TRANSNATIONAL ISLAM AND MUSLIM POLITICS

POLICIES, IDENTITIES, AND IDEOLOGIES

Editors
Ahmet Köroğlu
Baptiste Brodard

İSTANBUL UNIVERSITY PRESS

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INTRODUCTION

This book titled *Transnational Islam and Muslim Politics: Policies, Identities, and Ideologies* combines the important contributions of various researchers who've presented their intellectual endeavor on transnational Islam. As a result, this book represents a bold transversal reflection on recent evolutions in transnational Islam by delving into its various dimensions in the realms of politics, identity, and ideology. This book seeks to explore the complexities and dynamics of transnational Islam as a phenomenon that transcends national borders by linking Muslims from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds as well as from different ideological and theological influences. Aside from the chapters expounding on various expressions of Sunnism, the volume also integrates a contribution on Shiite Islam. The authors of the volume are distinguished researchers from different corners of the world, each bringing their unique expertise and perspectives to the table. A brief glance at the book's various chapters reveals this wide diversity of geographical and cultural focus.

Titled *"The Boundaries of Belonging a Nation: Hajj as a Transnational Interaction for the Turkish Pilgrims"* the first chapter addresses Turkish pilgrims' experience of Hajj from a sociological perspective. Among other points, Dr. Ahmet Köroğlu questions the perspective of their identity as influenced by the dichotomy between the Turkish national identity and integration into the global Ummah. This first chapter goes straight to the heart of the issue by connecting a national expression of Islam with an opening toward the transnational community of the Ummah. In this context, this encounter between the Turkish Muslim identity and the global Muslim identity takes place within the specific framework of the Hajj, the pilgrimage that has brought Muslims together from around the world, representing various cultures and regions since the early days of Islam. Right from the start, Dr. Ahmat Köroğlu's paper allows us to reflect on this ambivalence between the national religious identity as seen in the case of Turkey and a broader integration into the global and borderless community of believers, the Ummah.

Shamima Raihan Manzoor and Abdullah Al Mahmud's chapter *"Analyzing the Push-Pull Factors for the Sustainable Impact of Inbound International Muslims in Malaysia: An Emerging Diaspora of Integrated Transnational Islam"* explores the current challenges of Muslim migrations and transnational Islam in the context of Malaysia, an issue often neglected by the literature. Focusing on international migrants coming from diverse countries, Chapter 2 questions the emergence of a transnational Islamic diaspora based on surveys and in-depth interviews, with 100 international Muslims residing in Malaysia having been surveyed to nurture this reflection, as well as several in-depth interviews conducted by the researchers. Using various methods, this collection of data has allowed the authors to articulate a relevant analysis of the rise in transnational Islamic civil society in the particular context of Malaysia, a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic nation that has increasingly attracted Muslim migrants coming from various countries all around the world.

The third chapter covers Dr. Muhammad Arif's paper, which discusses the ideological dispute between transnational Salafism and the traditionalist local movement Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in the context of Indonesia, not far from Malaysia. Founded in the beginning of the 20th century, Nahdatul Ulama (NU) has succeeded in becoming a major Islamic movement representative of local traditional Islam in the country. The rise of Salafism over the last two decades through the use of the Internet and social media threatened NU's legitimacy and

raised new challenges for local Muslims confronting a diversification of Islamic discourses. In response, NU elaborated the concept of *Islam Nusantara* (local Islam), which opposes the transnational and foreign influence of Salafism. One of the ideas the dichotomization of religious discourses between these two movements challenges is that of a unified Ummah in Indonesia and beyond. Reflecting on this issue, Arif's paper also expounds on the ways Islamic discourses mutually shape one another.

The question of transnational Islam concerns not only the Sunni world but also Shiite countries. While Iran is the country with the most Shiite Muslims, Iraq is home to the pilgrimage sites of Najaf and Kerbala, which attract Muslims from other countries every year. Chapter 4 contains Ehsan Amini Baghbaderani's work titled *"Globalization of Transnational Religious Capacities; A Strategy Towards the Islamic,"* which investigates the great Arbaeen religious event in this regard. He argues the Arbaeen community to have evolved into a transnational ritual characterized by its indigenous and intercultural elements, making it a potential focal point for fostering unity among the Islamic Ummah. Elaborating upon the case of the Arbaeen phenomenon, this paper sheds light on its significance in the pursuit of Islamic charity in the context of globalization.

Another chapter explores the issues regarding the migrations and transformations of the Muslim diaspora. Dr. Inam Ullah Leghari from the Quaid-i-Azam University of Islamabad, Pakistan dedicates his chapter on Pakistani migrants in Greece. The Pakistani diaspora has become one of the most significant immigrant groups to recently settle in Greece. The first part of his paper focuses on the Pakistani diaspora in Athens based on ethnographic fieldwork. The author then addresses the question of the transformation of the forms of communities and the Ummah, exploring the theme of religious identity and transnationalism based on the example of the Punjabi Barelvi Sufis who've settled in Greece. In this regard, Chapter 5 will show how the transnational Sufi Barelvi missionary movement, known as *Dawat-e-Islami*, has used information and communication technologies (ICTs) to construct a community and illustrate another manifestation of what transnational Islam could mean.

While Pakistan is the origin of diverse diasporas worldwide, it also hosts migrants trying to flee from conflicts and find asylum. Dr. Riaz Ahmad Saeed dedicates his paper titled *"Transnational Islam in Pakistan: A Case Study of Rohingya Muslims"* to the challenges faced by the Rohingya migrants living in the country. The Rohingya crisis is a major transnational challenge because many of them have been forced to leave Burma due to discrimination and violence. They seek refuge in countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Malaysia. They've encounter various problems in Pakistan, such as not having citizenship because Pakistan views them as Bengali (originating from Bangladesh), while Bangladesh views them as Burmese citizens. Over the years, the Rohingya people have faced statelessness, violence, and killings that even involve women and children and are severe violations of human rights and international agreements. This study aims to look at their current situation concerning education, job opportunities, and healthcare in their host countries. Unfortunately, they live in poor conditions and struggle in many areas of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India. The pressing need exists to grant them citizenship and protect their human rights in these countries. The paper relies on analytical and historical research and uses a qualitative approach to explore these issues and connect them with the broader question of transnational Islam.

Mansour's chapter 7 *"European Converts' Quest for Transnational Connectivity with the Islamic Ummah"* will then address the case of "converts" as members of the Muslim Ummah in the West. While Islam is still majorly perceived as a 'non-white' religion and negatively portrayed in the West, white converts may have to bring a positive contribution these stereotypes. Mansour's paper aims to foster understanding of converts' perception of Ummah. Moreover, the author argues that converts undergo a re-racializing process where they become 'non-white' or 'not-quite-white' and losing accessibility for white privilege the way they had it before". Moreover, they face challenge with dominant ethnic groups from Muslim backgrounds, which may consider them as "others" and fail to integrate them in mainstream Muslim communities. To address these issues and others, the study argues for a transnational collaborative partnership that foster inclusivity within Muslim communities. Eventually, this process would participate in the revitalization of the essence of the Ummah.

Chapter 8 is Baptiste Brodard's work titled *"From Transnational Islamic Movements in Western Europe to New Ways of Understanding Islam: Between Normative Authorities and Individual Religiosity"* expounds on the recent transformation of Islamic organizations in Western Europe over the past few decades. Muslim communities in the West have undergone distinct religious phases. Initially, Islamic associations are reliant on institutions from the migrants' home countries. In the second stage, the emergence of Islamic organizations affiliated with transnational religious movements, such as Tabligh, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Salafist movements, cater specifically to the young Muslims born in these countries. This new religious landscape represents a significant divergence from the Islamic practices followed by migrant parents, as it involves active engagement within society and a rejection of ethnic boundaries. A novel category of local and grassroots associations surfaces in the third stage, and these are often driven by youth and largely independent of established Islamic movements. These three stages of development have formed a common trajectory across various countries over the past three decades. The primary objective of this paper is twofold: firstly, it seeks to analyze the recent shifts in Islamic ideological influences within mosques and religious discourses in Western Europe over recent years with a focus on the transitions between these three phases. Secondly, this study seeks to address the new challenges arising from the waning influence of traditional authorities, coupled with the rise of personalized discourses on Islam and the proliferation of diverse religious offerings.

The final chapter is written by Dr. Sajaudeen Nijamodeen Chapparban and titled "Challenges to Muslim Identity in Transnational Spaces: A Comparative Study of Diaspora Fictions after 9/11." It aims to analyze the responses Muslim writers from different diaspora have provided to the negative discourses against Muslims and Islam as broadcast through both political and intellectual debates. Indeed, the increasing terrorist attacks perpetrated by organizations identified as Muslim have contributed to shaping an association between Islam and violence, bringing new vocabulary into the public sphere for concepts such as jihad, Sharia, kafir, and others. Consequently, public discourses have highlighted the so-called risks of Islamization and Islamic extremism and ultimately conveyed a negative image of Islam based on biased arguments. In this regard, Muslim identity, and the visibility of Muslims (e.g., the wearing of the hijab) have came under the spotlight of racial and cultural discriminations in Western societies. In response, Muslim writers have developed discourses to challenge these negative stereotypes and projections regarding Muslims after the 9/11 attacks. In

brief, Chapter 9 argues that, despite the ongoing international propaganda against Muslims, several authors have been able to resist and reclaim their identities in order to expose the biasness in the contemporary discourses against Islam and Muslims.

In brief, these nine chapters express the diverse realities of transnational Islam in the current age and highlight through various illustrations how Muslims face common and diverging challenges across different countries and cultures. Moreover, the range of ideologies and interpretations within the Islamic tradition have given rise to a plurality of voices, presenting opportunities for constructive dialogue as well as challenges that demand thoughtful examination. Throughout the pages of this volume, readers will encounter a plethora of insightful analyses and fresh ideas that shed light on the complex interactions between transnational Islam and the contemporary world. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, understanding these dynamics becomes paramount for fostering a more informed and empathetic global community.

Overall, the chapters in this book are like pieces of a puzzle, each revealing a unique part of the big picture. Together, they show us how Muslims from Turkey and Greece to Malaysia, Indonesia, and beyond are linked by their faith and the complexities of the modern world. However, this book does not aim to address only concepts, theories, and ideas. It also proposes to look at Muslims' concrete experiences which, from the journey of Turkish pilgrims to the struggles of Rohingya refugees, will help deepen an understanding of the state of today's Ummah, as well as its ongoing challenges. So, *Transnational Islam and Muslim Politics: Policies, Identities, and Ideologies* serves as a testament to the collective efforts of scholars and researchers from around the world who strive to deepen our understanding of transnational Islam and its manifold implications. Our hope is that this volume will serve as a valuable resource for academicians, policymakers, and other individuals interested in navigating the intricate terrain of transnational Islam and its role in shaping our shared future.

Ahmet Köroğlu
Baptiste Brodard

CHAPTER 1

THE BOUNDARIES OF BELONGING A NATION: HAJJ AS A TRANSNATIONAL INTERACTION FOR THE TURKISH PILGRIMS

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to take the sociological narratives of Turkish pilgrims as a point of departure in discussing the experience of Hajj through its capacity to address their feelings. As such, this work will argue these feelings to be related to the spiritual experience of the pilgrimage to Mecca and to be motivated by the interactions of Muslim pilgrims who belong to diverse backgrounds, cultures, identities and nationalities. The Hajj itself brings together Muslims representing the global nation beyond the differences that might exist within Muslim communities and national boundaries. However, this chapter also argues that the use of feelings in descriptions of the pilgrimage at the personal level has enabled individual Turkish pilgrims to gain an ongoing awareness and sense regarding the time and place of the pilgrimage upon their return to Türkiye. The pilgrimage itself is a powerful experience because of its effects and impact it is able to leave on the senses of both those who've performed the Hajj as well as those who listen to their narratives and stories. As a religious experience, the pilgrims have may be perceptible, visible, and audible and may also provide a framework of emotions. From this point of view, this work tries to reflect on the narrative experiences of Hajj through some feelings and awareness will reflect on how transnational relations during Hajj become part of these pilgrims' emotional and belonging experience.

Keywords: Hajj, transnational community, identity, unity, spirituality, emotions, Turkish pilgrims

1. Introduction

This work takes the sociological narratives of Turkish pilgrims as a point of departure in discussing the experience of Hajj through its capacity to address the senses and emotions. As such, this project will argue these emotions to be related to the spiritual experience of the pilgrimage to Mecca and to be motivated by the interactions of Muslim pilgrims who belong to diverse backgrounds, cultures and nationalities. The Hajj itself brings together Muslims representing the global nation beyond the differences that might exist within Muslim communities and national boundaries. The Islamic Pilgrimage, or Hajj, is one of the biggest and important supranational organization and gathering in the world to be repeated every year with a large number of participants. Writing extensively about the global pilgrimage to Mecca is difficult, of course. This difficulty is due to the fact that the subject is too complex and multifaceted in terms of content for one person to cope with, as well as the responsibility of being one of the first writers. This is because when it comes to pilgrimage, certain elements and aspects certainly exist that will be discovered from the treasure of humanity. Hajj corresponds to an organization with wider participation in terms of people who cannot escape from their local ties for most of their lives. The pilgrimage provides the opportunity to read all aspects of the realm of existence over a single time and space, through which pilgrims undertake witnessing this event firsthand (Sardar, 2014). Thus, Hajj ultimately means finding salvation and truth for many pilgrims and their candidates (Hammoudi, 2006). However, this work also argues that the use of senses in the descriptions of the pilgrimage at the personal level have enabled individual Turkish pilgrims to gain an ongoing awareness and sense regarding the time and place of the pilgrimage upon their return to Türkiye. This transnational experience has generally become part of the narratives that pilgrims tell family and friends upon returning home. At the group level, sharing the experience through the senses allows religious sentiments to emerge and triggers feelings and emotions to be stimulated in those listening. In this sense, sharing the Hajj experience is a cultural act that also influences people's expectations of certain physical and emotional responses during the pilgrimage. Both those who have performed the Hajj (or Umrah/lesser Hajj) and those who plan to may, whether consciously or unconsciously, anticipate certain emotions related to the various rites involved in the pilgrimage. With regard to this, Victor and Edith Turner argued in their book *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* that liminality produces a sensation of unity, *communitas*, and anti-structure as integral features of a pilgrimage. They used the concept of c*ommunitas* to refer to a relational quality of full unmediated communication, even communion with other individuals that combines the qualities of lowliness, sacredness, homogeneity, and comradeship (Turner, 1978). With their

narratives about their feelings, pilgrims express the emotions they had during the pilgrimage, while at the same time evoking, communicating, and reinforcing these emotions. The pilgrimage itself is an emotionally powerful experience because of its effect and the impact it is able to leave on the senses of both those who performed the Hajj as well as those who listen to pilgrims' narratives and stories. In the work *The Hajj and the Anthropological Study of Pilgrimage in Hajj: Global Interactions Through Pilgrimage*, Marjo Buitelaar points out the importance of understanding specific instances of Hajj performances within their wider historical and cultural contexts, each of which testify to the Hajj as a changing tradition (Mols & Buitelaar, 2015). As a religious experience, the sensual experience the pilgrims have may be perceptible, visible, and audible and may also provide a framework of emotions. From this point of view, this work tries to reflect on the narrative experiences of Hajj through such senses as sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch and will also reflect on how the transnational relations during Hajj become part of these pilgrims' sensory experience (Al-Ajarma, 2023).

2. Hajj; Meaning and Definition as Transnational Action

In Islam, the Hajj is often discussed as a central aspect of religion that includes both beliefs and practices (Rahimi & Eshaghi, 2019). Thus, the Hajj as a practice is not limited to a bunch of rites that pilgrims engage in when they visit Mecca. The practice also relates to how they bring to it their understanding of the pilgrimage, framing the ways in which they engage with other religious, social, and cultural practices. In terms of the theoretical content of the discourse of Hajj and of Islamic belief, Muslims believe in one single God, and all people are distinguished by race, language, class, status, and gender. Hajj is a sacred meeting that brings people to become individual members of the Global Muslim Community by melting them together in servitude as a universal pot without discrimination and takes the multitude of individual persons to a place of worship that has existed throughout history and time (Vitray-Meyerovitch, 2011). However, the pilgrimage in practice has a function of bringing more status like becoming a *Haji* for Muslim people with a certain social status who can be describe as the traditional elite. Due to the obligatory conditions of Hajj and the fact that it is for people who belong to a certain class, being able to go on the pilgrimage also indicates a class status in Islamic society. Thus, while the pilgrimage symbolizes the status of the middle class, it also serves as a confirmation (McDonnell, 1990). However, some contradictory definitions are found about Hajj. According to Michael Sallnow (1991), the pilgrims have different languages that Islam itself includes, and therefore the joint worship of the pilgrimage brings out these differences by introducing national, cultural, and sectarian differences regardless of the unifying discourses that unite these differences over the Muslim identity.

Hajj takes Muslims out of their regular everyday environment and places them amidst new surroundings where they perform a set of rituals, both individually and collectively. In addition to its importance as a personal religious undertaking of devotion for Muslims, the Hajj is also a global annual event that involves political, social, economic, and intellectual aspects (Ryad, 2017). Therefore, Hajj is the most important journey Muslims will undertake on both a communal and personal level. According to Bayyiğit (1998), however, pilgrimage has more of a social character rather than an individual one as a form of worship and one of the most concrete examples of traditional religious life with its emphasis on unity. Pilgrimage manifests itself as a religious, cultural, and sociopolitical phenomenon (Tagliacozzo & Toorawa, 2016), despite the fact that the pilgrimage, together with other Islamic worships, deserves to be included in a different socio-cultural framework in addition to all the meanings it carries in the Islamic tradition with its various characteristics that it refers to in social memory (Çakmak, 2010). From the perspective of Türkiye, such an event or phenomenon that affects so many people directly and indirectly due to it being an annual pilgrimage needs to be examined in multi- and interdisciplinary ways through its different aspects. While such a need exists and is essential, pilgrimage as a subject has not been able to go beyond being the subject of studies conducted in theological fields that examine practices and creed or of works that examine the Hejaz Region from a historical and political point of view.

