistani bourgeoisie to a "non-militant version of modern conservative Islam being peddled by the neo-Islamic-evangelists"—that is, the Tablighi Jama'at. According to Paracha (2009), " . . . members of the petty-bourgeois trader classes . . . were the first major urbanites to join the Tableeghi Jamaat [sic] in large numbers soon followed by experimental middle-class folks who'd been dangling uneasily between Salafiyya militancy and Muslim secularism in the 1980s." This trend gained momentum in the early 2000s through the high-profile conversion to the Tablighi Jama'at of several celebrities, including numerous members of the Pakistani national cricket team, which can be directly traced to Maulana Tariq Jamil's influence (A. Khan 2021). It was through their very public 'intra-religious conversion' experiences (Timol 2022), I argue, that Jamil first came to the attention of the Pakistani mainstream (see also Z. Khan 2021).

It was the turn to the Tablighi Jama'at of Saeed Ahmed, a retired cricketer infamous for his nightclub antics in the 1970s, which paved the way for the subsequent large-scale conversion of the national team (Jawalekar 2017; Paracha 2019). Ahmed began visiting the team's dressing room around 2000 and, having formed friendships with several players, supplied them with audiocassettes of Jamil's lectures which they listened to avidly on car stereos (Paracha 2009; A. Khan 2021, p. 1407). As Hirschkind's (2009) capturing of late twentieth-century Egyptian religiosity shows, such cassette sermons comprised a key component in the technological scaffolding of a broader Islamic revival sweeping across multiple Muslim-majority settings during this period. Chastened by the public embarrassment of recent match-fixing scandals, a reconfigured national team searching for redemption and new sources of identity found itself, according to several analysts, receptive to the Tablighi Jama'at's message of reform (Samiuddin 2006; A. Khan 2021). Saeed Anwar, Pakistan's renowned opening batsman, was the first to convert after undertaking a three-day *khurūj* (Tablighi outing) following the sudden death of his young daughter in 2001 which Jamil was quick to capitalize on through several in-person meetings (A. Khan 2021, p. 1408). Others followed in quick succession—including Shahid Afridi, Mushtaq Ahmed, Saqlain Mushtaq and Inzimam ul-Haq—but it was the conversion to Islam of the team's only Christian player Yousuf Youhana (henceforth known as Mohammad Yousuf), who had been discreetly accompanying Anwar to Jamil's lectures, which caused the most stir (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqB5LeGFPeI). Under the captainship of Inzimam ul-Haq, the spectacle of public prayer, flowing beards, and constant references to Allah in post-match interviews henceforth punctuated Pakistan's national sport provoking ridicule and admiration in equal measure from different segments of Pakistani society (Paracha 2019).

Though they met for the first time at a Karachi *ijtimāʿ* (mass Tablighi gathering) in 1997, it took several years of sustained interaction with Maulana Tariq Jamil for Junaid Jamshed to convert definitively to the Tablighi Jama'at (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0pmWuHDWv4). Following a four-month *khurūj* outing in 2002, he suffered considerable privation and thus succumbed to the pressure of a lucrative concert tour offer in the Gulf region—despite his stated intention to retire from music and its associated hedonistic lifestyle. Jamil immediately intervened and successfully convinced Jamshed to attend Raiwind instead; soon after, Jamshed launched an international clothing franchise (J.—see https://www.junaidjamshed.com) in partnership with a fellow Tablighi and turned his musical talents to the production of numerous Islamic *nasheeds* (pious songs) which became hugely popular in religious circles. The two became bosom friends; Jamil chose

titles for all Jamshed's *nasheed* albums (even contributing vocals on occasion) and when Jamshed launched an upmarket Hajj tour group in 2007, Maulana Tariq Jamil became the scholar-in-residence who would accompany pilgrims to the Hijaz (Siddiqa 2020; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHruFj1TFHw; Figure 5). Jamshed was also very open about Jamil's role in his conversion, referencing him in numerous television interviews, speeches and talk-show programs (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0pmWuHDWv4). His own celebrity status opened doors, such as live performances at the annual Reviving Islamic Spirit conference in Canada (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjVozIK75DM), which in due course Jamil himself would walk through (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bzH0j4OGdU; Figure 6).

Figure 5. Junaid Jamshed tweets a picture of himself and Maulana Tariq Jamil in pilgrim garbs en route to Arafat as part of the 2014 Hajj pilgrimage. Source: https://twitter.com/junaidjamshedpk/status/517903518191980544?lang=en-GB.

Figure 6. A Facebook poster advertising Maulana Tariq Jamil co-delivering the Friday prayer with American scholar Imam Zaid Shakir as part of the 2017 Reviving Islamic Spirit conference in Canada. Source: https://www.facebook.com/events/312249172595859/permalink/314846235669486/.

This period also witnessed the public Tablighi activism of other well-known figures in Pakistan including actor Naeem Butt, politician Mian Abbas Sharif (younger brother of former and current Prime Ministers Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif) and military leader Lieutenant-General Javed Nasir. From the 1990s, Jamil also began to call upon successive serving Prime Ministers inviting them to the annual Tablighi *ijtimāʿ* (mass gathering) in Raiwind (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JB_x4fEM-kA) and, as documented by Shah (1999), he had begun addressing Cabinet Ministers and senior bureaucrats in special meetings organized at the behest of the Pakistani premier Nawaz Sharif as early as 1999. Moving in such elite circles, including forging close links with leading army personnel and business moguls, helped Jamil develop "intricate personal power networks" which, according to critics such as Siddiqa (2020), represent the dangerous potential of exploitation for personal gain. The net social impact of this approach, however, was to legitimize the Tablighi Jama'at as a credible framework of religious practice for many among the professional middle classes, and concomitantly to bring Jamil into the public limelight. As a visible member of the traditionally trained religious establishment, Maulana Tariq Jamil's impact also lay in rehabilitating the reputation of the *ʿulamāʾ* among the secularized upper classes, many of whom foster the deeply entrenched anticlerical attitudes once espoused by his own family:

> Observers of contemporary Islam have often viewed the ulama as mired in an unchanging tradition that precludes any serious or sophisticated understanding of the modern world on their part, and prevents them from playing any significant role in their societies other than striving fruitlessly to mitigate their increasing marginalisation. (Zaman 2009, pp. 214–15).

In December 2016, Junaid Jamshed tragically died in a plane crash while returning from a Tablighi *khurūj* trip undertaken with cricketer Saeed Anwar in Chitral. Seemingly inspired by his legacy, several *nasheed* artists—such as Anas Younus (*Jazba-e-Dawat*), Sohail Moten and Shaz Khan (*Chal Deen Ki Tabligh Main*), the latter of whom underwent his own singer-to-preacher conversion experience—soon released popular singles extolling the virtues of the Tablighi Jama'at (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZGsS0ZlMKo; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgDLubq1aTs). Their professional production and popularity on YouTube (2.8 million and 7.7 million views respectively) signal a step change in bourgeoisie perceptions and engagements with the movement and, in the technical terminology of the sociology of religion, this may be characterized as a shift from 'sect' to 'denomination' in Pakistani society for which Maulana Tariq Jamil, personally, must largely be credited:

> The TJ [Tablighi Jama'at] has, undoubtedly, penetrated deep into the Pakistani society and counts among its activists members of the civil and military bureaucracy, businessmen, university lecturers, celebrities from the entertainment industry and . . . sportsmen." (A. Khan 2021, p. 1407).

Such a social constituency represents considerable evolution from the group of "illiterate rustics" Jamil had patiently endured during his formative four-month *khurūj* as a teenager in 1972 and, cementing his own emergence as a leading Islamic figure on the national stage, Jamil passionately addressed the vast crowds assembled for Jamshed's funeral, and led them in prayer, as part of a multi-channel live television broadcast watched by millions on what effectively became a national day of mourning (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gYBO18qpLk for the speech and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8varNHzpVbA for the funeral prayer).

It would be unfair however, as some have suggested (Siddiqa 2020; refer also to Jamil's interlocutor during a BBC News Urdu interview https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JB_x4fEM-kA), to restrict the Maulana's influence to the upper strata of Pakistani society. At the same time as targeting high-profile celebrities, there is ample evidence of his dedicated work among some of the most disenfranchised and marginalized people in South Asian cultural milieus. These include sexually ambiguous cross-dressers or hermaphrodites (known collo-

quially as *hijra* or *khawaja sira*), usually disowned by their families and condemned to a life of social exclusion (Rao 2017; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0TyUJGdvN2M; https://tinyurl.com/5k6ujs75), those with long-term disabilities (including the deaf, blind, crippled, mute and lepers) and prostitutes (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8mPMzX9cRI). As a direct result of his efforts, sign language was incorporated into the plethora of translations offered for daily speeches at the Raiwind Markaz, madrassas for transgender adults were set up in Islamabad and Lahore (Mehmood 2022; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9mrPQjgYhyg), and hundreds of prostitutes, especially in Lahore's notorious 'Heera Mandi' quarter and the 'Bazar-e-Husn' red light district of his hometown Tulumba, repented from their lifestyles with the aid of monthly stipends, personally provided by Jamil, which helped them to marry and settle into a new life of Islamic piety (Arqam 2015; Abdul Qadir 2018; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ttr52MKFJjg). In 1998, Maulana Tariq Jamil also established Jamia al-Hasanain in Faisalabad, a Dar al-Uloom institution teaching the traditional Dars-i-Nizami syllabus, but with a much greater emphasis on *sīra* (prophetic biography), Islamic history and, under the tutelage of his close friend the Tunisian émigré to Pakistan Shaykh Ramzi al-Habib, the Arabic language (Figures 7 and 8). Over the years, this has developed into an international franchise with ten branches, eight catering for male students and two for female, including one in Indiana, North America, and another in his hometown of Tulumba; to date they have collectively produced around a thousand *ʿulamāʾ* (see https://alhasanainofficial.com).

Figure 7. Maulana Tariq Jamil's primary Dar al-Uloom institution, the Jamia al-Hasanain established in Faisalabad in 1998. Source: https://www.facebook.com/OfficialMTJ/videos/601310440352560/.

Figure 8. Students listening attentively to Maulana Tariq Jamil at the annual graduation ceremony of Jamia al-Hasanain in June 2022. Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FL1HGay20Rs&t=962s.

A Shift from 'Hard' to 'Soft' Tabligh

This period also witnessed subtle changes in Maulana Tariq Jamil's public discourse which may be characterized as a shift in approach from 'hard' to 'soft' Tabligh. Probably cognizant of the broader social audiences his speeches were now attracting, Jamil's tone gradually mellowed from that of fiery preacher to wise counsellor, and he more directly began to address social ills perceived around him including bribery, exploitation of the weak and vulnerable, filial impiety, endemic malfeasance, or the common practice of depriving women of inheritance. In fact, his message was remarkably empowering for young women straddling the expectations of modernity amidst the entrenched conventions of a patriarchal society by insisting, for example, that women are not juristically obligated to serve their husbands' families and should be given considerable latitude in selecting their own marriage partners (Siddiqa 2020; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5SRjfyr3JE). Moving away from mosques, Jamil's speeches would more frequently be delivered at neutral public venues—such as universities, army barracks, finance centers or simply large, open grounds capable of accommodating the huge crowds that would inevitably attend—and emphasize the overwhelming mercy of God. Humor began to permeate his talks with ever-more frequency and, rather than fervent calls to embark immediately upon lengthy Tablighi *khurūj* outings, the Maulana would now ask his audiences to publicly repent of their sins and commit to a new life of piety and virtuous character (*akhlāq*) facilitated by a framework of monthly weekend *khurūj* outings. During this period, Jamil also introduced a new element into his public performances in which he traced the Prophet Muhammad's lineage back to the Prophet Adam through an unbroken chain of 80 generations (Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Abdul Mutallib bin Hashim bin Abd Munaf bin Qusai bin Kilab . . . etc.) in a feat of rhetorical grandiosity which showcased his remarkable memory and never failed to draw exclamations of wonder from the assembled crowds (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLwqtdxJeY8 for an example). The 'discursive building blocks' of his talks remained implacably centered around *tawhid*, *risālah* and *ākhirah* (monotheism, prophethood and the Hereafter) however, and he continued to evince a relentless commitment to the "bottom-up *da'wa* modernity" (Kuiper 2019, p.173) of the Tablighi Jama'at:

> It is not [due to] anybody's conspiracy! [People say: "Our downfall is due to] an American conspiracy, a British conspiracy, a French conspiracy. Ah! These are the habits of defeated nations who project their faults onto others. They ascribe their weaknesses to others. If they get a stomach ache, then even that's blamed on an American conspiracy! Find faults within yourself. Seek out your own shortcomings. [Quoting Allamah Iqbal, *apne man mein dūb kar pā ja surāgh-e-zindagi*]: "Delve into yourself and discover life's secret traces" . . . A nation's ship only sinks when its crew drill holes into it with their own hands. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnNevzucIKs.

Most significantly, there was a discernible shift towards a powerful ecumenical discourse which has today become a defining hallmark of Jamil's preaching (Z. Khan 2021). The immediate driver of this seems to have been the internecine sectarian bloodshed which has blighted Pakistani religious life for decades, both between various Sunni groups and the Sunni and Shia (Zaman 2002, pp. 111–43). In this context, Maulana Tariq Jamil began making impassioned pleas for Muslims of all backgrounds to tolerate each other and relegate sectarian affiliations to the private sphere, thus advocating for a type of civic pluralism:

> Show me, what are you doing with my Prophet? [weeping] Did he leave you bound in sects or did he make you into an ummah? Why do you squander your lives in these foolish games [*nādān khel*]? . . . Difference of opinion has existed since the inception of this ummah and will always remain, but don't go to the extent of issuing decrees of disbelief [*kufr*] against one another [weeping]. Who will go to Paradise? [If] Sunnis say that Wahhabis are *kāfir* [disbelievers], Wahhabis say that Sunnis are *kāfir*, Barelvis say that Deobandis are *kāfir*, Deobandis say

> that Barelvis are *kāfir*, Shias say that Sunnis are *kāfir*, Sunnis say that Shias are *kāfir* [then] who will go to Paradise? . . . [weeping] You don't go to one another's mosques, you don't pray behind one another, [but have instead] made yourselves into wardens over Paradise! . . . Show me, where have you got this religion from in which you've divided into sects and spread fires of hostility? . . . I beseech you in the name of Allah and His Prophet [to] live as an ummah. Live [simply] as Muslims. Remain firm on your own creeds [*aqīdah*] but be lenient towards others. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKB2SDYTodI).

Taking this further, the Maulana also started meeting with leading scholars of different Islamic denominations (Figure 9) and, during a period of heightened tensions in 2013, delivered a lecture at the Central Shia Mosque in Gilgit where a local curfew had been imposed to stem rampant Sunni-Shia violence which had claimed 70 lives over the past year. In a historic gesture, Shia clerics reciprocated by accepting Jamil's invitation to attend the local Tablighi *ijtimāʿ* and his intervention was widely perceived to have reduced tensions in the area by 'dousing the flames of sectarianism' (Mir 2013; https://tinyurl.com/kyhjjfkf). In an ostensible move to further build bridges with Shia audiences, Jamil began a tradition of tearful annual lectures delivered on 10th Muharram (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9BBFgpzfKY for an example) in which he would mournfully lament the massacre of the Prophet's family at Karbala—the ultimate event of Islamic theodicy—which, for some, went dangerously close to undermining the parameters of Sunni orthodoxy (Rangooni 2019). Similarly, in the month of Rabi ul-Awwal, Jamil would extol the life and virtues of the Prophet Muhammad in a seeming attempt to appeal to Barelvi sensibilities. In reaching out to ever wider audiences through an expanding array of techniques and technologies however, Maulana Tariq Jamil has, as we shall see, faced the challenge of maintaining credibility and support within his own foundational constituencies.

Figure 9. Maulana Tariq Jamil building bridges with the Shia. Source: https://www.parhlo.com/life-of-molana-tariq-jameel/.

4.5. Forging His Own Way: Controversy and Criticism (2014–Present)

It was around 2014 that Maulana Tariq Jamil's embrace of digital media gained momentum. Third parties had begun uploading his lectures onto YouTube and, probably recognizing their popularity and the changing nature of religious consumption in a digital age, he started recording messages directly for virtual audiences and allowing his own live lectures to be videorecorded for dissemination via social media platforms or channels such as Message TV. Around the same time, he began accepting invitations to be interviewed on mainstream television programs—initially over the telephone but before long via live video transmission too—and would offer comments on newsworthy incidents.[6] Both moves signaled a departure from classical Tablighi Jama'at policy which insists on the primacy of face-to-face *da'wa* and which has long-maintained a stoic public silence in the face of topical crisis events, for which it has frequently been subject to criticism from rival Muslim groups (Ahmad 1991). Further, his rapid transition into a major media-based Islamic personality challenged the traditional Tablighi position of adopting the most cautious opinion on any contentious juristic (*fiqh*) issues which divide people; South Asian Tablighis had

therefore generally accepted the basic prohibition of *taswīr* (photographic/digital imagery) propounded by the majority of Deobandi *ʿulamāʾ*.

Jamil, however, found justification for his differing stance in the more lenient juristic opinion of the influential Mufti Taqi Usmani (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Gsm_9ZPEyM) and, as he warmed to a digital audience, two YouTube channels emerged as official carriers of his content. 'AJ Official', launched in December 2014, is today Pakistan's largest Islamic YouTube channel with a 9.71 million subscriber-base while 'Tariq Jamil', launched in March 2017, today has 6.84 million subscribers. Many other unofficial channels carry stylized excerpts from his lectures which, between them, have attracted hundreds of millions of views (and associated advertising revenues). The gradual supplanting of traditional television broadcasts by online video streaming platforms accessible largely via handheld devices marks a shift in global patterns of digital consumption; Jamil's responsiveness to such media thus marks him out as a contemporary 'intervangelist', to use a neologism coined by Bekkering (2011), rather than a conventional 'televangelist' (Figures 10 and 11). That said, the Maulana's lectures have also been broadcast regularly on satellite channels since 2014 when a Ramadan special series, *Roshni Ka Safar* (Journey of Light), premiering on the state-run network Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV), attracted more viewers "than most dramas aired on prime time with a star cast . . . [and] mustered millions in advertisement revenue" (Arqam 2015).

