

## TAMING THE PURITAN: Bibliometric Mapping and Critical Review of the Global Salafism Discourse Trajectory

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**Abstract:** This study maps the trajectory of academic discourse on global Salafism (2000–2025) using a mixed-methods approach integrating bibliometric analysis and critical review. Quantitative findings reveal a radical “epistemic decentralization” and structural shift. Geographically, the Global North’s hegemony is eroding; Indonesia (46 papers) has emerged as the closest competitor to the US (50), with UIN Sunan Kalijaga ranking as the world’s most productive institution (8 papers), surpassing elite Western universities. Bibliometric mapping further reveals a shift in knowledge structure: the discourse has transitioned from dense “terrorism” and “security” clusters toward “social movement,” “gender,” and “digital identity” nodes. Authorial authority is polycentric, led jointly by scholars like Cavatorta, Duderija, Pall, and Wagemakers, without a single dominant figure. Qualitatively, the discourse evolved in three phases: (1) The Security Phase (2000–2010), dominated by perspectives viewing Salafism solely as a source of terror post-9/11; (2) The Fragmentation Phase (2010–2020), driven by the Arab Spring, highlighting internal divisions and digital activism; and (3) The Post-Salafism Era (2021–2025), where the movement is domesticated by state nationalism and algorithmic discipline. The study concludes that Salafism is no longer a monolithic threat but a hybrid entity, requiring a digital sociological approach to understand its new adaptations.

**Keywords:** Global Salafism, Post-Salafism, Bibliometric analysis, Epistemic decentralization, Digital domestication, Algorithmic religion.

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## Introduction

Studies on Salafism, along with global geopolitical changes, social dynamics in various Muslim regions, and the expansion of digital space, have shaped a new landscape for academic studies on this movement. Research since the early 2000s shows that Salafism encompasses a complex spectrum that includes textual teachings, political activism, and global jihad networks. After the Arab Spring, the debate on the typology of Salafism has been renewed due to the emergence of new categories and the transformation of the behavior of its actors. Scholars such as Blanc argue that Wiktorowicz's framework needs to be revised due to the emergence of new post-revolutionary forms.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, theological studies reveal that certain doctrines, such as *tawhīd al-asmā' wa al-ṣifāt*, have become central to Salafi ideological identity in many modern contexts, particularly in relation to the legacy of Ibn Taymiyyah and the reconstructions of 18th-century scholars, including Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb.<sup>2</sup>

In the European context, changes in the security landscape following the fall of ISIS have resulted in new patterns of mobilization that are more fluid, not tied to a single leadership, and influenced by competition with criminal gangs and the weakening of the heroic narrative of jihad.<sup>3</sup> At the social level, research on Salafi groups in Indonesia shows diversity in religious motivations and practices,

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<sup>1</sup> T. Blanc, *Categorizing Salafism with and without Wiktorowicz: Grounded Reflections from Tunisia*, 30, no. 1 (2025): 306–26, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2023.2215726>; Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (May 2006): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100500497004>.

<sup>2</sup> P. Ťupek and O. Beránek, "Monotheism of the Divine Names and Attributes as a Defining Criterion of Salafism," *Die Welt Des Islams*, ahead of print, Brill Academic Publishers, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700607-20240035>.

<sup>3</sup> M. Nilsson and H.F. Esholdt, "After the Caliphate: Changing Mobilization in the Swedish Salafi-Jihadist Environment Following the Fall of ISIS," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 48, no. 5 (2025): 463–84, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2022.2104682>.

including a trend of hijrah among urban youth,<sup>4</sup> romanticism towards the Salaf generation in local da'wah,<sup>5</sup> and expressions of female piety in universities.<sup>6</sup> Studies on Salafi women in Egypt also note the existence of active agency, albeit within strict normative boundaries.<sup>7</sup> In the Indonesian public context, Salafi authority is expressed through television media, creating a new arena of competition with mainstream religious authorities.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to social and political dynamics, the development of digital technology has become an essential arena for the expansion of Salafism discourse. Virtual communities, such as the British Salafi network on Twitter/X, have been researched and analyzed using interdisciplinary methods that combine Middle Eastern studies with digital learning.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, the use of artificial intelligence technology to track the activities of Salafi-jihadist extremists in the digital space reveals new complexities in the interaction between privacy, security, and information transparency.<sup>10</sup> Even linguistic

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<sup>4</sup> S. Rijal, "Pursuing Hijrah to Salafi Path: Urban Muslim Youth and the Quest for Self-Transformation in Indonesia," *Contemporary Islam* 19, no. 1 (2025): 101–21, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-024-00564-x>.

<sup>5</sup> S. Sarwan et al., "Romanticism In Salafi Da'wah: A Cultural And Historical Perspective From West Sumatra, Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 13, no. 1 (2025): 177–98, <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v13i1.1373>.

<sup>6</sup> I.K. Muyassaroh and R. Sciortino, "Public Expressions of Religion among Yogyakarta's Salafi Muslimah," *KARSA* 32, no. 2 (2024): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.19105/karsa.v32i2.15440>.

<sup>7</sup> M. Ghalwash and A. Masod, "Salafi Women in Contemporary Egypt: The Politics of Integration," *Middle East Critique* 34, no. 3 (2025): 503–20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19436149.2025.2489812>.

<sup>8</sup> A. Subakir, "Challenging the Mainstreams: Broadcasting Salafi Da'wah on Indonesian TV Channels," *Uhumuna* 28, no. 2 (2024): 681–709, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v28i2.1115>.

<sup>9</sup> E. Alshech et al., "A Qualitative and Quantitative Method for Studying Religious Virtual Communities: The Case of the Salafi United Kingdom's Community on Twitter (X)," *Religions* 16, no. 4 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16040494>.

<sup>10</sup> D. Cohen, A. Elalouf, and D. Citrinowicz, "Uncovering Salafi Jihadist Terror Activity through Advanced Technological Tools," *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, ahead of print, Routledge, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18335330.2025.2478553>.

aspects, such as naming practices within Salafi-jihadist groups, have been analyzed as forms of ideological transmission and symbolic framing.<sup>11</sup>

Although diverse, these studies remain fragmentary because they focus on specific issues, specific countries, or a single dimension of analysis. Theoretical studies on Salafi hermeneutics, such as those conducted by Jaan S. Islam,<sup>12</sup> stand alone without any systematic connection to social and digital dynamics. Phenomenological studies on extremism are not accurately mapped chronologically to show how the terms radicalism, fundamentalism, or extremism interact with Salafi discourse in various disciplines.<sup>13</sup> Research on Salafi women in Indonesia and Egypt is growing rapidly, but has not yet been positioned as part of the big picture of global developments. The same applies to studies of digital da'wah and virtual communities, which, to date, remain peripheral to academic discourse.

This disconnect highlights a significant gap in research. From 2000 to 2025, the number of publications on Salafism has increased; however, there has been no comprehensive synthesis based on Scopus bibliometric data that maps how these studies have developed, interacted, or shifted focus in line with global political transformations and the growth of the digital space. Some studies that attempt to provide a comprehensive overview are often normative or limited in scope, and therefore cannot accurately represent the overall global academic developments on Salafism. The absence of such systematic mapping creates a need for thematic bibliometric research that brings together various clusters of discourse: jihadism, identity politics, women, da'wah, hermeneutics, psychology, and digital technology.

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<sup>11</sup> K. Gatt, "What's in a Name? Names as Ideological Transmitters of the Salafi-Jihadi Worldview," *Journal of Language and Politics*, ahead of print, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.24020.gat>.

<sup>12</sup> J.S. Islam, "What Is Salafism? An Intellectual History of Salafi Hermeneutics," *Journal of Religion* 104, no. 4 (2024): 479–504, <https://doi.org/10.1086/731596>.

<sup>13</sup> U. Pektaş and T. Kasıkcı, "Who Are They: Radicals? Extremists? Fundamentalists? A Phenomenological Analysis of Salafi Movements with the Case of AQAP," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, ahead of print, Routledge, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2025.2520095>.

The urgency of such mapping has increased with the growing use of bibliometrics as a tool for tracking the direction of disciplinary development, assessing trends, and understanding interdisciplinary relationships. The period from 2000 to 2025 is particularly important because it encompasses major transformations in global politics, religion, and digitalization. Events such as 9/11, the invasion of Iraq, the Arab Spring, the rise and fall of ISIS, and digital proselytizing have shifted the focus of research in each phase. Without systematic mapping, it is challenging to comprehend these changes as a cohesive series. The bibliometric approach enables quantitative analysis of publication intensity, inter-country collaboration, and inter-concept relationships through co-occurrence mapping. When this quantitative data is combined with critical-thematic analysis, the result is statistics on one side and a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of academic discourse on the other.

Based on this concept, this study aims to map the development of global academic discourse on Salafism from 2000 to 2025. The research data were obtained through the Scopus database using the keywords “Salafism” and “Salafi” in the “article title” menu to ensure the relevance of the theme. The data were then limited to English-language journal articles published between 2000 and 2025 to maintain consistency in the quality and affordability of the bibliometric analysis. The selection of these criteria was based on the epistemic consideration that English-language articles in Scopus-indexed journals are the strongest representation of international academic discourse.