3. The Sociology of Hajj: The Literature and Challenges

One of the important challenges I faced when I started to search the literature on pilgrimages was that these writings were mostly removed from the perspective at which I had aimed, namely the literature sometimes had been written to provide information about the region or for those who would perform the hajj to fulfill the purpose of worship. However, all these writings were able to provide material for a field that can be described as pilgrimage sociology, and the knowledge that emerges from the pile of information created by these memoirs corresponds to my field of interest. In rare moments, scholars focused more on the ethnic or political form of the pilgrimage and wanted to evaluate the pilgrimage only over these features. Anthropological and sociological studies on the pilgrimage could not escape the influence of two main schools. These are the Durkheimian method, which can be described as the mechanical solidarity model, and the Turnerian *communitas* method. The Durkheimian method of mechanical solidarity ignores the differences in both pilgrims and pilgrimage, instead focusing on the function of the pilgrimage to establish the social and generalizing certain characteristics of the pilgrimage in a reductionist way (Durkheim, 2014). Turner's *communitas* method addresses the pilgrimage as a phenomenon that includes a journey to holy places

and underlines the most important aspect of pilgrimage worship to be individual experience, as this includes the pilgrim in a *communitas* (Turner, 2011). Meanwhile, many studies have critiqued the Turnerian approach for being too totalizing in its depiction of a pilgrimage rather than taking into account the variety of pilgrimage experiences and the range of motivations for performing a pilgrimage (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1990; Eade & Sallnow, 1997). For example, Sallnow critiqued how the notion of *communitas* inaccurately characterizes the behavior of pilgrims; indeed, far from expressing a sense of unrestricted fellowship, a pilgrimage might be characterized by nepotism, factionalism, endemic competition, and inner-community conflict (Sallnow, 2011). Examples from Muslim pilgrimage sites as arenas for competition among individuals and groups can be seen most clearly in studies focusing on local pilgrimages to a lodge of a saint or local shrine (Flaskerud & Natvig, 2018). When sociologists and anthropologists focus primarily on the phenomenon of pilgrimage, they considered it to be an exception to their familiar behavior with regard to the society with which they are concerned (Eickelman, 1976). This actually points to a very understandable situation, because in every society, especially in Islamic societies, the pilgrimage as a worship that is performed annually corresponds to an exception for the small minority who do participate in it when considering the large majority who do not. With all these aspects, Hajj has an effect that exceeds that of a minority in terms of its results and areas of influence. Secondly, anthropologists believe that the community hosting the subject they plan to study should not be a small stable homogeneous community where every member can be recognized closely.

In summary, a shift has occurred in the study of pilgrimage over time, mainly from the ideas of *communitas* to those of conflict and contestation, and more recently toward looking at the experience from the perspective of its embeddedness in everyday life. Situating this study within the broader framework of the anthropology of Islam is also important as this takes on an anthropological and sociological approach when looking at the lives of pilgrims and the sociocultural dimensions of the everyday lives of Muslims. Thus, through the anthropological ethnographic narrative, this paper reflects on how pilgrims in Türkiye express their Hajj and Umrah experiences as a form of feelings and sensations.

4. Hajj Studies; Approaches and Methods

This kind of study examines the phenomenon of religion in terms of the meaning that the participants attribute to their worship. Therefore, the universality or specificity of the concept of belief is not in question in the sociology of religion. Although worship is thought to have not changed in terms of either form or content while ignoring the historical course of popular understanding, differences have always occurred in practice. Interpreting and evaluating these

differences are necessary within the historical context. The issue of understanding religious experience occupies an important place in the literature of sociology and anthropology. Geertz put the meaning of religious experience in particular at the center of his anthropological studies. He paved the way for the application of the hermeneutic anthropology school to Muslim societies by arguing for the possibility of understanding the insight and meaning of behaviors made regarding individual events using the ideographical approach he adopted. According to Geertz, the main factor that determines the target and content of human behavior is the meaning the individual who performs this behavior attributes to it. Thus, Geertz considered the meanings he attributes to his behavior as an acting actor can only be revealed through an intense description of symbols (Geertz, 2012).

According to Buitelaar, however, the sacred always constitutes the center of all anthropological studies related to religion, especially to pilgrimages. As a journey toward the sacred, a pilgrimage literally divides the lives of pilgrims into two different lives: pre- and post-pilgrimage (Buitelaar, 2015). The journey is about discovering the expansions of phrases one is accustomed to hearing in today's Türkiye, such as Hatice who said, *"The old Hatice died with the pilgrimage, now there is a new Hatice"* and Mehmet who said, *"I became a brand-new person after the pilgrimage."* According to Buitelaar, some of the questions are about the lives of the pilgrims; who they become when they return to their previous self; the worlds of their daily social and cultural lives; their personal stories about their modern pilgrimage; and how it affected their religiosity, social identities, and self-identifying references and habits. On top of all this, a crucial focus remains on the questions of how much of what they have experienced and accumulated about themselves really belongs to themselves, and how much belongs to the narrators of pilgrimage stories. However, results that are obtained without filtering or sifting through real experiences are worthless in terms of anthropology. For an anthropological study to be conducted, the researcher is expected to have as primary and direct a relationship as possible with the people to be addressed. because the reliability of the information obtained for each indirect relationship decreases. One of the main factors that result in an indirect relationship between the researcher and the participant people is the researcher not knowing or having a command of the participants' language (Gamson, 1991). Of course, the language here not only involves the formal language (i.e., Turkish), but also the dialects that weave the participants' world of meaning, as well as the use metaphors, idioms, aphorisms, and similes. Turkish is a language in a broad sense, and its specialized forms includes many subtle elements. In this sense, my ability to use the language and these traditional religious concepts and notions in relation to the participants is a dominant factor among the ones that

helped me during the entire field research. The researcher is namely expected to observe the participation more so than observe by participating. However, the way individuals cope with the religious phenomena they experience in certain social contexts reveals the possibility of discovering the meanings of all these religious practices by taking a closer look at their level of belonging. How the symbolic language of worship is included in a construction process becomes easier to understand by using ethnography to associate the meanings and norms with the personalities of those performing the act.

After all these, something needs to be said about how this study examines Hajj and the method it applies. First of all, the subject to be studied needed to be narrowed down, because the issue of how to study the subject stood as a vital question corresponding to the research problematic. The answer to this question, as well as the question itself, would also greatly affect the course of the study. Narrowing the subject would set a constraint on both the question and answer. In this context, I conducted in-depth interviews with 10 people who had previously performed Hajj within the framework of this study. Of these 10 people, 6 are male and 4 are female. While determining both the male and female candidates, I also attempted to draw them from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. However, performing Hajj at an early age is very unlikely in Türkiye and is usually performed later in life. In this context, the people I interviewed were mostly older. However, I attempted to identify young and middle-aged people as much as possible for this research. When considering what the participants said in the interviews conducted with them after the Hajj, they noteworthily did not describe their experiences in a purely chronological order. The quotes the listeners and pilgrims made in this way are exactly what, how, and why they remember. I did not intervene because their responses constituted the answer to my questions. Also, how the participants structured what they would express or convey and what they preferred or didn't choose to talk about was as meaningful as what they did say. In addition to all of these, their body language, movements, and behaviors, as well as their tone of voice and breathing, were as valuable as the subject being conveyed. In the face of all these issues, I only intervened as a listener.

Another point to note is that the research was carried out using semi-structured questions in all the interviews that form the sources of the study. This was done as the aim was to reach in-depth meaningful data that would reflect the phenomenon of pilgrimage in its natural state. The common question the participants in the research asked me was *w*hether I had gone on the Hajj/Umrah. The research topic was developed and shaped by carrying out conversation-sized interviews partially using purposeful sampling. At this point, formatting occurred, which means making the person's subject matter more understandable. The participants were

expected to emphasize what they understood and how, with the researcher being involved as little as possible in the interviews. An effort was made to conduct interviews with questions created using semi-structured content based on the participants' own true stories so as not to disturb the natural flow of the interviews.

5. The Preparations and Motivations for Hajj

In Türkiye, the first real material preparation or condition to undertake once a person wishes to perform the pilgrimage is to apply for the lottery for the pilgrimage. In brief, the quota system was introduced to provide a quota for pilgrims from each country up to the capacity of the pilgrimage (Hammoudi, 2006). In Türkiye, anyone could go on the pilgrimage until the 2000s when the quota was implemented as a result of the increased demand. Due to the quota, the General Directorate of Hajj and Umrah Services within the Presidency of Religious Affairs draws lots every year among the pilgrim candidates and determines two lists: the main and reserve lists. After being chosen for the pilgrimage, exciting days begin for every pilgrim candidate in Türkiye. Days run together as people make preparations, give notifications, and become halal with one another. Although this process is exciting for the pilgrim candidates, it is felt even more intensely for the older pilgrim candidates (Çelik, 2011). Candidates for Hajj are simultaneously intricately involved in joy/hope and sadness/anxiety, like being two sides of a coin simultaneously. However, those who have the thought of taking on this acceptance of pilgrimage worship consider leaving their loved ones behind as one of the torments and sufferings of Hajj and go to the path of motivating themselves.

When I asked the pilgrims the reasons that motivated them to go on Hajj or Umrah, one of the issues that caught my attention was that a substantial group of those who were to go on Hajj openly expressed not being pious. I should note here that my interviewees mostly consider being a devotee as being deed-centered. I asked the questions What is the motivation that leads you to Hajj ?, why do you want to go to Hajj ?, and what is the factor that motivates you to perform Hajj ?" Their answers focused as *Allah's command*. The reason why I deliberately asked my questions with singular nouns rather than plural ones was the assumption that the first answer that came to the participants' minds would be the most vital and realistic answer. In the subsequent interviews, I made some revisions in line with both the uniformity and superficiality of the answers I received. Yes, people may be going on pilgrimage as Allah commands, but this alone was not a factor. I had more than one interview with the participant Yusuf. In the second of our private unrecorded conversations, Yusuf half-heartedly uttered the phrase *"Yes, Allah commands it, but…"* I felt the need to go over this and arranged a few more meetings with him to explain this "but…" Although he considers himself a good Muslim at the

religious level and tries to perform the five daily prayers without missing them at home or in the mosque, he is the only one of his childhood friends who has not experienced Hajj/Umrah at his age. Another participant, Sinan, stated how he had lost his reputation due to the lack of pilgrims in the small middle-class artisan community, because *"the quality of pilgrimage creates a sense of security in the business sector."* After he became a pilgrim, he conveyed that he was put in first place both in this artisan community and in the eyes of customers with the phrase *"Business has been blessed, Alhamdulillah."* These examples once again show the central role of religion in making sense of status and class positions in traditional communities.

Many of the pilgrim candidates interviewed before the pilgrimage were seen to have viewed their personal pilgrimages as the jumping-off point of their piety: *Forgive me, I had my shortcomings in both prayers and hijab, but when I learned that I would go on Hajj, I went to the mirror and asked myself, "What face will you come out with in this state of yours, across from the Kaaba?" So, you see, it had an effect before the pilgrimage took place. So, I made a decision, now that we can no longer be the old Meryem, we will be pilgrims, let's not make any mistakes, shall we?* (Meryem)

Until the stage of intention before the pilgrimage, a spiritual distress existed as a result of doing acts that are considered wrong, forbidden, or haram in Islam, and being a complete believer is desired. As one of the rare participants who openly revealed their mistakes prior the pilgrimage, Kasım said: *We drank and gambled when we were young, may Allah forgive us. Oh, were I atheist at that time, no, I was a Muslim still, but I say, we made a lot of mistakes because we were young. Do I regret it now? Of course, but should we learn from human mistakes? Maybe if I hadn't had so many sins, I guess I would have been one of those pilgrims who didn't know where they were going. But since I know and face my past, I hold on to my pilgrimage with both hands and I appreciate its value, thank goodness…*

Although not as much as Kasım, other participants were found to state that they had achieved the Islamic life they desired, despite not having a perfect Islamic life, pre-Hajj. As Bayyiğit's (1998) study revealed, the individual religious lives of many of pilgrim candidates are seen to be indexed to the pilgrimage. His study showed the candidates statements, involving such things as complaints, wishing for the pilgrimage to be a means of confession, that all these should be implicitly considered as an opportunity prior to the pilgrimage, and that many things that should not be done after the pilgrimage should be done before the pilgrimage, to be able to express the presence of an understanding that one has the license or has no objection to do these things. One important issue in this regard is that an improvement and care was observed regarding the would-be pilgrims' intention to perform Hajj and fulfill their religious obligations.

Coming to another very important issue, the first visual contact experience with the Kaaba constitutes an important part of Hajj/Umrah worship. Whether this is a tradition in other countries or not is unknown, those coming from Türkiye believe that the prayer made upon first seeing the Kaaba is accepted. As far as I have heard from many pilgrims, seeing the Kaaba for the first time was what had motivated the pilgrims, hearing about this sighting. The same general concepts and descriptions are the ones most commonly chosen. The general feature of all these expressions is that they emphasize the emotional intensity of the lived experience: *Time stopped, space was rolled up, and the first threshold of the path to eternity began to appear. The eye of the Kaaba put me into a trance, and all the cells in my body began to revolve in the orbit of divine love.* (Uzunkaya, 2019)

Many interviewees stated experiencing something that transcended the perception of time and space, using expressions such as *"I was frozen and shocked"* (Süleyman), and "*Time appeared to have stopped"* (Ayşe). Compelling aspects of their physical existence were emphasized. On the other hand, conveying the physically challenging and impressive experience they went through referred to how familiar the encountered landscape is from the perspective of Islamic culture.

6. The Issue of Belongings for Turkish Pilgrimages: Adaptation and Incompatibilities

One of the debates over Hajj is the criticism against the universality of the pilgrimage regarding the symbols of belonging that the pilgrims of Türkiye or any other country carry with them. Small signs that indicate pilgrims' belongings serve vitally important functions, especially in terms of preventing disappearances and finding the group one belongs to in such times of crisis. In the past the pilgrim candidates were given a cloth, the pilgrim would have their clothes sewn in a certain pattern with the same color for all pilgrims, and the Turkish flag and Directorate of Religious Affairs emblem were required to be attached in the chest area. Nowadays, women and men in one group are given the same bags instead of the same clothes. These bags are the trademark of each group, and pilgrim candidates use these to be able to distinguish those in their own group or company.

One thing Turkish pilgrims are very good at is their ability to adapt to the current situation. Turkish pilgrims, especially male pilgrims who started to show up on the streets of Mecca and Medina as rare communities without their own local national clothes during the pilgrimage/umrah period, for the most part had obtained from street vendors and tradesmen the clothing style and turbans, wearing them immediately after a short period of 3-4 days. However, de-

spite the ihram for men, the women of the Islamic countries of Africa and Far East Asia in particular reveal and display a kind of pilgrimage dowry that they have created over the years while waiting for the pilgrimage in a way that includes their own locality, and they almost blow away Islamic fashion (Alkan, 2010). As a matter of fact, Türkiye is practically the one of the country that is condemned to monotony regardless of the locality and colorfulness of other countries; regardless of how far from their locality, they do not have their own style of clothing. Incidentally, let's not move on without mentioning Mesut's statements on this subject: "*Look let's go to the top floor of Masjid al-Haram and look down. What do we see, you know? Everyone's clothing includes the shape and color of their hometown, their own lifestyle. Only our Turks dress like this in a uniform military uniform. It's as if we have no history, tradition, or custom, as if we've been thinking about shapeless and formless things."*

While the way is open for people from different countries to come into contact with each other personally during the pilgrimage period, and this contact takes place physically, no cultural activities occur that will pave the way for a desired or expected kind of togetherness or the resultant communication. According to Hammoudi, most pilgrim candidates do not want to leave their country group or convoy, nor do they want to contact other alternatives, whether for just or unjust reasons, regardless of the country they come from (Hammoudi, 2006). Speaking specifically to Türkiye, the fact that pilgrims mostly come from an introverted environment and do not have the experience otherization are highly effective. Neither this of experience Hajj itself nor agents such as language skills that would facilitate such an experience are helpful; they are afraid of getting lost or abducted. One of the factors that make the experience of the other the most difficult is that the Turkish pilgrims do not know enough about the languages of the countries where Muslims are common, such as Arabic, or the colonial languages that control these geographies. Regarding this issue, Halil said: *"I think we Turks are the ones who returned from this congress with the least profit, like a big congress of the Hajj world. We neither know the languages of the countries where the pilgrims come from, nor any foreign language that can be understood in common. What if you can only say and understand something with styled hand-arm gestures? While you will be able to contact thousands of pilgrims during the whole day of pilgrimage, you return home without meeting two people. You can return to Türkiye by realizing that you have thousands, millions of Muslim brothers whose backs you cannot break with at most two words."*

As another important issue to be mentioned here, Turkish pilgrims are very assertive on the issue of criticizing different nations and cultures. During the Hajj/Umrah period, statements are heard such as "This place is not like here,", "I would have done this or that," and "This

is missing, this is okay" Not hearing words like these is rare. In the face of the excitement of Turkish pilgrims, especially elderly people who leave no stone unturned when it comes to criticism, he thinks that his education is an obstacle for him to experience these feelings. In this regard, I should point out that those who made the most harsh and cruel comments about the pilgrimage, both about the architectural changes, the emptiness of the pilgrimage, and the unqualifiedness of the pilgrims, came mostly from young men and women who had read it. On one hand, there are determinations that see modernity as the cause of all kinds of mistakes, deficiencies, and evils and throw everything out of reach of the will of people and Muslims. On the other hand, those who read their personal role in every event, either willingly or by not preventing what is happening, they try to make sense of the material and spiritual changes. All the comments I had heard related to the pilgrimage before going were as Gül said: *"The real pilgrimage was a long time ago. Now the event is just a tourist trip, and everything is indexed for shopping."* (Gül, 2016)

7. The Tension Between Being Turkish and Being a Member of the Ummah

After the interviews I made about the pilgrimage, some of the Turkish pilgrims saw themselves as part of a larger whole, made their evaluations from this point of view, defined themselves in terms of the Islamic Ummah, and attributed a positive meaning to the Islamic Ummah. Recep's thoughts in this regard are as follows: "*The first thing that strikes you when you are there is how many people believe in God and how different these people differ from each other in terms of color, size, language, and country. Since believers are declared brothers and sisters in the words of Allah, you feel in your bones how diverse our family is and that you, your Qur'an and your religion are not without an owner. You start to enjoy your long overdue reunion, while cursing those who keep us ignorant from each other so much, and you become happy."*

The second part emerges as those who add themselves to a smaller whole, such as Fatma who said, *"We Turks have no clean or good worshipers."* On the other opposite side, when the issue of cleanliness comes to the fore, a racist *"Arab hatred"* emerges. Rabia was very full on this subject, and she listed her criticisms as follows: "*Millions of people come to this geography every year, these Arabs earn a lot of money from them. But every place is filthy except for a few spots. The sinks, the toilets, and the bathrooms are all very bad. Everything smells, from the hotel we stayed at to the buses we traveled on. 1400 years ago, Allah had mercy on them, sent his Qur'an and Prophet, but in vain. I do not believe there is any of difference in mentality between the Arab wandering around now and the Bedouin of that period.*

Look, these places would be in the hands of the Turks, you would have seen them at that time. Just as in Eyüp Sultan, Sultanahmet, and Konya, Mevlana was in a clean and polished state, I swear to you, it would be the same here. But fate is destiny, you will get it, the world of testing. I try to look at our worship by saying patience, but it is really difficult."