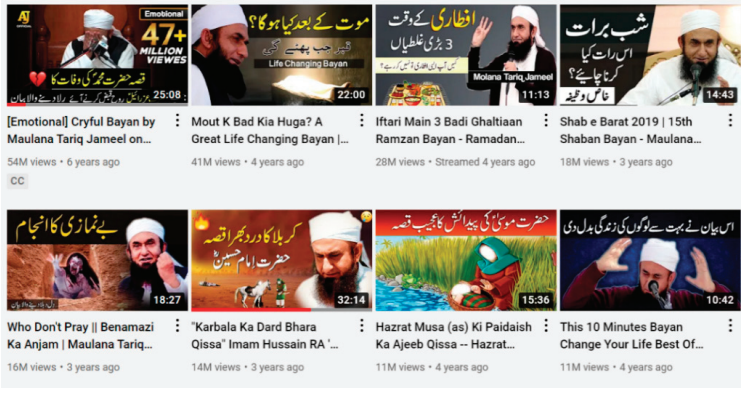

Figure 10. Maulana Tariq Jamil has a YouTube following which few other religious scholars can hope to match. Source: https://www.youtube.com/c/AJOfficialPK/videos?view=0&sort=p&flow=grid.

Figure 11. Passengers on a Faisal Movers coach from Islamabad to Lahore watching speeches by Maulana Tariq Jamil via on-board entertainment consoles in April 2022. Source: author's photograph.

By the time of Hajji Abdul Wahhab's death in November 2018, the revered *amīr* of the international Tablighi headquarters in Raiwind, Maulana Tariq Jamil had become a

household name across Pakistan and synonymous with the Tablighi Jama'at in the mind of many Pakistanis. By this stage he had, somewhat ironically, morphed into the de facto role of 'media spokesperson' for a movement always known for shying away from publicity—as evidenced by the way in which media anchors flocked to him to learn more about the eminent yet somewhat reclusive religious personality who had just passed away (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgWRDBIoyIk). Yet, the fact that he was simultaneously selected to address the vast crowds who assembled for Abdul Wahhab's funeral in Raiwind, and lead them in prayer, indicates his continued role at the very top of the Tablighi Jama'at's leadership hierarchy. Balancing such roles has not always been straightforward though and has gone hand in hand with the challenge of maintaining cordial links with Pakistan's rival political parties.

In this regard, Jamil's close personal relationship with the chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and former Prime Minister Imran Khan has been seen to compromise the strict political neutrality of the Tablighi Jama'at—often identified as a key reason for the movement's ability to flourish in multiple international settings (Ahmad 1991; Ali 2010). As early as 2014, at Jamil's behest, Khan renamed his landmark three-day protest against alleged election-rigging in opposition Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif's government from the 'Tsunami March' to the 'Azadi [Freedom] March' (see https://www.prideofpakistan.com/who-is-who-detail/Maulana-Tariq-Jameel/655). After his accession to power in 2018, Khan regularly called upon Jamil (Figure 12) who, in turn, publicly praised and supported him: "We have been blessed with a very good ruler. All of you should pray for him" (Z. Khan 2021; see also https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25KfcvwdNu0). Such an endorsement of a member of the secular-educated elite, however, was perceived by many *ʿulamā'* as a betrayal of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, a Deobandi political group led by the traditionally trained *ʿālim* Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman, thus causing some antagonism towards him in religious circles (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6e2rI-Qkcc). Jamil was simultaneously obliged during this period to navigate the tightrope of maintaining cordial relations with the Sharif family associated with the rival political group Pakistan Muslim League. In 2018, he led the funeral prayers of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's wife, Begum Kulsoom Nawaz (https://tinyurl.com/yc23wy3h), and upon the death of his and current Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's mother in London in 2020, visited their family home in Lahore to offer condolences (https://tinyurl.com/3bmzxhcm). As anthropologist Zaigham Khan pertinently observes:

> Tariq Jamil's success in reaching out to the powerful elite was seen as an asset. And his huge popularity is clearly seen as an asset by state officials as well. His close association with them can be seen as a mutually beneficial relationship. Maulana's endorsement, even a picture with him, extends an aura of religiosity to members of Pakistan's political elite, who have always used religion as a major source of their legitimacy. They also find him valuable in extending the state's messages to the religiously inclined masses. It is hard to guess who benefits more from the relationship—members of the political elite or the Tableeghi Jamaat [sic] and its mission. (Z. Khan 2021).

Figure 12. Maulana Tariq Jamil and Imran Khan, during the time of his premiership. Source: https://www.dawn.com/news/1630280.

As part of his drive to recruit high-profile public figures to the Tablighi cause, Maulana Tariq Jamil has not shied away from meeting female showbiz celebrities including actresses, singers, and talk-show hosts. This signals another departure from classical Tablighi policy which advocates strict gender-segregation when engaging in *da'wa*. In 2014 however, Jamil visited the provocative Pakistani actress Veena Malik at her Dubai residence who, soon after in a televised interview, caused a media storm by attributing her new-found religiosity to Jamil and referring to him as her "spiritual father" (https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1a244h). The Maulana has also interacted with other well-known figures including popular Punjabi stage dancer Nargis, who accompanied him on a Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, supermodel Ayyan Ali, and the celebrated actress Reema Khan, in meetings which swiftly attract headlines and which in no small measure enhance Jamil's own reputation as a religious preacher with uncommon appeal (Arqam 2015). Further, in an apparent move to indulge his considerable female fanbase, Jamil premiered Shaista Lodhi's new program *Gupshup with Shaista* in a candid 2019 interview focusing on his personal life which rapidly attracted millions of YouTube views (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkIg1mVlSPY). Most recently, Indian model and Bollywood actress Sana Khan caused widespread astonishment in 2020 when—inspired by Junaid Jamshed—she suddenly quit the entertainment industry and married a wealthy Tablighi scholar, Mufti Anas Sayed, after a sustained period of listening to Jamil's lectures online and eventually meeting with him in Dubai (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErLH029przM). Such public interaction with women, allied with a growing tendency to attend and address mixed-gender gatherings (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujhUXJbKa8c), has caused consternation among the more conservative sections of Pakistani society and marks a shift in the conventional role of *ʿulamāʾ* in Pakistani public life (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIBMAzouuoo).

As Maulana Tariq Jamil settled into the role of full-blown national celebrity, criticism of him mounted from several fronts. Most significantly, fellow *ʿulamāʾ* began to express reservations about the content of some of his talks and cast doubt upon his scholarly credentials (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvin9WFnDv0). As with the *quṣṣāṣ* and *wuʿʿāẓ* of old, Jamil's tendency to relate fanciful tales and 'weak' (*ḍaʿīf*) traditions, particularly those drawn from the corpus of *Isrā'īliyyāt* narrations,[7] provoked the ire of stricter scholars who insisted on a more stringent scriptural engagement. His trademark recital of the Prophet's lineage back to Adam, for example, appears to ignore a traditional body of scholarship which cautions that, beyond the patrilineal Ishmaelite ancestor Adnan, a definitive genealogy cannot be traced. For such issues as this, several Pakistani *ʿulamāʾ*—most prominently Mufti Zar Wali Khan and Maulana Manzoor Mengal—have publicly criticized him sometimes leading to muted spats and some back and forth over social media (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ww9ycdWT9_k; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q34wOITpQXo; https://youtu.be/8wm9ZeUUukM; https://youtu.be/J4$\times$70qqLpCA).

It is the Maulana's unremitting discourse of intra-Muslim ecumenicalism however—laden with overtures to the Shia and sporadic praise of rival Muslim leaders such as Maulana Ahmed Raza Khan or Syed Abul A'la Maududi—which has attracted the most criticism from Deobandi *ʿulamāʾ*, who see it as potentially imperiling the boundaries of a received orthodoxy. Consequently, he has on occasion found himself summoned to different Pakistani Dar al-Ulooms to account for or publicly retract statements made in his speeches which, initially, he acquiesced to but more recently has tended to demur (Vawda 2018). In recent years, several full-length books have been published cataloguing his mistakes in forensic detail carrying titles such as *Fundamental Errors found in the Speeches of the Famous, Independent Preacher Maulana Tariq Jamil Sahib which are Contrary to Orthodox Beliefs and Viewpoints* [*Ahl-e Sunnat wal Jamā'at Aq'āid wa Nazariyāt ke Khilāf Ma'ruf Āzād Muballigh Maulana Tariq Jamil Sahib ke Bayānāt mai Pāyī Jane Wālī Bunyādī Galṭiyā*] (Eesa Khan 2010; Rangooni 2019). In line with the disapproving genre of medieval refutational literature identified by Berkey (2001), such texts evince the perennial concern of the *ʿulamāʾ* to police orthodoxy and safeguard the simple faith of the masses by warning against

the excesses of popular preachers who, despite their unmatched appeal, fall short of the exacting standards demanded of public callers to Allah. Ironically, they are likely to appeal to a limited readership base however and almost entirely bypass millions of ordinary fans of the Maulana whose consumption of religious material revolves far more around bitesize social media clips than the perusal of weighty technical tomes. While personally upset at some of the allegations made against him (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDs1awivPns), Jamil's response has generally been to disengage and, avoiding any form of direct confrontation, press on tenaciously with his own revivalist vocation.

In April 2021, Maulana Tariq Jamil launched a commercial Islamic clothing franchise—the 'MTJ brand' (https://mtjonline.com; Figure 13)—at a lavish, star-studded ceremony in Karachi (Haq 2021; see https://youtu.be/fDTu3O4xsTg for the launch ceremony). Among others, the event included a video endorsement from Mufti Taqi Usmani—a strategic move which not only provided juristic validation of the venture but also a public show of unity between the country's most prominent Deobandi and Tablighi scholars[8]—performances by spoken word artists and a speech by a representative of Imran Khan's government (Figure 14). Jamil's stated rationale for the enterprise was to generate a source of lasting income for the multiple Dar al-Ulooms he administers, thus freeing them from dependency on the largesse of individual donors, and the immediate driver was the COVID-19 pandemic which made it untenable for him to rely on conventional funding sources (https://images.dawn.com/news/1186601). For critics, however, the move was indicative of a hypocritical or egotistical desire to commodify his religious reputation along the lines of a Western consumerist model, adding to the considerable advertising revenues already generated via YouTube (Javed 2021). Shortly after, Jamil launched a charitable organization, the 'Molana Tariq Jamil Foundation' (https://www.mtjfoundation.org), aimed at formally institutionalizing and expanding philanthropic work he had long been attending to privately (https://youtu.be/0LC7Jlxko78). Both moves are rather unusual for a traditional elder of the Tablighi Jama'at—which, as a movement, has maintained a fundamental separation between its own spiritual revivalist activities and humanitarian aid—and the overt use of his own name, in particular, has been found distasteful by some.[9] Nevertheless, they cement Jamil's reputation as a charismatic public figure able to pursue personal ventures independently of groupthink but reveal a tension in balancing his autonomy with the weight of corporate responsibility that attends his leadership position in the Tablighi Jama'at. More broadly, such ventures—and the medium through which they are promoted—contribute to the redefinition of Islam in the Pakistani public sphere:

> The transposition of religious (and political) issues to new media also changes the associative ecology of Islamic discourse, juxtaposing religious issues in innovative ways with commerce, entertainment, and the professions, and contributing to the greater pervasiveness of religious themes in an increasingly redefined public life. (Eickelman and Anderson [1999] 2003, p. 14).

Figure 13. A MTJ store in Lahore's prestigious Emporium Mall. Source: author's photo.

Figure 14. A representative of Imran Khan's government speaking at the MTJ brand's launch event in Karachi. Source: https://youtu.be/fDTu3O4xsTg.

5. The Dialectic of Structure-Agency in a Global Revivalist Movement

The preceding biographical outline has captured the story of one of Pakistan's most influential public figures, and one of the most popular and prominent Islamic preachers in the world today. In doing so, it has highlighted the extent to which Maulana Tariq Jamil's own journey has been intertwined with that of the Tablighi Jama'at; individual and institution have largely been inseparable over the past 50 years. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that, in the most recent past especially, Jamil has developed into an independent global preacher who commands a following among a wide cross-section of the Muslim (and indeed Urdu-speaking non-Muslim) community. Cognizant of this wide social appeal, his revivalist discourse and methods of delivery have witnessed considerable evolution over the years transcending both the Tablighi Jama'at as a movement and the conventional praxes of the Deobandi *ʿulamāʾ*.[10] His autonomy as an individual thus appears to chafe against the institutional expectations of the broader revivalist impulse which nurtured him and the resulting tension sheds important light on how movements and individuals, in responding to the exigencies of particular social and cultural moments, evolve in history.

For Zaman (2002, p. 7), "No rupture is greater in the history of Islam than that brought about by the impact of Western modernity." The scriptural-spiritual theological enterprise formalized at Deoband in 1867, as wonderfully illustrated by Barbara Metcalf (1982), was one distinct response to this challenge. Developed in the new conditions of British colonial rule, the Deobandi *maslak* (theological orientation) privileged a privatized, interiorized religious life able to sustain itself independently of state patronage and which disseminated mass religious instruction through the continuous production of *ʿulamāʾ*, facilitated by the technologies of rail and print. Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhalawi, founder of the Tablighi Jama'at, was a scion of this movement but innovated several lasting changes which reconfigured the contours of its reformist ambit. As Maulana Saeed Ahmad Khan, Jamil's mentor and Ilyas' companion during the final years of his life, observed:

> When Hadhrat Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Saheb Rahmatullahi alayhi [God have mercy upon him] commenced his mission of propagation, even the Ulama were at variance with him and even the most eminent scholars tended to be critical towards him, but placing his confidence in Allah, he nonetheless planted the roots of this mission and went ahead. He showed no outward sign of being awe-struck by their criticism and condemnation. (Kadwa 2003, p. 5).

Most significantly, Ilyas was successful in adding the dimension of *tablīgh* (proselytization) to the well-established traditions of *ta'līm* (scriptural pedagogy) and *tazkiya* (reformist Sufism) in the Deobandi cosmology. His development of the Tablighi mechanism of *chillah* for example—the standard 40-day *khurūj* outing which has become a hallmark of

the movement globally—drew upon a long-standing Sufi tradition in which the spiritual novitiate, under the supervision of a master, would undertake a 40-day retreat aimed at self-improvement (see Özelsel (2002) for a riveting account of such a retreat in contemporary Istanbul). Consequently, Ilyas' exercise of agency in pursuing his own revivalist vocation ended up reflexively altering the structures of Deobandi reform he had inherited.[11] Henceforth, the institution of the Markaz (Tablighi headquarters) was added to the existing institutions of the Dar al-Uloom (theological seminary) and the Khanqah (Sufi hospice); and—accentuating the democratization and vernacularization of Islam noted earlier—his greatest achievement perhaps lay in reconfiguring the conceptual landscape of twentieth-century Islamic activism by wresting the responsibility of *da'wa* away from the *ʿulamāʾ* and Sufis instead placing it squarely on the shoulders of the ordinary Muslim. As such, his efforts gave birth to a movement of lay preaching *par excellence* (and many of the reservations expressed by historical *ʿulamāʾ* with respect to individual *wuʿāẓ* and *quṣṣāṣ* have certainly been echoed in response to the collective lapses of ordinary Tablighis—see Azmi (2010), for example, or Rahman's (2020) compilation of *Fifty Unsubstantiated Narrations* popularly repeated by Tablighis). For sociologist Anthony Giddens, this capacity of subordinate agency to modify superordinate structure is essential to the ongoing sustainability of social systems in history:

> Power within social systems which enjoy some continuity over time and space presumes regularized relations of autonomy and dependence between actors or collectivities in contexts of social interaction. But all forms of dependence offer some resources whereby those who are subordinate can influence the activities of their superiors. This is what I call the *dialectic of control* in social systems. (Giddens 1986, p. 16, italics original).

Over the course of its century-long history, the Tablighi Jama'at has developed into an independent global revivalist movement which, in many regional settings such as Africa or the Middle East, retains little to no links with its Deobandi progenitor. Though in South Asian social contexts, the Tablighi Jama'at continues to enjoy cordial relations with the majority of Deobandi *ʿulamāʾ*, who provide an important source of legitimacy for the movement, it is not directly managed by them (and has, indeed, on occasion antagonized them (Azmi 2010)) functioning rather as an autonomous entity with its own hierarchy and bureaucratic structures (Reetz 2008; Timol 2019). The Deobandi *ʿulamāʾ*—while acknowledging the significant impact of the Tablighi Jama'at in reviving a grassroots religious consciousness among the Muslim laity, and in no small measure remaining dependent on that for the ongoing vitality of their institutions—have also faced the challenge of exerting some form of control, somewhat in the capacity of theological or juridical chaperones, over the movement's trajectory. This situation, I argue, mirrors in several important ways the subsidiary relationship of Maulana Tariq Jamil with the Tablighi Jama'at today.

As we have seen, Jamil is a direct product of the Tablighi movement and trained as an *ʿālim* (religious scholar) under its auspices at the Raiwind headquarters during the 1970s. Over the course of the past four decades, he has exhibited a tireless dedication to the movement's revivalist mission single-handedly attracting millions of new recruits from across the social spectrum. Yet over recent years, his increasing exercise of personal agency in preaching Islam has seen him depart from the conventional trajectory expected of a typical Tablighi elder. This article has identified five specific areas in which his personal choices diverge from classical Tablighi policy, namely: his embrace of digital media vis-à-vis the movement's insistence on face-to-face *da'wa*; his frequent engagement with the news media to address topical events; his public support of former Prime Minister Imran Khan widely perceived as compromising the Tablighi Jama'at's stance of political neutrality; his blurring of the Tablighi Jama'at's strict gender segregation norms; and his recent launching of an eponymous clothing brand and philanthropic organization. Further, his style of oratory—closely resembling the archetypes of the *quṣṣāṣ* (storytellers) and the *wuʿāẓ* (popular preachers)—as well as his unwavering message of intra-Muslim unity have provoked the ire of more scripturally oriented scholars, including those from within

his own Deobandi fraternity. Consequently, senior Tablighi elders and *'ulamā'* have for some time faced the implicit dilemma of managing his high-profile revivalist activities, particularly given the precedent they may set for rank-and-file Tablighis:

> . . . the most fundamental issue surrounding preachers and storytellers was one of control: who was to control their activities, their words, and their messages, and how was such control to be exercised? (Berkey 2001, p. 55).