In addition, placing the keywords in the title ensures that the focus of the research is truly on Salafi or Salafism, rather than merely mentioning the term implicitly. In this way, the research objective was formulated to capture the relationship between global socio-political changes and scientific dynamics. Thus, the final results can reveal the center of gravity of academic discourse and how geopolitical and technological transformations have influenced the direction of global Salafism studies over the past quarter-century.

## Bibliometric Landscape: Knowledge Production and Discourse on Salafism

Bibliometric analysis begins with mapping keywords to examine the direction of global research on this issue. VosViewer data produces the following map:

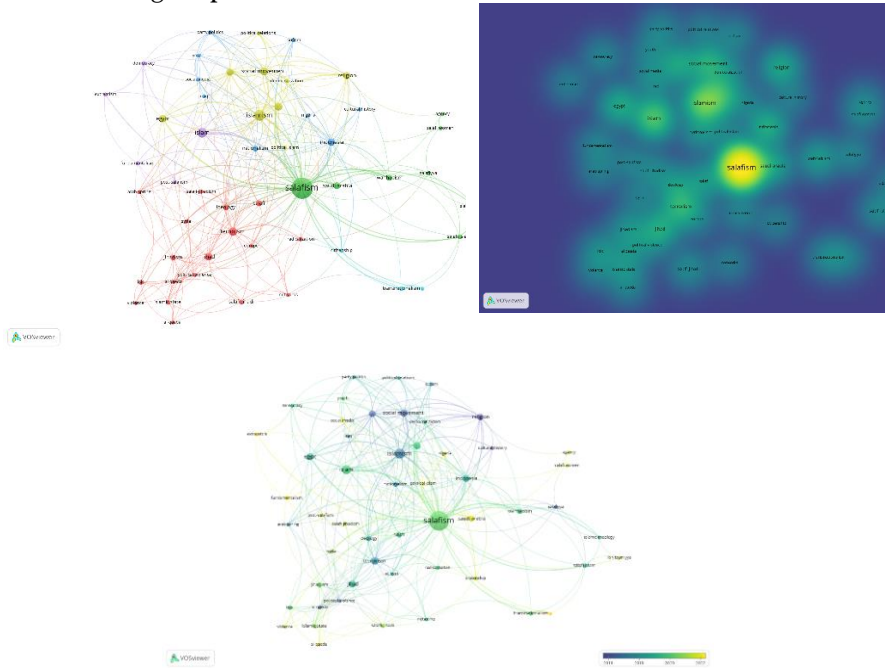


Figure 1. Map of co-occurrence of all keywords in VOSviewer

The co-occurrence of all keywords in the image above shows that academic discourse on Salafism centers on two major clusters: first, the green cluster, which links Salafism to theological constructs, global networks, and contemporary social expressions; second, the red cluster, which positions Salafi-jihadism as a theme that remains dominant in international literature. The green cluster links “Salafism” with terms such as “Wahhabism,” “Islamic theology,” “Salafiyya,” “agency,” “Salafi women,” and “transnationalism.” These links suggest that over the last two decades, the study of Salafism has shifted from focusing on global security issues to increasingly examining theological aspects, individual agency, women’s lives, and transnational dynamics. The presence of nodes such as “Indonesia,” “Saudi Arabia,” “Nigeria,”

and “cultural history” marks a trend toward comparative and contextual studies. This map illustrates that researchers view and understand Salafism studies as a multi-layered phenomenon operating within social, theological, and transnational frameworks.

Meanwhile, the red cluster shows the intensity of the relationship between “Salafi-jihadism,” “jihadism,” “terrorism,” “ISIS,” “al-Qaeda,” “political violence,” and “radicalization.” The dominance of connections in this cluster indicates that the discourse on radicalism remains one of the primary axes shaping academic perceptions of Salafism at the global level. Nodes such as “Syria,” “Iraq,” and “Europe” indicate that research generally develops in line with geopolitical dynamics, especially during the rise and fall of ISIS and the Middle East conflict. The yellow and blue clusters linking “social movement,” “youth,” “social media,” and “democratization” confirm that Salafism is also studied through the perspective of social and political change, especially after the Arab Spring.

The existence of nodes such as “extremism,” “fundamentalism,” and “Arab Spring” that bridge the red and green clusters shows that contemporary literature views Salafism as a phenomenon that falls within the spectrum of the great debate on ideology, citizenship, and modern Muslim identity. Thus, this map displays a complex academic discourse structure that combines theological, social, political, and security dimensions in understanding the transformation of global Salafism.

Meanwhile, the *co-occurrence* map with the *overlay timeline* above shows the shift in the focus of academic discourse on Salafism from 2000 to 2022 (indicated by the gradient from dark blue to bright yellow). Clusters dominated by dark blue and dark green (representing the early period, before 2016-2018) indicate that early studies were driven by two major post-Arab Spring agendas: political transition and global security. Terms such as “democratization,” “social movement,” “youth,” “party politics,” and “social media” are in the older clusters, indicating an initial surge of research that attempted to position Salafism within the framework of social change and political roles.

Simultaneously, clusters involving “terrorism,” “jihadism,” “al-Qaeda,” and “ISIS” also show darker colors, indicating that although these themes remain central (dominant), the intensity of their first appearance as major hot topics occurred at the beginning of the mapping period. Therefore, academic discourse initially focused on responses to political and security crises. At the same time, the central node of “Salafism” and its regional context, such as “Saudi Arabia,” “Egypt,” and “Indonesia,” is represented by a medium green color, indicating consistent and sustained relevance throughout the period.

The shift to light green and bright yellow (representing the most recent period, around 2021-2022) marks the maturation of the field of study and the broadening of the research frontier. The most recent clusters (yellow) now focus on more micro and specific social, theological, and transnational dimensions. The three most prominent nodes in terms of recency are “agency,” “Salafi women,” and “transnationalism,” indicating an academic shift beyond institutional or security analysis alone toward the study of individual agency, gender dynamics, and transnational networks beyond the Middle East. In addition, nodes related to theological legitimacy, such as “salafiyya,” “Islamic theology,” and “Ibn Taymiyya,” also show brighter colors, implying recent efforts to rediscover the intellectual roots and genealogy of Salafism. Overall, this overlay map highlights the evolution of academic discourse, from a reaction to political and security crises (blue) to a more comprehensive understanding of Salafism as a layered phenomenon operating within the space of individual agency and theological frameworks (yellow).

Meanwhile, the density map presents the structure of academic discourse on Salafism by identifying points of gravity based on the frequency of co-occurrence and the interconnectedness of keywords. The highest density points (bright yellow) are centered on the core terms “Salafism” and “Saudi Arabia,” confirming that, although studies have developed, the fundamental understanding of Salafism remains tied to its original context and the institutional support provided by the kingdom. The high density extending to the areas of “Islamism,” “social movement,” and “democratization” (medium yellow) indicates

that Salafism studies collectively tend to position this phenomenon within the broader spectrum of contemporary Islamic politics. Thus, the center of discourse is socio-political rather than theological or ideological.

Areas with lower density (green) surrounding the core indicate themes that are less central but still crucial. The security cluster, which encompasses “terrorism,” “jihadism,” and “radicalization,” has a medium density, implying that while security threats remain a pillar of study, they no longer dominate the discourse with the highest frequency, as is the case with “Salafism” or “Islamism.” This difference in density indicates the maturation of the field of study away from a solely security perspective. On the other hand, micro or new themes, such as “agency,” “Salafi women,” and specific discussions of theological figures like “Ibn Taymiyya,” are located in the lowest density area (dark green). This shows that in-depth studies of individual agency, gender, or intellectual genealogy are still a developing research niche, which has not yet reached the same level of connectivity as political or regional themes. Overall, this density structure reflects the complexity of a discourse that has moved from a reactionary focus to a more detailed and layered analytical framework.

After examining the temporal dimension and density of discourse through *overlay* and *density* maps, the focus of the analysis shifted to reviewing the thematic network structure formed by all author keywords. This network map identified three main thematic clusters that form the pillars of academic literature on Salafism. The green (middle-lower) cluster represents the sociological, theological, and regional core of this study. The central node “Salafism” is strongly connected to critical geographical contexts such as “Saudi Arabia” and “Indonesia,” confirming that the literature is heavily dependent on comparative case study approaches and local contexts. The strength of these links is supported by theological terms such as “wahhabism” and “salafiyya,” which indicate academic efforts to understand how Salafist ideology takes root and adapts in diverse domestic environments, while maintaining theological connections to its origins. Furthermore, the connection to “transnationalism” underscores the dimension of

cross-border dissemination and interaction inherent in this phenomenon.