Everdi stated that, with the time spent in the Hijaz, the social phenomenon one can describe as "recognition and exclusion" has come true, and Turkish pilgrims have come up with justifiable arguments about their own cleanliness and the pollution of others (Everdi, 2005). Ayşenur also stated similar things: *"I have been superhumanly patient until now. I said to myself that such things happen, ignore it, be patient. What they weren't: They tried to pile on the shopping, on the days when those buses were not running, they asked for 30-40, sometimes 100 riyals for a distance worth 10 rials. I kept silent toward all of them, but this last hotel in Medina broke the stone of my patience. They had us stay in filthy places where the animals would not stay, let alone human beings. I passed out of their humanity and started to doubt their faith. Am I right, are you like this? Oh, this was not just one or two days. Look, I am saying this with what I have now seen and accumulated over the past 27 days, humph."*

With regard to Türkiye's pilgrims at the level of discourse on *'We are members of the Ummah'* and *'We are siblings'*, I should point out that most of this rhetoric does not go beyond a dry word. It is clear that the religiosity of a country that motivates itself to be the most religious, cleanest, and most virtuous cannot view the practices of other countries and sects with a good eye. Criticisms were not limited to these, but the following were extended to the Arabs in Saudi Arabia, such as *"Dirty Arabs"* (Meryem), *"They smell"* (Mahmut), *"Is it Salat that they are also praying?"* (Ayşe), *"They shake their hands while praying as if they are dancing"* (Halil). I experienced often how Turkish pilgrims are extremely generous and open-handed when distributing judgments of disgust and contempt. Such marginalizing judgments are sometimes conveyed under political issues and interpretations, and other times through cultural codes.

Even Turkish Muslim intellectuals are well known for making sentences containing "but…" when addressing the Kurds. In the past, I considered such expressions as unwarranted sensitivities or exaggerations of the Kurds. However, when I encountered in the interviews for this work. Çelik also experienced some similar reflections, I can conclude that such issues are not an isolated incident: "*My eyes scanned the rows again during the morning prayer. I saw a group of northern Iraqi Kurds. They were immediately apparent from their clothes. I will not hide what Allah knows from the servant, because I thought that they supported the invasion of Iraq, I felt cold inside. But I went to the Prophet's house saying this would not*

work, and I prayed the morning prayer among them" (Çelik, 2011). The same author wrote after a few pages in his book,*"We are all one in this human ocean, but Kurds and Turks, we are even more one. Even though we have the same big family as the others, our home is one with the Kurds"* (Çelik, 2011).

8. Post-Hajj Experiences: Reflections and Emotions

Some behavioral and physical changes generally occur in people who have undergone Hajj. In the religious sense, more attention is paid to religious practices, such as beard growth being frequently seen in male pilgrims depending on their age. As Bayyiğit (1998) stated, this is the situation remains where the beard is left as a declaration of Hajj in men after the pilgrimage. Halil conveyed his experiences about growing a beard as follows: "*I performed the pilgrimage. After I returned, many people said to me, "Well, a pilgrim's beard suits you now; you're already a Haji, you won't grow your beard, but who will?" Sometimes with a smile and sometimes with a serious expression. Maybe I don't feel ready, or I don't see myself that old. And I think, no, I don't necessarily have to grow a beard. I'm not going to have a beard, and I didn't have one. Let them see and learn how to become a pilgrim without a beard."*

Male pilgrims now make a special effort to perform their five daily prayers in congregation in the mosque. In this regard, Yusuf described the state of mind he was in as follows: "*We performed Hajj, a situation that is easy to say but difficult to practice. I see how difficult it is for my soul, I try to fulfill it out of spite. I felt it on my first pilgrimage. The adhan was recited, the mosque was right next to our house, there was a conversation among the guests that we should go to the mosque when someone else said, "Oh, we came to visit you. Should we go to the mosque or be left alone?" When I heard them, I said, "Of course, we will not be left alone, let's go together to the mosque." Alhamdulillah, I have not failed to go to the mosque or to pray in congregation to this day."*

As for the female pilgrims, in their own words they said they took "greater care" regarding wearing the hijab. Ayşe said: "*I try to give importance to wearing looser clothes after Hajj. I should also mention that I get the most criticism from my own family and friends. They list their criticisms as "You are younger and beautiful; there is still time for these" and "Whatever you decide is beautiful; don't exaggerate." But I know that God's will and desire for me is to dress the way I am."* Meanwhile, some women preferred to cover themselves with a topcoat, like Ayşenur, or with a chador like Hatice. In this regard, they had chosen and quite remarkably said things such as "I cover myself completely" or "I no longer feel remorse" as common expressions.

Post-Hajj, many of the pilgrims act by viewing themselves as a stimulant in the daily lives of the people around them regarding Islam and morals. While this is often met with understanding, it also paves the way for clarifying the pilgrim's behavior and enabling those with opposing behaviors to question themselves. When a pilgrim does something, others in the community who do not look at it face significant social pressure or condemnation. Thus, the pilgrimage mechanism can be claimed to have a bidirectional system. Proverbs and idioms expressing negative judgments about Hajj and pilgrims in daily life are considered unusual, and those who are not in harmony in this context are condemned and judged (Bayyigit, 1998 and Çakmak, 2010).

Although withdrawal from trade, which can be described as human life after Hajj, is less frequently observed now due to pilgrims being generally younger compared to previous years, the prevalence and dominance of the idea of withdrawing from the world is still an issue. The sensitivity pilgrims show in fulfilling the fards of Islam expand to the sunnah, mustahab, and known facts. This is seen as an integral part of a blessed pilgrimage among male pilgrims because, as one pilgrim stated, male pilgrims from Türkiye in particular use foul expressions to a great degree as Kasım pointed out: *"While Turkish people attach so much importance to physical cleanliness, I can't understand how they can use bad language so easily and have a dirty mouth."*

9. Conclusion

Turkish pilgrims leave their country, family, and friends to embark on their journey to Mecca, where they perform the rituals of Hajj. Mixing with Muslims from other countries and sects whose nationalities, languages, and traditions may be as strange to them as theirs are to these pilgrims from other countries. Al-Hajj holds an important place in the religious lives of most Muslims in Türkiye, especially when discussing their experiences in Mecca itself. For many pilgrims, Hajj is the journey of a lifetime. The pilgrims' narratives regarding their time in Mecca include descriptions of the places they visited, the people they met, the rituals they performed, and the feelings they faced, and these descriptions are often articulated through the senses. The narratives show Hajj to be a multi-sensory experience that extends over time and space with its wealth of potential sensory experiences. This paper has been an attempt to reflect on how Turkish pilgrims refer to their interactions with other members of the broader Muslim community. For many Turkish pilgrims, their journey to Mecca is a momentous event; it is even commonly the first time leaving the country, let alone being a journey to the most sacred place for Muslims. As a result, my research data confirm to a considerable extent that, although the pilgrimage to Mecca is an experience shared by different Muslim groups,

pilgrims tend first and foremost to emphasize their differences within Islam to have been re-synthesized into Islamic unity in Mecca, thus supporting and illustrating Turner's hypothesis.

As a researcher conducting a focused study of pilgrimage narratives, many interesting and valuable topics may have been overlooked by being an insider. This type of study should be repeated by researchers who can be referred to as outsiders. Distance and looking from afar will contribute to future studies so they can discover and reveal the details and facts the current author failed to see due to his cultural belonging. As previously emphasized, being an insider has advantages as well as disadvantages in reality. Unfortunately, the males were more visible and vocal about the pilgrimage, both in terms of science and in terms of participants. However, the majority of the experiences occurred with the women. Examples and descriptions of Hajj are mostly male-centered. For example, the phrase "pilgrims wearing their shrouds" is inspired by the whiteness of the ihram garment and the two seamless fabrics but actually only describes the coverings of male pilgrims. As is known, men are obliged to wear the ihram, whereas the female pilgrims are not. Nevertheless, mentioning a practice involving one gender as a valid expression for all pilgrims should be read as an example of this discourse.

Another issue that remains to be studied is the relationship between pilgrimage and self-perception. As a result of field studies to be carried out in the presence of raw information obtained from works similar to this study, the extent to which the experience of pilgrimage is decisive in the self-perception of believers should be evaluated in this regard, as well as the positive and/or negative effects of what is experienced within the scope of Hajj as an act of worship. Although the experience of pilgrimage is thought to cause significant changes in self-perception, which one a study following the footsteps of this change prefers remains an important question in terms of national belonging and ummah awareness. The issue of whether the pilgrimage experience is an individual or a collective experience is the key to paving the way for the subject. In the particular context of today's technological possibilities, the possible expansions of the experience of pilgrimage to the concept of transcendence are worth studying with regard to self-technologies and self-discipline.

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CHAPTER 2

ANALYZING PUSH AND PULL FACTORS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE IMPACT OF INBOUND INTERNATIONAL MUSLIMS IN MALAYSIA: AN EMERGING DIASPORA OF INTEGRATED TRANSNATIONAL ISLAM

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ABSTRACT

The idea of a transnational Muslim community has always had great appeal, perhaps more so now than ever before. The rise of transnational Islamic civil societies in the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic country of Malaysia in recent years has deepened its Muslim implantation mostly through educational and expatriate migrations, as well as due to Malaysia My Second Home (MM2H) visa holders. However, this has not been duly reflected in the literature, as most of the studies related to transnational Islam only cover the Western context. Therefore, the current study analyzes under the theory of migration the push and pull factors influencing the international Muslim migration toward Malaysia. A self-administered survey was conducted based on the snowball sampling method among 100 international Muslims residing in Malaysia. Every effort was made to diversify the samples and make them as representational as possible by assigning a certain quota to the respondents' country of origin, profession, age, marital status, and duration of stay in Malaysia. Six in-depth interviews were conducted based on purposive sampling with the international Muslim immigrants who had been residing in Malaysia for over 5 years. The outcome of this study can provide thoughtful insights into the impact of certain pull factors from the host country of Malaysia on maintaining the same mind frame in the migrants even after migration and thus building optimism for a sustainable transnational Islamic diaspora. This study may also inspire ideas among Muslim scholars and activists on how to initiate a sustainable integrated public sphere that is beneficial for the *ummah* at large.

Keywords: Higher education institutions, integrated Islamic community, international students, Malaysia, transnational Islam

1. Introduction

Transnationalism emerged in the 1990s for understandable reasons, though the studies on conventional migration and diaspora had been heading toward this through ideas such as multiculturalism. As a result of globalization in general and the wars in the Middle East over the past three decades, the rise of ISIS, and other militant groups in particular, Muslims have sought opportunities to live and flourish as good citizens of an international community belonging to the same major faith and identity.

Undoubtedly, the actualization of the ummah is "constantly confronted with national and sectarian differences" (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1996, p.21). However, the rise of a transnational agenda has led to the emergence of transnational Islamic civil societies in many countries such as Malaysia. The growing Muslim diaspora philanthropy and conglomeration in Malaysia are an attempt at establishing a united ummah. Islam and modernity seem compatible and exist side by side in Malaysia, unlike other Muslim countries. The country combines the traditional principles of justice with more modern secular forms of government and society. As a result, other identifiable population inflows consisting of low- and high-skilled foreign workers, students, and participants of the Malaysia My Second Home (MM2H) Program occur in addition to the temporary inflow of tourists that rose to 25 million just in 2012. Beginning in the late 1990s, foreign workers and expatriates in particular have played a major role in Malaysia's economic development. Moreover, Malaysian recruiters have widened their market search for international students by targeting many countries in the Middle East, such as the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon (Sedgwick, 2004).

The trend of international Muslim migrants throughout the world has risen due to various forms of unrest, pushing them to choose certain Muslim countries where they can also establish harmony with diverse Islamic communities. This has lately drawn the attention of many researchers toward conducting studies in these countries instead of studying only the Western context that is predominantly available in the previous literature. Obviously, "rising tensions between the USA and the Middle East post-September 11, the invasion of Iraq, and unstable economic and political conditions throughout much of the region" (Sirat, 2008, p.81) are several push factors that have motivated the population in the Muslim world to seek safer and more affordable options that are geographically closer to home.

In addition, the post-Trump era has also led to a new breakdown of the current network of international Muslim students, academicians, and other professionals presently living in the West or intending to stay there, causing them to reconsider their career plans toward countries

other than those just in the Northern hemisphere. The "increased enmity towards the West, and the resurgence of political Islam and the traditional values in the region" (Sedgwick, 2004, para.21-22) is also noted to have contributed to this trend.

Despite the growing body of academic literature on transnational migration, scholars acknowledge that little is known thus far about the connection between migration and transnational Islam or the role religion plays in migration. The majority of past studies mainly focused on Chinese Muslim immigrants in Malaysia. However, no notable research is found on the factors that have influenced the international Muslim population, especially students and expatriates, to choose Malaysia as a base for transnational Islam.

Therefore, the present study intends to view Malaysia as a platform for inbound international Muslims who have a consistent desire to unite as a community (Moten, 2005). The objective of the study is to analyze the push factors of the home country and the pull factors of Malaysia as the host country that have influenced Muslim migrants to choose Malaysia. In doing so, the paper proposes research by incorporating the aspect of Muslim unity into the framework of transnational activism. The subsequent sections of this paper discuss international Muslim migration, followed by the methodology and the results and discussion sections before finally ending with the conclusion.

That many Muslims are now long-term migrants and/or have been born and raised in the countries of immigration may be a fact, but the significance of transnationalism, namely what is now understood as the transnational character of Islam and of the migrant populations who espouse it, was not fully apparent or appreciated two decades ago and still remains under-researched despite studies that have placed Islam in the context of globalization (e.g., Ahmed, 1992; Ahmed & Donnan, 1994).

1.1. The Global Flow of Muslim Migrants

Getting an overview of the international Muslim diaspora will be important before going deeper into the topic of transnational Islam. According to new population projections by the Pew Research Center's [PRC] Forum on Religion & Public Life (PRC, 2011), the world's Muslim population is expected to increase by about 35% over the next 20 years, rising from 1.6 billion in 2010 to 2.2 billion by 2030.

Table 1. The Projected Global Muslim Population in 2030 (Source: PRC, 2011)	
Country	**Projected Muslim Population**
Pakistan	256,117,000
Indonesia	238,833,000
India	236,182,000
Bangladesh	187,506,000
Nigeria	116,832,000
Egypt	105,065,000
Iran	89,626,000
Turkey	89,127,000
Afghanistan	50,527,000
Iraq	48,350,000

Another interesting projection is that 79 countries will have a million or more Muslim inhabitants by 2030. A majority of the world's Muslims (about 60%) will continue to live in the Asia-Pacific region (including Malaysia), while about 20% will live in the Middle East and North Africa, as is the case today (PRC, 2011).

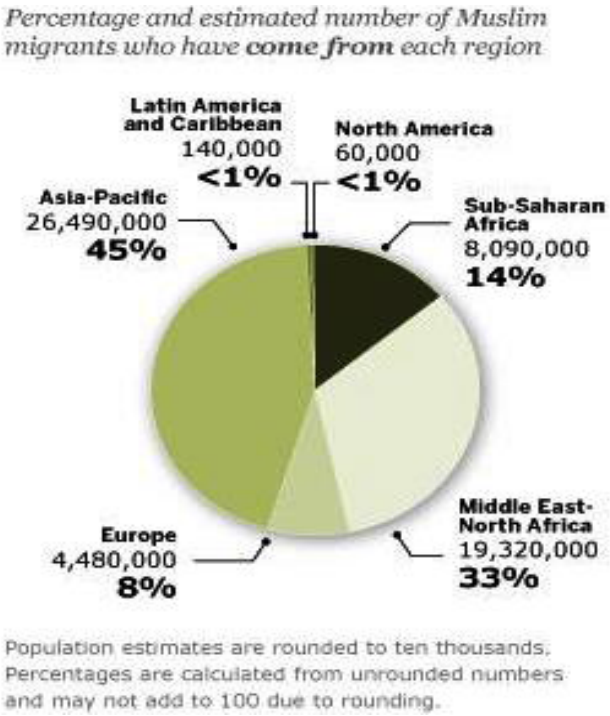


Figure 1. Global religion and migration database (Source: PRC, 2011).

The figures for the 10 countries with the largest numbers of Muslims projected above well justify the current statistics of the international Muslim population in Malaysia. Based on the recent statistics from the Malaysian Higher Education Institutions [MOHE] (2018), the majority of the international student population in Malaysia already belongs to these countries.

Meanwhile, a rough balance has existed between Muslim emigration and immigration in the Middle East and North Africa region as a whole. About a third of Muslim migrants are from the Middle East and North Africa, including many who have moved from one country to another within the region, with the greatest number of Muslim migrants being from Syria and Palestine (more than 5 million each) (PRC, 2012a; UNHCR, 2023). Overall, Muslims make up the second-largest share of people who have migrated across borders (almost 60 million) according to the Pew Research Center's report (PRC, 2012b). Therefore, a timely need truly exists for scrutinizing this international Muslim mobility toward Malaysia as a diaspora of transnational Islam.