There has been a tendency in the academic literature to characterize the Tablighi Jama'at as a Goffmanian 'total institution' (Dassetto 2000; Gaborieau 2006; Pieri 2021)—that is, an organization which requires the almost complete relinquishment of autonomy on the part of the individual as Goffman's prototypical cases of incarceration or hospitalization entail (Goffman 1961). The biodata presented in this article, however, supports Rauf et al.'s (2018) more nuanced argument that the Tablighi Jama'at operates as a 'soft' total institution in which individual agency *does* enjoy room for maneuver, especially away from the closed setting of the *khurūj* outing (the temporal context which most closely resembles the conditions of a 'total institution'). To take this a step further—and evoking Giddens' 'dialectic of control' cited above with reference to Maulana Muhammad Ilyas' eventual modification of the Deobandi reformist paradigm—it may be asserted that the exercise of agency outside of conventional parameters possesses the incipient potential, should the power dynamic so permit, to modify or even transform structural organizational norms given that those norms, though they wield considerable authority in governing the activities of group members, are nevertheless dependent upon social agents for their ongoing legitimization and actualization in society (Giddens 1986). Charismatic leadership thus constitutes for Weber one of the principal forces of change in human history which, though it exists in a complex relationship with 'traditional' and 'legal-rational' forms of authority, may be posited as an important evolutionary mechanism through which change is instigated within established traditions (Weber [1920]1978; Robbins 1998).

Viewed through the conceptual lens of the sociology of religious organizations, there is some analytical purchase in comparing Maulana Tariq Jamil's role in the Tablighi Jama'at today with that of Malcolm X in the historic development of the Nation of Islam (Haley [1965] 2001). In each case, the life-story of the individual has been intimately tied to that of the organization and through the sheer power of their words and force of their convictions, both figures successfully expanded networks of activism across their respective national spheres. The Tablighi Jama'at—while acknowledging the immense role played by Jamil in raising the movement's profile over recent decades, and while remaining somewhat dependent on his personal reputation for its ongoing credibility among the more secularized classes in South Asian public spheres—has nevertheless been sometimes constrained to 'clip the wings of the eagle'. Consequently, I was reliably informed by several respondents[12] that Maulana Tariq Jamil has sporadically been banned from giving speeches at the Raiwind headquarters and at traditional Tablighi *ijtimās* in a move somewhat reminiscent of Elijah Muhammad's 1963 suspension of Malcolm X from speaking on behalf of the Nation of Islam. The rationale for this, I was informed, has been to placate those *'ulamā'* who remain vocal in their criticism of him by taking away his formal Tablighi platform as well as to inhibit the discernible 'cult of personality' developing around him which—having spawned even an eerie copycat[13]—threatens to undermine the collectivist dynamics of the movement (Figure 15). Managing the impact of such high-profile individuals within existing organizational structures thus becomes a delicate balancing act revolving around the 'bureaucratization of charisma'—though not in a classical Weberian sense (Morrison 1995). Rather, it is about the subtle and diplomatic management of charisma within existing structures of authority, and the ultimate privileging of the institution over the individual while minimizing rupture. Whether Maulana Tariq Jamil's tremendous personal appeal is seen as a threat to the ordinary functioning of the Tablighi Jama'at—as it was with Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam—or whether his revivalist vocation catalyzes new directions in the movement's broader trajectory—just as Maulana Muhammad Ilyas' revivalist vocation

institutionalized new trends in the broader Deobandi movement—remains to be seen. As Giddens puts this:

> Action depends on the capability of the individual to 'make a difference' to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events. An agent ceases to be such if he or she loses the capability to 'make a difference', that is, to exercise some sort of power . . . Expressing these observations in another way, we can say that action logically involves power in the sense of transformative capacity. (Giddens 1986, pp. 14–15).

Figure 15. Maulana Tariq Jamil greeted by hordes of adoring students during a visit to the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad in November 2021. Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ir5-o6cI72k.

Finally, it may be argued that the story of Maulana Tariq Jamil's biographical trajectory casts light on a tension at the heart of the contemporary Tablighi Jama'at: namely, the conflicting tendencies of adhering rigidly to long-established conventions vis-à-vis a pragmatic responsiveness to new conditions and changing circumstances. While many of the 'old guard' in the movement espouse the former attitude, Jamil is clearly pioneering the latter with great aplomb. While visiting Raiwind during March and April 2022, I was struck at how, to this day, daily prayers are offered without the aid of a microphone to amplify the imam's voice; consequently, an elaborate system of human amplifiers (*mukabbirs*) are strategically placed across the huge congregation to call out changing postures (though the audible recitation of the Qur'an during the *Fajr* (dawn prayer), *Maghrib* (dusk prayer) and *Isha* (night) prayers can only be heard by a tiny handful of people within physical earshot of the imam). Upon querying this, I was informed that it stems from the Tablighi Jama'at's tendency to adopt the most cautious position when it comes to divisive issues of *fiqh* (see Mian (2017) for an excellent analysis of the debates regarding the permissibility of loudspeaker usage during ritual prayer in early twentieth-century South Asia) as well as a desire to replicate the practice of the Prophet's Mosque as closely as possible.[14] Juxtaposing this anachronism with Maulana Tariq Jamil's embrace of digital media reveals two starkly contrasting faces of the movement today: "Even as spokespersons for some groups assert that they seek a return to past values . . . they do so in a distinctively modern way, oriented to the future and assimilating new technologies and communicative forms" (Eickelman and Anderson [1999] 2003, p. 6). For Masud (2000), antecedents of such contrasting tendencies can be traced back to the movement's genesis when leading Tablighi Jama'at scholars espoused subtly different approaches to Islamic revival thus indicating an internal heterogeneity which has long resided—in theory if not always in practice—at the heart of the movement.[15]

6. Conclusions

Maulana Tariq Jamil's rise to prominence—and the concomitant conversion to the Tablighi Jama'at of numerous high-profile celebrities—should be placed against the wider canvas of the Islamization of public life in Pakistan since General Zia ul-Haq's state-sponsored policies of the 1980s in a way which defies the expectations of early secularization theorists (Casanova 1994; Berger 1999). Unlike other popular religious figures in Pakistan such as Javed Ghamidi, Farhat Hashmi or Dr. Israr Ahmad, who have often highlighted "their modern educational credentials" to self-consciously position themselves as alternative voices to the *ʿulamāʾ* (Ahmad 2010, p. 22), Jamil has successfully catapulted himself to national stardom as a bona fide representative of the religious establishment. That a traditionally trained Islamic scholar—and a member of the conservative Tablighi Jama'at to boot—should consistently top annual survey results purporting to list the most admired figures in the world's second most populous Muslim country signifies not only the ongoing influence of the *ʿulamāʾ* in shaping mass religious sensibilities but also the enduring popularity of bottom-up reformist paradigms which focus on the reinvigoration of grassroots piety and ritual practice over Islamist or modernist goals (Zaman 2002; Kuiper 2019).

Building on the critical role placed on 'print-capitalism' by Benedict Anderson (1983) in the early modern construction of a nation as an imagined community, Ahmad (2010, p. 25) suggests the salience of 'media-capitalism' in creating new religious public spheres, real or imagined, in contemporary societies. This article thus captures the story of a contemporary Muslim 'intervangelist's' responsiveness to 'media-capitalism' and his gradual assimilation of new communicative forms and technologies to influence public discourse (Bekkering 2011). Though there is a precedence of traditionally trained scholars using modern media tools to propagate Islamic messages—the respected Mufti Shafi Usmani, for example, first released his popular Qur'an commentary *Ma'ariful Qur'an* as a decade-long series of radio broadcasts between 1954 and 1964—it has tended to be Eickelman and Piscatori's ([1996] 2004, p. 13) 'new religious intellectuals', such as the immensely popular Egyptian Amr Khaled or the Indonesian Aa Gym, who have capitalized on the potential of digital technologies to present forms of Islamic discourse more amenable to secular-liberal sensibilities. With official accounts on Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, Maulana Tariq Jamil's full-blown embrace of digital media platforms therefore represents a step change in *da'wa* methodologies for a prominent leader of the Tablighi Jama'at for whom simplicity, humility and a general eschewing of the public limelight have always been cardinal virtues. His development into a national voice of moderate Islam in Pakistan further reveals an instrumental awareness of the forces of supply and demand in the marketplace of Islamic discourse which, coupled with the successful commercialization of his own popularity into a retail brand, marks him out as an astute 'faith entrepreneur.'[16] Arguably, it has been his method as much as his message which has helped to make Islamic practice more amenable to middle-class bourgeoisie lifestyles through a seeming policy of 'influencing the influencers';[17] though there remains an undeniable tension with the basic behavioral psychology of the Tablighi Jama'at which seeks to effect inner transformation not through words or snazzy online content, but by the repetition of ritualized action in the physical context of arduous *khurūj* excursions (Metcalf 1994; Ali 2010).[18]

The implications of Maulana Tariq Jamil's innovations in *da'wa* are manifold. While the legacy of traditional scholars has tended to live on in books pored over by subsequent generations of Muslims, Jamil—who as a popular preacher *par excellence* has produced virtually no literary oeuvre—is likely to live on in a digital cybersphere attracting hundreds of millions of views posthumously. Further, his personal example as a respected leader of the world's most powerful grassroots Islamic revivalist movement has set a precedent which is impacting contemporary Muslim mediascapes. Directly inspired by Jamil for example (and frequently defending him against critics), the Karachi-based Deobandi scholar Mufti Tariq Masood has developed a considerable online following regularly addressed from his digital pulpit (see https://www.muftitariqmasood.com). Similarly, the aforementioned former Bollywood actress Sana Khan, drawing on her existing fame, has embarked upon

a career as an Islamic social media influencer regularly publishing pious content via popular Hinglish vlog posts (see https://www.instagram.com/sanakhaan21/?hl=en). Such initiatives represent the 'avant-garde' impulses of a long-established Islamic revivalist movement with roots in colonial India and speak to a debate centered around the most effective and authentic ways of calling people to Allah under conditions of technological modernity (Kuiper 2021). Rather than typecasting them as static monoliths then, this article argues for the need to recognize the internal heterogeneity of mass Islamic movements as they evolve through space and time under the influence of multiple leaders—some more and others less responsive to the exigencies of changing circumstances—to play out a story of both continuity and change.

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Notes

1 See https://yougov.co.uk/topics/international/articles-reports/2020/09/22/worlds-most-admired-2020 (Pakistan must be selected from the dropdown list of 42 countries). Jamil's 'admiration score' was 17.5%, Imran Khan 16.38%, Bill Gates 5.16% and Cristiano Ronaldo 3.42%. Jamil also topped the poll in 2018 with a 17.6% admiration score (the second highest being army general Raheel Sharif with 13.7%—see https://yougov.co.uk/topics/international/articles-reports/2018/04/11/worlds-most-admired-2018), though in 2019 he was narrowly pipped to the top spot by Imran Khan (19.37% and 20.95% admiration scores respectively), the next closest ranking being Bill Gates with 6.74% (see https://today.yougov.com/topics/international/articles-reports/2019/07/18/2019-worlds-most-admired). Country-specific ratings seem not to be available on the YouGov website for 2021 or prior to 2018. Unless otherwise specified, all URL links referenced throughout this paper were accessed on 8 July 2022.

2 See https://www.youtube.com/c/tariqjamilofficial/about and https://www.youtube.com/c/AJOfficialPK/about (accessed on 13 December 2022). These figures do not include the many unofficial channels that feature his talks which have collectively attracted hundreds of millions of additional views.

3 To cite a single excerpt from many possible examples: "For the sake of Allah, my children, if you are my students then this Deobandi-Barlevi [conflict], you must get rid of these quarrels! Consider yourself [only] Muslims . . . I want to see you as Muslims. I want to take you out of Deobandiyat [Deobandism], just be Muslims . . . We follow the decrees of Imam Abu Hanifa [and] consider the interpretation of his edicts by the scholars of Deoband to be more correct. [But] we respect everybody else and honour them. Our hearts are open to everybody. [To claim that] we're exclusively on the truth and we're exclusively going to Paradise, I want to take this '*ujb* [vanity] out of you. He [God] is a generous King who forgives whomsoever He pleases. Are we sentinels [over Paradise]? Be a Muslim, be a *mu'min* [believer], be an *ummatī* [member of the global Muslim community] . . . Love everybody. Clean your hearts [from animosity] towards anybody." See https://youtu.be/306c7ZKsrS4 (accessed on 8 July 2022).

4 Maulana Tariq Jamil, in particular, was influenced by four teachers two of whom he describes as '*jalāli*' (majestic, stern) and two as '*jamāli*' (beautiful, gentle): (1) Maulana Jamshed, erstwhile imam of Raiwind and *khalīfah* (spiritual successor) of Maulana Masiullah Khan (himself a *khalīfah* of the renowned Deobandi figurehead Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi); (2) the ethereal Maulana Nazar-ur-Rahman, current *amīr* [leader] of Raiwind following the death of Hajji Abdul Wahhab in 2018, and an accomplished scholar of hadith and Sufi master; (3) Maulana Ehsan ul-Haq, son of Raiwind's second *amīr* Hajji Babu Bashir Ahmad and *khalīfah* (spiritual successor) of Tablighi Jama'at founder Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhalawi's nephew Shaykh-ul Hadith Maulana Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhalawi; (4) Maulana Abdur Rahman, a pious elder of the Tablighi Jama'at known for his rigorous ascetism (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWf1V6xkJDE). In addition, he was a personal attendant to Mufti Zainul Abideen, a respected scholar who had been a companion of Tablighi Jama'at founder Maulana Muhammad Ilyas during his final illness (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZe8yR7Hl4U).

5 See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ttjKc0yj5Ck. Hajji Muhammad Abdul Wahhab, one of the most important global leaders of the Tablighi Jama'at, was head of the Pakistani chapter from 1992 until his death in 2018. Maulana Tariq Jamil married around 1983 and has five children, three sons and two daughters.

6 To take a recent example, in December 2021 he visited the Sri Lankan embassy to express grief and condemnation at the mob killing of Sri Lankan national Priyantha Kumar in Sialkot for alleged blasphemy; see https://www.dawn.com/news/1665216 and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnZd9rj8nWE.

7 The *Isrā'īliyyāt* refer to a corpus of extra-Quran'ic exegetical material derived mainly from Christian and Jewish sources which has formed "a nebulous and undisciplined stratum of popular culture" (Berkey 2001, p. 41) in Islamic societies.

8 In his speech, Mufti Taqi stated: "It is my heartfelt prayer that Allah blesses this work you are commencing today, makes it successful and also grants you divine aid (*tawfīq*) to bring it to fruition with sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) . . . [so you may] achieve the virtuous objectives before you with special divine grace. Hadhrat Maulana Tariq Jamil Sahib, may his blessings abide (*dāmat barakātuhu*), is an asset for our nation and community. In this regard, after conveying my greetings of peace to him, I congratulate him that his personal name is being utilised in this venture. I pray that this becomes a means of virtuous reputation (*naik nāmi*) and a means of serving (*khidma*) Allah's religion and that it results in external and internal benefits, and that Allah confers upon him increases in external and internal [blessings]" (see https://youtu.be/fDTu3O4xsTg).

9 Conversations with senior Tablighis in Gujranwala and Raiwind (3 and 7 April 2022).

10 The foreword to a lengthy Urdu critique of Jamil published in the UK observes: "The respected personality of Sir Maulana Tariq Jamil Sahib is not in need of any introduction. He is famous in the capacity of a global preacher and in this capacity attends diverse religious assemblies across the world addressing Muslims; the Muslim masses thus benefit from him. From the beginning, he has been attached to the Tablighi Jama'at discharging the responsibilities of *da'wa* and *tablīgh* in conformance with the principles stipulated by the elders of Tabligh for scholars and masses involved in the Jama'at. However, for some years now Maulana appears to have freed himself from these principles and now he travels the world delivering lectures in the capacity of an independent preacher" (Muhammad Thaqalain Jawed Haidari in Rangooni 2019, p.4).

11 There are further examples of evolution in the history of the *maslak*. As Metcalf (2008) also illustrates, Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani successfully added an activist political wing to what had hitherto largely been an *'ulamā'*-centric educational reformist movement.

12 Conversations with senior Tablighis in Pakistan and the UK (April and May 2022).

13 A certain Azad Khan—under the misleading title of Maulana Azad Jameel—gained some fame as an Islamic preacher in Pakistan by imitating to a remarkable degree Maulana Tariq Jamil's intonations of voice, idiomatic expressions, and general rhetorical style leading to a widespread misconception that he was the Maulana's son. This caused some chagrin to Jamil's family who were eventually obliged to formally distance themselves from him. For more, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ROT4v3HRF0; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=toDJ4cAQIwk; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-hfi0HFdKI; https://thenamal.com/latest/fact-check-azad-jameel-is-not-maulana-tariq-jameels-son/; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIX5gTM3bFQ (accessed on 9 September 2022).

14 Conversations with senior Tablighis and *'ulamā'* in Raiwind and Islamabad (April 2022).

15 Specifically, Masud (2000) contrasts Maulana Ihtisham ul-Hasan Kandhalawi's (a close relative and early associate of Tablighi Jama'at founder Maulana Muhammad Ilyas) and Shaykh Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's intellectual engagements with modernity, rooted in a rationalizing discourse, with Shaykh-ul Hadith Maulana Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhalawi's more interiorized Sufi-inflected ethos rooted in strong theological foundations. I am grateful to Professor Muhammad Khalid Masud for bringing this to my attention (personal conversation, Islamabad, 14 April 2022).

16 I am grateful to Dietrich Reetz for suggesting this phrase to me (personal communication, 19 August 2022).

17 I am grateful to Muhammad Khalid Masud for suggesting this phrase to me (personal communication, 3 September 2022).

18 Tablighi Jama'at's second global *amīr* Maulana Yusuf Kandhalawi, son of the founder, unequivocally stated: "It is necessary to avoid usual [*riwājī*] channels like newspapers, advertisement and the press for the publicity of this work, since the customary words cannot properly describe this significant work. This is an extraordinary work. The media, as an ordinary means, tends to reinforce the current ordinary customs in the society. It cannot explain this extraordinary work. The true forms of publicity are *gasht*, *ta'līm* and *tashkīl*" (Masud 2000, p. 80).