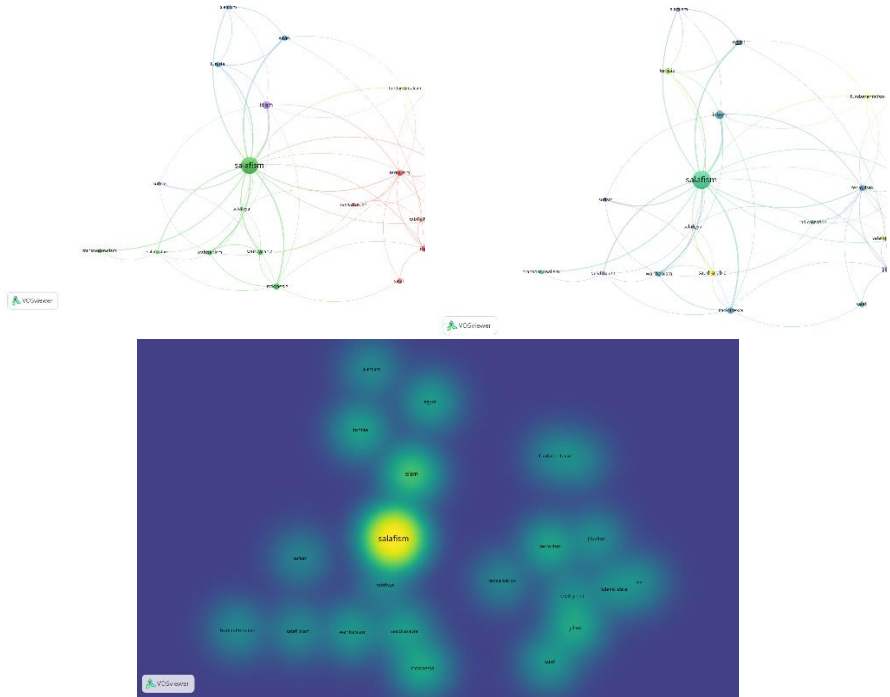


Figure 2. Map of all author keywords VOSviewer

Meanwhile, two thematically separate clusters show a more specific focus. The red cluster (right) clearly defines a focus on Security and Radicalism, where “terrorism,” “jihadism,” “radicalization,” “ISIS,” and “salafi-jihadi” are closely related. The density and strong links within this cluster prove that the discourse on security, although separate from the sociological dimension, remains one of the central axes in international literature. On the other hand, the blue cluster (top) highlights the political context and nation-state, which is dominated by nodes such as “Islamism,” “Egypt,” and “Tunisia.” This cluster focuses on academic efforts to analyze the role of Salafism as a political actor within the context of nation-states, particularly in relation to the political dynamics in North Africa and the Middle East

following the Arab Spring. The overall structure of this cluster displays a thematic division within the research community, where one group focuses on ideological roots and social adaptation (Green), another on the threat of extremism (Red), and a third on electoral and formal political roles (Blue).

With a comprehensive understanding of thematic grouping through the author's keyword network map, the analysis is deepened by integrating the temporal dimension through an overlay map, which visualizes the evolution of academic interest (average year of publication) from 2019 (dark blue) to 2021 (bright yellow).

The integration of the timeline dimension into the author's keyword network reveals that the academic focus on Salafism shows a significant shift in dynamics from the early period (before 2019) to the more recent period (2021). In the early period, represented by dark blue and dark green, it is evident that academics focused primarily on the political and regional dimensions of Salafism. Nodes such as "Islamism," "Egypt," and "Tunisia" in the blue cluster indicate that early research focused on the role and position of Salafism in the context of nation-state politics and the implications of the Arab Spring. Meanwhile, studies centered on "terrorism" and "jihadism" also show a darker color (dark green), indicating that the security discourse, while still relevant, tended to be stable or experienced an initial surge in intensity during that period, not reflecting the forefront of the latest research. The medium green central nodes of "Salafism" and "Saudi Arabia" indicate that studies linking Salafism to its origins continue as a consistent foundation over time.

The shift to light green and bright yellow (representing 2020-2021) marks the emergence of a research frontier driven by more specific ideological issues and more extreme manifestations. The clusters on the right side of the map, which include "fundamentalism," "ISIS," and links to "jihadism," show colors that tend to be bright yellow. This implies a new wave of research that explicitly discusses forms of extremism and fundamental ideologies in Salafism. Additionally, at the bottom of the map, the nodes "Indonesia" and "Wahhabism" also display a lighter color compared to other regional

nodes, indicating an increased focus on Indonesian case studies and their relationship with Wahhabism as a relatively new research theme. This temporal evolution suggests that academic discourse has shifted from a reactionary emphasis on politics and security at the beginning of the period to a more nuanced attention to the evolving extremist ideology and the regional context of Southeast Asia in the more recent period.

The density map analysis reveals the concentration and centrality of the most frequently used and most connected keywords among academic authors, clearly mapping the center of discourse on Salafism. The core with the highest density (bright yellow) is centered on the node “Salafism,” confirming its position as an irreplaceable subject of study. This high density radiates to the clusters above, which include “Islam,” “Islamism,” “Egypt,” and “Tunisia.” This suggests that the study of Salafism is deeply intertwined with the broader context of Islamic politics and case studies in countries that have undergone significant political transformations since the Arab Spring. Thus, the highest frequency of author contributions focuses not only on Salafism itself, but also on its role within the regional Islamic political movement. In addition, “Saudi Arabia” and “Wahhabism” are in a directly connected area of high density, validating that ideological and geographical references to the sources of the movement remain the most frequently associated foundations for authors.

On the other hand, areas with medium and low density (green to blue) identify themes that support or are separate from the central core. Clusters focusing on security and extremism, including “jihad,” “jihadism,” “terrorism,” and specific entities such as ‘ISIS’ and “Islamic State,” show significant density but lower than the political/Islamism cluster in the center. This disparity in density suggests that although the threat of extremism is a strong theme, the collaborative focus of the authors tends to be more dominant in comparative political analysis than in pure studies of terrorism. Meanwhile, nodes such as “transnationalism,” “Sufism,” and “Salafi Islam” are on the periphery with low density, indicating that studies of an ideological comparative nature, global networks, or regional case studies (such as “Indonesia”

which is separated at the bottom) although important, have not achieved as high a frequency of co-occurrence as the main political topics. This reveals a discourse structure in which core politics and ideology lead, followed by security studies, and supported by more specific sociological and regional analyses.

The keyword index network map presents a highly focused and fragmented thematic structure, dominated by two main clusters. The Red Cluster shows intense interconnections between issues related to politics and nation-states, where the nodes “Egypt,” “Tunisia,” “social movement,” “political ideology,” and “party politics” are closely related. The strength of the links in this cluster shows that, from a formal indexing perspective, studies of Salafism are more often classified based on regional relevance and political dynamics, reflecting the literature's high level of attention to the role of Salafism as an actor in the political system, especially in the context of countries undergoing political transformation. This red cluster highlights the core of research that focuses explicitly on the activism and political ideology dimensions of this movement.

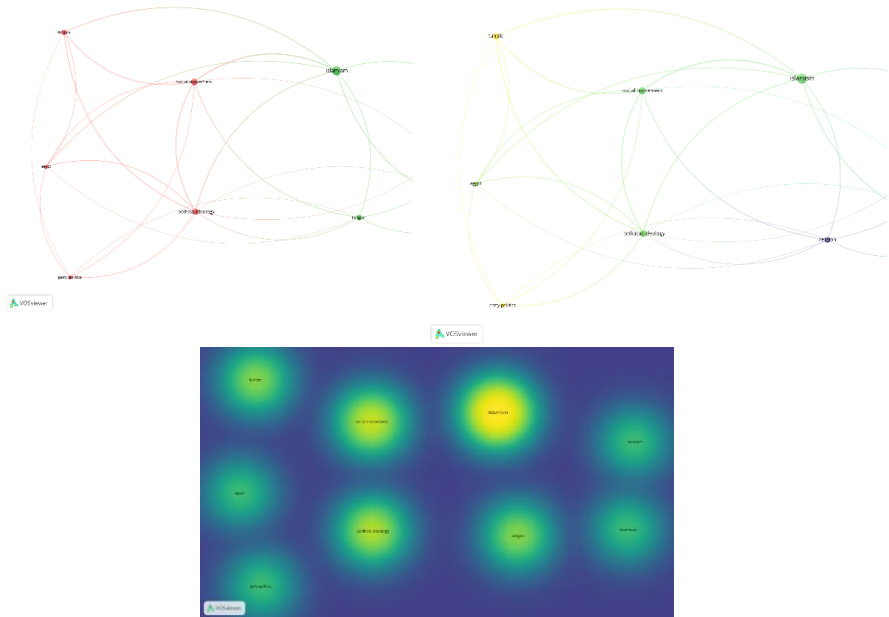


Figure 3. Map of *index keywords* VOSviewer

In contrast, the Green Cluster exhibits more dispersed connections and serves as a bridge, linking core political themes with more ideological and security issues. The node “Islamism” is the central point of the green cluster and has strong links to the “social movement” (red cluster), confirming the role of Islamism as a concept that links politics and social movements. The green cluster also connects “religion” and ‘terrorism’ with “Islamism,” showing that the index classification links three main dimensions of discourse—politics (Islamism), ideology (religion), and security (terrorism)—in a single thematic chain. The presence of “Indonesia” as a node in the green cluster, which is directly connected to ‘terrorism’ and “Islamism,” places the Indonesian case study at the intersection of global security issues and regional Islamism phenomena in the index classification.