1.2. The Ummah United through Transnational Islam

Indeed, to say transnational is "not to say post-national" (Grillo, 2004, p.863). Namely, the Muslim migrants to Malaysia and elsewhere do not give up their home culture; alongside the diversity, they still find a refuge in their unity under the same major faith identity of Islam and its transnational manifestation. Diversity within Islam (e.g., national, ethnic, schools of thought, and madhabs [schools of jurisprudence) has been widely documented and discussed (Soares, 2000; Karam, 2004). Many Islamic scholars, both Western and non-Western, have interpreted diversity as representing different manifestations of an essential Islam in different locations. Globalization has also given added significance to the notion of the Islamic Ummah as "a transnational supra-geographical community of fellow Muslims that transcends nationality and other bases of a community" (Ahmed, 1992, p.155).

Despite sharing a common religious identity, ethnic, linguistic, and other factors actually exist that divide the Islamic world into what scholars see as six broad zones (i.e., Arabic, Iranian, Turkish, Malay, Sub-Saharan African, and South Asian), "each of which can be further sub-divided into numerous sub-zones" (Nasr, 1981, p.30). These zones differ not only along linguistic lines but also in more subtle ways. For example:

> *The Malay zone's Hindu-Buddhist past, for instance, has inspired much of the arts and architecture that we witness in the region today, while the Sub-Saharan African zone is defined by its unique tribal and regional complexions*. (Nasr, 1981, p.41)

However, underscoring Islam's central role in the lives of its adherents is still imperative, thus making it a key source of cohesion and unity within all diversities. Transnational Islam manifests itself through an orientation not toward a particular migration circuit or diaspora (e.g., Iranian, Turkish) but toward the imagined community of Muslims (Roy, 1996) at large, either within one society or across many.

This idea of a transnational Muslim community, the nation of Islam, or the totality of all Muslims irrespective of place, origin, or orientation has always had great appeal, perhaps even more so now than ever before. The imagined 'united ummah' is referenced constantly across the globe in Islamic newspapers, books, TV programs, mosque sermons, Qur'anic lessons, and the Internet, which Haddad and Smith (2002, p.9) called "virtual Islam." As Nielsen (1999, p.13) suggested, modern communications offer "the solidarity of the ummah a tool of a practical strength which traditionally only the annual pilgrimage at Mecca was able to elicit." Bowen (2003, p.35) located transnational Islam within this "public space of reference and debate" with its network of scholars, conferences and websites. However, the lived experience of the ummah in popular and everyday life as a united community seems poorly documented (Ahmed & Donnan, 1994). It needs to have an actualized form rather than one simply imagined as it indeed comprises many factors beyond mere religion.

Firstly, the concept of tawhid (usually translated as "oneness" or "unity") can ultimately help one fully understand the Islamic sense of unity. This belief in unity lies at the very heart of Islamic life and thought. In fact, the first part of Islam's testimony of faith (the *Shahadah* in Arabic) affirms the Oneness of God: *La ilaha illallah* [there is no god but God]. Its deepest sense means that there is no reality save the Absolute Reality and that as a consequence all other "realities [are merely] relative and transitory" (Nasr, 1981, p.57,). However, the applicability of this concept is not strictly limited to God, even if Divine unity is its most fundamental assertion. For Muslims, the Oneness of God instead implies the additional unity, inter-relatedness, and interdependence of all creations, including mankind (Moris, 2003; Moten, 2005). Tawhid also applies to Muslims' lives as social beings who remain a united community in the transnational Muslim diaspora. The concept of Muslim unity is often summed up by the term "brotherhood," given its familial connotation.

The second unifying factor involves the deeds (Sunnah) and sayings (Hadith) of Prophet Muhammad, a figure held in the greatest esteem by all Muslims, both Sunni and Shi'a alike. Thirdly, Muslims are bound by the universal rites of the religion. This comprises the five daily prayers in the direction of Mecca, the fast (*sawm*) of the lunar month of Ramadhan, yearly mandatory almsgiving (*zakat*), and the Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca). The lives of all Muslims, whether Arab or non-Arab, rich or poor, are punctuated by these rites.

Undoubtedly, the existence of multiple cultures within the Islamic world makes achieving unity difficult for some due to the self-contented and imperfect attitude toward others in the ummah (Tibi, 2001). Nevertheless, this diversity is celebrated with respect to Islamic principles and is both a gift and a challenge to humankind from Allah. Important reminders are given in both the Qur'an (5:48, 22:34, 22:67, and 49:13) and elsewhere on the diversity of human beings being an expression of Divine Wisdom. Unity implies not uniformity but its antithesis, as some degree of diversity or multiplicity must exist by definition for any kind of unity to take place.

1.3. Malaysia as a Fertile Ground for Transnational Islam

Over the past couple of decades, Malaysian government policies have aimed at winning Malay Muslim political support in the face of sustained competition from the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), which advocates an Islamic state. This was done by creating a Muslim religious bureaucracy and codifying laws that provided the basis of an Islamic state, which led Malaysia to be perceived as a safe haven for Muslims. Consequently, a former prime minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, promoted his vision of Islam (i.e., Islam *Hadhari* [Civilizational Islam]) as a model for development in Malaysia, which emphasizes "the need for balanced development, which covers both physical and spiritual development" (Low, 2017, p.154). Badawi's approach means a shift in the approach of development from a secular paradigm to a holistic Tawhid paradigm that emphasizes growing a thinking society, social harmony, and economic progress.

Malaysia's success in maintaining a pluralistic political system, its vibrant economy which has grown at 8% per annum over the past two decades, and its adoption of policies that foster social integration have made the country a successful developmental model for many Islamic and emerging countries. These ultimately indicate the terrain of transnational Islamism in Malaysia to offer a robust empirical ground for understanding the impact globalization has had on the dynamics of the international Muslim population movement as an intersection and conjugation of the Islamic ummah.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Background

2.1. Transnational Migration

According to Muir et al. (2014), relocation across international borders for work is nothing new. People are found who move by choice (Favell, 2007), whose movement is initiated by an organization (Baruch et al., 2013), and who move in response to forces beyond their

control (Al Ariss et al., 2012). International migration is thus a transnational phenomenon that involves spatial movement across national boundaries. As such, transnational migration encompasses emigration and immigration and issues as diverse as the brain drain and labor migration.

As highlighted by the burgeoning field of transnational studies (Levitt, 2003, p.850), migration processes are "embedded in a nexus between national origins and national reception—a cultural, economic, and political bundle of fluid connections between the societies of origin and reception." Thus, migrants both shape and are shaped by the transnational contexts of their lives. A better understanding of the Muslim migrant experience has been suggested as calling for greater attention to transnational contexts such as the varied forms and characters of the national origins, as well as the nexus of national receptions that undergirds migrant lives.

2.2. Migration Theory

An extensive body of literature is found on migration and the many factors that can facilitate or impede the process (Portes & Borocz, 1989; Kritz et al., 1992; Massey, 1993; Bauer & Zimmermann, 1995). Though migration theory originated among economists who were primarily concerned about the movement of people from one locality to another for economic reasons, the complexity of the topic has made researchers and academicians across many disciplines investigate how migration affects individuals, communities, infrastructures, and resources.

More than a century ago, Ravenstein (1889) focused his theory on observed immigrant behavior that is determined by the presence of "attracting (pull) factors at a destination and repelling (push) factors at the place of origin" (as cited in Bijak et al., 2007, p.12). Lee (1966) reformulated Ravenstein's theory, giving particular emphasis to push factors and outlining how intervening variables such as human capital or motivation may significantly influence the migration process. Push factors include violence from political unrest, threat to personal safety, poverty and social insecurity, struggle for livelihood, and low level of education. Pull factors cover the more personal dreams of self-improvement, booming economy and security, job opportunities, favorable migration laws, unification with family, better socioeconomic possibilities, and education.

2.3. Push Factors Influencing International Muslims Toward Malaysia

In broad terms, a real, perceived, or apprehended lack of fundamental human rights is the push factor of migration. In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which asserts and protects the inherent dignity of all

members of humankind. These rights are the equal and inalienable rights for all to the right to life, liberty, security, health, education, food, clothing, housing, and livelihood. However, being unfortunately oppressed through lack of freedom, insecurity, and one or more of the above fundamental human rights, the intellectuals and professional classes as well as common folks of many countries have migrated in droves.

Conflict is the most common push factor for forced migration around the world and throughout history. Most recently, the world's focus has been on the Rohingya crisis, as religion has been the pretext for ethnic persecution and expulsion in Myanmar with over half a million of the country's Muslim population fleeing to various countries such as Bangladesh and Malaysia in the wake of violence and ethnic cleansing. Syria's deadly civil war is still ongoing and to date has left nearly 6.3 million Syrians displaced within the country and over 5 million Syrian citizens migrated to different countries such as Lebanon, Türkiye, and Malaysia for the sake of such things as safety, work, and education (UNHCR, 2023). South Sudan has been continuously plagued by war-induced migration during its short existence. In addition, mass movements have also been caused by armed fundamentalist groups such as Daesh (also known as ISIL/ISIS) in the Middle East or Boko Haram in sub-Saharan West Africa. Due to religious discrimination, the trend of Uyghurs leaving China mostly toward Malaysia has continued in recent years for educational and business purposes (Abdurehim, 2015). The amalgamation of the Muslim population from most of these countries in Malaysia is mainly backed by reasons such as people tending to seek opportunities for study, job, or business while not compromising their religious values.

2.4. Pull Factors Influencing International Muslims towards Malaysia

Studies on migrant transnationalism have highlighted the significance of the political histories between the migrant-sending and receiving states (Kim, 2011). The transnational contexts of migration reflect the dynamics of interstate power and global national hierarchy. Thus, how migrants are received in the destination society reflects "the position and status of the state from which they originate within the world political and economic order" (p.11).

Bashi (2007, p.18) described how transnational social networks can successfully organize the migration process by "providing access to employment and housing as well as legalized immigration status." In addition to the critical material resources of jobs and visas are other types of benefits, such as the emotional support that comes from the presence of kith and kin and from similar cultural atmospheres. Individuals from families or communities that have already positively experienced migration in previous years are more inclined to migrate, as their

travel abroad is regarded as a possible benefit to the origin society. For such individuals, the existence of ethnic or family links in the destination country is a further driver of migration.



Figure 2. Expatriate Muslim families in Malaysia keeping to their Ramadan traditions (Source: The Star, Malaysia, 2016).

Many expats (44%) in Malaysia say that, in terms of an active social life, they have better social lives now than they had had at home, this compared to 31% globally and 40% regionally ("Expats", 2018). Active engagement in transnational networks and institutions can sustain the meaning and significance of the society of origin (i.e., the homeland) as a point of social reference for migrants. In other words, with a dual frame of social reference, they are able to resist the negative effects of race and class stigma in the receiving society.

Considerable energy and resources may be directed toward maintaining transnational ties, especially in ways that strengthen one's sense of self-worth. In this regard, mosques play the essential role of providing an organic national network that connects different communities across space and that belong to the same major faith and identity (i.e., Islam and being Muslim). Being able to find a place to pray (*surau* or masjid) almost everywhere and being able to hear the call to prayer (adhan) through radio and television in Malaysia also appears as a strong instrument of cohesion for the transnational Muslim population there. This can thus help the international Muslim population reinforce their solidarity ties and activity platforms.

3. Methodology

This study analyzes the context of the international Muslim population that have come to Malaysia for educational, professional, or business purposes as a form of transnational migration on a temporary or long-term basis. The reason behind choosing international Muslim students and expatriates for this study is twofold. Firstly, the current Malaysian higher education

system has been able to attract a good number of international students. According to MOHE (2018), the top 10 Muslim source countries for international students in Malaysia are Bangladesh, Nigeria, China, Indonesia, Pakistan, Yemen, Sudan, Iran, Libya, and Kazakhstan. These are followed by Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Palestine, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Jordan and represent the Muslim world population in Malaysia's higher education institutions. Secondly, 44,140 expatriates were found in Malaysia in 2012, comprising 2.7% of foreign workers in the country. According to Bozionelos et al. (2017), the great numbers of internationally mobile workers (IMWs), along with the variety in motives and patterns of movement, have made them a very important population to study from both an empirical and theoretical perspective.

Before conducting the main survey, the push and pull factors developed from the literature review were pre-tested among the group of experts to ensure the contextualization of the factors based on the diaspora of transnational Islam. The factors were elaborated by the researchers of this study, and participation was solicited from the group to respond to the questions as a Muslim who had been pushed and then as a migrant who had been pulled. Their feedback was used to improve the questions, and the addition of demographic information completed the questionnaire. The 18 refined items were used in a pilot study. A self-administered survey was conducted among 100 international Muslim immigrants residing in Malaysia and comprised of both students and expatriates. Snowball sampling was used to select the respondents for the survey. Every effort was made to diversify the samples and make them as representative as possible so that the sample is not concentrated on just one specific group of people.

For this survey, the respondents in this study (i.e., international Muslim postgraduate students and expatriates) were allowed to express their level of agreement or disagreement based on a 7-point Likert-type scale regarding their source country's push factors and the host country's pull factors. The final questionnaire consists of two sections. The first section focuses on demographic information and the respondents' basic professional background. The second section is comprised of the push and pull factors used in this study. The push factors are low levels of education, struggle for livelihood, violation of human rights, political unrest, and religious discrimination, while the pull factors are such as geo-political relationships, favorable migration laws, cultural/ linguistic similarities, social factors, religious factors, and cost of living. Around 100 questionnaires were distributed among the international Muslim immigrants residing in Malaysia and included both students and expatriates. The response rate was 65%. The program Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 22) was used to analyze the frequencies of these factors against the international Muslim students and expatriates residing in Malaysia. Moreover, an independent sample t-test and one-way analysis of variance

(ANOVA) were utilized to compare the means among the various groups of respondents in terms of how their profession and geographic location have an impact on building a united ummah from the perspective of transnational Islam in Malaysia.

Afterward, six semi-structured interviews were conducted using the purposive sampling method from among the international Muslim immigrants who had been residing in Malaysia for over five years. The target was to collect their insights regarding the current picture of the push and pull factors and future prospects, as well as the consequences of people's religious beliefs, behaviors, and practices, on transnational Islam and the idea of the ummah as an international community.

4. Results and Discussion

Among the 65 respondents (international Muslim students and expatriates) in this study, 72.3% are male and 27.7% are female. Of the respondents, 60% reported being between 20-30 years old, 26.2% between 30-40 years old, and 13.8% over 40 years old. Of the participants, 46.2% are single, while 53.8% are married; 26.2% are associated with business/humanities, 46.2% with science/engineering, 12.3% with Arabic/Islamic Studies, and 15.4% with other fields. This study managed to reach mostly international Muslim students (70.8%), as their number is higher compared to the Muslim expatriate population in Malaysia.

Table 2. Demographic Information for International Muslim Students and Expatriates in Malaysia

	Frequency	**Percentage**
Gender		
Male	47	72.3
Female	18	27.7
Age		
20-30 Years	39	60
30-40 Years	17	26.2
More than 40 Years	9	13.8
Marital Status		
Single	30	46.2
Married	35	53.8
Stay Duration		
< 1 Year	5	7.7
1-2 years	9	13.8
2-3 years	4	6.2
More than 3 years	47	72.3

Expertise		
Business/Huminites	17	26.2
Science Engineering	30	46.2
Arabic/Islamic Studies	8	12.3
Others	10	15.4
Profession		
Students	46	70.8
Expatriate	19	29.2
Source: SPSS output		

The respondents to the survey are from 20 different countries. They were categorized into three different continents/regions (i.e., Asia, Middle East, and Africa) in order to better understand their behavior patterns regarding the push and pull factors of their inbound flow to Malaysia. The Middle East was singled out from broader Asia in order to distinguish the respective countries of the region with a marked difference from other Asian countries and their particular relevance to Islam. Consequently, 67.7% of the respondents were found to be from Asia, 13.8% from the Middle East, and 18.5% from African countries.

Based on the frequencies of the push and pull factors, the push factors are evidently stronger than the pull factors regarding the inbound flow of international Muslim students and expatriates toward Malaysia. The independent samples t-test was performed to see the differences among the international Muslim population in Malaysia regarding the impact of push and pull factors on their inbound flow to Malaysia. Levene's test for equality of variances showed no differences to occur among the international Muslim students and expatriates in Malaysia regarding the push and pull factors, ($p > 0.05$ at the 5% significance level). The two groups are found to be homogenous. Based on the one-way ANOVA, the test results for homogeneity of variance shows the international Muslim students and expatriates from Asia, the Middle East, and Africa to be homogenous regarding the various push and pull factors affecting their inbound flow to Malaysia.

The ANOVA results in Tables 3-8 show the international Muslim students and expatriates in Malaysia from Asia, the Middle East, and Africa to differ significantly regarding two push factors (i.e., escaping unrest such as violence or war [$p = .018 < 0.05$] and struggle for survival [$p = .038 < 0.05$] and regarding three pull factors (i.e., increase Islamic faith and knowledge in Malaysia [$p = .036 < 0.05$], quick adaptation to life in Malaysia [$p = .025 < 0.05$], and good geopolitical relationship with the home country [$p = .030 < 0.05$]. Because equality of variance can be assumed, Duncan's post-hoc test was used to compare the two push and

three pull factors in order to arrive at a conclusion. No significant differences were found for the rest of the push and pull factors ($p > 0.05$) among the Asian, Middle Eastern, and African international Muslim students and expatriates in Malaysia.