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Article

Deprived Muslims and Salafism: An Ethnographic Study of the Salafi Movement in Pekanbaru, Indonesia †

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Abstract: This article analyses the process of reversion to Salafism in Pekanbaru, Indonesia in the context of Muslims who have returned to Islam as a solution to their sense of deprivation. This return to Islam is considered by many as an initial solution to a feeling of deprivation which often manifests itself as a form of spiritual 'emptiness', accompanied by anxiety, depression and a lack of direction in life. The analysis in this article is based on extensive reading of relevant literature, participatory observation, and interviews conducted during fieldwork in Pekanbaru from July 2015 to June 2016. The discussion is based on three case studies of Salafi members, detailing their reversion to Salafism and the personal and sociological reasons for their choice to return to Islam, i.e., Salafism, after a certain period of time in their lives. Findings show that those who join the Salafi movement have previously experienced relative deprivation which led to a sense of existential deprivation.

Keywords: Salafism; reversion; deprivation

1. Introduction

The role of Salafism in Indonesian society is gradually increasing. However, it remains a neglected subject of research, particularly in marginal areas of Indonesia. This article explores the phenomenon of Islamic revivalism in Pekanbaru, Sumatra, in terms of how the Salafi members deal with relative deprivation. A study of Sumatran Salafism is required as most recent studies on Indonesian Salafism have focused on Java, with scant reference to other regions of Indonesia.

The objective of this study is to explore the role of Salafism in how lapsed or non-religious Muslims in Pekanbaru seek to overcome the suffering of existential deprivation by adopting Salafism and joining the Salafi community. This aim was approached by focusing on the reasons why people revert to Islam by choosing only Salafism among the numerous other Islamic movements which exist in Pekanbaru.

In this study, I used the relative deprivation theory, enabling me to reveal socio-cultural factors which caused non-religious Malays to revert to Islam. This theory was selected to gain a more comprehensive understanding of Salafism in Pekanbaru. Salafism operates as a revivalist movement, acting to overcome the problems faced by those struggling with existential deprivation associated with modern life. It is an attempt to return to the teachings of the Qur'an and *sunnah* (sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad), exemplified by the *al-salaf al-salih* (pious predecessors comprising the first three generations of Muslims).

The study of the Salafi movement in Pekanbaru is part of the effort to understand the religious changes occurring in Sumatra. The religious changes on an individual level can take two forms: first, within a given religious tradition (reversion), and second, between religions, (conversion). The former is manifested in a change of religious affiliation, preferences and participation, while the latter may involve conversion from one religion to

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another, for example from Christianity to Islam or vice versa. Since the context of this study is the Muslim society of Pekanbaru, where Salafism is very active, my focus is on reversion. Moreover, the use of the term conversion to refer to religious change within one religion is considered incorrect and is uncommon in scholarly literature. The correct term, reversion, is therefore used.

2. Methodology

This study utilised case studies and the ethnographic method. According to Benjamin (2005), ethnography may denote a methodology that mainly focuses on the social and cultural contexts of the observed cultures. This method is suited to address themes of research related to perspective, world-views, social interaction and identity (Marvasti 2004). Religion has much to do with the way people see their world, as well as how they establish relationships with others as social beings. Thus, this method is best suited to the study of Salafism as a religious movement in a specific social context in Pekanbaru, Indonesia.

Data was collected during fieldwork through different methods. Participant observation was conducted in Pekanbaru from July 2015 to June 2016. This was important as it enabled me to observe, in person, various events in the research area. Moreover, I sometimes found that a particular description given by an informant during an interview required an observation to validate it. For example, the information given by a participant that the Salafis have strong solidarity among themselves could be validated by observing their attitudes and behaviour in religious rituals and social events they regularly conduct. Similarly, how far a Salafi is attached to the Salafi movement can be best seen from their involvement in Salafi community activities. In these cases, observation was an effective way to address the limitations of the interview method. I conducted observation for 12 months across various locations and on various occasions in Pekanbaru, including in the central part of the city and the suburban areas of Rumbai and Kulim. Unlike interviewing, which to some extent has lost its natural setting (Fontana and Frey 2008), the participant observation method is an effective way to listen to, and capture, authentic conversation among Salafis in a natural setting. During the fieldwork, I spent significant time in various social settings including *aqiqa* (Islamic welcoming ceremony for a new baby), chatting with some Salafi informants casually at restaurants, attending their barbeque parties and regular main prayers and sermons in the Salafi mosques. These allowed me to obtain substantial details about the intentions, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour of the Salafis. I also visited some Salafi schools, such as Imam Shafii Primary School and Ummu Sulaym Islamic Boarding School, to talk with the teachers and principals in their offices.

The second method of collecting data was through in-depth interviews. These can yield substantial details, which is useful if there is scant textual information on the subject (Howe and Lewis 1993). Additionally, the method provides opportunities to delve deep into the interviewee's personal behaviour and experience (Marvasti 2004). Interviews in this study generated extensive verbal data which was later converted into a written form and personal life stories of Salafi members. The interviewees can be termed competent members (Blasi and Weigert 1976), as they are considered representatives of their group (Babbie 2008). It is worth noting here that the Salafis strongly uphold the belief that the interaction between unmarried non-*mahram* (with whom one is not related by blood and, therefore, can marry) males and females is not allowed by Islam. For this reason, the informants were male Salafis and though not intentionally chosen, they were all middle-aged, ranging from 35 to 45 years old.

During the in-depth interviews, I used semi-directive and semi-structured questions to obtain information from the informants. The in-depth interviews were conducted face to face in locations such as mosques and coffee shops decided by the interviewees. Interviews were recorded only if the participant had given consent to do so. I asked participants about their life histories related to the "turning point" in their lives that led them to Salafism. In so doing I asked them about their socio-cultural background, the reference group which influenced them in their choice of Salafism, the reasons behind their choice and their role

and expectations about joining the Salafi movement. The interviews were conducted in the Indonesian language. The recorded interviews were transcribed, while for unrecorded ones, written notes were taken during the interview. Only the relevant parts of the interviews were translated into English, which appear as direct citations in this article. All informants were clearly informed about the purpose of the research. They were also asked to provide their written consent before conducting the interviews. Some of them gave consent to use their real names, while others requested that I use pseudonyms. However, to protect all the informants' privacy, all names in this article are pseudonyms.

Library research represents the third and final method of data collection. The media I accessed included written documents, such as school curricula, brochures and textbooks, or recorded activities, such as CDs or cassettes containing preaching and teaching materials.

Unit analysis of this study is based on individuals, characterised by gender (male Salafis), age (from 35 to 45 years old) and attitudes (religious and non-religious). In general, there are three stages of data analysis, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusions (Berg 2004).

Pekanbaru, the research scene, is the capital city of Riau Province, Indonesia. It is geographically located in the middle of Sumatra Island, close to Malacca Strait. Recently, the city has undergone rapid development, propelled by growth in the petroleum, plantation, pulp and paper industries and service and commerce sectors. The strong economic growth can be seen in the establishment of modern markets and entertainment centers. In addition to the economic growth, urban sprawl and migrant inflows from the neighbouring provinces, particularly West Sumatra, North Sumatra and as far as Java, increase every year which is altering the demographic composition in Pekanbaru (Pekanbaru 2015).

Findings show that those who join the Salafi movement have previously experienced relative deprivation which has led to a sense of existential deprivation. In contrast to a perceived lack of life's necessities in the case of deprivation, the emptiness and lacking in existential deprivation are felt in a religious or spiritual sense, and manifest in feelings of anxiety, emptiness and a sense of a lack of meaning in their life. It is these feelings which motivate them to search for the true and pure interpretation of Islam, in an attempt to quench their thirst for spiritual understanding and comfort. In many cases, the process of adaptation to Salafism is not linear in nature and is accompanied by doubt, contemplation, and for some informants, resistance from their families. Despite these challenges, the participants interviewed stated they felt content and fulfilled once they had found Salafism. This will be discussed in detail below, where it is argued that both social and normative factors, such as the Salafi movement's strong solidarity and purity attract people to join. The discussion is based on three case studies of Salafi members, detailing their reversion, i.e., the personal and sociological reasons for their choice to return to Islam after a certain period of time in their lives of not practicing religion.

3. Salafism: A Contested Concept

Salafism is a term widely used to refer to those Muslims who call for the return to the teachings and practices of their pious predecessors (*al-salaf al-salih*). Practically, it is an umbrella concept that incorporates a wide range of different Muslim communities aiming at purifying Islamic teachings and practices. Etymologically, *Salaf* means time past or what happened in the past (al Thalibi 2006; Ma'luf 1986), however over centuries, the concept of Salafism has transformed. It is now attributed to a major Islamic current emerging in Saudi Arabia, aiming to purify Islamic teachings and practices (Adonis 1998; al Buthy 1998). Salafis are also known by some scholars as Wahhabis (Ayoob 2009; Commins 2006; Sirozi 2005). The majority of funding for international Salafi activity comes from Saudi Arabia (Haghayegi 2002), which according to Gadzey (2005) provides funds for the operation of 1500 mosques, 210 Islamic centers and almost 2000 colleges in various countries where Wahhabism is taught to local people.

Wiktorowicz (2006) classified Salafis into three categories: (i) purists, who stress persuasive propagation and education; (ii) political, who emphasize the implementation

of Salafi precepts at a governmental level, and (iii) jihadis, who choose revolutionary strategies to achieve their goal. Whereas Wiktorowicz (2006) categorises Salafis mainly on the basis of strategies adopted to achieve their goals, Duderija (2007) describes Salafis on the basis of their methodology of interpretation to extract meaning from Qur'an and *hadiths* (Prophetic Traditions). According to Duderija (2011), Salafism is a modern phenomenon, but its followers employ a traditional *manhaj* (methodology) to uncover the Qur'anic and *hadiths* meaning.

In the Indonesian context, it is important to consider the factors that make Salafism appealing among Muslims. In historical terms, Indonesian Salafism proliferated a long time ago. *Persatuan Islam* (Islamic Union), *Muhammadiyah*, and the *Paderi* movement are strongly influenced by Salafism. *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia* (Indonesian Islamic Propagation Council) is also closely related to Saudi Arabia, with its goal being to compete with Christian missionary activity (Bruinessen 2004). All of these movements emerged in the frame of Islamic revival influenced by the interaction between tradition and modernity, international influences as well as political tensions. The Salafi movement explored in this article is not related to the general trends mentioned above, but to the new current, referred to as 'the new Salafi', which came to Indonesia in three ways: education, mainly emanating from Saudi Arabia and Yemen; human movement around in international caravans; internet and book publications (Fealy 2005).

The new Indonesian Salafis have been studied by numerous scholars. Syarifuddin (2012), a leading religious preacher in Aceh, discusses a specific topic related to the response of Salafism to the school of jurisprudence (*madzhab*). This is a significant topic due to the strong rejection by Salafism to joining any *madzhab* in Islam. According to the Salafis, joining a *madzhab* is illegal. Instead, all Muslims should refer directly to the Qur'an and *sunnah*. Syarifuddin (2012), on the basis of his debate with a group of Salafi *ustadz* (Islamic religious preachers) in a mosque in Medan, shows the weakness of the Salafi position and its preference to only follow the Salafi *ustadz*.

Studying the suicide bombings in Indonesia, particularly in Java, there were different reactions according to the Salafi subgroup: there were those who supported it, represented by the Jihadi Salafi, and those who totally rejected it, represented by the Salafi Wahhabists. The latter group argued that Islam does not allow its followers to commit suicide regardless of the reason (Rusli 2014). Another scholar, Jahroni (2013) focuses on the religious character of the relationship between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia, in which Salafism is the main element in maintaining the Saudi influence in Indonesian Muslim society. He argues that the Islamic and Arabic College of Indonesia (LIPIA) in Jakarta, which is fully funded by the Saudi government, can be regarded as the main agency to strengthen the presence of Saudi religious authority.

Hasan (2006) discussed specifically the hard-line Salafi represented by *Laskar Jihad* (the Troops of Jihad), arguing that the emergence of *Laskar Jihad* in Indonesian society, particularly in Java, is an assertion of their identity. The socio-political atmosphere in 1998, when the tension between Muslims and Christians was at its peak, provided a fertile ground for the hard-liners to make their presence felt.

Unlike Hasan, Wahid (2014) focuses his research on the role of Salafi *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) in Java. He sees these as playing a crucial role in training a young generation of Indonesians to be capable of teaching the Salafi *manhaj* (path or methodology). Wahid emphasises the importance of the Salafi path as it is considered the third Islamic source, after Qur'an and *hadiths*, reflecting the belief and practices exemplified by the first three generations of Muslims. It is this *manhaj* which distinguishes Salafism from other reformist movements in Indonesia, such as *Muhammadiyah* and *al Irsyad* (Wahid 2014).

Nisa (2012) discusses another aspect of Indonesian Salafism: the status of women and how they interact and practice their religion with special reference to the wearing of the *niqab* (veil). According to Nisa, wearing the *niqab* among female Salafi students is part of fulfilling Islamic obligations in order to be able to be a better believer.

4. How Does a Muslim Come to Feel Deprived?

The theory of relative deprivation has been used by scholars to explain the causes and development of social movements in which an individual or a group of people feel deprived in the cultural and socio-economic spheres (Ali 2012; Morrison 1971). Agbiboa (2013), for example, claims that the emergence of Boko Haram in Nigeria is caused by socio-economic and political issues resulting from elite corruption and the prevalence of poverty among people. Similarly, Dein and Barlow (1999) argue that the underlying reason for people to join the Hare Krishna Movement in London is a feeling of existential deprivation. From this explanation, it can be assumed that an individual can feel deprived in a religious or spiritual sense, reflected in feelings of emptiness, anxiety and experiencing life with little or no meaning.

Smith and Pettigrew (2015, p. 2) define relative deprivation as "a judgment that one or one's in-group is disadvantaged compared to a relevant reference, which consequently invokes feelings of anger, resentment and entitlement". Relative deprivation itself is referred to as "a sense of deprivation" which involves comparisons with the "reference group" (Runciman 1966, pp. 10–11). The basic idea of relative deprivation is that the feeling of being deprived or dissatisfied largely depends on what someone desires to possess. This desire comes about as a result of comparing with the referent group (Morrison 1971; Runciman 1966; Webber 2007). The comparison may be carried out by an individual, which is referred to as "individual relative deprivation," or by a group, referred to as "group relative deprivation" (Runciman 1966, p. 11). Runciman further explains that the sense of deprivation may vary from one to another in terms of its magnitude, frequency or degree.

Among the Salafis, when an individual is seen to be deprived of their religious roots, his or her condition is referred to as *jahiliya* (ignorance), indicating that he or she is "unguided" and had taken the wrong path. As a corollary of this, when someone undergoes proselytization and joins the Salafis, he or she is called *muallaf* (newly converted to Islam). The use of the word *muallaf* among the Salafis implies that an individual is not a Muslim, or not a true Muslim, before his or her adaptation to Salafism. As a result of this, any knowledge of Islamic doctrines and teachings acquired before becoming a Salafi is no longer applicable, because it is impure and not in line with the understanding of *al-salaf al-salih*. If an individual experiences deprivation in the religious sense, there can be two possible responses: either returning to the religion or abandoning it. The idea behind Islamic revivalism is that Muslims return to their religion with a new and heightened commitment. In popular jargon, this is expressed as returning to Qur'an and *sunnah*.

How does a Muslim arrive at a state of feeling "deprived"? Runciman elaborates that there are three possible factors involved: education, social class and power. He elaborates that this can emerge in an individual through the process of comparison with external groups.

The basic idea discussed by Runciman is that the feeling of deprivation appears after conducting a comparison between one's lacking with another's surplus. In this comparative process, there are two aspects that should be explained, the subjects and the objects of the comparison. The latter is also called a reference group, which refers to an individual, a group or an abstract idea (Runciman 1966). According to Runciman (1966, pp. 11–15), there are three types of such groups: "comparative reference group, normative, and membership group". The first is the group an individual compares the material possession he or she has with what others possess, which can lead to a sense of lacking when found to be worse off than the other person or group. The normative group serves as the barometer of the value, and the membership group is the group to which someone feels belonging and the people with whom he or she is associated.

In the context of Islamic revivalism, the comparison conducted by some Muslims is not a linear process, but rather involves a series of thoughts and reflections of their own lives and conditions and measuring against non-Muslims in the West who appear to have better conditions than him or her. The socio, economic and political conditions of contemporary Muslim societies are in multi-dimensional crises (Dekmejian 1988). On the macro level,

Muslims are encountering crises of legitimacy and cultural, political and military conflict. These crises have driven many Muslims to seek a solution to their collective problems. Some see how their current unfortunate situation contrasts markedly with their perceived ideal of glory in the past at the time of the Prophet Muhammad, his companions and *al-salaf al-salih.* From this, they conclude that if they, as Muslims, commit to the teaching of Qur'an and *sunnah*, as their predecessors did, they will achieve glory with the reemergence of Islam as a dominant force in the world with the Qur'an and *sunnah* fully implemented in their daily lives.

Why do some Muslims seek solutions for the problems they are facing today by returning to the Qur'an and *sunnah*? The past plays a vital role in the life of Muslims who in many ways seek to find legitimacy from the past to justify what they practice today. These multiple comparative processes allow these Muslims to find the normative gap between their current behaviour and the way people behave in the past, particularly during the first three generations after the demise of the Prophet. It is this difference that triggers the feeling of being deprived; the feeling that they are no longer in line with the guidance of the Prophet.

5. Deprived Muslims: In the Quest for Meaning

While conducting the fieldwork, a Salafi friend in Pekanbaru invited me to see some young people to discuss a certain matter about Islam and Salafism. They were united by the same factor: searching for a solution to their existential deprivation. One of them, Ari (2015), was taking his first step towards joining the Salafi movement, and he had already attended various sermons in the Raudlatul Jannah mosque. His main reason to 'return' to Islam, he said, was that he had been married for 6 years but had no children. When he was conducting *umra* (non-obligatory pilgrimage to Makka) he prayed near the *Ka'ba* and asked God to give him children. Surprisingly, a couple of months after coming back from the *umra*, his wife fell pregnant, and finally, he had a child. This experience confirmed his decision to return to Islam, which he had neglected for a long period of time. Through Salafism, he found "true" Islam.