Meanwhile, the temporal overlay map, which represents the average year of publication from 2012 (dark blue) to 2018 (bright yellow), shows a clear evolution from an ideological focus to a political and regional focus. The early period of research, represented by dark blue and purple, was dominated by the themes of “religion” and “terrorism.” This indicates that in the early period (around 2012-2015), the primary focus of the index classification was on studies that directly linked Islam as a religion to the issue of terrorism, placing these two themes as the starting point of the fundamental discourse. The “Indonesia” node also shows a blue-purple color, implying that case studies of Indonesia emerged as a relatively early focus of research.

The shift to light green and bright yellow (around 2016-2018) indicates that the research frontier has shifted strongly towards regional political issues and social movements. Almost all of the red clusters covering “Tunisia,” “Egypt,” “party politics,” and “social movement” are bright yellow. This shift indicates a surge in publications focusing on the outcomes and implications of the Arab Spring, in which Salafism and Islamism are positioned as key variables in the analysis of nation-state politics. The dominance of yellow in these political clusters confirms that in the final years of the mapping period, the regional political dimension became the most frequently

indexed theme, dominating academic attention over the earlier issues of religion or terrorism.

The final analysis reveals that the density map highlights the main clusters in the index classification, characterized by a high level of intensity, yet with a clear separation between topics, resulting in several distinct focal points. The highest density point (bright yellow) is located at the “Islamism” node. This definitely confirms that, from a database indexing perspective, Islamism is the most frequently used thematic category for classifying studies related to Salafism and is the most dominant hypernym or concept. The high density around “Islamism” radiates out to “social movement” and “religion,” forming a central axis in the upper center of the map.

Additionally, there are several strong secondary density points (medium yellow to light green), underscoring thematic segmentation. The cluster centered on “terrorism” shows high density and is separated on the right side, reflecting the substantial volume of literature classified purely based on security focus. The “social movement” cluster is also a prominent and separate focal point, emphasizing the importance of activism and grassroots dimensions. On the other hand, specific regional issues such as “Tunisia” and “Egypt” also form their own areas of density, although lower than “Islamism.” This fragmented density structure indicates that research on Salafism is grouped into distinct categories—Islamism (highest), Terrorism, Social Movements, and Regional Cases—showing that no single secondary theme completely dominates or absorbs the others.



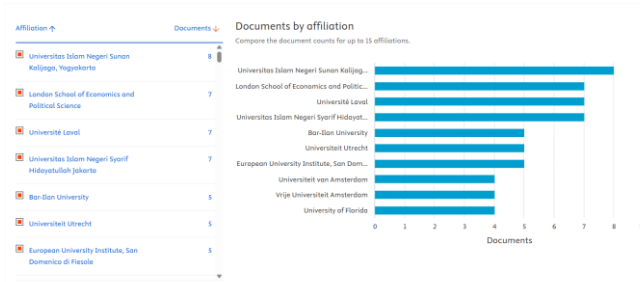


Figure 4. Map of authors, university affiliations, and country affiliations<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, analysis of geographical distribution and institutional affiliation reveals an interesting phenomenon regarding the decentralization of Salafist knowledge production. The data shows that the epistemic dominance of the “Global North” is beginning to erode; although the United States still leads with 50 documents, Indonesia has emerged as the closest competitor with 46 papers, surpassing the United Kingdom (31 papers) and Germany (17 papers). This shift is further emphasized by affiliation data, where Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University (UIN) ranks first (8 papers), surpassing Western elite institutions such as the London School of Economics (7 papers) and Universit  Laval (7 papers), followed by UIN Syarif Hidayatullah (7 papers).

These statistics indicate that the study of Salafism is no longer the monopoly of outside observers viewing it from the “ivory tower” of the West, but has undergone an adaptation in which scholars from Muslim-majority countries—particularly Indonesia—have become the leading producers of discourse that reframes Salafism from a sociological-contextual perspective, rather than simply through the lens of terrorism.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.scopus.com/term/analyzer.uri?sort=plf-f&src=s&sid=5c75a0a2a44a5a4acce35e1cd36483d6&sot=a&sdt=a&cluster=scolang%2c%22English%22%2c%2bbscosubtype%2c%22ar%22%2c%2bbscosubjabbr%2c%22SOCI%22%2c%2c%22ARTS%22%2c&sl=53&s=%28TITLE%28Salafism%29+OR+TITLE%28Salafi%29%29+AND+PUBYEAR+%3e+1999&origin=resultslst&count=10&analyzeResults=Analyze+results>

At the individual level, author statistics show a pattern of evenly distributed and polycentric authority, where no single author dominates the discourse to an extreme degree. The top productivity positions are shared by four scholars, each of whom has produced six documents: Francesco Cavatorta, Adis Duderija, Zoltan Pall, and Joas Wagemakers. The next tier is filled by Eli Alshech and Fabio Merone, each with five documents. This data also records the contribution of Indonesian scholar Noorhaidi Hasan, who is among the most productive authors with four papers, on par with Susanne Olsson. This quantitative data structure suggests that the current academic discourse on Salafism is shaped by a broad network of scholars, with relatively balanced contributions among the leading actors.

### **The Dynamics of Contemporary Salafism: Rereading Radicalism, Fragmentation of Authority, and the Post-Salafism Era**

Academic discourse on Salafism underwent a radical epistemological shift in the wake of 9/11. Whereas in the previous decade Salafism might have been understood as a marginal phenomenon of religious purification, the period from 2000 to 2010 marked a “securitization of theology,” in which the literature shifted dramatically to dissect the anatomy of violence and the genealogy of terror. In this phase, scholars no longer simply asked “what is Salafism,” but rather “how did puritan theology transform into a deadly global ideology.”

The primary focus in the decade from 2000 to 2010 was the urgent effort to formulate a framework that could explain the metamorphosis of Al-Qaeda. John Turner asserted that after the invasion of Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda could no longer be viewed merely as a terrorist organization, but rather as a “supranational caliphate” ideology that united separate groups. However, attempts to understand this ideology sparked fierce debates over taxonomy.<sup>15</sup> Roel Meijer, through his analysis of Yusuf al-Uyairi, identified the birth of

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<sup>15</sup> J. Turner, “From Cottage Industry to International Organisation: The Evolution of Salafi-Jihadism and the Emergence of the Al Qaeda Ideology,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, no. 4 (2010): 541–58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2010.485534>.

“revolutionary Salafi praxis,” in which a mujahid is considered to have a superior understanding of reality compared to established scholars.<sup>16</sup> This analysis is further explored by Joas Wagemakers, who challenges the rigid categorization between “purists” and “jihadists.” Through his study of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Wagemakers proposes the hybrid concept of “Purist Jihadi-Salafi,” showing that the authority of violence is actually built on strict adherence to puritanical creeds.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, internal mechanisms that justify violence have come under intense scrutiny. Mohammed M. Hafez exposes the “martyrdom” among Salafi Jihadi groups that target fellow Muslims. He shows how the theological prohibition against killing fellow Muslims is circumvented through the redefinition of piety and the labeling of those outside the group’s protective umbrella as “apostates.”<sup>18</sup> Simon R. Cottee calls this process “mind slaughter,” a strategy of moral neutralization that allows combatants to free themselves from conventional humanitarian constraints.<sup>19</sup>

Assaf Moghadam adds that Al-Qaeda’s evolution into a global actor and the appeal of Salafi Jihadi ideology are key factors behind the “globalization of martyrdom” and the spread of suicide attacks.<sup>20</sup> However, Christina Hellmich offers a critical warning that the terrorism studies community’s obsession with explaining Al-Qaeda

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<sup>16</sup> R. Meijer, “Yūsuf Al-‘Uyairī and the Making of a Revolutionary Salafi Praxis,” *Die Welt Des Islams* 47, no. 3 (2007): 422–59, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006007783237419>.

<sup>17</sup> J. Wagemakers, “A Purist Jihadi-Salafi: The Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 2 (2009): 281–97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530190903007327>.

<sup>18</sup> M.M. Hafez, “The Alchemy of Martyrdom: Jihadi Salafism and Debates over Suicide Bombings in the Muslim World,” *Asian Journal of Social Science* 38, no. 3 (2010): 364–78, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156853110X499927>.

<sup>19</sup> S. Cottee, “Mind Slaughter: The Neutralizations of Jihadi Salafism,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 33, no. 4 (2010): 330–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576101003587176>.

<sup>20</sup> A. Moghadam, “Motives for Martyrdom: Al-Qaida, Salafi Jihad, and the Spread of Suicide Attacks,” *International Security* 33, no. 3 (2008): 46–78, <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.2009.33.3.46>.

often gets caught up in simplistic “outside-in” perspectives, which actually obscure the true complexity of Islamic thought.<sup>21</sup>

While theoretical debates continue, empirical research in this decade highlights the tension between Salafism's global ambitions and local realities. Noorhaidi Hasan offers crucial insights from Indonesia, highlighting the paradox of the “Wahhabization” campaign.<sup>22</sup> Although Salafi madrasas have successfully provided alternative educational access for the rural poor, their efforts to recruit the abangan and change local practices have been met with skepticism and cultural failure. Similar tensions are recorded in Cerwyn Moore and Paul Tumelty's study of Chechnya, where a movement that began as post-Soviet nationalism turned into a regional conflict due to the infiltration of foreign jihadists promoting Salafism.<sup>23</sup>

In the Western world, Robert Lambert presents a different perspective through a case study in London. He challenges the singular narrative about the Salafi threat by showing that the Salafi community has actually played an active and courageous role in countering Al-Qaeda propaganda, even though they continue to be stigmatized by state counter-terrorism policies.<sup>24</sup> Marc Lynch expands this political map by highlighting the global rivalry between the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi-jihadists. Lynch poses a provocative question: Does the Brotherhood's non-violent political activism serve as a

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<sup>21</sup> C. Hellmich, “Creating the Ideology of Al Qaeda: From Hypocrites to Salafi-Jihadists,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31, no. 2 (2008): 111–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100701812852>.