Table 3. ANOVA test results, Source: SPSS output

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
I found the social environment in my country is discriminating for the Muslim population.	Between Groups	6.147	2	3.073	.704	.499
	Within Groups	270.715	62	4.366		
	Total	276.862	64			
I found there are good quality higher education institutions to study in various subjects (i.e. Business, Engineering, Science, etc.) including Arabic/Islamic Studies in Malaysia.	Between Groups	.953	2	.476	.313	.733
	Within Groups	94.432	62	1.523		
	Total	95.385	64			
I knew how to go about applying for a job in Malaysia.	Between Groups	19.581	2	9.790	2.818	.067
	Within Groups	215.404	62	3.474		
	Total	234.985	64			
Before I left my country, people were crowding into the capital to escape the unrest (i.e. war, violence et.) in the provinces.	Between Groups	32.987	2	16.493	4.282	.018
	Within Groups	238.798	62	3.852		
	Total	271.785	64			
My family/friends and I were struggling for basic survival items to live day by day.	Between Groups	28.324	2	14.162	3.456	.038
	Within Groups	254.076	62	4.098		
	Total	282.400	64			
I have chosen Malaysia as it is an Islamic state	Between Groups	3.252	2	1.626	.598	.553
	Within Groups	168.533	62	2.718		
	Total	171.785	64			
I found sufficient options for international Muslim students/expatriates to study/work in Malaysia.	Between Groups	9.981	2	4.990	1.706	.190
	Within Groups	181.404	62	2.926		
	Total	191.385	64			
I knew Malaysia is a secular state, but with Muslims as the majority of the population	Between Groups	6.339	2	3.170	1.191	.311
	Within Groups	165.045	62	2.662		
	Total	171.385	64			
I knew living in Malaysia will be conducive for me to increase Islamic knowledge and strengthening my faith in Islam	Between Groups	14.015	2	7.007	3.500	.036
	Within Groups	124.139	62	2.002		
	Total	138.154	64			
I was convinced with Malaysia's Govt's conducive policy and alliance with the Muslims world	Between Groups	2.495	2	1.248	.547	.581
	Within Groups	141.351	62	2.280		
	Total	143.846	64			

I could adapt quickly to Malaysia culture (food, language, music, clothes, and religion).	Between Groups	16.762	2	8.381	3.930	.025
	Within Groups	132.222	62	2.133		
	Total	148.985	64			
I knew Malaysia respects people's freedom of religion	Between Groups	7.170	2	3.585	2.186	.121
	Within Groups	101.692	62	1.640		
	Total	108.862	64			
I Knew doing a job/business in Malaysia will be prospecting due to its booming economy.	Between Groups	.574	2	.287	.142	.868
	Within Groups	124.965	62	2.016		
	Total	125.538	64			
I knew I will be able to unite with my family and/or friends in Malaysia.	Between Groups	6.001	2	3.000	1.714	.189
	Within Groups	108.553	62	1.751		
	Total	114.554	64			
I found Malaysia's migration laws are favourable for the International Muslim population.	Between Groups	.037	2	.019	.005	.995
	Within Groups	213.409	62	3.442		
	Total	213.446	64			
I knew Laws in Malaysia should have more Islamic elements	Between Groups	7.913	2	3.957	1.733	.185
	Within Groups	141.533	62	2.283		
	Total	149.446	64			
I believed that Malaysia would be socially secured for the international Muslim population.	Between Groups	.038	2	.019	.010	.990
	Within Groups	122.116	62	1.970		
	Total	122.154	64			
I knew that Malaysia has a good geopolitical relationship with my country.	Between Groups	21.860	2	10.930	3.726	.030
	Within Groups	181.894	62	2.934		
	Total	203.754	64			

Table 4. Duncan's Post-Hoc Test Results for the Push factor 1 ('escape the unrest')
*Duncan[a,b]

Continent	**N**	**Subset for alpha = 0.05**	
		1	**2**
Asia	44	2.95	
Africa	12	4.00	4.00
Middle East	9		4.89
Sig.		.166	.238

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.
*a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 13.814.
*b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

Based on this procedure, the mean for the first push factor regarding international Muslim students and expatriates of Asia is significantly lower compared to the mean for those from the Middle East and Africa. This means the African and non-Middle Eastern Asian countries have less intense situations in terms of war and violence.

Table 5. Duncan's Post-Hoc Test Results for the Push factor 2 ('struggle for survival') *Duncan[a,b]

Continent	*n*	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Asia	44	2.80	
Africa	12	3.58	3.58
Middle East	9		4.67
Sig.		.310	.165

*[a] Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 13.814.
*[b] The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

Based on this procedure, the mean for the second push factor regarding the international Muslim students and expatriates of Asia is significantly lower compared to the mean for those from the Middle East and Africa. Thus, those from some of the Middle Eastern and African countries are the main ones who have to struggle for basic needs. This is also caused by the previous push factor in their countries.

Table 6. Duncan's Post-Hoc Test Results for the Pull factor 1 ('increase Islamic faith') *Duncan[a,b]

Continent	*n*	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Middle East	9	4.44	
Africa	12	5.17	5.17
Asia	44		5.75
Sig.		.185	.283

*[a] Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 13.814.
*[b] The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

Based on this procedure, the mean of the first pull factor for international Muslim students and expatriates of the Middle East is significantly lower compared to Asia and Africa. Most Middle Eastern Muslims do not feel their place to be less conducive when it comes to practicing Islam and strengthening their faith in Islam.

Table 7. Duncan's Post-Hoc Test Results for the Pull factor 2 ('quick adaptation to life in Malaysia') *Duncan[a,b]

Continent	*n*	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Africa	12	4.17	
Middle East	9	5.22	5.22
Asia	44		5.50
Sig.		.062	.619

*[a] Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 13.814.
*[b] The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

Based on this procedure, the mean of the second pull factor for the international Muslim students and expatriates of Africa is significantly lower compared to the Middle East and broader Asia. As Malaysia itself is a part of Asia, it has nurtured a cultural atmosphere that is close to the Muslim Population in other parts of Asia. Besides, nowadays the proliferation of Middle Eastern culture in Malaysia in terms of Arab food, Music, Clothing, etc. has also conquered the market in Malaysia. However, in this regard, the African culture is yet to reach that prominence in Malaysia.

Table 8. Duncan's Post-Hoc Test Results for the Pull factor 3 ('good geopolitical relationship')
*Duncan[a,b]

Continent	*n*	**Subset for alpha = 0.05**	
		1	**2**
Africa	12	4.08	
Middle East	9	4.67	4.67
Asia	44		5.52
Sig.		.374	.194

*[a] Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 13.814.
*[b] The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

Based on this procedure, the mean for the third and final pull factor regarding the international Muslim students and expatriates from Africa was significantly lower compared to the mean for those from the Middle East and Asia. Malaysia has always maintained sort of an apolitical, self-focused foreign policy and maintains a positive relationship with the countries of the respondents (e.g., India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Nepal) in terms of a large supply of students, expatriates, and workers. Most of the Muslim citizens of Middle Eastern countries are also aware of the positive alliance their countries have with Malaysia. However, this was not routinely evidenced or deemed significant in the case of African countries.

4.1. The Interview Outcomes

Based on the outcome of the quantitative analysis in this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with six international Muslim students and expatriates in Malaysia. The respondents were chosen from those who had a long duration of stay that is firm (i.e., status) and focused (e.g., living with family) enough in Malaysia, as this can be helpful for capturing their true experiences and inner thoughts about the previously mentioned push and pull factors. The interviews were initially conducted face-to-face and lasted approximately 30 minutes. Later on, the researchers of this study made further clarifications through telephone interviews in order to understand their responses better.

The first interviewee was a former Bangladeshi expatriate lecturer and a current postgraduate student who has been living in Malaysia for over 10 years. When asked about the overall experience in Malaysia as a Muslim female, she related the following:

> *I have never felt any pressure as a Muslim woman living in Malaysia from the people around me. I have never felt alienated as a Bangladeshi Muslim from the local and international Muslims residing in Malaysia. This is the essence of the united ummah from my point of view. However, throughout these long years of staying in Malaysia, I am skeptical about the Malaysian government's immigration laws, particularly in regard to showing honor to its long-staying international Muslim students and expatriates.*

The thoughts of one Iraqi expatriate who has lived in Malaysia for over 10 years succinctly captured some important issues regarding transnational Islam:

> *The instability in my country is what made me stay so long in Malaysia. I don't differentiate between Muslims. If the Government of Malaysia could have inclusive policies like Oman where discriminating between Shias and Sunnis or between Salafis and Sufis is restricted by law, this would be exemplary as a mark of a united ummah.*

One expatriate from India expressed deeper satisfaction about Malaysia, particularly highlighting the atmosphere there in masjids during the month of Ramadan:

> *I have a similar positive attitude toward all Muslims as well as non-Muslims. I think the Malaysian Government should have stronger policies so that educated and skilled international Muslim migrants feel settled here and can serve the country.*

Another Indian expatriate who has been in Malaysia for 20 years shared his experience, comparing the past to the present. As a Tamil language speaker, he found it very easy to connect with other Malaysian Indians. However, according to him, the immigration policies in Malaysia seem to have become less flexible over time, even for skilled international Muslims:

> *One interesting thing in Malaysia regarding the unity of the ummah is that different sects and schools such as Shias don't have different mosques here like they have in India. Apart from the tolerance and people's good manners here, halal food availability, and geographical and climatic conditions are the convenient factors for Muslim migration here. For me, joining my extended family in Malaysia was also important.*

Another interviewee had initially migrated as a research fellow of a government-run Islamic organization and is currently a PhD student from Bangladesh. This student mentioned his attempts at establishing two Islamic institutions in Malaysia thanks to the availability of

resources and the conducive environment in the country. He sees the problem of Muslims' disunity in the religious arrogance of certain groups and relates to Malaysia's good atmosphere as follows:

> *Back in my country, I couldn't find opportunities to mingle with various groups of Muslims from around the world like in Malaysia. I am hoping that the current Government does something for those international Muslims who sincerely wish to live and settle here and pursue their religious endeavor as a <u>united community.</u>*

Another PhD student from Bangladesh who has been in Malaysia for 5 years highlighted Malaysians' Islamic nature as not being arrogant or harmful toward other Muslims as is seen in some other countries. According to him, problems happen when one sect or school does not want to accept others as Muslims or possibly better Muslims than themselves just because they have a different attitude to a matter. He added:

I have strong hope from Dr. Mahathir whom I see as a vibrant Muslim leader. I hope to see more positive initiatives for a sustainable <u>united ummah</u> under the current leadership of Malaysia.

5. Conclusion and Implications

This study has intended to view transnational Islam from the perspective of the unity of the ummah. Malaysia was chosen as the breeding ground for implanting a united ummah. As a multicultural and Muslim majority country, Malaysia has been a conglomerative place for the international Muslim population for over two decades, because acculturation, assimilation, and multiculturalism are embedded in the transnational phenomenon, and this phenomenon needs ample social support from the host country in the quest to successfully form a united Muslim community.

Firstly, this paper analyzed the push (from home country) and pull (to destination country) factors that have influenced the inbound international Muslim students and expatriates toward Malaysia. According to the respondents from the three different continents/regions (i.e., Asia, the Middle East, and Africa), these migrant Muslims had evidently mostly been driven by pull factors toward Malaysia. The outcome of analyzing the push factors revealed the majority of the students' and expatriates' reasons for migrating to Malaysia have not always been related to religious discrimination in their home countries. Of course, many Muslims needed to migrate from the Middle East and some parts of Africa due to the unrest in their countries, but they still came to Malaysia as students or expatriates and not as asylum seekers. Thus, though pull factors are dominant, differences are found in some cases from Asia, the Middle East, and Africa regarding the three pull factors.

Most studies on transnational Islam have taken place in Western contexts, where Muslims are the minority (Doris, 2006; Aitamurto, 2019) and mostly maintained ethnically divided communities, as Werbner (2002) pointed out regarding the picture in Britain:

> *… even today there are Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Arab mosques, as well as Turkish and Shi'a mosques, and the language of sermons and even supplicatory prayers in the Pakistani mosques, whatever their tendency, is Urdu rather than Arabic.*

The interview outcome of this study revealed in-depth views regarding the overall push and pull factors for Muslim migration to Malaysia and their impact on the united ummah for a transnational Islam. The responses revealed that international Muslim students and expatriates generally want to live in a regular Muslim society that has better prospects and security for them as Muslims. In addition, some international Muslims with a *dawah* [call to Islam] mission also feel the need for favorable groundwork to form Muslim associations or perform *dawah* work as a mark of their contribution toward Islam.

As Desker (2003) suggested, responding effectively to the challenge posed by the migration of the international Muslim population toward Southeast Asian states, particularly Malaysia, is crucial. In line with this transnational diaspora, Malaysia needs to build up its own networks of multilateral cooperative relationships as an endeavor to establish a united ummah in order to benefit from this inbound flow of Muslims. Globalization can enhance the cause of a global ummah if the Tawhid Paradigm (Richardson, 2013) is accepted and practiced in a transnational conglomeration of Muslims such as in Malaysia. This is the time to have Muslims from diverse backgrounds and nationalities play a key role as a united ummah in order to participate in the worldwide debate against the propaganda of so-called Islamic terrorism.

Malaysia needs to take several initiatives aimed at increasing its capabilities at nurturing the spirit of a united ummah by positively utilizing the diaspora of transnational Islam. Firstly, the country's migration laws should be carefully scrutinized so that it can better facilitate the international Muslim migrants who sincerely wish to live and contribute there. Contrary to the image of strong states (e.g., USA, UK) treading on the rights of citizens, the reality in Southeast Asia is that the state remains fragile and open to challenge in an era of political instability, economic stagnation, and social disruption (Desker, 2002). The motives for forming a sustainable united ummah as a diaspora for transnational Islam in the context of Malaysia can act not only as an anecdote for addressing all these unrests but also as a reference point for future researchers to continue their research endeavors toward similar Muslim conglomeration hubs.

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CHAPTER 3

IDEOLOGICAL DISPUTE BETWEEN PURIST SALAFIS AND ISLAM NUSANTARA IN THE INDONESIAN ISLAMIC DISCOURSE: JURGEN HABERMAS' PERSPECTIVE ON DISCOURSE THEORY

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the ideological dispute between purist salafis (transnational Islam) and *Islam Nusantara* (local Islam) in the Indonesian Islamic discourse. During the Reformation era (1998–2023), purist salafis developed rapidly in Indonesia and even dominated the Internet and social media. Concerned about this, the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has suppressed the development of purist salafis. In 2015, NU defined its ideology as *Islam Nusantara* (an ancient Indonesian name) and purist salafis as transnational Islam, to regard the ideology of NU as indigenous and that of purist Salafism as foreign. Meanwhile, the purist salafis campaign portrayed the ideology of *Islam Nusantara* as a liberalism project that is different from the Islam of Prophet Muhammad and called their purist salafis *Ahlu al Sunnah wa al Jama'ah* to attract sympathy as a mainstream ideology in Indonesia, which is interesting. How did the ideological dispute between purist salafis and NU form the Islamic discourse in Indonesia? Can a consensus be reached between them to form an *ummah*? Results show that reaching a consensus is difficult. The reasons are that both have formed their own Islamic discourse in Indonesia, the NU's discourse formed over anti-Salafism, and integration of Islam with local culture was stronger than before, whereas the discourse of purist salafis has formed stronger than Islamic purification, anti-liberalism, and anti-Shiah.

Keywords: Islam Nusantara, Salafism, NU, Islamic Discourse, Local Islam, and Transnational Islam

1. Introduction

Nowadays, particularly after the September 11 attacks, discussions on the development of transnational Islamic ideology (Salafism) often become a global topic (Meijer, 2009, p. 1). When did the spread of this transnational Islamic ideology start? In Indonesia, the spread of this transnational Islamic ideology (purist salafis) has been around since the 1980s, in conjunction with the establishment of the *Islamic and Arabic College of Indonesia* (LIPIA) in Jakarta (Muhtarom, n.d.). LIPIA is a college that obtains funding from Saudi Arabia. Through LIPIA, Saudi Arabia (government and Salafi foundations) has been providing scholarship assistance, educational facility development assistance, mosque construction assistance, and other social assistance to the Indonesian people. The LIPIA alumni, particularly those who have continued learning in Saudi Arabia, have been spreading the transnational Islamic ideology massively to the Indonesian people through various ways, for example, educational institutions and radios, YouTube, and social media. Hence, since the 1980s, the transnational Islamic ideology of purist salafis has been developing and reached its peak in the Reformation era (after the fall of the Soeharto authoritarian regime, 1998) (N. Hasan, 2008).

The transnational Islamic ideology of purist salafis follows the Islamic form of Saudi Arabian Wahhabism, although they acknowledge that they are back on al-Qur'an and hadith and *al salaf al shalih* scholars (the first three generations of Islam). The purpose of purist salafis Indonesia is to purify and rectify the Islamic form practiced in Indonesia (integrating Islam and local culture). According to purist salafis, integrating Islam and local culture like many found in Indonesia is a heresy (Jahroni, 2018; D. Wahid, 2015).

Certainly, the purpose of purist salafis Indonesia is to destroy one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, that is, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), for the following reasons. First, this Islamic organization has always practiced Islam that compromises with local traditions and culture. One of the principles of NU is *al adah al muhakkamah* (good tradition can be determined as juristic) and *al muhafadzah ala al qadim al shalih wa al akhdz bi al jadid al ashlah* (maintain the good old teachings and contextualize it with the good new teachings) (Fealy & Bush, 2014). Second, NU initially came forward to provide a representative organization that could travel to Saudi Arabia and influence the Wahhabist new ruler to retract the demolition of the tomb of Prophet Muhammad and Waliyullah (holy persons) that Indonesian Muslims often visit (Ismail, 2011).

Therefore, when the purist salafis grows strong in Indonesia, NU should take immediate action to respond. NU has popularized the idea of *Islam Nusantara* (Islamic Archipelago),

which started since muktamar (conference) NU 33rd August 1–5, 2015. The ideal purpose of the *Islam Nusantara* ideology is to reaffirm that Islam in Indonesia is adopting local culture. The result of the adaptation was *Islam Nusantara*, which emphasizes peace, harmony, and compassion that manifest the core of Islamic teachings.

The political purpose of the *Islam Nusantara* ideology—as per Said Aqil (NU general chairman)—is to withstand Salafism dissemination in Indonesia. The term *Islam Nusantara* is used to regard this ideology as indigenous, whereas the other ideology (in this case, purist salafis) is regarded as foreign because *nusantara* (archipelago) has an ancient Indonesian name. Therefore, NU hopes that Indonesian people will consider purist salafis as a foreign and negative ideology so that it will fade away in Indonesian society and, on top of that, if necessary, be prohibited by the Indonesian government.

The circle of purist salafis in Indonesia knows that *Islam Nusantara* discourse is a form of NU's resistance to purist salafis ideology, so they also fight back. They massively promote that *Islam Nusantara* is a liberalism project and different from the Islamic of Prophet Muhammad and perverted through their radio, educational institutions, website, YouTube, and social media. Moreover, the purist salafis in Indonesia also often named their ideology as *ahlu al sunnah wa al jama'ah*, such as a mainstream ideology in Indonesia, to attract sympathy.