According to Fauzi (2015), the Salafi movement, with all its religious activities at the Raudlatul Jannah Mosque, was a place that offered support and answers to many deprived Muslims. This led Fauzi to get involved in the Salafi movement. Among the Salafi activists with whom I interacted, I have chosen three informants to represent the case studies of this study. The trio represents different social classes, professions and types of experiences of deprivation. Fauzi suffered from existential deprivation, whereas in the case of Eka, as a drug dealer, he suffered from both existential and social relative deprivation, and for Edi, both economic and existential relative deprivation. The purpose of these case studies is to show that although the informants suffered from different types of deprivation, they all turned to Islam as a solution to their problems. Indeed, as with many other 'lapsed' Muslims, Salafism was their choice among various Islamic organizations and schools of jurisprudence. The following outlines the cases of Fauzi, Eka and Edi respectively.

5.1. Case Study One

Fauzi, a 40-year-old man, had been a civil servant at the Office of the Mayor in Pekanbaru since completing his undergraduate degree in Economics. As a civil servant with a position close to the governor and the mayor, he was at the centre of power. This meant he was involved in many underhand deals, with collusion and conflict among his staff making his work environment uncomfortable. His life was strongly materially oriented, and he would easily become angry if he was unable to get what he wanted. For example, he would suffer from migraines if he wanted to buy a new car but could not afford to do so and would resort to illegal means to obtain the object of his desire. For many years he chose not to spend weekends at home with his family in Pekanbaru, but rather with his boss, either in Batam or Singapore, both well-known for their glamour and luxurious lifestyle. He felt that he had achieved and experienced 'everything' in life except death.

Fauzi's first encounter with Salafism occurred when he went for *umra* to Makka in 2007, guided by *Ustadz* Armen, an influential Salafi figure in Pekanbaru. He shared a room with Armen during their stay there and Fauzi was deeply moved by the simple guidance and teaching of this preacher. After returning home, he attended Armen's sermons in various mosques, but his commitment to Salafism was short-lived and he returned to his previous lifestyle.

The turning point for Fauzi came one night in 2014 when he was at home:

> I stared at my sleeping son and suddenly began to cry because I realised I had experienced everything in life except death and I did not want my son to follow in my footsteps. The only pious friend I have is Pai. Pai told me that if I was not capable of providing a good example for my son, my son would not obey me. So, since that moment, I began to repent and learn the basics of Islamic teachings from many daurohs (religious workshops) conducted by the Salafis so that I could teach my son religious basics. I didn't want him to be a civil servant, because they are morally broken. It would be better for him to be a business person or farmer. (Fauzi 2015)

However, before joining the Salafi movement, he discussed the matter with a close friend. The friend had graduated from an Islamic boarding school of the Salafi tradition, and was able to reassure him as to its credibility. From that time on, Fauzi began attending religious sermons and informal teaching at the Raudlatul Jannah mosque, eventually finding what he was looking for. Fauzi then demonstrated his commitment to Salafism by celebrating the *aqiqa* (an Islamic ritual to welcome, protect and purify a baby) of his newborn baby at the Raudlatul Jannah Salafi mosque. The most important impact that joining Salafism has had on his life is his feeling that he is getting closer to God; he no longer feels anxious and no longer has an unhappy life. He stated that he had become a better husband and father to his children. Furthermore, his trust in God had strengthened, as had his belief that God has managed all things for him (Fauzi 2015).

Fauzi further explained what made him aware of the importance of religion as a guide in his life:

> I have had enough adventures in this mundane journey on earth. I don't need any more. All I need now is to worship God and expect a good life in the hereafter. Yes, I was disappointed with life before, because I was betrayed by others. Now, if I want something, I just ask God, not a human being. I have observed that those who worship God regularly have a pleasant life and face no hardship. (Fauzi 2015)

Continuing to compare his way of life before joining the Salafi movement and life as a Salafi activist, Fauzi (2015) recounted that:

> Before joining the Salafis, I was very engaged in earning money, whereas the people in the RJ mosque have a completely different outlook on life. They focus on giving, providing *sedekah* (optional charity). Since I joined the Salafis, I have felt calm, and no longer worry about life. This change has surprised my wife.

At the time of the interview, Fauzi had been an active Salafi in the Raudlatul Jannah Mosque for one year, having undergone a major psychological change. He narrated:

> I felt the change in my life took place during Ramadhan 2015. I never miss praying and fasting and was consistently encouraged by the ustadz to do good which made me feel good. When *Ied al Fitr* (Muslim festivity to celebrate the end of Ramadan) came, I felt a sense of calm with no desire to buy new clothes. I had also no desire to compete materially with others, something which had always been important to me in the past. (Fauzi 2015)

Despite the relatively short time that new Salafism has been in Pekanbaru compared to *Nahdlatul Ulama*, *Muhammadiyah* and some other Muslim organizations, Fauzi related to this movement for several reasons. He was deeply moved by how the Salafi preachers referred to *kitab* (religious books), using simple and understandable language:

> The sermons are heart-touching . . . the way the Salafi preachers deliver them is very interesting with very simple language, suitable for the layman. If their language was too complicated, it would not be understood by people like me who went to secular schools. (Fauzi 2015)

In addition to the simplicity of the language, the politically neutral stance of Salafism also appealed to Fauzi. As he explained about one particular preacher, *Ustadz* Abu Zaid:

> *Ustadz* Abu Zaid has an Islamic boarding school. The local government wants to offer him financial aid, but he has turned it down because if he accepts it, he will be considered "part of the government", and will therefore be unable to maintain a neutral political position. Abu Zubair believes that there are many other people who will be willing to offer him aid for his *pesantren* with no strings attached. (Fauzi 2015)

When talking about why he adopted Salafism, Fauzi also mentioned that the character of the Salafi preachers was a major contributing factor in attracting people to join the movement. He told me that *ustadzs* were very sincere in their *da'wa* (Islamic preaching), and showed great wisdom in dealing with the people who consult them on religious matters.

To sum up, Fauzi joined the Salafi movement because he had become disappointed with his old life and was looking for answers to guide him away from it. Salafism appealed to him more than any other Muslim group and he was attracted to the simple language and apolitical position of the Salafi preachers.

5.2. Case Study Two

Eka was a single, 40-year-old man, a television journalist, and a small shop owner. His work as a journalist opened up networks to many people, including dubious characters. He frankly confessed that he had abused his profession as a journalist in order to make money. For many years, he never thought about integrity and much of the knowledge he gathered was used to blackmail people. In addition, he also took drugs, such as ecstasy, and made money by selling them. Though he came from a religious family, he never prayed, and even admitted to me that he did not know how to pray.

The *hidayah* (guidance) came to him from a Salafi and guided him to visit the mosque. Eka had conducted prayer in various mosques and had listened to many sermons but had never been satisfied. The feeling of emptiness that he felt for many years was not answered until he prayed at the Raudlatul Jannah Mosque, and listened to the sermons given there. Only then did he feel calm and that his thirst had been quenched. Since attending the mosque, he became actively involved with its many charitable activities, including serving others.

Eka was particularly drawn to the sense of social cohesion he felt among the congregation at the mosque, the respect and love shown to each other, meaning no one was left without guidance or help. For Eka, this sense of acceptance had a profound psychological effect. As a former drug dealer and drug user, Eka had spent much of his life scared of being caught, especially because a convicted drug dealer in Indonesia can face life imprisonment or capital punishment. He lived in constant fear of the police, so when he found the mosque it became a safe sanctuary for him where he no longer felt under threat.

Eka (2015) recounted the background of his life:

> I am a freelance journalist for a private television company. My life is closely related to drugs. Once I got money, I bought drugs. That's the way of my life. One of my friends was a drug dealer, and then I became involved in selling drugs too. I tried to give up in 2009 but was unsuccessful. Then, I went back to Bukittinggi, my home village (*kampung*), and tried to get away from all this. While I was there, a friend of mine in Pekanbaru who sells drugs called me and asked why I was staying so long in *Bukit*.

Eka was well aware of the wrong path he had taken and wanted to change it but did not know how. His decision to stay a while in his home village was spiritually important

and was the starting point of his return to Islam. He went to an *ustadz* asking for advice on how to reorient his life. The *ustadz* there simply told him to start praying in the mosque and disconnect himself from his 'evil' friends. When he later returned to Pekanbaru, he started praying at mosques, moving from one to another, from the *musalla* (small mosque) to a grand mosque. His first visit to a mosque did not impress him. He narrated:

> My first visit to a mosque made a bad impression on me because I didn't know the procedure. When I entered the mosque, I said *assalamualaikum* (Muslim greeting) but nobody returned my greeting. They even laughed at me. (Eka 2015)

Then, one of his friends suggested he visit a Salafi mosque. Eka recounted his first experience there and his initial involvement in Salafism:

> I visited the mosque alone. Every day, after conducting *Maghrib* prayer, I sat behind the same pillar, reading a book just to pass the time, because everybody in the mosque was reciting passages from the Qur'an. After a couple of days of doing the same thing, some members of the congregation started to pay attention to me and shook my hand. Because of their friendliness, I began to feel at home in the mosque and started learning about Islam. Three months later, I had totally given up taking drugs. I chose the Raudlatul Jannah Mosque to learn about Islam for two reasons: the members of the mosque didn't discriminate against a person like me, and they always showed respect to me even though I asked them simple or silly questions. (Eka 2015)

Eka became very active in attending the sermons and events in the Raudlatul Jannah mosque. He also prayed regularly, including *tahajjud* (optional prayer conducted between midnight and dawn), and proudly showed me the wallpaper on his mobile phone, which was a picture of the Raudlatul Jannah mosque.

5.3. Case Study Three

Edi was a 45-year-old man, who at the time of our meeting was selling ice cream. Riding his old motorbike, he traveled around public schools within the Pekanbaru area, where students were his main customers. He wore an Arab robe and had a long beard, which made him easily identifiable as a Salafi. His first acquaintance with Salafism started when his father enrolled his younger sister in Pesantren al Furqan, the oldest Salafi *pesantren* in Pekanbaru. After that time, he was regularly asked by his father to deliver a package of food to his sister. The regular visits to his sister's *pesantren* gave him an initial experience with Salafism but this ended when he got a job as a fish supplier for a petroleum company in Rumbai, a suburb of Pekanbaru. He was kept very busy and was well paid, but he told me that for him, the money was not a *berkah* (blessing). His father was not happy about him mixing with what he regarded as 'vulgar' people in the fish market, and they grew apart. Edi felt that his life was meaningless, and he was aware that he had adopted bad habits, such as drinking alcohol. After 13 years, he resigned from the company and started selling ice cream.

> I had sufficient money, but I spent it on useless things. I then decided to give up my job and search for the real meaning of life. I started going to places where I could join informal religious teaching sessions, including Tabligh Jamaa on Sumatra Street. I just felt that my life was meaningless if I didn't learn about Islam. (Edi 2015)

However, Edi's involvement with Tabligh Jamaa, a Sunni group in Sumatra Street Pekanbaru, only lasted a few months. He recounted:

> The preaching began after *Maghrib* (dusk) (6 pm). I met some of my friends there. I am originally from Pekanbaru. After listening to several preachers, I felt that it was only indoctrination; there was no discussion or dialogue. (Edi 2015)

The turning point in his life occurred when his sister gave him some Salafi clothes: above-the-ankle trousers, a white and grey ankle-length Arab dress, and a white Islamic

headpiece. He felt comfortable wearing them and grew a beard. Psychologically, he felt calm, as if he had found something for which he had been searching for a couple of years. He remembered his past experience with Salafism and decided to become further involved in their activities in order to quench his thirst for inner peace. This led him to visit the Raudlatul Jannah Mosque every day after work to spend a couple of hours listening to religious sermons.

During his involvement with the Salafis, he realized that many of the rituals he had performed previously when praying were incorrect and the Salafis guided him onto the right path. In addition, he found that the sense of solidarity was very strong among the Salafi members. As a person of modest means, he received many forms of material and emotional support from his Salafi peers. He also felt that the friendship in the Salafi group was based on loving God. Finally, he had found his 'real home' where he could quench his spiritual thirst.

Edi's commitment to Salafism was firm, to the extent that after traveling from school to school on his motorcycle from 6 a.m. until 4 p.m., he would attend the mosque until 9 pm and then he would travel nine km back home. He continued getting up at 4 a.m. and only going to bed after 11 p.m. for several years, but still felt energized on an average of 4 h of sleep a night. He also mentioned that he never visited his local mosque ever again, once he had found Salafism.

6. Deprived Muslims: A Reversion

The above three case studies all have a common thread: an initial lack of spiritual direction in life with an accompanying sense of meaninglessness and dissatisfaction with other Islamic groups, concluding with finding 'the truth' of Salafism. Following on from the personal accounts given by participants, this section looks at different types of deprivation.

Glock and Stark (1965) listed five types of deprivation: economic, social, organismic, ethical and psychological, and Dein and Barlow (1999) adding a sixth: existential deprivation. Economic and social deprivation are among the most common forms of deprivation faced by those who suffer from relative deprivation (Ali 2012), and therefore, these two types are explored in this study; while the three others (organismic, ethical and psychological) are not relevant to the phenomenon of Salafi development in Pekanbaru. Organismic deprivation refers to deficiencies in either physical or mental health; ethical deprivation refers to the sense that society does not offer appreciation for an individual life; and psychological deprivation refers to the lack of psychic rewards felt by an individual, such as love and affection (Stewart 2010). The emphasis on economic, social and existential deprivation will be elaborated further on the basis of perspectives and life stories of participants obtained during the fieldwork.

In practical terms, an individual can experience one or more types of deprivation in their life. For instance, being a drug dealer not only entails illegal activities which can cause estrangement with one's family or friends but also comes with inherent risks involving other suppliers and customers. This can lead to a sense of social alienation or social relative deprivation. In addition to this, in relation to religious doctrine, the money earned from selling drugs is considered illegal in Islam, and therefore, spending the money earned from this activity is also illegal and utterly condemned. Illegal money is not blessed by God and Muslims believe that anyone who uses that money will penalized by God in this world or the next or both. Eka was aware of this but chose to ignore it until the end of 2014 when a sense of alienation and feeling of emptiness he felt led him to seek a new direction in life.

The experiences of existential or spiritual deprivation felt by the informants fell into two categories: a sense of a meaningless life and dissatisfaction with the existing Islamic groups. Both of these forms led them to find the 'truth' of Salafism, and for some informants, a combination of the two categories above was experienced simultaneously. In the first category, the feeling of emptiness initially arose when one begins to question what one is doing in life, and begins to make changes. This process can be called the self-identification act. In the process of change, self-identification is an act to assess one's situation; it is a

precursor that is followed by a reaction to get out of the situation. Age is one of the factors that trigger one's awareness. Isrul (2015), for example, started to question the meaning of life when approaching 40 years of age. For him, turning 40 was a very significant point in his life. He felt that if he was unable to find the answers for which he had searching for years, he would no longer be able to improve his life to have a better spiritual condition. As a graduate of a secular university, his limited religious background hindered his ability to interpret his experience. He was well-established financially but was poor spiritually. For him, adapting Salafism totally changed his view about life: Allah became central to his identity, represented by his willingness to spend his life in the mosque, instead of in the *kampung* (native village). In a similar sense, Anwar (2015) also expressed his anxiety about life when turning forty. Although financially secure, he did not have a remedy for his emptiness until he listened to a sermon delivered by *Ustadz* Abu Zaid, a Salafi preacher, entitled: *Aku Datang Wahai Kekasih* (I am coming, oh my Love). Anwar confessed that it was this sermon that totally changed his life. Then, along with his Salafi friends, he donated a great amount of his wealth to establish *al Bayyinah* School, a leading Salafi school in Pekanbaru. He also decided to resign from his established position in the Ministry of Forestry, saying that he no longer needed a salary from the government.

In line with Anwar's case, Joko (2015) wondered how he could 'invest' his wealth for the hereafter life. Being economically secure, Joko was aware that human life in this world is very short and subsequently the opportunities to enjoy wealth are also limited. Islam offers an explanation for people about the meaning of wealth, allowing them to enjoy that wealth in this world as well as in the hereafter by using it for *da'wa* (preaching). The expected rewards of the invested *da'wa* funds have an important meaning bestowed by Islam, allowing the owners to enjoy a 'new opportunity' to get involved in *da'wa* by donating their wealth instead of giving sermons.

Unlike the informant above, Ari (2015) returned to Islam after his prayer to have children was granted by Allah. The sentiment that God had been 'present' in his life was strongly felt after doing *umra*, and this led him to get involved more deeply with religious activity, particularly in the Raudlatul Jannah mosque where regular teachings were available during the weekdays. His closeness to Allah helped him understand his destiny; he believed that it is Allah the Almighty who manages everything, and therefore, the return to Islam is a reasonable choice for those who seek a meaningful life.

The second category, dissatisfaction with the existing Islamic groups, is also part of existential deprivation. Hasan's (2016) experience is worth narrating here. He was recruited as a member of *Negara Islam Indonesia* (Islamic State of Indonesia), a clandestine movement which aims to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia, when he had been an undergraduate student. His last position in *Negara Islam Indonesia* was the Principal of the Recruitment Department for the northern part of Sumatra. His main task was to recruit people to become members of Negara Islam Indonesia, and in order to do so, a deep knowledge of Islam was required. He was thirsty for religious knowledge but *Negara Islam Indonesia*, as an organization, did not provide it. This had made him anxious. As a *Negara Islam Indonesia* member, he was indoctrinated that all Muslims are disbelievers unless they join the *Negara Islam Indonesia*. However, when he was pursuing a master's degree in the *hadith* sciences, he started to question *Negara Islam Indonesia*'s stance. He then visited Tarmizi, a Salafi preacher, to discuss various religious matters that had made him anxious. After a series of discussions with Tarmizi, he found what he needed to finally leave the *Negara Islam Indonesia*. Salafism provided him with arguments which were, according to him, 'very logical, and in line with his thoughts'. In the same way, Bilal (2015) returned to the 'right' path as a result of his dissatisfaction with liberal Islam, which could not satisfy his religious thirst. According to him, the liberal Islamic approach places an over-emphasis on reasoning instead of Qur'an and *hadiths*. In other words, this approach did not deeply touch his heart. In addition, the proponents of liberal Islam are highly influenced by Western thought, which in many cases, affects their interpretation of the religious texts. This can be seen

from the main issues upheld by this group, such as supporting the women's emancipatory movement, freedom of religion, secularism and allowing interfaith marriage.