<sup>22</sup> N. Hasan, “The Failure of the Wahhabi Campaign Transnational Islam and the Salafi Madrasa in Post-9/11 Indonesia,” *South East Asia Research* 18, no. 4 (2010): 675–705, <https://doi.org/10.5367/sear.2010.0015>.

<sup>23</sup> C. Moore and P. Tumelty, “Assessing Unholy Alliances in Chechnya: From Communism and Nationalism to Islamism and Salafism,” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 25, no. 1 (2009): 73–94, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523270802655621>.

<sup>24</sup> R. Lambert, “Salafi and Islamist Londoners: Stigmatised Minority Faith Communities Countering al-Qaida,” *Crime, Law and Social Change* 50, nos. 1–2 (2008): 73–89, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10611-008-9122-8>.

“firewall” that prevents radicalization, or is it actually a “stepping stone” toward extremism?<sup>25</sup>

The end of the decade also marked a shift in research, moving beyond global security issues to focus on the construction of identity and intellectual history. Amal N. Ghazal and Basheer M. Nafi conducted crucial historical research. Ghazal traced the Arab-Salafi press network during the interwar period that united Sunnis and Ibadis in the discourse of nationalism,<sup>26</sup> while Nafi highlighted the role of Nu'man al-Alusi and the printing press in the revival of Ibn Taymiyya's legacy in the 19th century.<sup>27</sup> Both studies remind us that Salafism has modernist and intellectual roots that are far more complex than its current image of extremism.

Finally, gender dimensions and self-construction began to gain ground in the discourse. Adis Duderija analyzed how “Neo-Traditional Salafism” (NTS) constructed the image of the “normative Muslim woman” and the theological boundaries between ‘Self’ and “Other” through a rigid hermeneutic method of interpreting the Qur'an and Sunnah.<sup>28</sup> This suggests that, behind the geopolitical clamor, Salafism also functions as a project of disciplining the body and identity that is highly personal. Overall, the decade from 2000 to 2010 was a period in which Salafism was redefined from a mere purification movement to a significant variable in the global security equation, yet still left room for debate regarding locality, history, and identity.

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<sup>25</sup> M. Lynch, “Islam Divided between Salafi-Jihad and the Ikhwan,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 33, no. 6 (2010): 467–87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576101003752622>.

<sup>26</sup> A.N. Ghazal, “The Other Frontiers of Arab Nationalism: Ibadis, Berbers, and the Arabist-Salafi Press in the Interwar Period,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42, no. 1 (2010): 105–22, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743809990559>.

<sup>27</sup> B.M. Nafi, “Salafism Revived: Nu'mān al-Alūsī and the Trial of Two Ahmads,” *Die Welt Des Islams* 49, no. 1 (2009): 49–97, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006008X424959>.

<sup>28</sup> A. Duderija, “Neo-Traditional Salafi Qur'an-Sunnah Hermeneutic and the Construction of a Normative Muslimah Image,” *Hawwa* 5, nos. 2–3 (2007): 289–323, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156920807782912526>; A. Duderija, “Constructing the Religious Self and the Other: Neo-Traditional Salafi Manhaj,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 21, no. 1 (2010): 75–93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410903481879>.

Entering the decade of 2010–2020 marks a period of profound epistemic disruption in the study of Salafism, in which academic discourse has shifted significantly from a post-9/11 focus on security to a complex sociological analysis of the fragmentation of authority. While the previous decade was dominated by attempts to define Salafism as a static theological entity, the literature of this period records how Salafism mutated into an actor grappling with the upheavals of the Arab Spring, the territorial brutality of ISIS, and the digital revolution. Research during this period collectively debunked the myth of Salafism's unity, exposing internal tensions between theological puritanism and political pragmatism, as well as fluid identity negotiations in urban and digital spaces.

A striking shift that marked the beginning of this decade was the collapse of the theoretical barrier between “purist” (quietist) and “political” Salafism due to the opening up of political opportunities in the wake of the Arab Spring. Francesco Cavatorta and Valeria Resta note the phenomenon in Tunisia and Egypt, where Salafi parties, which historically rejected democracy, were forced to adapt to electoral logic.<sup>29</sup> However, in his research, Cavatorta explains that the seeds of adaptation above gave rise to the paradox of “stop-start democratic learning,” in which the liberal environment was exploited to consolidate an anti-liberal agenda, while, on the other hand, these parties stumbled in formulating coherent economic policies.<sup>30</sup>

Emmanuel Karagiannis (2019) analyzes this maneuver as the adoption of a strategic “democracy master frame” for political survival, rather than a sincere ideological transformation.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Khalil Al-Anani and Maszlee Malik refer to this phenomenon as the “pious way

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<sup>29</sup> F. Cavatorta, “Beyond Quietism: Party Institutionalisation, Salafism, and the Economy,” in *Politics and Religion*, 4, no. 4, 2020, 13:796–817, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755048320000292>.

<sup>30</sup> F. Cavatorta, *Salafism, Liberalism, and Democratic Learning in Tunisia*, 20, no. 5 (2015): 770–83, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2015.1081464>.

<sup>31</sup> E. Karagiannis, “The Rise of Electoral Salafism in Egypt and Tunisia: The Use of Democracy as a Master Frame,” *Journal of North African Studies* 24, no. 2 (2019): 207–25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2017.1417124>.

to politics,<sup>32</sup> a discursive pragmatism that emerged as a result of post-revolutionary pressures on political competition. However, this political experiment is not without risk; Sebastian Elischer, in his case study in Kenya, shows that the involvement of Salafi associations in partisan politics actually triggers radicalization among youth when their elites are co-opted by state patronage politics and lose moral legitimacy.<sup>33</sup>

While the political wing grapples with the ballot box, the militant wing has undergone a terrifying metamorphosis through the rise of ISIS, forcing scholars to revise their understanding of jihadism from a cellular structure to a territorial entity. Joas Wagemakers identifies a sharp factional split in Jordan between the combat-oriented “Zarqawiyyun” and the “Maqdisiyyun” who are loyal to the authority of the ulema, proving that the Syrian conflict has actually deepened the internal fragmentation of the movement.<sup>34</sup>

At the ideological level, Shiraz Maher and Alexandra Bissoondath provide an in-depth analysis of how the doctrine of al-Qadā’ wa-l-Qadr (divine destiny) is reengineered in Salafi-Jihadi literature to rationalize military defeat as a test from God,<sup>35</sup> a psychological mechanism to maintain the morale of fighters. Tactical evolution is also highlighted, with Kim Cragin and Phillip Padilla tracing the shift of kidnapping from mere murder to a strategic propaganda tool,<sup>36</sup> while Jacob Zenn et al. demonstrate Boko Haram's

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<sup>32</sup> K. Al-Anani and M. Malik, *Pious Way to Politics: The Rise of Political Salafism in Post-Mubarak Egypt*, 22, no. 1 (2013): 57–73, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1111/dome.12012>.

<sup>33</sup> S. Elischer, “‘Partisan Politics Was Making People Angry’: The Rise and Fall of Political Salafism in Kenya,” in *Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, 2, no. 2, 2019, 10:121–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21520844.2019.1580088>.

<sup>34</sup> J. Wagemakers, “Jihadi-Salafism in Jordan and the Syrian Conflict: Divisions Overcome Unity,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 41, no. 3 (2018): 191–212, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2017.1283197>.

<sup>35</sup> S. Maher and A. Bissoondath, *Al-Qadā’ Wa-I-Qadr: Motivational Representations of Divine Degree and Predestination in Salafi-Jihadi Literature*, 46, no. 1 (2019): 14–28, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2017.1361317>.

<sup>36</sup> R.K. Cragin and P. Padilla, “Old Becomes New Again: Kidnappings by Daesh and Other Salafi-Jihadists in the Twenty-First Century,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 40, no. 8 (2017): 665–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2016.1237217>.

hybridity, which blends local Nigerian grievances with the global jihadist narrative.<sup>37</sup> Alexander Thurston reinforces this historical argument by pointing to the GIA in Algeria as a precedent for groups that subjugate jihadist strategy to rigid theological puritanism.<sup>38</sup>

Amidst political turmoil and violence, this decade also saw the rise of an “authority war” in the intellectual realm, where Salafi claims to authenticity faced serious challenges from other Islamic traditions. Farah El-Sharif documents the rise of “anti-Salafist rhetoric” through Neo-Traditionalist figures such as Sheikh al-Buti, who aggressively challenged the legitimacy of Salafism as a deviation from Sunni orthodoxy.<sup>39</sup> Philipp Bruckmayr adds that Salafi attacks on Maturidiyyah theology actually triggered a counter-consolidation and a resurgence of madhhab consciousness among Hanafi scholars.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, sharp criticism emerged from within the epistemological structure of Salafism itself. Massoud Vahedi offers an immanent critique of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Albānī's hadith methodology, exposing logical inconsistencies and a reliance on secondary sources that undermine the claim of “returning to the pure Qur'an and Sunnah.”<sup>41</sup> Emad Hamdeh reinforces this by referring to Albani's anti-school of thought claims as a rhetorical strategy to discredit

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<sup>37</sup> J. Zenn, A. Barkindo, and N.A. Heras, “The Ideological Evolution of Boko Haram in Nigeria: Merging Local Salafism and International Jihadism,” *RUSI Journal* 158, no. 4 (2013): 46–53, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2013.826506>.