This ideological dispute between transnational Islam of purist salafis and local Islam of "Islam Nusantara" is interesting and worth observing. How does the ideological dispute between transnational Islam of purist salafis and local Islam of *Islam Nusantara* form an Islamic discourse in Indonesia? Is it possible to reach an Islamic discourse consensus between them? Can both of them be the *ummah*?

To answer these questions, I will use the discourse theory of Jurgen Habermas, a German philosopher. According to Habermas, discourse is a kind of communication in which participants can no longer freely use socially accepted statements because, in discursive communication, participants must provide rational and reflective reasons. Discourse is an effort not only to produce legitimate norms but also to test the truth of hypothetically considered norms.

Furthermore, Habermas said that a discourse can reach a rational consensus if it is inclusive, egalitarian, and free of dominance. However, is it possible to reach a consensus? Do the participants in those discourses bring their own interests? According to Habermas, those interests are not something static or something isolated from other interests. The intersubjective contact has formed those interests. Thus, a collision of interests will occur in a discourse, but the common interest or the discourse will achieve a consensus through this collision.

In addition, in this research, I will use several methods of data collection, such as literature review (journal article, book, and website) and mass and social media observation. This research restricts to study only the ideological dispute between transnational Islam of purist salafis and local Islam of *Islam Nusantara* particularly between the purist salafis Saudi Arabia network and Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU—the big administrator of NU) in Jakarta from 2015 to 2019.

2. Transnational Islam of Purist Salafis in Indonesia: An Overview

Before discussing the transnational Islam of purist salafis in Indonesia, first, I will provide an overview of the Salafi movement. The Salafi movement originated in Saudi Arabia. Initially, the name of the Salafi movement was Wahhabism. Since the 1970s, Saudi Arabia has been campaigning for Wahhabism in all Muslim countries worldwide.

Khalid Abou el Fadl noted four factors that motivate Saudi Arabia to campaign Wahhabism in all Muslim countries worldwide. First, by rebelling against the Ottomans, Wahhabism appealed to the emerging ideologies of Arab nationalism in the 18th century. Second, Wahhabism advocated the return to what Abd al-Wahhab saw as the pristine and pure origins of Islam. Third, by controlling Mecca and Medina, the symbolic heart of Islam, and the sites where millions of Muslims perform pilgrimage each year, Saudi Arabia became naturally positioned to exercise a considerable influence on Muslim culture and thinking. Fourth, the discovery and exploitation of oil in Saudi Arabia provided the country with high financial liquidity (Abou El Fadl, 2005, pp. 70–72). However, according to several other researchers, a factor of Saudi Arabia's campaign of Wahhabism to all Muslim countries worldwide is the dynamics of international Islam, particularly the Islamic revolution of Iran in 1979 (Ali, 2018; N. Hasan, 2010; D. Wahid, 2014; Yon, 2006).

Particularly, in the globalization of Wahhabism, Saudi Arabia prefers to use the Salafism term than the Wahhabism term. For its followers, the Wahhabism designation is an insult because it indicates that they are one of the sects within Islam, but they understand themselves to be Islam, and it is the only possible Islam (Abou El Fadl, 2005, p. 74). Therefore, they prefer to call themselves Salafi rather than Wahhabi.

As noted in the history, Salafism is different from Wahhabism. Salafism is a creed founded in the late 19th century by Muslim reformers, such as Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1323/1905), Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1314/1897), Muhammad Rashid Rida (d. 1354/1935), Muhammad al-Shawkani (d. 1250/1834), and Jalal al-San'ani (d. 1225/1810). Some people even attributed the origin of the creed to Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya

(d. 751/1350). The word *salaf* means predecessors, and in the Islamic context, it usually refers to the period of the Prophet, his Companions, and their successors. Although the term was originally adopted by liberal reformers, in the early 20th century, the Wahhabis referred to themselves as Salafis. However, the term did not become associated with the Wahhabi creed until the 1970s (Abou El Fadl, 2005, pp. 74–75).

Since the 1970s, the Wahhabis who referred to themselves as Salafis have spread around the world. Although it is a movement with clearly defined characteristics, it is not a homogeneous movement but—particularly in the modern era—has become a movement with mixed and recently even contradictory tendencies that have sprung up in different regions (Meijer, 2009, p. 3). According to Roel Meijer, one of the factors that make Salafis not a homogeneous movement is the contradiction between expounding a rigorous doctrine of complete submission to God, represented in the doctrine of the Oneness of God (tawhid), and the demands this makes on the believer to adhere to this creed. This case is partly a political issue. Can a believer implement this fundamental injunction by accepting political power even if the ruler does not adhere to Islamic law, the shari'a? In addition, should the believer concentrate on *tarbiya* (education) and *da'wa* (spreading the faith) to create a purified Muslim society? Alternatively, should the true believer correct the deviant ruler by verbally upbraiding him or even rising up against him? In other words, is Salafism primarily quietist or activist, and to what degree should it be one of these alternatives (Meijer, 2009, p. 4)?

Surveying the map of Salafism today, Roel Meijer identified three elements: jihadi Salafism, political Salafism, and quietist Salafism (Meijer, 2009). Jihadi Salafism channels Wahhabi thinking on how to manage Muslims and Muslim-run entities that fail to meet the doctrinal test of faith and action but is influenced by Muslim Brotherhood thinker Sayyid Qutb's ideas on the apostasy of postcolonial Muslim rulers. The second element, sometimes termed *al-salafiyya al-tanzimiyya* (organized/activist Salafism), supports some level of involvement in national political processes (as seen in Kuwait, Bahrain, and Egypt). The third one, sometimes called *al-salafiyya al-ilmiyya* (scholastic Salafism), is "quietist" in that it rejects participation in processes of political contestation and advocates obedience to rulers as long as they ensure the writ of *sharia* through the empowerment of its guardians, the *ulama* (Hammond, 2017, p. 419).

Different from Roel Meijer, according to Zoltan Pall, the Salafis movement in Tripoli and Northern Lebanon was divided into two groups, that is, purist Salafis and *haraki* Salafis. The purist Salafis is supported by the Kuwait-based foundation, the Jam'iyyat Ihya' al-Turath, whereas the *haraki* Salafis received generous funds from the Qatar-based Sheikh Eid Charity

Foundation (Pall, 2013). However, according to Din Wahid, Salafis movement in Indonesia is categorized into three, that is, purist Salafis, *haraki* Salafis, and Jihadist Salafis. The purist Salafis are those who advocate absolute compliance to the ruler and concentrate their activities on *da'waand* education. The *haraki* Salafis is a political movement. They believe that Islam is an all-encompassing worldview that covers all aspects of life, including rituals, social norms, economics, and politics. The last category of Salafism is the *jihadists*. In contrast to the *haraki* who criticizes the government verbally and refrain from violent actions, the *jihadist* group goes further by taking up arms against Muslim rulers (D. Wahid, 2015, pp. 372–373).

This study will discuss purist salafis, neither *haraki* Salafis nor *jihadist* Salafis, because International Crisis Group purist salafis is a dominant Salafis in Indonesia. Purist salafis emerged in Indonesia in the 1980s. Purist salafis emerged in Indonesia through Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII), a *da'wah* council founded by an Indonesian Islamic scholar and politician, Mohammad Natsir (1908–1993) (N. Hasan, 2008, p. 45). The reason is that the establishment of DDII is a political deadlock that has hindered the ambitions of its founders in the political arena, particularly associated with their demands to rehabilitate the party of Masjumi (an Islamic party) and to legalize the Jakarta charter (an effort to make Indonesia an Islam country). The reason for the political deadlock is the marginalization of Islamic politics by the Soeharto authoritarian regime, so the focus of DDII shifts from the political movement to the *da'wa* movement (Latif, 2013; Natsir, 1998).

In conjunction with this situation, Saudi Arabia was campaigning massively the Salafism around the world, and DDII had similar views with Salafism that the Shia is heretical rather than establishing cooperation with Saudi Arabia. According to Noorhaidi Hasan, DDII has received considerable funding from Saudi Arabia through institutions, such as Hai'at al-Ighatsah al Islamiyyah al-'Alamiyyah (International Islamic Relief Organization), al-Majlis al-'Alami lil-Masajid (World Council of Mosques), al-Nadwat al-'Alamiyyah li al-Shahab al-Islami (World Assembly of Muslim Youth) and Lajnat Birr al-Islami (Commite of Islamic Charity) (N. Hasan, 2008, p. 49).

Purist salafis has developed in Indonesia owing to the cooperation of DDII and Saudi Arabia. In 1980, Saudi Arabia founded LIPIA in Jakarta. LIPIA is a college that obtains funding from Saudi Arabia. LIPIA is directly under the control of Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Through LIPIA, Saudi Arabia (government and Salafi foundations) has been providing scholarship assistance, educational facility development assistance, mosque construction assistance, and other social assistance to the Indonesian people.

The LIPIA alumni, particularly those who have continued their studies in Saudi Arabia, mark the birth of a new generation of purist Salafis in Indonesia. The prominent LIPIA alumni include Chamsaha Sofyan (Abu Nida), Ahmad Faiz Asifuddin, and Aunur Rafiq Gufron. All of them are DDII cadres, but they are different from DDII generations before. Most of them already commit to spreading the Salafis teachings in Indonesia (N. Hasan, 2008, p. 65).

The LIPIA alumni held *halaqh* (circle discussion) and *daurah* (training) on many campuses in Indonesia. Owing to the successful recruitment of many students through the *halaqh* and the *daurah*, they established a Salafis foundation that continues to grow rapidly. Through the Salafis foundations, they spread purist salafis in Indonesia. At a later time, the Salafis foundations expanded establishing *pesantrens* (a traditional Islamic educational institution that originally belonged to NU), radios, websites, and magazines. Therefore, purist salafis has been growing rapidly in Indonesia, particularly since the Reformation era (after the fall of Soeharto authoritarian regime, 1998).

As noted above, the purpose of purist salafis Indonesia is to purify and rectify the Islamic form in Indonesia (integrating Islam and local culture). According to purist salafis, integrating Islam and local culture like many found in Indonesia is a heresy. Purist Salafis members often show the opposite attitude to local culture and are less tolerant of diversity and differences of opinions (N. Hasan, 2014).

3. NU and Islam Nusantara: An Overview

Certainly, as noted above, the purpose of purist salafis Indonesia is to destroy one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, that is, the NU, because of the following. First, this Islamic organization has always practiced Islam that compromises with local traditions and culture. One of the principles of NU is *al adah al muhakkamah* (good tradition can be determined as juristic) and *al muhafadzah ala al qadim al shalih wa al akhdz bi al jadid al ashlah* (maintain the good old teachings and contextualize it with the good new teachings) (Fealy & Bush, 2014). Second, NU initially came forward to provide a representative organization that could travel to Saudi Arabia and influence the Wahhabist new ruler to retract the demolition of the tomb of Prophet Muhammad and Waliyullah (holy persons) that Indonesian Muslims often visit (Ismail, 2011). Therefore, when the purist salafis grew strong in Indonesia, NU immediately took action to respond and popularize the idea of *Islam Nusantara* in Indonesia.

However, before I explain *Islam Nusantara*, I will first provide an overview of NU as Islamic organizations popularized the idea of *Islam Nusantara.* NU is the largest Islamic

organization in Indonesia. Said Aqil Siraj noted that the number of NU members is approximately 84 million people (164 Channel, n.d.). NU has a member base in almost all regions in Indonesia (Turmudi, 2012).

NU was established on January 30, 1926, in Surabaya, Indonesia. The establishment of NU was influenced by the international context where at the time the Turkish parliament abolished the Caliphate, and the wahabis Abdul Aziz bin Saud controlled Mecca. Just before the establishment of NU, there was news that a world Islamic congress would be held in Mecca.

Related to the congress, Indonesian Muslims dissent. Traditional Muslims were concerned that Abdul Aziz bin Saud would prohibit Syafi'I's education and ritual in Mecca, whereas Modernist Muslims were very happy with the dominance of Abdul Aziz bin Saud in Mecca. Indonesian Muslims held two congresses, that is, Yogyakarta in 1925 and Cianjur West of Java in 1926. The result of these congresses refused the proposal of Kiyai Haji (KH.) Wahab Hasbullah (one of the Traditional Muslims' ulama). That is, Abdul Aziz bin Saud must guarantee religious (sect/madzhab) freedom in Mecca, and these congresses recommend two delegations from Modernist Muslims (Head of State Tjokroaminoto from Sarekat Islam and Mas Mansoer from Muhammadiyah) (Fealy, Barton, & Wahid, 1997, p. 10).

These events convinced several Kiyai (clerics of Traditional Muslims) that they must do their own initiatives, unlike Modernist Muslims whose religious interests were guaranteed. Finally, on January 31, 1926, KH Abdul Wahab invited the prominent *ulama* to his house in Surabaya to discuss what they had talked about in their meetings in several cities in Java. In addition to Abdul Wahab, the leading ulama who attended the meeting were KH Hasyim Asy'ari of the Pesantren of Tebuireng (Jombang), KH Bisri Syansuri of the Pesantren of Tambakberas (Jombang), KH Raden Asnawi of Kudus, Ma"mun of Lasem, Ridwan of Surabaya, H. Abdullah Ubaid of Surabaya, Alwi Abdul Aziz of Malang, H. Abdul Halim of Lewimunding (Cirebon), H. Doro Muntaha of Bangkalan (Madura), Dahlan Abdul Qahar of Kertosono, and H. Abdullah Faqih of Gresik, among others (Ismail, 2011, p. 259).

From their meeting, these influential *ulama* made two important decisions, which would later color the pages of Indonesian Islamic history. First, they formally established the Komite Hijaz whose term would end when its delegates returned from Saudi Arabia to Indonesia. Second, they established an organization to act as an instrument for the *ulama* to guide the Islamic community in achieving the glory of Islam and of the Muslims (Ismail, 2011). From the suggestion of KH Alwi Abdul Aziz, this organization was called the NU. Thus, the NU was formally established in Surabaya, East Java, on January 31, 1926.

The main teaching of NU is Islam of *Ahlus Sunnah Wa al Jama'ah* specifically explained by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari as follows: in Islamic theology (*aqidah*), NU follows Abu Hasan al-Asy'ari and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi; in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), NU follows one of four madzhabs (school of thought within fiqh) that is Maliki, Hambali, Hanafi, Syafi'I; in Islamic mysticism (sufism), NU follows al-Ghazali and Junaid al-Baghdadi. Other than that, NU has a thinking method (*manhaj al-fikr*) that is moderate (*tawasuth*), balanced (*tawazun*), tolerant (*tasammuh*), and fair (*i'tidal*) (Akhiyat, 2017; M. T. Hasan, 2005; Makin, 2016).

The thinking method in turn makes NU members regarded as "Traditional Muslims." The thinking method in turn allows NU members to appreciate local traditions and local culture. They maintain and modify local traditions and local culture to become an Islamic tradition or Islamic culture, such as *slametan*. Initially, *slametan* was a Hindu tradition, but according to Wali Sanga (Islamic scholars who spread Islam in Java, Indonesia in the 15th century), this tradition was modified into Islamic tradition by inserting Quran reading activities and *dhikr* in the congregation into *slametan* (Woodward, 1988) and was maintained by NU members.

Therefore, when purist salafis who rejected local culture have grown rapidly in Indonesia, particularly since the Reformation era, NU does not remain silent. Then, NU conceptualizes its teachings specifically using the term *Islam Nusantara*. In PBNU's official book, Ahmad Sahal explained that *Islam Nusantara* is an Islamic practice in Indonesia. The ideal purpose of the *Islam Nusantara* ideology is to clarify that Islam in Indonesia adopts the local culture. The results of the adaptation show that *Islam Nusantara* emphasizes peacefulness, harmony, and compassion, which are the manifestation of the core of Islamic teachings (A. Wahid, Sahal, & Aziz, 2015).

Furthermore, *Islam Nusantara* has several characters. First, scientific genealogy (*sanad*) is continuous and traceable to Rasulullah Muhammad. Second, wisdom and virtue should be prioritized rather than symbolic Islam, such as turban. Third, *Islam Nusantara* is non-cooperative but not frontal and radical. NU always maintained things that are principle and flexible on things that are not principle. Fourth, *Islam Nusantara* has tolerance for diversity (Al-Zastrouw, 2017; Makin, 2016; Munfaridah, 2017; Qomar, 2016; Ramdhan, 2018).

The *Islam Nusantara* term has been popular since *muktamar* (conference) NU 33rd August 1–5, 2015, in Jombang East Java. At that time, NU raised the theme, "Strengthen *Islam Nusantara* as a civilization in Indonesia." As Said Aqil Siraj (general chairman of NU) said, "the purpose of this theme is to respond to the rampant misconceptions about Islam, such as Islam is terrorism, Islam is a violent religion, and Islam is an extremist religion." Therefore,

NU strives to still have Islamic tolerance, Islamic friendliness, and Islam *rahmatan lil alamin*, that is, *Islam Nusantara* (Darmadi, 2016; Official NET News, n.d.).

Meanwhile, the other purpose of this theme (*Islam Nusantara*) is to withstand Salafism dissemination in Indonesia. Employing the term *Islam Nusantara* is clearly intentional to view this ideology as indigenous, whereas the other ideology (in this case, purist salafis) is regarded as a foreign ideology because *nusantara* (archipelago) has an ancient Indonesian name. NU named purist salafis as a transnational ideology and characterized it as foreign, radical, and violent (Hilmy, 2014). Therefore, NU hopes that Indonesian people will consider purist salafis as a foreign ideology and a negative ideology, so that ideology will fade away in Indonesian society, on top of that, if necessary, prohibited by the Indonesian government (Fata & Ichwan, 2017, p. 356).

4. Indonesian Purist Salafis' Responses on the Idea of Islam Nusantara

The circle of purist salafis in Indonesia knows that *Islam Nusantara* discourse is a form of NU's resistance to purist salafis ideology, so they also fight back. They massively promote that *Islam Nusantara* is a liberalism project and different from the Islamic of Prophet Muhammad and perverted through their radio, educational institutions, website, YouTube, and social media. Moreover, the purist salafis in Indonesia also often named their ideology as *ahlu al sunnah wa al jama'ah*, such as a mainstream ideology in Indonesia, to attract sympathy.