In a similar vein, Doni (2015) and Said (2015) expressed their disagreement with the existing Islamic organizations, such as *Nahdlatul Ulama* and *Muhammadiyah*, emphasising that what Muslims need is only to imitate the *al-salaf al-salih*, the earliest and purest Muslim generations. It is clear that being a member of a certain Islamic group does not ensure that an individual will obtain satisfactory explanations about Islam, as seen in the case of Hasan and Bilal, which therefore led them to search for more trusted answers from other Islamic groups. The strength of Salafism, in this case, is its capacity to provide reliable and confidential answers, based on the Qur'an and *hadiths*, which can meet the needs of some Muslims.

In addition to dissatisfaction with the existing Islamic organizations, the perceived truth of Salafism is also an important factor that led many people to join the Salafi movement. Syukur (2015), Jafar (2015) and Habib (2015), for example, stopped their studies at the secular university due to their perception that the secular sciences they had been learning were not 'recommended' religiously, and therefore would not be useful to them in the hereafter. This awareness arose after attending the sermon in which Buya Jufri explained the superior position of Arabic and religious knowledge compared to the secular one. Following this, they decided to learn Arabic and Islamic studies at the *pesantren* instead of secular sciences at the university. They then became teachers of religious subjects at the Salafi schools. Salafism, in this case, re-oriented their life and led them to prioritize the Salafi teachings over other matters, including secular sciences taught at a university.

In a slightly different narrative, Nimra (2015) and Musa (2015) found the 'truth' of Salafism and joined it without dropping out of the university in which they studied mathematics and chemistry. In order to be able to take 'double' courses at the university and *pesantren*, they decided to live in a *pesantren* dormitory, allowing them to learn and interact with Buya Jufri intensively. By doing this, they were able to complete both their academic degree at the university and religious training in *pesantren.* They then became lecturers at the university. However, the experience of living and learning in the Salafi *pesantren* kept them active in the Salafi *da'wa.* Nimra and Musa are presently Head of the Department of Education and Chairman of *Ubudiyya* Salafi Foundation, respectively.

The interviews above show that the participants have adopted Salafism after being deprived for a certain period of time. Salafism, in this case, is a referent group for them which is regarded as the ideal standard of Islam. Runciman (1966) explains that there are three types of referent groups: group, individual or an abstract idea. In the process of adaptation to Salafism as shown in the case studies and interviews above, these three types of referent groups exist together, represented, respectively, by the Salafi preachers, the Salafi doctrine and the Salafi movement. These referent groups are interlinked, with the Salafi preachers playing the most important part. The following Table 1 shows the perception of the informants (represented by the three case studies above) on the three types of the referent groups explained above.

Table 1. Perception of the informants on the referent groups.

Salafi Preachers as an Individual Referent	Salafism as an Abstract/Idea Referent	Salafi Movement as a Group Referent
Sincere	Simple	Strong solidarity
Wise	Pure	Gives culture
Non-political	Based on Qur'an and *hadiths*, therefore authoritative	Sincerity of friendship due to love of Allah
Respect the layman		
Expert in Islamic sciences		

Adaptation is a slow and long process and for some individuals, matters related to their relative deprivation have to first be resolved. Data generated from the informants identified that choosing Salafism as a resolution for their crises was mainly based on two reasons: searching for a new sense of self or having had previous experience with Salafism. Eka and Fauzi represent the former, where Eka had first listened to sermons in other mosques but found they did not address his needs, whereas the strong sense of community in the Raudlatul Jannah mosque appealed to him. In addition, the large number of people attending prayers impressed him, particularly at the *Fajr* prayer. It should be noted that in Indonesia, most Muslims are still in bed at the time of the *Fajr* prayer, whereas thousands congregate in the Raudlatul Jannah mosque regularly for the event.

In spite of his sinful past, Eka felt accepted at the Raudlatul Jannah Mosque and proudly told me that a couple of months after regularly attending the mosque, he was asked by the Salafi Foundation to join the *Qurban* (animals slaughtered during *Eid el Adha* festival) committee, and also the Salafi team to distribute aid to needy people in the countryside. For him, his previous alienation was replaced by a strong sense of community and religious experience. The Salafi preachers and the Salafi community were the two crucial referent groups that satisfied his needs. Eka (2015) sums up his perceptions of the Salafi movement. "I came in and out of numerous mosques in Pekanbaru, but none of them had strong solidarity as I had found in RJ mosque. As a layman, my questions about Islam were always answered politely."

The first informant, Fauzi, also found that his existential deprivation was resolved by Salafism, which he found was a simple and straightforward way to understand Islam on the basis of Qur'an and *sunnah*. He attributed this to the sincerity of the preachers, and the simplicity of the teachings which he felt was spoken from the heart and touched him deeply. He recounted: "I started to select the preachers; I don't want to listen to sermons other than those conveyed by the Salafi preachers." He explained further: "I found peace and sincerity in the Salafi group. They develop the culture of giving rather than receiving" (Fauzi 2015).

In a similar vein to Eka and Fauzi, Edi had felt a lack of meaning in his life, compounded by financial difficulties. In his case, he adopted Salafism as a result of his sister giving him Salafi clothes to wear, which triggered a recall process of his previous interactions with the movement. Edi confessed that his financial worries were largely resolved by joining the Salafis since they gave him regular payment for his children's education in Salafi schools and two lump sums a year towards other expenses. In addition, when he followed the Salafi commitment of fasting two days a week, on Mondays and Thursdays, the Salafis provided the food when he broke his fast. He narrated:

> I have been active in the RJ Mosque for many years. In spite of my economic situation, which is economically unlucky, I have never been insulted or discriminated against by others. That is why I am so comfortable within the Salafi group. Though I sell ice cream all day, I never feel tired when I arrive at the Raudlatul Jannah Mosque. The feeling of tiredness usually comes when I arrive home. (Edi 2015)

In addition to his financial needs being met, from a religious perspective, Edi felt that he had become aware of the false practice of prayer he had conducted for many years, which the Salafis claimed was not in line with the teachings of the Prophet. He stated that Salafism had taught him the correct way to worship God.

Table 2 outlines the mental state of the informants prior to embracing Salafism, comparing the three referent groups.

Table 2 above shows that the informants experienced existential and social relative deprivation before they felt their needs were met when they adopted Salafism. The comparison they made with the referent groups, the individual Salafi, the doctrine of Salafism and the Salafi community can be viewed as the initial identification they experienced prior to seeing their problem resolved.

Table 2. Mental state of the informants and comparison with referent groups.

Informant	Informant's Mental State	State of the Referent Group within the Salafi Group		
		Individual	**Idea**	**Group**
Fauzi	• Consumed material pleasure • Feelings of anxiety • Being a bad Muslim	• Sincerity of Salafi preacher	• Purity of Salafism and authority of its teaching	• Salafi culture rising above material culture
Eka	• Never prayed • Involved in criminal activities, including consuming and selling drugs • Felt anxious and alienated	• The sense of calm and sincerity of Salafi followers	• The simplicity of Salafi teaching	• The high attendance at Salafi mosques • Sincerity of friendship among the Salafis
Edi	• Relationship with his father not warm • Felt not blessed by God • Lack of meaning in life	• The Salafis only consume *halal* food • The wisdom and sincerity of the Salafi preacher	• The purity and authority of Salafi teaching	• Strong sense of solidarity (*ukhuwwah)* • The Salafis helping each other in God's name

Among the three referent groups, the Salafi preachers, as the individual referents play an important role, because they function as a Salafi window through which the newcomer can see 'inside' Salafism. Fauzi was strongly influenced by the humble life of *Ustadz* Armen, the Salafi preacher, who taught him that Islam is quite simple. Similarly, Edi and Eka were impressed both by the extensive knowledge and humble life of *ustadz* Bukhari. Salafism, as taught by these preachers is considered simple, pure and therefore authoritative. The Salafi preacher's interpretation of Islam is then implemented by Salafi laymen. The only reference to the Salafi preachers then creates homogeneity within the group. It is clear that the Salafi preachers have played a significant role in attracting people to join the Salafi movement.

From the above accounts given by informants concerning their transformation, Salafism appears to offer some positive advantages, such as relief from anxiety, creating social solidarity, and satisfying their cognitive needs through the explanations given by the Salafi preachers. When describing the process of reversion, all informants use the word *hijra* (migration). The underlying reason which motivates them is that they feel they are doing *hijra* (spiritual migration) under God's *hidaya* (guidance). Proponents of Salafism describe the condition before transformation, as being one of *jahiliyya*. *Jahiliyya* is a situation where an individual is deprived of religious experience. The process of moving from being unguided to guided is called *hijra*. The new Salafi recruit is called a *muallaf*. Table 3 below explains the relationship of these four sequences, *jahiliyya, hidaya, hijra, muallaf*.

Table 3. Sequences of adaptation to Salafism and its equivalent condition according to relative deprivation theory.

Jahiliyya	***Hidaya***	***Hijra***	***Muallaf***
Existential deprivation: • Non-practicing Muslim • Practicing but still doing illegal rituals • Practicing rituals but does not understand the *dalil* (argument)	Assessment/act of identification then finding a solution: • Being conscious of one's Muslim identity • Being aware of positive advantages of Islam	Turning point: • From *bid'a* (innovation) to *sunnah* • Moving from an unconscious state of one's Muslim identity to a fully conscious one	New-born Muslim: • Know the *dalil* • Imitate the Prophet in all aspects of life

Before discussing the Salafis and the factors that draw people to choose it, it is worth looking at the factors that make Islam attractive to those suffering from a sense of deprivation.

7. Relative Deprivation and the Return to Religion

It is commonly believed among those who support the socio-economic deprivation theory that people's reversion, or return to religion, is as a result of the feeling of material deprivation (Wimberley 1984; Durkheim 1951; Weber 1946). Their hypothesis is that people are subjected to one or more types of deprivation, such as socio-economic, and will strive to find a solution to their dissatisfied social and material conditions (Glock 1964; Runciman 1966; Wimberley 1984). Stark and Smith (2010), for example, cited some scholarly observations on the underlying reasons that drive people to join Pentecostal Protestantism in Latin America: poverty, illiteracy and health problems. Some other scholars, such as Berger (1969), Davidson (1977) and Stark and Bainbridge (1980) also considered that the socio-economic deprivation proposition led those who are economically unlucky to religiosity. The term religiosity here refers to a complex combination of cognitive and behavioural tendencies, such as a belief in God, rituals and different states of consciousness.

On the basis of the deprivation theory, religion is perceived as being capable of alleviating people's suffering by providing explanations that 'refresh' their understanding of life and its meaning. In other words, it can be said that religion serves as a compensator (Stark and Bainbridge 1980). The capacity of religion to provide profound meaning to life can be used by materially deprived people as a justifiable excuse to solve their problems. However, Stark and Smith (2010) explained that the proselytization of underpriveleged people to Pentecostal religious groups in Latin America were not caused by material deprivation, but rather influenced by social ties and spiritual satisfactions. The absence of the rich people in those groups is only because they do not appeal to the rich. Spiritual satisfaction should be highlighted here as the most important goal pursued by people in religions, therefore, deprivation theory should not be confined to material aspects only, but extended to include religious or spiritual deprivation (Stark and Smith 2010).

The gist of spiritual or religious deprivation theory is that people will look to supernatural solutions to overcome their dissatisfied existential and moral conditions. This hypothesis is relevant to explain the underlying reason for the process of transformation in Pekanbaru Salafism, in which most of its members are financially secure but religiously unhappy. Instead of pursuing material rewards from their transformation, they seek spiritual fulfilment provided by Salafism. They reach that fulfilment through learning religious teachings and maximising the use of their wealth for religious purposes, such as helping the needy and constructing religious buildings.

In general, there are various reasons why people tend to return to religion at a time of deprivation. Geertz (1973), for example, stated that religion is a universal element of human cultures due to its ability to satisfy human spiritual needs; it is also considered as the most powerful force in human society that influences relationships with each other (Mc Guire 2002). The return to religion, in this case, is a reasonable act due to its potential to solve the problem of deprivation.

As a universal element, religion has been defined in many ways, the most popular of which is through substantive and functional approaches (Mc Guire 2002). The former defines religion on the basis of its essence: what qualifies something as religion or not a religion, while the latter focus on its social function (Mc Guire 2002). The two approaches above seem to distinguish between the essence of religion and its function. Practically, religion cannot be separated in a clear-cut sense into these two categories because it could socially function due to its essence which provides an explanation of the mystery of life and offers a profound meaning of life for its followers. Both approaches are accordingly intertwined and therefore, the role of Salafism, for instance, can be understood in terms of its capability to provide the certainty needed by the anxious and curious members; and this certainty originates from its deep explanatory essence about all aspects of life.

The way religion offers meaning about life is by providing explanations of situations, experience and events (Mc Guire 2002). For example, in Islam, different states of human life, with some people poor and others rich, are given a meaning when it is interpreted as God's will. The Salafis believe that Allah has already managed everything in the world, and therefore, complaining about poverty is understood as complaining about Allah's will, which is not allowed in Islam. Total surrender to Allah's will is regarded as the highest level of sincerity that a Muslim can achieve. Adopting such an interpretation can prevent the 'unlucky' from being resentful towards the rich on one hand, and on the other hand, ensure the wealthy that all their property belongs to God and should be used in legitimate ways. Linking explanations of different fates to God's will offers a clearer perspective that makes people calm psychologically and helps give their life meaning.

The role of religion in providing meaning for people is significant as the meaning itself is bestowed, not intrinsically found in it (Berger 1969). As a result, it is commonly found that similar phenomena are understood in different ways depending on the strength of one's attachment to religion. For example, a tragedy faced by a deprived Muslim could be understood as a burden in their life, while a committed Muslim may have a different outlook by perceiving it as God's will to elevate him or her to a higher degree. The teaching that Allah will not let a Muslim upgrade his religiosity without giving him or her comprehensive and continuous trial in his life is clearly mentioned in the Qur'an. In this sense, a total submission to God's will has led people to understand life challenges in a positive way: to improve their religious understanding and practice, which eventually can affect their socio-economic conditions.

8. Conclusions

This article contends that those who return to Islam have suffered from a sense of relative deprivation, particularly existential deprivation. Being relatively deprived leads those non-religious Muslims to seek the truth which, in the cases presented above, is influenced significantly by the Salafi community, preachers and doctrines. In light of the Islamic revivalism phenomenon, the feeling of relative deprivation is presumed to be closely related to the negative impacts of modern life. In the case of Pekanbaru, this can be observed in individuals who report a lack of meaning and being disoriented in life, or being involved in religiously prohibited deeds. Moreover, dissatisfaction with the existing Islamic groups due to their perception that these kinds of Islamic practices are not pure and are less authoritative led some of the informants to leave and join Salafism, which is perceived as being more authoritative and genuine.

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Article

Revisiting Literacy Jihad Programs of 'Aisyiyah in Countering the Challenges of Salafism

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Abstract: The rise of the Salafi movements in Indonesia during the last two decades has created an increasingly pessimistic view of the status of women in Islam. This paper aims to lessen this negative view by showing the tremendous contribution of 'Aisyiyah, the oldest modern Muslim women's organization in Indonesia, to transforming Indonesian society through literacy jihad for women and families. Using in-depth interviews with board members of 'Aisyiyah, combined with library research to collect primary data on the past activities of 'Aisyiyah, this qualitative research portrays how 'Aisyiyah has preserved and maintained its consistency in conducting literacy jihad since the 1920s. Through the establishment of 'Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten, usually shortened to TK ABA, and the publication of *Suara 'Aisyiyah* magazine, the literacy jihad of 'Aisyiyah constantly empowers many Muslim women and families, especially those who live in urban areas across the country. Currently, the number of TK ABA has reached nearly 22,000 units, and the *Suara 'Aisyiyah* has also entered a digital platform to continue raising the voice of women's rights in Indonesia. Furthermore, we posit that the literary jihad programs of 'Aisyiyah provide a new perspective on the relationship between modernist Muslim organizations and the Salafi movements, which have been seen as similar because they both subscribe to the same purification ideology.

Keywords: women movements; 'Aisyiyah; Muhammadiyah; modernism; revivalism; literacy; Indonesian Islam

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1. Introduction

The picture of women in Islam, especially related to their status and societal roles, is often seen negatively (Hurvitz and Alshech 2020; Mahbuba and van Wichelen 2021). The rise of radical Islamic groups in the last few decades seems to have accentuated this negative view (Dzuhayatin 2020; De Leede 2018). Mass media coverage on the issue of female slave trading during the ISIS rule in Syria or the ban on women from attending school by the Taliban in Afghanistan undeniably contributed to this pessimistic view, primarily related to women's rights issues. Furthermore, the emergence of transnational Islamic movements in many parts of the Islamic world (Sebastian et al. 2021; İskenderoğlu 2022) within the last two decades has also strengthened this negative impression. Although these transnational Muslim movements, especially those that follow a revivalist ideology, do not use physical violence, their *dakwah* (preaching) potentially puts women in a dilemma (Galonnier 2017).

Echoing this global situation, Indonesian women's organizations also have to face various issues related to the increasing number of transnational Islamic movements (Qodir 2014). In addition to the growing number of intolerance cases, due to differences in religious ideology, the presence of these movements also creates challenges specifically for women activist movements. The rise of the Salafi movement, which subscribes to the ideology of puritanism, for example, has initiated several activities campaigning for women to return to the domestic sphere and condemning women who work outside the home as unfaithful (Izharuddin 2016; Ubaidillah et al. 2018). Another controversial campaign of Salafism is the

invitation to marry at a young age to avoid immorality and free sex, which become very attractive for young Muslims, especially those who live in urban areas (Kresna 2019). These campaigns have become a serious challenge for Muslim women's organizations, including 'Aisyiyah, the oldest Muslim women's organization in Indonesia.