<sup>38</sup> A. Thurston, “Algeria's GIA: The First Major Armed Group to Fully Subordinate Jihadism to Salafism,” *Islamic Law and Society* 24, no. 4 (2017): 412–36, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685195-00244p05>.

<sup>39</sup> F. El-Sharif, “The Rhetoric of Twentieth-Century Damascene Anti-Salafism,” in *Contemporary Levant*, 2, no. 2, 2020, 5:113–25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20581831.2020.1767400>.

<sup>40</sup> P. Bruckmayr, “Salafi Challenge and Maturidi Response: Contemporary Disputes over the Legitimacy of Maturidi Kalam,” in *Welt Des Islams*, 2, no. 2, 2020, 60:293–324, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700607-06023P06>.

<sup>41</sup> M. Vahedi, “A Critique of Salafi Contributions to the Science of Ḥadīth,” *Islamic Studies* 59, no. 2 (2020): 145–70.

established legal traditions.<sup>42</sup> However, on the other hand, Mukhlis Rahmanto and Adis Duderija point to pragmatic flexibility among moderate Salafis in responding to Islamic economics and the Western context, indicating that rigid theology does not always correspond to rigid social practices.<sup>43</sup>

This dynamic becomes even more complex when Salafism interacts with local contexts in Southeast Asia and Africa, producing unique hybrid variants. Jajang Jahroni provides an institutional analysis of the role of LIPIA and Saudi philanthropy in Indonesia,<sup>44</sup> which serves as funding and instruments for institutionalizing ideology. At the sociological level, Chris Chaplin (2018, 2020) examines the phenomenon of urban Salafism in Yogyakarta, where campus activists synthesize Islamic values with modern middle-class identities, utilizing the language of “professionalism” to appeal to the educated class.<sup>45</sup> Cultural resistance is also powerfully documented, as analyzed by Mark Woodward through literature that critiques Arabization, as well as Abdoulaye Sounaye's study of the aesthetics of da'wah in

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<sup>42</sup> E. Hamdeh, *Qurān and Sunna or the Madhhabs?: A Salafī Polemic Against Islamic Legal Tradition*, 24, no. 3 (2017): 211–53, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685195-00240A01>.

<sup>43</sup> M. Rahmanto, “Rowing in the Flow of Khalaf; Indonesian Salafism Response towards Contemporary Islamic Economics,” *Humanities and Social Sciences Reviews* 7, no. 4 (2019): 968–72, <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2019.74132>; A. Duderija and G. Rasool, “Bilal Philips as a Proponent of Neo-Traditional Salafism and His Significance for Understanding Salafism in the West,” *Religions* 10, no. 6 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10060371>.

<sup>44</sup> J. Jahroni, “The Narratives of Islamic School Students: Contesting Salafism in a Saudi-Wahabi Educational Institutions in Contemporary Jakarta,” *Ulumuna* 24, no. 1 (2020): 77–104, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v24i1.386>.

<sup>45</sup> C. Chaplin, “Communal Salafī Learning and Islamic Selfhood: Examining Religious Boundaries through Ethnographic Encounters in Indonesia,” *Ethnography* 21, no. 1 (2020): 113–32, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138118795988>; C. Chaplin, “Salafī Islamic Piety as Civic Activism: Wahdah Islamiyah and Differentiated Citizenship in Indonesia,” *Citizenship Studies* 22, no. 2 (2018): 208–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2018.1445488>; C. Chaplin, “Salafī Activism and the Promotion of a Modern Muslim Identity: Evolving Mediums of Da'wa amongst Yogyakarta University Students,” *South East Asia Research* 26, no. 1 (2018): 3–20, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967828X17752414>.

Nigeria, which employs humor and theatricality to challenge common perceptions of Salafi rigidity.<sup>46</sup>

The most significant breakthrough in this decade was the emergence of studies that positioned women and digital media as active subjects with agency. Kristin M. Peterson introduced the concept of “Salafi Feminist” through her analysis of female bloggers who used hybrid aesthetics in online spaces to deconstruct narratives of oppression.<sup>47</sup> Yuyun Sunesti et al. reinforce this finding by highlighting how young *niqabi* women use social media to negotiate identity in the public sphere.<sup>48</sup> Richard A. Nielsen identifies the phenomenon of “patriarchal pragmatism,” in which the Salafi movement is forced to give authority to female preachers on Twitter to reach a wider audience.<sup>49</sup> This shift of authority to the digital realm, according to Samira Tabti, gives rise to “text charisma,” where authority no longer rests solely on the physical figure of the sheikh, but on the ability to quote digital texts that are considered authentic.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, research on the diaspora in the West reveals a surprising identity paradox. Emil Aslan Souleimanov and Jasper Schwampe found that among Chechen Salafis in Europe, the rhetoric of universal Islamic brotherhood is often overshadowed by ethno-nationalist sentiments and racism towards Middle Eastern Muslims.<sup>51</sup> Susanne Olsson adds

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<sup>46</sup> A. Sounaye, *Salafi Aesthetics: Preaching among the Sunnace in Niamey, Niger*, 47, no. 1 (2017): 9–41, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700666-12340101>.

<sup>47</sup> K.M. Peterson, “Hybrid Styles, Interstitial Spaces, and the Digital Advocacy of the Salafi Feminist,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, Routledge, 2020, 254–66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2020.1786142>.

<sup>48</sup> Y. Sunesti, N. Hasan, and M.N. Azca, “Young Salafi-Niqabi and Hijrah: Agency and Identity Negotiation,” *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 8, no. 2 (2018): 173–98, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v8i2.173-197>.

<sup>49</sup> R.A. Nielsen, “Women’s Authority in Patriarchal Social Movements: The Case of Female Salafi Preachers,” *American Journal of Political Science* 64, no. 1 (2020): 52–66, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12459>.

<sup>50</sup> S. Tabti, “The Charisma of Script: The Quran and the Hadith in Neo-Salafi Online Community,” in *Journal of Religion in Europe*, 2, no. 2, 2020, 12:191–216, <https://doi.org/10.1163/18748929-01202005>.

<sup>51</sup> E.A. Souleimanov and J. Schwampe, “Devout Muslims or Tough Highlanders? Exploring Attitudes toward Ethnic Nationalism and Racism in Europe’s Ethnic-

that the formation of Salafi identity in Sweden is heavily dependent on aggressive processes of “othering,” including the designation of Shiites as “Internal Others.”<sup>52</sup> Overall, the 2010–2020 literature corpus confirms that Salafism has lost its singularity; it has evolved into a discursive battleground where democracy, violence, gender, and local traditions intersect, compelling scholars to continually refine their analytical frameworks beyond traditional binaries.

Entering the discourse on the 2021–2025 period, there appears to be a shift towards what many scholars refer to as the “Post-Salafism” era. This is a period in which Salafism is being domesticated (tamed) by the state, hybridized with local culture, and radically redefined in the digital space, sparking heated debates about the relevance of old categories in Islamic studies.

In 2021, research focused on how Salafism survived after the wave of post-revolutionary state securitization. In Tunisia, Fabio Merone, Théo Blanc, and Ester Sigillo noted an interesting phenomenon they called “Salafi-Malikism.” Pressured by a state promoting moderate Islam, Salafi groups began to soften their rejection of madhhab (*la maddhabiyya*) and adopted local Maliki fiqh as a protective shield.<sup>53</sup> A similar adaptation is recorded in a study by Djallil Lounnas, which analyzes the shift in the jihadist paradigm from the “Peshawar” model (Al-Qaeda) to the “Raqqqa” model (ISIS), and how the defeat of ISIS forced the remnants of this movement to redefine their survival strategy.<sup>54</sup>

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Chechen Salafi Communities,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43, no. 15 (2017): 2616–33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1287560>.

<sup>52</sup> S. Olsson, “Shia as Internal Others: A Salafi Rejection of the ‘Rejecters,’” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 28, no. 4 (2017): 409–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2017.1318545>.

<sup>53</sup> F. Merone, T. Blanc, and E. Sigillo, *The Evolution of Tunisian Salafism after the Revolution: From La Maddhabiyya to Salafi-Malikism*, 53, no. 3 (2021): 455–70, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743821000143>.

<sup>54</sup> D. Lounnas, “The Shifts in the Jihadi-Salafi Paradigms: From the Peshawar and Jalalabad Paradigms to Those of Idleb and Raqqqa,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 33, no. 3 (2021): 441–65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2018.1544557>.