Several purist Salafis in Indonesia campaign to reject the idea of *Islam Nusantara.* First, Abu Nida, one of senior figures of Indonesia Purist Salafis. In a seminar in Yogyakarta in August 2016, he said that *Islam Nusantara* is not Islam. It is a new religion. With the intention of belittling, he asked, "What is *Islam Nusantara*? What is the Quran of *Islam Nusantara*? Who is the prophet of *Islam Nusantara*? Who is the God of *Islam Nusantara*?"

Second, Syafiq Riza Basalamah, one of the popular YouTube *da'i* of purist Salafis in Indonesia noted that *Islam Nusantara* is an Israeli Zionist effort to separate Islam from its origin (Arab and Rasulullah). According to him, Islam cannot be separated from Arab. He said, "Quran is Arabic, is not it? Prophet Muhammad is Arabian, is not it?" ("Tanya Jawab: Islam Nusantara - Ustadz Dr. Syafiq Riza Basalamah, M.A. - YouTube," n.d.). Furthermore, Syafiq Riza, Oemar Mita, and Khalid Basalamah (also popular YouTube *da'i* of purist Salafis in Indonesia) said that *Islam Nusantara* is wrong because the Islamization of the archipelago should not be the same as the purpose of *Islam Nusantara* and vice versa. According to them, *Islam Nusantara* has reversed the mission of Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, *Islam Nusantara* is a misguided understanding ("Islam Nusantara - Ustad Oemar Mita Lc - YouTube," n.d.;

"Tanya Jawab: Islam Nusantara - Ustadz Dr. Syafiq Riza Basalamah, M.A. - YouTube," n.d.; "[VV]"Islam Nusantara" itu cuma orang iseng & Dialog Ustadz Khalid Basalamah Dengan Orang Katolik - YouTube," n.d.).

Third, Luqman bin Muhammad Ba'abduh, a purist Salafis in Indonesia, commented about *Islam Nusantara* on the official website of Indonesian Purist Salafi (salafy.or.d). He said that, "*Islam Nusantara* is a liberalism project that wears a mask of Islamic tradition. Moreover, *Islam Nusantara* can cancel the faith (*iman*). The reason is that *Islam Nusantara* recognizes all religions as true and acknowledges lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT). Furthermore, *Islam Nusantara* refused heads carves (burqa/jilbab) and hate Arab" ("Link audio kajian ilmiyyah 'Permutadan Terselubung di balik gerakan islam nusantara' - Salafy.or.id," n.d.).

Fourth, Jel Fathullah, a purist Salafis from West Sumatra, Indonesia, said in a Friday sermon (khutbah Jum'at) broadcast in Tazkiyah media that, "*Islam Nusantara* is a real deception. *Islam Nusantara* is contrary to comprehensive Islam (*Islam kaffah*) because of the accepted local traditions. *Islam Nusantara* is a Shiite project because Said Aqil Sirajd (who founded *Islam Nusantara*) indicated it as a Shia. *Islam Nusantara* is a Jewish project because Yahya Cholil Staquf is a Jewish henchmen" ("Mengapa Keyakinan Islam Nusantara Sesat? Ini jawabannya - Ustadz Jel Fathullah - YouTube," n.d.). Furthermore, Jel Fathullah said that "*Islam Nusantara* is a tribalism, a Hadis, said, 'Whoever calls it a tribalism is not my group.' Therefore, *Islam Nusantara* is not the teachings of Prophet Muhammad" ("Mengapa Keyakinan Islam Nusantara Sesat? Ini jawabannya - Ustadz Jel Fathullah - YouTube," n.d.).

The above are the Indonesian purist Salafis's responses to the idea of *Islam Nusantara*. Most of their responses were based on their perspective (even their emotions) on the idea of *Islam Nusantara*, and not on the review of NU's perspective of the idea of *Islam Nusantara*, such as PBNU's official book of *Islam Nusantara*. Therefore, most of their responses to the idea of *Islam Nusantara* are wrong and end up being insulting.

5. NU's Responses on Indonesian Purist Salafis's Responses on the Idea of Islam Nusantara

Considering the many refusals on *Islam Nusantara*, particularly from purist Salafis, finally, NU responded to these refusals. First, Said Aqil Sirajd, the NU general chairman and founder of *Islam Nusantara*, clarified that *Islam Nusantara* is not a new religion; it is only a typology of Islamic practice in Indonesia. The typology of Islamic practice in Indonesia is Islam, which is friendly to local traditions and culture, as long as the local traditions and

culture do not contradict with *sharia*. If the local traditions and culture contradict with *sharia*, such as LGBT and drinking alcohol, then NU rejects it explicitly (Official NET News, n.d.).

Furthermore, Said Aqil clarified that *Islam Nusantara* does not hate Arabs and is not liberalism. He said, "I found *Islam Nusantara* to be very like Arab. I like Arabic, and I like Arabic songs, so if they say I hate Arabs, they are wrong. Other than that, *Islam Nusantara* is not liberalism. Liberalism is not based on the Quran and Hadis, which I always use everywhere. My lectures are always based on the Quran and Hadis. Therefore, if they said that *Islam Nusantara* is liberalism, they are wrong." ("KH Said Aqil Siraj Ditegur Tokoh NU Masalah Jenggot, Jilbab & Islam Nusantara - Vidio.com," n.d.).

Second, Habib Lutfi bin Yahya, one of the senior figures of NU, said that *Islam Nusantara* is not different from Islam in general. According to Habib Lutfi, wherever Islam is the same, the region and tradition are different. The *sharia* of Islam in Nusantara is the same, but his *da'wah* model is different, for example, Sunan Kudus (one of Wali Sanga) *da'wah*. When Sunan Kudus preached Islam, the Hindu people were dominant in Kudus, Middle Java. In Hindu's teaching, a cow is a noble animal, whereas in Islamic teaching, a cow is a halal animal. In this case, Sunan Kudus forbids his students to slaughter cows in lieu of slaughtering buffalo. According to Habib Lutfi, slaughtering cows is *Islam Nusantara* and does not violate *sharia* ("(62) Blak-blakan Habib Luthfi bin Yahya: NKRI Itu Syariah! - YouTube," n.d.).

Third, Marzuki Mustamar, the Tanfidyiyah chair of NU East Java, said that *Islam Nusantara* is the same as Islam in general, except for their religious expression. The order to close the *aurat* is the same, but the method of closing is different from Arab using a turban and Nusantara using sarong and songkok. Furthermore, Marzuki Mustamar said that Prophet Muhammad never forbade Muslims to call his tribal, such as Salman al-Farisi, Suheb al-Rumi, and Bilal al-Habsi. Becoming Islam does not have to become Arabian. Therefore, Islam and Nationalism are not a contest ("Penjelasan Islam Nusantara Sangat Gamblang Oleh Ulama Asli NU KH Marzuki Mustamar Habib Abu Bakar - YouTube," n.d.).

6. Ideological Dispute Between Transnational Islam of Purist salafis and Local Islam of "Islam Nusantara" in Indonesia: The Perspective of Discourse Theory of Jurgen Habermas

We have seen before the debate or ideological dispute between purist Salafis and NU about *Islam Nusantara*. This ideological dispute is interesting and worth observing. Is it possible to reach an Islamic discourse consensus between them? Is it possible for both of them to be the *ummah*? How does the ideological dispute between transnational Islam of purist salafis and

local Islam of *Islam Nusantara* form an Islamic discourse in Indonesia?

To answer these questions, I will use the discourse theory of Jurgen Habermas, a German philosopher. According to Habermas, discourse is an effort not only to produce legitimate norms but also to test the truth of hypothetically considered norms. Discourse is a kind of communication in which participants can no longer use socially accepted statements because, in discursive communication, participants must provide rational and reflective reasons (Habermas, 1996). In this study, rationality is a statement, where its reason can be explained or recognized intersubjectively. The rational argument not only drops the opponent of communication but to find the truth (Habermas, 1974, 1984).

According to Habermas, a discourse can reach a consensus if the opponents of communication can accept each other's argument or statement. When each participant of discourse wants to stand on a broader basis than the tradition of each flow, the participant of discourse will be receptive to consensus. In detail, the discourse will be receptive to consensus when the discourse is open, egalitarian, and free of dominance (Hardiman, 2009, p. 48).

Based on the discourse theory of Jurgen Habermas, it seems hard to argue that the ideological dispute between transnational Islam of purist salafis and local Islam of *Islam Nusantara* in Indonesia will be receptive to consensus and hard for both of them to become an *ummah*. First, the ideological dispute between purist Salafis and NU about *Islam Nusantara* occurs with the defensive and attack methods and logical demonstration of the beloved truth. The purist Salafis group statements on the idea of *Islam Nusantara* are attacking statements, such as "*Islam Nusantara* is deviating," "*Islam Nusantara* hates Arab," "*Islam Nusantara* is infidel," "*Islam Nusantara* is heresy," and "*Islam Nusantara* is liberalism." By contrast, NU's statements on Purist Salafi's response to *Islam Nusantara* are close to a defensive argument, such as "*Islam Nusantara* does not deviate," "*Islam Nusantara* does not hate Arab," "*Islam Nusantara* is not infidel," "*Islam Nusantara* is not heresy," and "*Islam Nusantara* is not liberalism." The consequence of this dialectic is that we end up criticizing each other rather than being constructive. Even worse, purist Salafis and NU refer to Plato's criticism of the sophist group as being the "master of dialectics" that is someone who understands how to make the right argument into a wrong one or vice versa (Ess, 1992, p. 6). In any case, the NU argument purist Salafis will respond negatively and vice versa. Therefore, disagreement is more common in ideological disputes between transnational Islam of purist salafis and local Islam of *Islam Nusantara* in Indonesia than a consensus. In addition, it is hard for both of them to be an *ummah*.

Second, purist Salafis and NU do not want to stand on a broader basis than the tradition of each flow. By contrast, purist Salafis and NU have different perspectives and contradict, particularly on the integration of Islam and culture. For NU, integrating Islam and culture is not wrong, but for purist Salafis, it is wrong (Jahroni, 2018). In addition, some purist Salafis on YouTube, such as Jel Fethullah and Syafiq Riza, forbid their students to read or study PBNU's official book of *Islam Nusantara*. In other words, they do not want to stand on a broader basis than their tradition. Therefore, it is hard for both of them to reach a consensus and to be an *ummah*.

The reason is that achieving a consensus between Purist Salafi and NU is more difficult than forming each Islamic discourse in Indonesia. Rejecting purist Salafis on *Islam Nusantara* will finally make the discourse on Islamic purification strong in Indonesia. The rejection of purist Salafis on *Islam Nusantara* attracts considerable attention among Indonesian people, particularly urban Muslims. From my observations, purist Salafis campaigns through the Internet (YouTube, social media, etc.) are more popular than NU's campaigns. The purist Salafis YouTube channel has more subscribers than NU's YouTube channel. For example, when this article was written, the purist Salafis YouTube channel or purist Salafis YouTube channel, such as Syafiq Riza Basalamah Official, has 343.280 subscribers, and Khalid Basalamah Official has 941.334 subscribers, whereas NU's Chanel, such as Islam NUsantara Aswaja channel, has 158.901 subscribers, 164 Channel has 40.096 subscribers, and Gus Muwafiq Official has 119.239 subscribers.

In addition to Islamic purification being strong in Indonesia, the campaigns of rejecting the purist of Salafis on *Islam Nusantara* have effectively made anti-liberalism discourse and anti-Shiah discourse stronger than before. The purist Salafis campaigns equate *Islam Nusantara* with liberalism and *Islam Nusantara* with shiah, effectively making several Indonesian Muslims sympathize with purist Salafis and anti-NU. Even NU was divided over the campaign. NUGL (NU *Garis Lurus*/ NU Straight Line) appears in NU. Although the NUGL disagrees with purist Salafis in Islamic purification discourse, they agree with purist Salafis in anti-liberalism and anti-Shiah discourse, so some NUGL, such as Buya Yahya, said that there is a liberalism and shiah project behind the idea of *Islam Nusantara* (Al-Bahjah TV, n.d.).

Different from purist Salafis, *Islam Nusantara* campaigns make the spirit of integration of Islam and local culture in Indonesia strong. NU's campaigns on the Internet are not as effective as purist Salafis campaigns, but in the real world, NU remains powerful, even much stronger than purist Salafis. Abangan Muslims (more information see Geertz, 1971) are certainly affiliated with NU. Furthermore, as noted above, NU is the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia with approximately 84 million members. The members of NU spread evenly throughout Indonesia, particularly in the villages. Based on the Ministry of Religious Affairs report in 2019, Indonesia

has 28.194 pesantrens (Daftar Pondok Pesantren Seluruh Indonesia, 2019) mostly affiliated with NU (Pribadi, 2013), whereas only 41 pesantrens were affiliated with purist Salafis (Nahimunkar.com, 2017). Therefore, NU campaigns are more influential than purist Salafis in Indonesia. Even the discourse that purist salafis is a foreign and negative ideology (although not always like that) is strong in Indonesian people. Purist Salafi's recitations (*da'wah*) have been dismissed by the Indonesian people, such as in East Java, Bali, and Middle Java.

In addition, *Islam Nusantara* campaigns make the spirit of Islamic Nationalism in Indonesia strong. The idea of *Islam Nusantara* made the patriotic spirit of Indonesian Muslims stronger than before, whereas, in the Reformation era, the Islam transnational movement (including Purist Salafi) made this spirit even weaker (for more information about Islamism in Indonesia, see Rahmat, 2018). In the presence of *Islam Nusantara* discourse, the Islamism spirit, which became stronger after the fall of Soeharto authoritarian regime in 1998, finally faced a strong challenge.

7. Conclusion

Finally, this study examines the ideological dispute between transnational Islam of purist salafis and local Islam of *Islam Nusantara* in Indonesia from the perspective of discourse theory of Jurgen Habermas. The study found the following:

a. The ideological dispute between transnational Islam of purist salafis and local Islam of *Islam Nusantara* in Indonesia makes it hard to reach a consensus, and it is hard for purist Salafis and NU to be an *ummah* in Indonesia. There are two reasons why. First, the ideological dispute between purist Salafis and NU about *Islam Nusantara* occurred with defensive and attack methods and logical demonstration of beloved truth. Second, purist Salafis and NU do not want to stand on a broader basis than the tradition of each flow.

b. The rejection of purist Salafis on *Islam Nusantara* will finally make the discourse on Islamic purification, anti-liberalism, and anti-Shiah stronger than before in Indonesia. Contrary to purist Salafis, *Islam Nusantara* campaigns make the spirit of integration of Islam and local culture and the spirit of Islamic Nationalism in Indonesia stronger than before.

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CHAPTER 4

GLOBALIZATION OF TRANSNATIONAL RELIGIOUS CAPACITIES: A STRATEGY TOWARDS THE ISLAMIC UMMAH: INVESTIGATING THE GREAT ARBA'IN RELIGIOUS EVENT

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ABSTRACT

To achieve the width and maneuverability of the soft power of the Islamic world, Islam needs to globalize its religious capacities to enable the formation of the Islamic ummah. To have this event occur, we must act on the discourse of Islam in the international environment based on fitrah with a focus on the ummah. *Fitrah* [innate nature] is considered to be one of the main topics in the Islamic religion as an intrinsic philosophical layer of Islam regarding intercultural and multicultural dialogue, while the ummah is considered an external operational layer of Islam in international dialogue. This study examines as a case the various dimensions of the large community of Arba'in, one of Islam's innate transnational religious capacities. Nowadays, the Arba'in community has become a transnational ritual with indigenous and intercultural characteristics and the potential to focus on the Islamic ummah and its formation. This research addresses the challenges in forming the Islamic ummah and the globalization of innate and transnational religious capacities as the strategy for achieving it. This article has been conducted using library and documentary methods as a theoretical study on *fitrah* and its implications regarding cultural theory and the study of the Arba'in phenomenon.

Keywords: Globalization, Islamic ummah, transnational reserves, Arbaian community, *fitrah*, soft power

1. Introduction

In recent decades, one axis has been dominant in human life with no other axes actively present. As a result, the dominant axis has introduced itself globally and used all the economic, political, cultural, and academic resources to establish itself globally (Entezari, 2010). This axis has also profited from the global division of labor and the specialization of industry and economics in many countries regarding the production of commodities, especially their relative advantages for the benefit of global capitalism. Although this is a brief description, A clear understanding of the world of hidden divisions exists in line with the aims and interests of the so-called global capitalist system. Many disputes, arguments, and sanctions result from a country seeking to withdraw from this division or being unable to tolerate the current division. The same is true in politics, culture, and the media. The Western world uses its core ideology, its ideology of modernity, and modern information and communication technologies in its quest to expand Western culture as a global culture, Western capitalism as a global economy, Western dominance through the concept of globalization, and Western power under the heading of global politics. Societies have not all confronted the Western world and modernity in the same way. Exposure to the Western world under the heading of globalization has been passive in some societies and groups who have tried to adapt themselves to the prevailing situation in the world. The slogan in these societies is "Think globally and act locally." But the key question is, why is it not "Think locally and act globally?" Meanwhile, other societies have taken a more resilient and active approach.

This resistance and activation can be seen to occur in one of two ways. The first is violent resistance, and the second is soft resistance. Violent resistance occurs as resistance to the resilient performance of globalization, which is clearly in stark contrast to the religious and ethnic values of some social groups. Examples of this type of resistance can be found in terrorist groups such as ISIS, the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and other terrorist groups. These terrorist groups initially worked to combat the manifestations of globalization but then went on to act as a weapon in the hands of the leaders of globalization. In fact, this is the Western project of Islamophobia, which aims to present a negative image of Islam and is followed by the West. The second type of resistance is soft resistance. Soft resistance occurs with no negative impact on globalization; it instead relies on its religious and civilizational resources and capacities to provide an alternative to global economic, political, and cultural patterns. Basically, societies that have these resources and capacities appear to be more likely to have soft resistance than other societies (Ashrafi & Sharifi, 2018).