The consistency of 'Aisyiyah in preserving a voice of moderate Islam in Indonesia through literacy jihad is interesting to study, especially their efforts to empower women and families (Mu'arif 2020). The dynamics of 'Aisyiyah's development in responding to various emerging challenges, including these Salafism campaigns, can be a source of inspiration for many other Muslim women's organizations. The success story of the literacy jihad of 'Aisyiah can be seen through their two effective programs: the establishment of 'Aisyiah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten and the publication of *Suara 'Aisyiyah* magazine. Starting with the establishment of 'Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten in Yogyakarta in 1924, 'Aisyiyah has managed to establish nearly 22,000 kindergartens throughout Indonesia, even in several districts where Muslims are in the minority (Sirait 2021). Meanwhile, the *Suara 'Aisyiyah* magazine has continued to develop since its first publication in 1926. *Suara 'Aisyiyah*'s transformation to a digital platform can be an effective tool to deliver the voice of moderate Islam related to women and family issues for Muslim youth as a counter to the Salafism campaigns (Amna 2017; Fitrianita 2018). Therefore, we argue that the literacy jihad program of 'Aisyiyah further confirms that Salafism does not develop as a monolithic entity, but will always adapt to the demands of the locality in which Salafism develops. In addition, an increasingly pessimistic view related to the social role of Muslim women should not be concerned because, if we look at the success story of 'Aisyiyah in implementing the literacy jihad program, there will be more opportunity for Muslim women to contribute to creating a better community.

2. Methodology

Before discussing the literacy jihad programs of the 'Aisyiyah, it is necessary to provide some notes on the methodology to understand the position of this paper. This paper is based on research on the women-empowering model of the 'Aisyiyah, conducted in Yogyakarta from November 2020 to February 2021. Data were collected through direct observations of the 'Aisyiyah programs, such as schooling activities, the process of handling issues for the *Suara 'Aisyiyah* magazine, and *pengajian ibu-ibu* (Islamic learning forum for adult women) at the village levels. Besides, this research also employed interviews with board members of the 'Aisyiyah, some village officers, and participants of the 'Aisyiyah's programs. The result of this research has been published in an accredited national journal of Aplikasia (Sofia 2021).

From this previous research, we found an interesting phenomenon, which was the massive use of the Internet in spreading *dakwah* (preaching), including by Salafi activists. In responding to the use of the Internet as an important medium for *dakwah*, we developed this research by employing an Internet research method by collecting information related to the *dakwah* of Salafism, especially on issues of women and family, from some popular websites belonging to both official and personal websites of Salafi activists. The collected data were categorized into two aspects: conceptual (values, norms, and doctrines) and practices (rituals and habits) to understand the main focus of each website. We used the basic theory of the Great and Little tradition with its vigorous debates on studying Islam and Muslims in Indonesia, as reflected in the works of Nakamura (2020). The contextualizing of the "Great and Little tradition" within Indonesian Islam shows a unique interaction, which differs from the practice of Islam in other places, as further explained below. The main purpose of this additional research is to provide more information on developing an alternative model for empowering women and families.

3. Understanding Modernism and Salafism in the Indonesian Context

Categorizing Islamic movements is problematic because it involves various perspectives according to the researcher's needs. Clifford Geertz's trichotomy regarding Javanese

Islam, which divides Islam into "*abangan*, *santri*, and *priyayi*" (Geertz 1976), for example, is based on obedience to the obligations in Islam. This trichotomy has a weakness when faced with the fact that so many differences arise when devout Muslims (*santri*) are only accommodated into one category. Traditional Muslims, commonly represented by *Nahdlatul Ulama*, and modern Muslims, represented mostly by *Muhammadiyah*, have some differences in practicing their daily rituals, often leading to the establishment of two mosques at a small village level. Woodward (2011) offers five categorizations of Islam in Indonesia: indigenized Muslims, traditional Muslims of *Nahdlatul Ulama*, modern Muslims of *Muhammadiyah*, Islamism, and neo-modernism, to accommodate the recent development of transnational Islamic movements. However, we should note that each category also has different variations of the sub-categories. Within the modern Muslims of *Muhammadiyah*, for example, some members only focus on social services, such as health and education, in their broader framework of *dakwah* work. Still, some members are more concerned with the puritanical *dakwah* model to purify Islamic teachings from local influences. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the differences between modern Muslims of *Muhammadiyah* and the emergence of Salafi movements because both can be categorized into modern Muslim movements in many aspects.

The Salafi movement in Indonesia began to develop in the early 1980s with the establishment of several educational institutions, especially those that received full financial support from the Saudi Arabian government, such as *Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Arab* or the Institute for Islamic and Arabic Sciences (Sebastian et al. 2021). Most of the main figures of the Salafi movement in Indonesia today are alums of *Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Arab*. The Saudi Arabian government has been at the forefront of developing the Salafi movement in Indonesia with the Wahhabi movement, which since the 1920s, especially after the fall of Mecca and Medina to the Wahhabis (Nakamura 2011), threatens the religious practice of traditional Muslims. Although there are significant differences between the Salafi movement and the Wahhabi movement, particularly in the reproduction of knowledge and *dakwah* strategies, Indonesian Muslims, especially those that are traditional Muslims, consider the Salafism movement simply as a continuation of the Wahhabi movement.

This statement is certainly an oversimplification if we further examine the development of the Salafi movement in Indonesia. In fact, there are five variants of Salafism in Indonesia (Simorangkir 2015), namely: (1) political Salafism, represented by the Prosperous Justice Party, the Indonesian version of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt; (2) *jihadi* Salafism, represented by Jamaah Ansar al-Daulah and Jamaah Ansar al-Tawhid and characterized by efforts to defeat those considered as the enemies of Islam using all means, including the use of violence; (3) *dakwah* Salafism, which is represented by various *dakwah* movements, such as Bin Baz *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school), the Qur'an Tafsir Council, and the Tablighi Jamaat, and having the main characteristic of promoting purification of Islam from local traditions; (4) traditional Salafism, represented by *pesantren* Temboro and several other *pesantren*, which were formerly affiliated with traditional Muslims of *Nahdlatul Ulama*; and (5) progressive Salafism, represented by several national figures, such as Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of *Muhammadiyah*, who were inspired by the modernist movements of al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, and characterized by a puritanical model of religious practice, but more open to modern ideas for the advancement of Muslims.

Since Salafism is not monolithic, it is necessary to understand the position of modern Muslims of *Muhammadiyah* within Salafism, especially related to *dakwah* Salafism. In this case, modern Muslims of *Muhammadiyah* are often associated with *dakwah* Salafism (Pohl 2012; Jabrohim 2021). Both have a strong puritan nuance in the practice of *dakwah* (preaching) as reflected in their similar jargons, namely "returning to the Qur'an and al-Hadith". Both have a similar target in their *dakwah*, which wants to purify Islamic teachings from local practices (Said and Sobariyah 2021). Interestingly, traditional Muslims of *Nahdlatul Ulama* emerged as a response to the purification ideology of *Muhammadiyah* and Wahabism (Said and Sobariyah 2021). The relationship between modern Muslims

of *Muhammadiyah* and traditional Muslims of *Nahdlatul Ulama* has always been marked by tensions related to local religious practices. It can be seen from various studies on *Muhammadiyah* conducted by foreign researchers, who generally emphasize the face of puritanism in modern Muslims of *Muhammadiyah*. Michael Feener, for example, considered a modernist Muslim of *Muhammadiyah,* has promoted the "Salafi vision" and added the notion of rationality, while at the same time urging the need for *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) (Feener 2007). Mitsuo Nakamura also has a similar idea on understanding modern Muslims of *Muhammadiyah* in Indonesia. He called *Muhammadiyah* "orthodox Islam in the form of a reformist movement" (Nakamura 2011, p. 3). Another prominent figure in the study of Indonesia, Howard M. Federspiel, has also considered *Muhammadiyah* as "an orthodox Islamic movement" (Federspiel 1970, p. 57).

However, it was not until the emergence of *Muktamar* (National Congress) of *Muhammadiyah* in 2010 that the document "Centennial Statement of *Muhammadiyah*" (*Zhawâhir al-Afkâr al-Muhammadiyah li al-Qarni al-Tsâni*) was officially issued. This document proposed a new interpretation in portraying the philosophical foundation of practicing *dakwah* and *tajdid* (renewal), which has to be oriented solely towards achieving the progress of humanity (Muhammadiyah 2010). At the National Congress in 2015, three important documents were issued. The first document, entitled "The Pancasila State as a [National] Consensus and a Place to Testify" (*Negara Pancasila sebagai Dar al-Ahdi wa al-Syahadah*), stated the acceptance of *Muhammadiyah* upon Pancasila, with additional spiritual and political values. The second document discussed the Community-based Enlightening *dakwah* model, in which *Muhammadiyah* should include all community members practicing their *dakwah*, including minority and marginalized people. The third document consists of *Muhammadiyah* and Strategic Issues on the Islamic Society, Nationalism, and Humanity (*Muhammadiyah dan Isu-isu Strategis Keumatan*, *Kebangsaan*, *dan Kemanusian Universal*), which addressed the issue of *takfiri* (accusing another Muslim as being an infidel) (Latief and Nashir 2020). The narratives from the *Muhammadiyah*'s National Congress above show how *Muhammadiyah* has transformed its ideological from "purist and conservative" to more "progressive and inclusive."

These continuation attempts through the National Congress of *Muhammadiyah* show that *Muhammadiyah* is not identical to *dakwah* Salafism or Wahabism. Many attempts have also been made to support this transformation. Hilman Latif, for instance, raised the issue of Islamic philanthropic activities within *Muhammadiyah* to emphasize the progressive and inclusive *dakwah* of *Muhammadiyah* (Latief 2016). In line with this attempt, Zakiyuddin Badhawy (Baidhawy 2015) uses the issue of coping with disaster management and mitigation to lessen the radical and fundamental tendencies in Muslims. This article seeks to provide a similar narrative in showing the opposite direction of modern Indonesian Muslims of *Muhammadiyah* with the *dakwah* Salafism by revisiting the success story of the literacy jihad program of 'Aisyiyah, the oldest modern Muslim women organization.

4. The Success Story of 'Aisyiyah in Promoting Literacy Jihad

As the oldest Muslim women's organization, 'Aisyiah has made a significant contribution to knowledge creation and making information accessible for women to empower them and facilitate them to play an active role in improving the surrounding communities. To understand the Indonesian context of the 'Aisyiyah as a representation of a modern Muslim women's organization, it is important to briefly discuss the history of the 'Aisyiyah and its relations to *Muhammadiyah*, the biggest modern Islamic movement in the country. Therefore, this section is divided into three parts: discussing briefly the historical development of 'Aisyiyah, the success story of 'Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten, and the consistency of *Suara 'Aisyiyah* in disseminating information about women empowerment.

4.1. Historical Development of 'Aisyiyah

The early Twentieth Century of Indonesian history was marked by the emergence of some nationalist movements, such as Budi Utomo (1908), Indische Partij (1912), and Taman

Siswa (1922), as well as some religious-based movements, such as Serikat Dagang Islam (1909), Serikat Islam (1911), and Muhammadiyah (1912). The emergence of these nationalist and religious movements was inspired by external factors such as the introduction of new concepts of liberalism and human rights, the implementation of ethical politics in the Dutch Indies, the victory of Japan over Russia, and the emergence of Islamic modernism and Pan-Islamism. Furthermore, the women's organizations that were founded became part of those movements (Darban 2010).

'Aisyiyah, for example, was originally the women's division of Muhammadiyah. Before being officially declared a Muslim women's organization on 19 May 1917, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of Muhammadiyah (Van Doorn-Harder 2006; Pohl 2012; Zara 2021), and his wife, Hj. Siti Walidah, actively taught organizational skills to the women's division of the Muhammadiyah movement (Darban 2010). In addition to creating intensive learning for them, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan and his wife formed an Islamic study circle called "Sapa Tresno," which provided the study of various Islamic knowledge. This women's division became the forerunners of the 'Aisyiyah, the oldest Muslim women's organization (Ro'fah 2016).

As a part of Muhammadiyah, 'Aisyiyah focuses on providing services for women and families, primarily related to the issues of health, education, economy, and literacy (Darban 2010). Although 'Aisyiyah's concern in these four areas is in line with the overall teachings of Muhammadiyah as its parent organization, this does not necessarily mean that 'Aisyiyah has no role in determining its own work plan. The important role of 'Aisyiyah in the early periods of its establishment was noticed during the First Women's Congress in 1928, where two representatives of 'Aisyiyah were highly praised at the Congress (Karomatika 2018). This Women's Congress is crucial because it is a manifestation of national awareness and unity for women in particular, where two months before this Congress was held, the youth oath was taken on 28 October 1928 (Karomatika 2018; Mu'arif 2020). In this Congress, nationalists and religious-based women's organizations raised similar issues on the position of women in marriage, polygyny, and education for women.

'Aisyiyah's consistency in fighting for women's rights gained momentum when, in 1966, it was officially declared an independent organization (Qibtiyah 2009), and even the head of 'Aisyiyah in each branch automatically became the Muhammadiyah administrator. This condition certainly gave 'Aisyiyah more authority to continue to develop, even when many nationalist-based women's organizations had to disband because they were involved in practical politics, where the political party they were fighting for lost in the national political contestation (Darban 2010). The development of 'Aisyiyah does not seem to affect the change in the ruling regime significantly. 'Aisyiyah has 34 regional branches at the provincial level, 370 at the district/city level, 2332 at the sub-district level, and 6924 at the kelurahan or village level. With an estimated membership of 20 million, 'Aisyiyah has become the oldest and largest Muslim women's organization in Indonesia.

4.2. 'Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergartens: Literacy Jihad through Education

'Aisyiyah's contribution to eliminating illiteracy in society through education started two years after 'Aisyiyah was founded, with the establishment of Frebol Kindergarten in 1919, the first kindergarten in Indonesia. The establishment of Frebol Kindergarten was preceded by Nyai Siti Walidah's concern about many children in Kauman who played without direction and guidance. She then gathered them and invited the Muslim girls to be educated and trained by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan so they could provide guidance to the children. This group of Muslim girls, known as Siswa Praja Wanita (SPW), initiated the founding of Frebol Kindergarten (Taman Kanak-Kanak Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 1983). Frebol refers to Friedrick Wilhelm August Frobel (1782–1852), a German philosopher known as the founding father of early childhood education. It seems that 'Aisyiyah has a similar approach to Frobel about modern education for young children (Ro'fah 2016). Using the name Frobel as the school's identity, adapting the Frobel concept of contemporary education, and integrating it with monotheistic education, it became the hallmark of

learning at the Frobel Kindergarten (Taman Kanak-Kanak Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 1983). In 1924, Frebol Kindergarten changed its name to 'Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten, abbreviated as TK ABA.

Establishing an educational institution is motivated by the difficulty for many people in accessing education. At that time, it was still difficult, especially for women, to access education. Moreover, many women marry at a young age and, in the process, lose many of their rights. Given this condition, 'Aisyiyah works towards equal rights. 'Aisyiyah encourages girls to be able to enjoy education like boys. Moreover, choosing a focus on early childhood education is a progressive idea. It shows the identity of 'Aisyiyah as a modern Muslim women's organization that pays serious attention to the development of the concepts of contemporary education, which at that time was arguably still rare.

Statistically, 'Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten has an impressive development. It became a kindergarten spread across the country, with nearly 22,000 units. This number continues to grow with various types of education. Early Childhood Education Institutions in 'Aisyiyah consist of the 'Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten, as well as other early childhood education units such as *Taman Pendidikan Anak* (Children's Education Park), *Kelompok Bermain* (Play Group), *Satuan Paud Sejenis* (Early Education) Kindergarten Unit, and *Taman Pendidikan al-Qur'an* (Alternative Education of Qur'an). These achievements show how 'Aisyiyah became a pioneer and leader in early childhood education in Indonesia, serving nearly 20 percent of children across the country (Sirait 2021).

Through the Elementary and Secondary Education Council, which oversees the 'Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten, 'Aisyiyah developed the vision of 'Aisyiyah's education, which creates a noble character for the people and the nation. To advance education and educate the people, it is hoped that the younger generation of Muslims will become pious, have a noble character and capability, and be helpful to the community. Therefore, 'Aisyiyah provides education based on Islam by optimizing all aspects of its development.

4.3. Suara 'Aisyiyah: Literacy Jihad through a Magazine

Another form of literacy jihad carried out by 'Aisyiyah is through the publication of *Suara 'Aisyiyah*. *Suara 'Aisyiyah* is a monthly magazine belonging to the Central Executive of 'Aisyiyah, published from 1926 until now. *Suara 'Aisyiyah* is the oldest women's magazine in Indonesia whose development can be followed from the Dutch colonial era and the Japanese era to the independence era. Apart from being an organizational tool that publishes 'Aisyiyah's programs, this monthly magazine is also a strategic tool in providing knowledge expansion and awareness to 'Aisyiyah residents, especially regarding the role of women in the domestic and public worlds.

In the early decades of *Suara 'Aisyiyah*'s publication, the branches of 'Aisyiyah leaders were also involved in supplying writings. The distribution of papers was decided within the 'Aisyiyah Section of the *Muhammadiyah* Congress.

In the early days of the emergence of *Suara 'Aisyiyah*, there were also dozens of women's newspapers or magazines. They were inconsistent in publishing each edition, and some had to be disbanded due to financial issues and other political reasons. However, *Suara 'Aisyiyah* remained consistent in its efforts to voice women's interests through advancing women's literacy. The involvement of the top leaders of 'Aisyiyah as editorial board members of *Suara 'Aisyiyah* reflects their commitment to the cause. They hold many positions, and they are as follows: first, the position of the General Chairperson of the Central Executive of 'Aisyiyah, who is also the General Leader of *Suara 'Aisyiyah*; second, the appointment of the magazine managers, whose duties are compiled and published by the Central Executive of 'Aisyiyah; third, the involvement of one of the Heads of the Central Executive of 'Aisyiyah as the technical coordinator and daily monitor and evaluator; fourth, the existence of periodical implementation and financial reports to the Central Executive of 'Aisyiyah; fifth, direct instructions from the Central Executive of 'Aisyiyah to all regional branch members to subscribe to *Suara 'Aisyiyah*; sixth, promotion and discussion of the

contents of *Suara 'Aisyiyah* on the main page and official social media determined by the Central Executive of 'Aisyiyah; and seventh, discussing the development of this magazine at every 'Aisyiyah Congress. This direct involvement shows how the leaders of 'Aisyiyah have paid serious attention to ensure important information is covered in *Suara 'Aisyiyah* in every edition. They are fully supporting the agenda of literacy jihad so that people can read and understand knowledge and science correctly, especially on the issues of women and families.