In the digital and social sphere, this year also marked a focus on new mechanisms for transmitting ideology. Simon Sorgenfrei highlighted how Salafi missionaries in Sweden have transformed themselves into social media influencers, using modern branding techniques to market their preaching.<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile, in Indonesia, Sunarwoto shows that Salafi rivalry in the online space is no longer just a matter of theological purification, but also a competition to prove “good citizenship” in a democratic atmosphere, a hybridity between piety and nationalism that is beginning to strengthen.<sup>56</sup>

In 2022, academic discourse became increasingly bold in challenging the established definition of Salafism itself. Besnik Sinani explicitly used the term “Post-Salafism” to describe the ongoing religious revisionism in Saudi Arabia, where the state is actively dismantling the old Wahhabi orthodoxy.<sup>57</sup> A historical challenge also comes from Stéphane Lacroix, who revises the narrative of the rise of Islam in Egypt in the 1970s, showing that Salafism has deeper local roots than simply being imported from Saudi Arabia.<sup>58</sup>

Sociologically, research this year has begun to examine particular and localized variants of Salafism. Ajmal Hussain introduced the concept of “Street Salafism” in the UK, where piety is negotiated on the sidewalks of multicultural cities, far from the authority of formal mosques.<sup>59</sup> In Indonesia, Andri Rosadi links conversion to Salafism

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<sup>55</sup> S. Sorgenfrei, “Branding Salafism: Salafi Missionaries as Social Media Influencers,” in *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 3, no. 3, 2021, 34:211–37, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700682-12341515>.

<sup>56</sup> Sunarwoto, “Online Salafi Rivalries in Indonesia: Between Sectarianism and ‘Good’ Citizenship,” in *Religion, State and Society*, 2, no. 2, 2021, 49:157–73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2021.1924014>.

<sup>57</sup> B. Sinani, “Post-Salafism: Religious Revisionism in Contemporary Saudi Arabia,” in *Religions*, 4, vol. 13, no. 4, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040340>.

<sup>58</sup> S. Lacroix, “Egypt’s Salafi Awakening in the 1970s: Revisiting the History of a Crucial Decade for Egyptian Islamic Activism,” in *Religions*, 4, vol. 13, no. 4, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040316>.

<sup>59</sup> A. Hussain, “Street Salafism: Contingency and Urbanity as Religious Creed,” in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 3, no. 3, 2022, 40:469–85, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02637758211069989>.

with feelings of existential deprivation among Muslims,<sup>60</sup> while Achmad Zainal Arifin et al. highlight the response of modernist women's organizations such as 'Aisyiyah, which counter Salafi narratives through "literacy jihad,"<sup>61</sup> signaling that ideological contestation is intensifying at the civil society level.

Meanwhile, 2023 was a critical moment for established theories. A wave of studies collectively reviewed the relevance of Quintan Wiktorowicz's classic typology (purists, politicians, jihadists), which had dominated for two decades. Samir Amghar, Francesco Cavatorta, and Massimo Ramaioli argued that these categories were outdated.<sup>62</sup> Ramaioli offers a "Gramscian vanguardism" approach to understanding Salafism as a fluid political movement,<sup>63</sup> meanwhile, Zoltan Pall shows through the case of Cambodia that local realities often "overwrite" grand typologies; local dynamics more often trigger Salafi schisms than by global doctrines.<sup>64</sup>

In Indonesia, Fachri Aidulsyah documents the phenomenon of "Urban Salafism," which blends pop culture and social media, creating a hybrid lifestyle for the new middle class.<sup>65</sup> This adaptation is also evident in Muhammad Nasir's study, which compares Muhammadiyah in Indonesia with the Izala movement in Nigeria, finding that both—

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<sup>60</sup> A. Rosadi, "Deprived Muslims and Salafism: An Ethnographic Study of the Salafi Movement in Pekanbaru, Indonesia †," *Religions* 13, no. 10 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13100911>.

<sup>61</sup> A.Z. Arifin, A. Sofia, and I. Hidayah, "Revisiting Literacy Jihad Programs of 'Aisyiyah in Countering the Challenges of Salafism," *Religions* 13, no. 12 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13121174>.

<sup>62</sup> S. Amghar and F. Cavatorta, "Salafism in the Contemporary Age: Wiktorowicz Revisited," *Contemporary Islam* 17, no. 2 (2023): 195–204, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-023-00524-x>.

<sup>63</sup> M. Ramaioli, "Salafism as Gramscian Informed Vanguardism," *Contemporary Islam* 17, no. 2 (2023): 297–318, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-023-00514-z>.

<sup>64</sup> Z. Pall, "What Divides Salafis: How Local Realities Overwrite Grand Typologies in Cambodia's Salafi Movement," *Contemporary Islam* 17, no. 2 (2023): 263–81, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-022-00507-4>.

<sup>65</sup> F. Aidulsyah, "The Rise of Urban Salafism in Indonesia: The Social-Media and Pop Culture of New Indonesian Islamic Youth," in *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 4, no. 4, 2023, 51:252–59, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajss.2023.07.003>.

despite their different contexts—are “weaving modernity” into their puritanical frameworks.<sup>66</sup> Eli Alshech adds a digital dimension by analyzing how Salafi-Jihadis in the US use social media to create “enclave mindsets,” proving that technology can be used for social segregation rather than integration.

Entering 2024, the dominant themes are indigenization and increasingly mature hybridity. Théo Blanc and Guy Robert Eyre formulated the concept of “post-Salafism through learning” in Tunisia and Morocco.<sup>67</sup> They argue that interaction with democracy has given rise to a new current that remains Salafi but rejects Saudi Wahhabism, shifting toward more inclusive national references. Alexander Thurston reinforces this with findings from West Africa that Salafism has become “modular,” with its elements being selectively adopted by non-Salafis, blurring identity boundaries.<sup>68</sup>

The role of women also received intense scrutiny. Zaky Ismail et al. and Marhumah et al. broke the stereotype of passivity by showing that Salafi women in Indonesia actively seek equality, higher education, and negotiate the living hadith in public spaces.<sup>69</sup> They are not hidden objects, but agents who appear with hybrid identities. On the other hand, criticism of historical narratives also continues; Omer Faruk Topal revisits the role of the Alusi family in 19th-century

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<sup>66</sup> M.M. Nasir, “Weaving Modernity In Salafism: A Comparative Study of Muhammadiyah And Izala Movements,” *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 8, no. 3 (2023): 100–125, <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v8i3.619>.

<sup>67</sup> T. Blanc and G.R. Eyre, “Post-Salafism by Learning: The Indigenization of Globalized, Exclusivist Salafism in Tunisia and Morocco,” *Mediterranean Politics*, ahead of print, Routledge, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2024.2410120>.

<sup>68</sup> A. Thurston, “Salafism and Dialectics of Muslim Identity in Nigeria and the Sahel,” *Mediterranean Politics*, ahead of print, Routledge, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2024.2410117>.

<sup>69</sup> Z. Ismail et al., “Seeking A Space Of Equality: The Shifting Role of Salafi Women in Contemporary Indonesia,” *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam* 14, no. 1 (2024): 211–29, <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2024.14.1.211-229>; Marhumah, Iffah Khoiriyatul Muyassaroh, and Rosalia Sciortino, “Negotiating Living Hadith in Public Spaces: The Case of Salafi Muslimah Religious Study Groups in Yogyakarta,” *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu al-Qur’an Dan Hadis* 26, no. 1 (2025): 131–58, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v26i1.5715>.

Baghdad to show that Salafism has strong intellectual roots in the Ottoman imperial structure, challenging the view that always associates it with anti-statism.<sup>70</sup>

Next, 2025 will be at the forefront of current research, opening up discussions in more advanced areas, including technology and psychology. Miron Lakomy and Ali Fisher (2026/2025)<sup>71</sup>, Daniel Cohen et al. highlight the crucial role of search engines and artificial intelligence (AI).<sup>72</sup> The war against Salafi-Jihadism has shifted to algorithms; how terrorist content is found or hidden by machines is key to mitigation. Eli Alshech et al. even used machine learning to identify “quietist” Salafi communities on Twitter, demonstrating how transparent ideological boundaries are in the eyes of algorithms.<sup>73</sup>

Psychologically, the study by Yusef Karimi et al. offers provocative findings about the psychological normality of Salafi-Jihadists. Rather than mental disorders, radicalization is driven by cognitive distortions and a very human need for identity.<sup>74</sup> At the sociological level, Iman Dawood examines the phenomenon of “leaving Salafism” through “pious feminist consciousness,” in which piety itself becomes a reason for women to abandon the oppressive

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<sup>70</sup> O.F. Topal, “The Ālūsī Family between Baghdad and Istanbul: Imperial Connections and the Development of Salafi Commitments,” *Die Welt Des Islams*, ahead of print, Brill Academic Publishers, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700607-20240033>.

<sup>71</sup> M. Lakomy and A. Fisher, “Making Terrorist Content Findable: Search Engines as a Key to Mitigating Salafi-Jihadi Persistent Presence on the Internet,” *Security Journal* 39, no. 1 (2026), <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41284-025-00518-9>.

<sup>72</sup> Cohen, Elalouf, and Citrinowicz, “Uncovering Salafi Jihadist Terror Activity through Advanced Technological Tools.”