'Aisyiyah's seriousness in managing the *Suara 'Aisyiyah* magazine since 1926 has received appreciation from various parties. In 2021, *Suara 'Aisyiyah* received a record from the Indonesian Record Museum. Previously, in 2020, *Suara 'Aisyiyah* received an award from the Yogyakarta Language Center as a print media that used the best grammatical language. These two awards prove that the community and the state recognize the existence of *Suara 'Aisyiyah*. In addition, this magazine also obtains a legal permit from the government and receives an assessment from the Press Council, and its journalists take a journalist certification exam from the Press Council.

Literacy jihad is a central focus of *Suara 'Aisyiyah*. For almost a hundred years, it has sought to address many problems facing women. If we observe and classify the publications of *Suara 'Aisyiyah* from when it was first published in 1926 until 2021, there are seven types of literacy jihad being fought for:

1. Latin Script Literacy

In 1926, many Indonesians, especially women, had not received an education. At that time, many Indonesian people were illiterate in Latin script; some even did not understand the script at all. Some people used local letters and languages daily, while others were familiar with Arabic letters or *Pegon*. For this reason, *Suara 'Aisyiyah*'s initial struggle was the eradication of illiteracy, which focused on the ability to read and write Latin script. The emergence of *Suara 'Aisyiyah* is based on the spirit of women immediately acquiring knowledge and knowledge correctly through reading. At the beginning of its publication, *Suara 'Aisyiyah* used Javanese, but then used Latin script. The 1927 edition (Radjab) also used Javanese with Latin letters and past spellings. On the back of the 1927 edition, starting on page 62, *Suara 'Aisyiyah* used Malay or Indonesian. Until 1930, only two articles have been written in Javanese, and in 1932, *Suara 'Aisyiyah* used purely Malay or Indonesian languages.

2. Literacy on Degree of Women

Problems that have been discussed constantly since the first publication of *Suara 'Aisyiyah* are the writings that inspire women throughout Indonesia to realize that their status is no different from that of men. For example, there is an article about the degree of women in the *Suara 'Aisyiyah* edition of 1927 entitled "*Derajadjading Tijang Estri Wonten ing Agami Islam*" (Degree of Women in Islam), the anonymous author who calls himself Goeroe S.P.Bg. Tadjmiloel Achlak. Likewise, in the 1930s, *Suara 'Aisyiyah* continued to speak about the status of women, for example, on pages 311–313 Number 12 (December) of 1932 with the title *"Dapatkah Islam Mendjoendjoeng Deradjat Kaoem Poetri?"* (Can Islam Uphold the Degree of Women?), by St. Chafsoh Moenawir Baturijah, Kendal. In this edition, *Suara 'Aisyiyah* also reported on the growth of *Muhammadiyah* and 'Aisyiyah outside Java, various conferences, and news from abroad.

3. Literacy on Loving Science and Homeland

During the independence period, *Suara 'Aisyiyah* discussed the importance of women studying and contributing to the homeland. These two problems are repeated to show that the issues of women's literacy and status are important, as well as the reader's understanding. The language style is distinctive and full of high literary nuances to touch the readers' hearts, so that they want to continue studying. In addition, *Suara 'Aisyiyah* also presented the writing "*Kaoem Poetri dalam Peperangan*" (Women in War). It was stated that, in other countries, many women have participated in wars, but in our country, women

have not been involved. The writing inspires the idea that women must also be involved in the struggle for independence.

4. Literacy on Islamic and Indonesian Identities

After the independence of the Republic of Indonesia, the *Suara 'Aisyiyah* editions of the 1950s published many articles about advancing women's Islamic and Indonesian identities. Various articles show how the public sphere can be entered by women with knowledge and literacy abilities. An example of provocative statements in *Suara 'Aisyiyah* states:

> *People say women are in the kitchen, but now it's not. Women also run outside as laborers in the office, factories, etc. People say that women should only become educators, become teachers, but it also turns out that this is not only where women place themselves. They run and compete in the political field as representatives of the people, have been ministers, and so on. People say that women are in the back line where they belong in warfare. But no women participate on the battlefield as entertainers and nurses; some even carry guns to kill the enemy.*

In its subsequent editions (1953–1955), the issue of the role of women in the public sphere was continuously written about, for example in the articles "Women in State Development", "Women and the Free Movement", "Should Women Dress Up and Wear Kebayas?", "The Personality of the Islamic Woman", and "The Obligations of a Muslim Woman". These writings place the identity of Muslim women who have Eastern customs and also have broad knowledge across different topics and issues. Not only through writing articles, but ideas about the identity of Indonesian Muslim women are also conveyed in literary rubrics in the form of poetry and short stories. In 1956, this Islamic and Indonesian identity was strengthened by an article entitled "Beauty Contest: Things That Destroy Morals and Society".

5. Literacy on Critical Thinking

In the 1960s, *Suara 'Aisyiyah* appeared very scientific. The articles were discussed in great depth and detail with a scientific perspective. At that time, the Chief Editor was Siti Baroroh. The articles published were the handiwork of scientists from this country, for example Siti Baroroh, Amien Rais, Abdul Hadi W.M., Rachmat Djoko Pradopo, Ismadi, Dawiesah, Bared, and Tudjimah. Later, these figures were known as scientists, professors, or professors of *Muhammadiyah* pride. The writings in the 1960s discussed the themes of population, literature, health, politics, leadership, and religion. This era also discussed many international issues through the adaptations of foreign media. One rubric explicitly indicated the progress of critical thinking at that time, namely the Science Room rubric. The rubric includes the thoughts of Prof. Dr. Lowenstein in an article entitled "There is No Conflict between Religion and Science". Lowenstein is a historian and philosopher from Germany who came to Yogyakarta at that time. This scientific characteristic continued when Siti Chamamah managed *Suara 'Aisyiyah* until the 1970s.

6. Literacy on Being Responsive to Social Problems

When 'Aisyiyah had finished discussing the issues of literacy, the status of women, Indonesian identity, and being able to think critically, *Suara 'Aisyiyah* entered the discussion about a very long journey of the nation, from the 1980s to the 2000s. The stability achieved by this nation made *Suara 'Aisyiyah* present writings about the efforts made to create "*baldatun thayyibatun wa rabbun ghafur*" (a prosperous country with God's forgiveness). In support of the nation, *Suara 'Aisyiyah* created social networks through its branches in country. The voice of 'Aisyiyah helped communicate various concepts from the Central Leadership of 'Aisyiyah to the grassroots. What happened to the community at the grassroots was raised by *Suara 'Aisyiyah*, so the leaders at the central level could respond properly. All the rubrics written in these three decades showed the intelligence of 'Aisyiyah in reading the social problems and responding to them appropriately. For example, consultation rubrics began to be held in this decade. The names of the 'Aisyiyah programs, such as the *Sakinah* Family and *Qaryah Thayyibah* (good community), also became

the names of the rubrics that could encourage the acceleration of the idea of developing an Islamic society based on *Muhammadiyah* and 'Aisyiyah doctrines. Representatives from the assembly in 'Aisyiyah are also included in the management of *Suara 'Aisyiyah*, so this magazine shows its contribution to the nation in a strong way.

7. Literacy on Smart Digital

Entering the decade of the 2000s, when technological developments occurred rapidly, *Suara 'Aisyiyah* adjusted to a digital platform. At the beginning of this century, people became familiar with the Internet. The themes of *Suara 'Aisyiyah* in this decade were always inseparable from worldwide technological developments, for example articles about getting to know websites and using the Internet. Towards the decade of the 2010s, *Suara 'Aisyiyah* continued to discuss globalization and the number of problems that arose in virtual life. *Suara 'Aisyiyah* became a medium to remind its readers to have digital intelligence and be ready to enter the post-truth era. In this era, it is no longer clear which texts are authoritative and which are not. *Suara 'Aisyiyah* consistently urges the readers to avoid hoaxes, take advantage of virtual networks as a medium of *dakwah* (preaching), and improve living standards.

This thematic series clearly illustrates the consistency of the *Suara 'Aisyiyah* magazine in guarding the discourse on gender equality and ensuring the fulfillment of the rights of women and children in Indonesia so that they can gain access to the widest possible information for a better life.

5. 'Aisyiyah and the Challenges of Salafism

'Aisyiyah's struggle in building public literacy is evident. At least, this can be seen from the numbers of 'Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergartens, which reached almost 22 thousand units and *Suara 'Aisyiyah*, which is recognized as the oldest and most consistently published magazine in Indonesia. These two accomplishments of 'Aisyiyah can be used as effective tools to create a more positive impression of women in Islam. It is critical to note that the proliferation of transnational Islamic groups, especially those that follow a revivalist ideology, has become a serious challenge for Muslim women's organizations (Kailani 2018; Sebastian et al. 2021). The transformation of the Salafi group's *dakwah* in the digital world poses a new threat to the sustainability of fulfilling women's rights that has been championed by 'Aisyiyah. Various campaigns initiated by the Salafi groups have directly challenged the active role of women in society. Some taglines raised through those campaigns, such as: "invitation to marry at young age" (Kresna 2019), "Indonesia without dating" (Sunesti et al. 2018; Sulaiman 2020), "Home is the best place for women" (Khotijah and Madkur 2018), or "ready to be a second wife" (Fitrianita 2018; Sunesti et al. 2018), have potential to obstruct the fulfillment of women's rights.

Indeed, the potential threats to fulfilling women's rights, such as banning girls from schools, like in Afghanistan, are unlikely to occur in Indonesia. However, directing public opinion through various campaigns, such as condemning women for working outside the home or campaigning for the ideal position of a woman to stay at home, eventually will bring up restrictions on women's rights. They use various media in campaigning their doctrines, such as flyers, posters, and banners, to create various taglines, which they upload on their social media accounts, such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The attractive packaging of *dakwah* messages with a short but provocative language style illustrates how their *dakwah* targets young Muslims, especially in urban areas.

Winning sympathy from young Muslims is relatively easier than persuading the older generation. In addition to the relatively unstable psychological condition, the younger generation is usually not faced with the demands of life's necessities yet. Therefore, they are more easily persuaded by provocative and ideological messages. The change in the *dakwah* pattern is not only limited to the use of digital platforms, but can also be seen in the choice of places: mosques, prayer rooms, city squares, or football fields, often used to hold religious activities, which are seen to be unattractive to young people. Instead, they prefer to use cafes, hotel ballrooms, boutiques, malls, or other hangout places to study

and practice Islamic knowledge. Besides, the packaging of dakwah that pays attention to the needs of young people becomes a challenge for mainstream Islamic organizations that usually are represented by *Muhammadiyah*, *Nahdlatul Ulama* and 'Aisyiyah.

If we use the issue of women's status in Islam, the position of 'Aisyiyah, as a representation of modernist Islam, is opposite to that of Salafi campaigns. Modernism and Salafism have different ideological directions on this issue, although many observers claim that one characteristic of modernism is purification. Both modernist Islam and Salafi activists in Indonesia use the same ideology of *dakwah*, with the similar jargon of "returning to the Qur'an and hadiths" (Said and Sobariyah 2021). The idea of providing equal access to education for girls, as the spirit of the establishment of 'Aisyiyah, shows that modern Muslims and Salafism in Indonesia are not always in agreement. This can be used as an effective tool for campaigning for a unique characteristic of modern Islam in Indonesia.

Another serious challenge posed by the *Tarbiyah* and Salafi movements is the establishment of a relatively new model of the schooling system, called "*Sekolah Islam Terpadu*" (Integrated Islamic School), usually abbreviated as IT and placed after the name of the school level, such as Taman Kanak-kanak Islam Terpadu (Kindergarten level) or Sekolah Dasar Islam Terpadu (Elementary School level). The Integrated Islamic School model can attract people's attention because it offers a full-day school, which is seen as helping families whose parents have to work. The public or state school model operates only from 7 am to 1 pm, while working hours for parents end at 4 pm. Therefore, one parent must pick their children up and bring them home during their working hours. With the full-day school model, parents no longer need to ask permission from their employers to pick up their children from school during working hours. Instead, they can pick them up after work. In addition to this practical reason, most parents feel comfortable with the label "Islam" without further confirming whether the schools are affiliated with moderate or radical Islamic groups.

Parents' ignorance in considering the school's Islamic affiliation has created some interesting cases (Muliya and Rivauzi 2021). Some of those parents are surprised by the changes in their children's behavior, such as forbidding parents from watching television, showing hatred towards infidels or non-Muslims, and refusing to perform certain rituals (Lestari 2016). The change in behavior in these children is evident in how radical teachings have also entered classrooms. A popular children's song, entitled "*Tepuk Anak Sholeh*" (A Pious Child Clap), for example, has gone viral on social media because it teaches children to hate non-Muslims (Ridlo 2017). These transformations of *dakwah* Salafism have become a concern and challenge for moderate Islamic groups in Indonesia.

In this context, 'Aisyiyah could play a significant role in countering Salafist *dakwah*, especially related to the status of women in Islam. As the biggest modern Muslim women's organization, 'Aisyiyah has the advantage of countering negative views on women in Islam posed by the Salafi groups compared to non-religious-based women's movements. Moreover, as a representative of Muslim women's organizations, 'Aisyiyah is also supported by academically recognized figures who have the integrity to discuss and interpret Islamic doctrines, especially regarding the fulfillment of women's and family rights (Aryanti 2013). The consistency of these figures, who are trusted by the public in countering the Salafism claims through *Suara 'Aisyiyah*, can at least guide readers amid the proliferation of hoax information wrapped in religious messages.

Literacy jihad, as shown by *Suara 'Aisyiyah* through a series of themes, shows how 'Aisyiyah always presents a moderate Islamic view that provides spaces for fulfilling women's rights. In addition, the transformation of the *Suara 'Aisyiyah* magazine to a digital platform can certainly be an alternative in countering various forms of Salafist *dakwah*, that also actively uses social media to gain attention from young Muslims (Lestari 2016). Although 'Aisyiyah has developed the *Suara 'Aisyiyah* into a digital platform, much work is still needed to counter the high intensity of Salafist *dakwah*, especially related to the issue of creating more eye-catching and attractive messages for broader potential readers.

Perhaps it is a good time for *Suara 'Aisyiyah* to share more contents with those outside its membership.

Another challenge of proselytizing Salafism is the existence of an integrated Islamic school that has the potential to teach radicalism and foster an intolerant attitude (Yusup 2018; Siregar 2021). The emergence of integrated "Islamic schools", which provide flexibility to increase study hours for Islamic subjects, is not different from the "*madrasa*" system under the supervision of the Ministry of Religion. Perhaps this is merely a *dakwah* strategy used by the Salafism groups to form a school model with a larger portion of Islamic lesson hours, but still under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, rather than being supervised by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The Ministry of Education has relatively few experts in the Islamic field, so supervision of Islamic subjects is not as strict as at the Ministry of Religion. Therefore, the label "Islamic school" is seen as making it easier to spread their religious ideology compared to using the label "madrasa," which has a relatively more comprehensive set of regulations and stricter supervision regarding Islamic subject materials taught to students.

The opportunity for the inclusion of radicalism and intolerance in classrooms should be prevented by giving more serious attention, particularly concerning the supervision and cooperation between the two ministries, namely the Ministry of Religion and the Ministry of Education (Taufiqurrahman and Mubarok 2022). The Ministry of Education has to be more selective in granting permits for the establishment of Islamic schools by scrutinizing the curriculum of Islamic subjects to avoid an ideology of intolerance and *takfiri*, which means judging people outside one's group as infidels. In this context, the existence of 'Aisiyah with nearly 22,000 units of 'Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten and other educational institutions at various levels, ranging from elementary to university, can be a good example of how to direct supervision through the involvement of board members of local branches of 'Aisyiyah (Taman Kanak-Kanak Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 1983) and also *Majelis Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah* (Assembly of Primary and Secondary Education) of *Muhammadiyah*.

The management of 'Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten, as part of 'Aisyiyah's business program, shows a great contribution and concern for early childhood education development, which in recent years has become an important target for Salafism groups. However, the high intensity of Salafist *dakwah* using the Internet and establishing an educational institution (Sunarwoto 2021) needs to be responded to systematically by all moderate Islamic groups. 'Aisyiyah, as a modern Muslim women's organization, seems to prioritize the issues of women and families, while other issues, such as radicalism or intolerant activities, should be countered by other moderate Muslim groups.

The success story of 'Aisyiyah in lifting the status of women and families through the literacy jihad programs shows two important points. First is the negative picture of the status of women in Muslim communities that has resurfaced through the works undertaken by radical groups and Salafism. Second, by exploring 'Aisyiyah, as a representative of modern Muslim women's organizations, clearer understanding can be gained about the nexus between modernism and Salafism.

6. Conclusions

As the oldest Muslim women's organization in Indonesia, 'Aisyiyah has made a tremendous contribution to showing the world that Muslim women can contribute to creating a better life in society, especially for women and families. Furthermore, the consistency of 'Aisyiyah in its literacy jihad programs, especially through the establishment of 'Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergartens and other education institutions, as well as through the publication of the *Suara 'Aisyiyah* magazine, can be seen to be an excellent example of countering the *dakwah* of Salafism, which potentially forces women into the confinement of domestic tasks. Besides, the existence of nearly 22,000 units of kindergartens can also be used as a tool to protect children from radical and intolerant ideologies, which

have started entering the classrooms, especially through some integrated Islamic schools that are affiliated with Salafi groups.

As a modern Muslim women's organization, 'Aisyiyah provides a new way of balancing information on studying the relationship between modernism and Salafism or moderation and extremism. However, a more comprehensive study on this issue is still needed to ensure that modern Islam should be more accommodating to minority and marginalized communities.

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