<sup>73</sup> Alshech et al., “A Qualitative and Quantitative Method for Studying Religious Virtual Communities: The Case of the Salafi United Kingdom’s Community on Twitter (X).”

<sup>74</sup> Y. Karimi et al., “Psychological Normality or Abnormality: A Case Study on Salafi-Jihadists in the Middle-East,” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 69, nos. 6–7 (2025): 779–97, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X231176008>.

patriarchal structure of Salafism.<sup>75</sup> Finally, Jérôme Drevon and Patrick Haenni pose an existential question through the case of HTS in Syria: “Is this the end of Salafi-Jihadism?” HTS’s transformation into a local technocratic government signals the possible end of the era of utopian global jihadism in favor of a pragmatic model of government.<sup>76</sup>

Overall, the discourse trajectory from 2021 to 2025 shows a shift from a post-conflict survival strategy to a profound redefinition of identity. Salafism is not seen as a single theological identity, but rather as a phenomenon that is “going native,” renegotiated by women and young people, and increasingly tied to the logic of digital algorithms. The term “Post-Salafism” does not imply the disappearance of Salafism, but rather its rebirth in more fluid, hybrid forms that defy categorization by traditional definitions.

### **Post-Salafism Trajectory: Ideological Domestication in the Grip of the State and Algorithms**

A comprehensive examination of global academic discourse over the past quarter-century (2000–2025) yields a crucial epistemological conclusion regarding the evolution of Salafism. An entity that, at the beginning of the millennium, was understood as a puritanical, rigid, and monolithic movement has recently emerged with a different face in contemporary literature. While the first and second decades were marked by an obsession with security and the fragmentation of authority in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the current period (2021–2025) confirms the entry of Salafism into a phase of “forced domestication.” In this phase, the movement’s survival depends heavily on its ability to adapt under two significant pressures: the nation-state and the logic of digital algorithms.

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<sup>75</sup> I. Dawood, “Moving out of Salafism: Muslim Women and the Development of a Pious Feminist Consciousness,” *Gender and Society* 39, no. 2 (2025): 257–84, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08912432251317157>.

<sup>76</sup> J. Drevon and P. Haenni, “The End of Jihadi Salafism? The Religious Governance of HTS, the Post-Jihadi Rebel Ruler in Northern Syria,” *Mediterranean Politics*, ahead of print, Routledge, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2024.2410119>.

A critical evaluation of existing literature indicates that the classical categorization framework has reached its limits of relevance. The standard trichotomy analysis of Puris, Politis, and Jihadis, as noted by Quintan Wiktorowicz, is beginning to be abandoned because political realities are forcing Salafi actors to move fluidly across these typological boundaries to maintain their existence.<sup>77</sup> Zoltan Pall's findings in Cambodia further reinforce that local realities often "overwrite" global doctrines, so that local dynamics more often trigger factional divisions than by loyalty to the fatwas of Middle Eastern clerics.<sup>78</sup> This condition necessitates a reevaluation of Salafism as a fragmented phenomenon closely tied to the local context.

This trajectory, referred to by scholars as "Post-Salafism," is marked by a significant shift from anti-system attitudes toward pragmatic accommodation with the nation-state. Literature from the period 2021–2024 documents the phenomenon of 'indigenization' or 'going native' as an effective self-defense strategy. In Tunisia, Fabio Merone et al. identified the birth of "Salafi-Malikism," a maneuver in which Salafi groups took refuge behind the local school of law (Maliki) and accepted local traditions to avoid repression.<sup>79</sup> A similar adaptation can be seen in the concept of "post-Salafism through learning" developed by Théo Blanc and Guy Robert Eyre, in which intensive interaction with democracy has given rise to a new current that prioritizes inclusive national references over Saudi Wahhabism.<sup>80</sup> This phenomenon intersects with Sunarwoto's findings in Southeast Asia, which show that competition in the public sphere is now centered on proving "good citizenship,"<sup>81</sup> as well as Alexander

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<sup>77</sup> Amghar and Cavatorta, "Salafism in the Contemporary Age: Wiktorowicz Revisited"; Ramaioli, "Salafism as Gramscian Informed Vanguardism."

<sup>78</sup> Pall, "What Divides Salafis: How Local Realities Overwrite Grand Typologies in Cambodia's Salafi Movement."

<sup>79</sup> Merone, Blanc, and Sigillo', *The Evolution of Tunisian Salafism after the Revolution: From La Maddhabiyya to Salafi-Malikism*.

<sup>80</sup> Blanc and Eyre, "Post-Salafism by Learning: The Indigenization of Globalized, Exclusivist Salafism in Tunisia and Morocco."

<sup>81</sup> Sunarwoto, "Online Salafi Rivalries in Indonesia: Between Sectarianism and 'Good' Citizenship."

Thurston's observations in West Africa regarding the “modular” nature of Salafism, whose elements can be adopted selectively.<sup>82</sup> This body of evidence affirms the position of Salafism, which has been domesticated into a subculture within the corridors of national power.

This ideological transformation is closely tied to radical disruptions in the realm of technology. Traditional theological authority based on scholarly sanad is now shifting towards machine authority. Simon Sorgenfrei highlights the transformation of Salafi missionaries into influencers who adopt modern branding techniques to effectively spread their message.<sup>83</sup> Samira Tabti refers to this phenomenon as the birth of “text charisma,” in which religious validity is determined by the ability to quote digital texts that are considered authentic.<sup>84</sup> The contemporary Salafist ecosystem has become highly dependent on search engine infrastructure and artificial intelligence (AI).

Miron Lakomy and Ali Fisher assert that search engine protocols now act as “gatekeepers” of a new theology that determines the visibility of content.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, Eli Alshech proves that technology facilitates the formation of “closed communities” (enclave mindset) as well as ideological transparency that can be easily mapped by machine learning.<sup>86</sup> This reality places Salafism in the digital age as a commodity of data that is processed, curated, and disciplined by algorithmic logic.

As a final point, the synthesis of this body of literature proposes the end of the era of “Global Salafism” as a monolithic existential

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<sup>82</sup> Thurston, “Salafism and Dialectics of Muslim Identity in Nigeria and the Sahel.”

<sup>83</sup> Sorgenfrei, “Branding Salafism: Salafi Missionaries as Social Media Influencers.”

<sup>84</sup> Tabti, “The Charisma of Script: The Quran and the Hadith in Neo-Salafi Online Community.”

<sup>85</sup> Lakomy and Fisher, “Making Terrorist Content Findable: Search Engines as a Key to Mitigating Salafi-Jihadi Persistent Presence on the Internet.”

<sup>86</sup> Alshech et al., “A Qualitative and Quantitative Method for Studying Religious Virtual Communities: The Case of the Salafi United Kingdom’s Community on Twitter (X);” E. Alshech, “Salafi-Jihadis in the United States: Using Social Media to Forge a Secluded Community,” *Journal for Interdisciplinary Middle Eastern Studies* 9, no. 2 (2023): 93–121, <https://doi.org/10.26351/JIMES/9-2/2>.

threat. Besnik Sinani's term "Post-Salafism" is highly relevant to describe the current global situation. Today, Salafism exists as a hybrid variant that female agencies, state pressure, and algorithmic market mechanisms are renegotiating. Future studies will face the challenge of understanding how the remnants of this puritanical theology survive and transform into urban lifestyles and fluid digital identities.

### **Concluding Remarks**

This study has mapped the evolution of the epistemic landscape of global Salafism studies over the last quarter century (2000–2025) through the integration of bibliometric analysis and systematic literature review. Scopus quantitative data findings reveal a significant shift in academic gravity, from the dominance of dense security clusters in the early decades—centered on terrorism and jihadism—to more fluid sociological and technological clusters in the recent period, covering themes such as female agency, transnationalism, and social media. Visualization maps confirm that Salafism is no longer studied as a static theological entity or a mere security threat, but rather as a dynamic social variable in the global political ecosystem.

Qualitatively, this study identifies three phases of discursive transformation. The first period (2000–2010) was marked by a theological paradigm, in which the literature focused on dissecting the genealogy of violence and classical taxonomic debates. The second period (2010–2020) witnessed the disruption of authority due to the Arab Spring and internal fragmentation, which compelled Salafi actors to adopt political pragmatism and created space for gender agency and digital authority. The third period (2021–2025) confirms the emergence of the "Post-Salafism" era, a phase in which the pressures of nation-state regulation and algorithmic logic domesticate ideological purity.

Contemporary Salafism has morphed into a hybrid, domesticated phenomenon. The taxonomy that divides Salafism into categories (purist, political, jihadist) is insufficient to capture the reality of actors who fluidly cross these boundaries to remain relevant. Instead, recent literature suggests that Salafism operates through a mechanism of "indigenization," adopting local cultural references and

conforming to the discipline of digital infrastructure that determines their theological visibility. Thus, the future of Salafism studies necessitates an interdisciplinary approach that transcends the traditional security lens. Scholars need to focus on how remnants of puritan theology negotiate with modernity, shape new civic identities, and interact with artificial intelligence. Global Salafism, as a monolith, has given way to local variants that continue to evolve amid the pressures of state power and the technology market.

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