The vast religious and civilizational capacities, resources, and wealth of the Islamic world and the religion of Islam, alongside the emergence of violent resistance in the form of terrorist groups that present to the world a negative image of Islam, indicate the need for the Islamic world to present a positive image and to offer an alternative approach to the Western world and modernity in the form of a revival of religious and civilization capacities and soft resistance. At present, the challenge of terrorist groups is the greatest challenge preventing the Islamic world from forming the Islamic ummah. That said, the way out is to revive and globalize indigenous and transnational religious capacities. Increasing the soft power of the Muslim world is important for accelerating the formation of the ummah and for reaching the stage of globalization. Islamic countries must use their soft power resources to achieve this. The use of religious and civilizational capacities that are prone to transnationalism is a prime example. This research will examine the large community of Arba'in as a case study. All that has been stated in the introduction here demonstrates the importance and extent of this issue, as well as the importance of this research from both practical and theoretical perspectives.

2. Problem Design and Research Method

The main issue of this study is the strategy of forming the Islamic ummah and overcoming the challenges to this using the globalization of indigenous and transnational religious capacities. Using the theoretical literature, this study attempts to present an innovative definition and perspective while offering various views on globalization and the Islamic ummah. Furthermore, based on the theoretical literature, this article discusses the privileged character of Islam in the context of intercultural and multicultural dialogue using *fitrah* [innate nature] as an intrinsic and philosophical layer on the path of globalization and the ummah as an outer layer and function of *fitrah*. The intrinsic properties of any religious capacity make it susceptible to globalization. In this article, the conclusion examines the dimensions of f*itrah* and of the ummah of the great Arba'in community as an intrinsic and transnational phenomenon and successful example on the path of globalization. The paper uses library and documentary methods to gather and study all Persian resources on the subject of the Arba'in community. In addition, the author of this article has had two years of experience and field observations in the Arba'in community. This article's two sections on the theoretical literature concern the fields of globalization and the Islamic Ummah. Many sources have been written and are available on these two fields, the most important of which are reviewed herein. What is of great importance in explaining the research background, as well as marking this paper's innovative research, is the importance of examining the theory of *fitrah* as an intrinsic philosophical layer of Islam, especially with regard to intercultural dialogue and this essay's case

study of the Arba'in community. In order to review the background of the research, several important sources must be mentioned regarding these two areas. Dr. Mohsen Labkhandagh's article on the implications of *fitrah* theory on cultural theory has been used as the main source regarding *fitrah* theory (Labkhandagh, 2011). This article describes the characteristics of *fitrah* then introduces and reinterprets *fitrah* theory into cultural theory. Most books on the Arba'in community are the result of a series of articles exploring the various dimensions of this community. One of the most brilliant books in this field is Dr. Massoud Moeenipour's book on civilization, rationality, spirituality in the context of Arba'in (Moeenipour, 2015). This book has four sections: 1) civilization and the Ummah in the context of Arba'in, 2) the major social capacities of this Husseinian religious ritual, 3) its trans-religious capacities, and 4) a model for future studies on Arba'in. Another book on the Arba'in community is Abbas Ashrafi and Ali Sharifi's book, which looks at Arba'in studies through 13 articles that examine each of Arba'in's particular perspectives (Ashrafi and Sharifi, 2018). Mohsen Hesam Mazaheri's book of sociological essays on Arba'in is another useful resource and contains seven articles on this field (Mazaheri, 2018).

3. Islam's Capacity for Globalization

By looking at the religion of Islam, one can see that the Islamic world has an extraordinary capacity for globalization. The concept of globalization is further explained by the doctrines of liberal thought in the fields of economics, politics, and society. In contrast, however, some globalization scholars have been skeptical of the liberal doctrines of globalization. In this approach, human schools of thought fundamentally do not have the capacity for globalization, because human thought, despite being solid and powerful, cannot encompass different cultural and social structures. This is why some have said that only religions, especially the Abrahamic religions, have this capacity and the intrinsic potential for globalization. The reasoning in this approach is that globalization needs to believe in a superior truth and ultimate value that can appeal to all cultures and civilizations; therefore, only religions can claim globalization. How can a humanist who has actually declared war against God claim the capacity for globalization. The world would have to believe in one truth, one ultimate value, and one essential being. To serve one's self and embrace globalization, as the world now indicates, shows how only religions have succeeded in claiming globalization (Afrogh, 2001). Among the Abrahamic religions, however, only Islam with its all-encompassing and universal nature and its human characteristics that mainly address human beings regardless of their ethnic, linguistic, or territorial affiliations has the potential for globalization. In response to the question of the extent to which Islam as a set of these revelatory laws and ordinances has the potential for

globalization, some Islamic scholars stated believing that Islam has certain characteristics indicative of its high potential for globalization. The most important characteristics of Islam in this regard can be stated as follows (Sajjadi, 2008):

1. The principles and values of Islam have universal characteristics and the nature of globalization and are in accordance with the nature of all human beings.

2. Islam views the world and humanity as a single body, pursuing social justice in this respect for all human societies.

3. Islam widely acknowledges ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity.

4. The audience of Islam includes all nations and ethnicities, as well as all ages; therefore, followers of this religion can be identified these days more or less on all continents of the world.

As one of the best most important resources on the Islamic religion and also as the main miracle of the Islamic religion, the Holy Qur'an contains points that indicate the transnational and universal capacity of Islam. The Qur'an has such a large potential that the idea of this book can be called an ummah, with the Qur'an alone being sufficient enough to arrive at the Islamic ummah provided that the Islamic world tries to use the Qur'an's capacities in thought and action and seek to introduce it to the world. The following are some of the expressions of the Holy Qur'an and its views on world issues (as cited in Eftekhari, 2018):

1. Emphasis on the single nature (*fitrah*) of human beings:
"O humanity! Be mindful of your Lord Who created you from a single soul" (Qur'an, 4:1)
2. Emphasis on all human beings have one and the same parents:
"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female" (Qur'an, 49:13)
3. Emphasis on their Creator and Mentor being one and the same:
"The Most Compassionate taught the Qur'an, created humanity, and taught them speech." (Qur'an, 55:1–4)
4. All human beings have a common nature (*fitrah*):
"[Adhere to] the *fitrah* of Allah upon which He has created [all] people." (Qur'an 30:30)
5. All human beings are bound by a common covenant:
"Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified." (Qur'an, 7:172)

The new Pew Research Institute results show that Islam will achieve remarkable growth by 2050, when for the first time in history, the population of Muslims and Christians around the world will be almost equal. The results also indicate that the population of non-believers

will decline and the global appeal to religion to grow. Therefore, the basis of globalization is religion, and of all the religions, Islam is the one that can be presented as an alternative to modernity, the current dominant approach of the world.

4. Islamic Ummah and Fitrat Theory

The essential point is that Islam has a strategic view because of its fundamental principles on civilization that go back to the nature of the Islamic worldview. The doctrine of the Islamic ummah is one of the tenets of the Islamic view of civilization, the consequence of which presents a new paradigm whose level of analysis is trans-regional and transnational. First, this study needs to take a closer look at the notion that the concept of the ummah has central focus in the social and political system of Islam. From the historical and religious point of view, the first Islamic state was founded by the Prophet (peace be upon him). This concept has persisted in various forms over time. Simply put, what this concept implies is that for a Muslim, religion is not merely an individual affair between oneself and God; it also identifies all the relationships one has with one's Muslim siblings, non-Muslim associates, and other creations of the Almighty God. As such, religion encompasses all life from birth to death, from moral and spiritual life to social, economic, and political life. In Islam, the individual and society are so interconnected that the individual and social aspects of life are not separated. The use of ummah as a word and design for a group of people united on the basis of religion, divine commandments, and divine leadership that form a religious community with common goals was first presented in the Qur'an (Bayat, 2015). Although ummah has a broad meaning in principle, it implies the meaning of *umm* [mother] in the Islamic tradition. In other words, the ummah has always been bound by a kind of convergence, not by place and blood but by shared beliefs. Therefore, what makes the ummah more than a coherent political situation or social cohesion is its ideological sharing and unity of practice and action based on the ummah, a belief that has emerged from the teachings and commonalities of human life derived from the teachings of revelation. The members of the Islamic ummah are all worshipers and servants of the Almighty God. Their solidarity is in fact the disciplines of faith and belief that bind each and every Muslim to Allah through Islam. Therefore, with regard to Islam's rejection of territorial, linguistic, blood, and other boundaries, the ummah from the point of view of Islam is inherently transnational and transcendent; in other words, it has a universal character (Zarei, 2011).

In Islamic culture, human beings' basic sacred bond is not based on sharing blood, race, or territory and land; nor on gathering and sharing regarding one destination or set of aspirations (whatever these may be) or on sharing class interests; it is based on the most fundamental factor of unity and the social bond and common movement people share in the certain way that

they have consciously chosen a certain direction and kind of social unity this shared leadership requires (Zanjani, 2012). A thorough examination of the ayahs in the Holy Qur'an involving the word ummah show that it is more expressive than other words at depicting the image of the Muslim religious community. The word ummah differs fundamentally from the meanings of society, nation, country, and homeland, as the criteria in the last four involve racial, geographical, and national characteristics, while the main criterion in the Islamic ummah is ideological and involves cultural unity and an Islamic religious worldview. Thus, thoughts crystallized around the concept of ummah in Islamic civilization have no room for geographical or spatial limitations and boundaries nor for ethnic, racial, or linguistic prejudices. Rather, the criterion of the Islamic ummah is the unity of belief and commitment to the universal teachings of the Holy Qur'an. Shariati (1969) also emphasized Islam to have used the word ummah over other words such as nation, tribe, ethnicity, branch, class, community, clan, or race.

Islam is able to be a universal religion in this sense. The theoretical basis of the research and its innovative presentation is that Islam has an intrinsic and esoteric capacity, as well as a philosophical basis called *fitrah* that is intrinsically concerned with all human beings and the world. The outer layer of Islam is also based on the nature of ummah, and at the heart of the word is the universal meaning of the ummah. The religion of Islam, which we know as the basis of the ummah, confirms the previous religions, completes them, and fulfills itself through Allah's last prophet. Because Islam does not conflict with the other Abrahamic religions or the common nature of other human beings, it has a universal potential. Some kind of discussion occurs of a unified religion that will shape a unified ummah. *Fitrah* theory depicts a human nature that is divine, pervasive, irreversible, non-attainable, and error-free, one where other creatures do not benefit from it. Thus, *fitrah* is the means of distinguishing human beings from other created beings. The introduction of the concept of *fitrah* to the foundations of various sciences has had many epistemological consequences. Cultural theory is one science that can bring about important scientific achievements with the introduction of the concept of *fitrah* such as the cultivation of indigenous cultures, all cultures benefitting from divine *fitrah*, acknowledging part of the cultural differences of societies, analyzing cultural crises on the basis of *fitrah*, voting on the transcendence of all cultures, indigenous communication, the ability to talk about cultures using the language of *fitrah*, the intrinsic meaning of cultures possessing religious culture, and the introduction of cultural politics based on the theory of *fitrah* (Labkhandagh, 2011).

Fitrah theory is the title of a view that is organized on one hand by what is human and on the other hand by God. This theory depicts human beings as divine, pervasive, irreversible, non-attainable and error-free, and human *fitrah* is something from which other beings do not benefit.

Thus, *fitrah* is the means of distinguishing human beings from other beings. One aspect of this theory is its ability to explain the existential link between humans and religion. *Fitrah* theory considers religion as a book of divine law, and humans as a book of development, with *fitrah* establishing an inextricable link between them (Labkhandagh, 2011). Given the understanding of *fitrah*, this strategic concept should be recognized for its effective ability to be applied to all matters. One very important issue is the implications of *fitrah* theory in cultural theory. Unfortunately, in spite of the importance of the issue of *fitrah*, no significant scientific effort has been made to expand the concept's presence in the foundations of science. *Fitrah* is essential for the survival of cultures. In principle, harmony with human *fitrah* is not only necessary for the life of cultures but also for the life of any phenomenon that somehow deals with basic human needs, including laws and sciences, and it depends on coordination with this divine duty (Javadi Amoli, 2006). Every culture must certainly be admitted having an innate truth. The concept of *fitrah* can be divided into two main parts: genuine and non-genuine. The genuine part of any culture is its fixed and enduring part, the innate elements of culture. However, the non-genuine part of any culture does not necessarily imply anything negative but instead observes the natural dimension of societies. The innate elements of cultures are inextricable due to *fitrah* being irreducible to the individuals in a society, however unobtrusive or marginalized some may be. One group of cultural differences is about *fitrah*, while the other is about what is natural. Because human beings' *fitrah* is unaltered, elements such as homosexuality that are found in non-*fitrah* cultures are invalid from the Islamic point of view. Avoidance of nature leads to cultural and social crises. These warnings can lead directly back to physical and mental issues. Societies that have material prosperity but that have kept aloof of divine beliefs and ethics are generally distracted and depressed. Because *fitrah* as a potential possibility is always present in every society, it is innate in all cultures, thoughts, and motives regarding transcendence. Human *fitrah* is enough to awaken and incite, so all societies are transcendent.

In order to form the Islamic ummah, the Islamic world must turn to the capacities of Islam, especially its transnational capacities and reserves. The distinctive feature of the Islamic religion in the transnational and global environment is *fitrah* and the attention given to it. According to what is stated in *fitrah* theory and its implications in cultural theory, *fitrah* is what enables intercultural understanding and communication in societies. Therefore, conformity with *fitrah* can be concluded as the criterion of the transnational reserves of the Islamic world and the religion of Islam and its success in achieving the goal of reaching the Islamic ummah. Globalization of transnational religious reserves in accordance with *fitrah* will be the strategy of the Islamic world toward the Islamic ummah. *Fitrah* is the intrinsic and philosophical basis of Islam in

intercultural and transnational dialogues, where acting unconsciously creates the Islamic ummah as the operational extrinsic layer of Islam in the transnational environment. Arba'in's huge community is a transnational phenomenon. The transnationality of this phenomenon is due to its use of innate (*fitrah*) capacities, which has made it popular with all humans and societies. The following sections attempt to study the intrinsic and transnational capacities of Arba'in. In addition to its transnational features, what has made this phenomenon successful is its increasing tendency to become a supporter of the Islamic world firstly for the unity of Muslims, secondly for the formation of the Islamic ummah, and thirdly for the globalization of Islam.

5. The Great Community of Arba'in

Arba'in Hosseini is the 20th day of the month of Safar and the fortieth day after Ashura, which marks the anniversary of Imam Hussein's (AS) martyrdom. The massive march on this day to Karbala has become one of the most important and widespread events in the world in recent years, even among the largest religious communities. The captives of the Karbala incident are known to have come to Karbala on the 20th day of the month of Safar in the year 61 AH on their return from Sham for the burial of Imam Hussein (AS). Also on this day, Jabir ibn Abdullah Ansari visited the tomb of Imam Hussein (AS), and the march these days is influenced by this historic event from times long gone.

The massive Arba'in community in Karbala is known as the largest gathering of humanity on Earth. Some reports announced 20 million people to have participated in the Arba'in march in 2013. The Arba'in community is also a transnational historical religious reserve that is based on *fitrah* characteristics. The Arba'in community used to be mainly run by the Iraqi people and has had its ups and downs due to government bans in the past, whereas today it has become a transnational custom. Participation in the Arba'in community by other of other communities is expanding rapidly, and this partnership is visible in both the participant and host roles. This is also due to transnational and intrinsic characteristics such as humanity, the existence of a single value, and the disappearance of social classes, as well as its peacefulness, focus on justice, humility, and cooperation. People from non-Iraqi communities in Arba'in are gradually recognizing and belonging to this community. The perception and emotion of the participating people is such that the political and contractual boundaries have diminished. In fact, time and place are compressed by Arba'in.

The following sections examine the phenomenon of Arba'in and its features from two perspectives, one based on *fitrah* and the other focused on the ummah.

5.1. Investigating the Phenomenon of the Arba'in Community from the Viewpoint of *Fitrah*

a- The fading of instrumental rationality: Humans are created on the basis of divine f*itrah*, departing from this godly blessing over time under the influence of external and internal factors. A touch is needed for these factors to be removed from *fitrah*. The starting point of these developments is to depart from material pleasures and to ponder the emptiness of the world and what in modernity is referred to as instrumental and computational rationality (Shah Mohammad Pour, 2015). In the Arba'in community, this distance from computational rationality is visible. Arba'in carries with it a tendency to sacrifice, spend, and transcend material gain and to gain divine reward. Behaviors are also shaped accordingly. In the face of Arba'in, a new aesthetic system has formed that undermines the spirit of the capitalist system that is centered on seeking wealth and pleasure, with a transcendent system emerging whose focus is charity, self-sacrifice, humanity, and respect for the world (Moinipour, 2015).

b- Shared spiritual experience: Arba'in as a space is created and expanded by the collision of history and geography through which it has become a collective memory that is also remembered every year. Thus, Arba'in both remembers and makes memories. Arba'in's atmosphere from the processes of remembrance and memory-making features that result from the participants' shared spiritual experiences can serve as glitter for the formation of the Islamic ummah while challenging the logic of modern civilization (Kalantari, 2017). The walk to Arba'in is a form of religious tourism in which one can achieve perception of the sacred. Religion is reinforced in this community, and ethics are crystallized. In other words, a system of ethics and a network of ethical meanings prevail in the ritual of Arba'in over social relationships that shape social trust between the Islamic Ummah and the durability and survival of social participation and cooperation (Mousavi, 2015).

c- Disappearance of social classes and discrimination: Discrimination and social and economic classes are abolished in the context of the Arba'in march. All pilgrims are equal and servants of one another (Moinipour, 2015). The hierarchies of the social classes disappear. One of the attractive points of this community and its inclusiveness is this class entanglement. Everyday social order disruptions are visible in different ways. As something that is common in modern day urban life and of which people are tired, the Arba'in march is changing it (Razavizadeh, 2018).

d- Creating unity, empathy, and affection: One of the most vital and important functions of Arba'in is to orient and shape believers' tendencies and to create affection and empathy among

the participants as an essential element in the formation of the Islamic ummah. Maintaining unity in this transnational custom is very important. The most crucial elements of creating unity are empathy and cooperation. At the Arba'in ceremony, people and groups from different countries, races, and languages come together in unity, peace, empathy, and cooperation in their purpose, method, and practice. Recognizing the common interests and goals of Muslims on the path to forming the Islamic Ummah can be established by relying on the closeness of Muslim thought and exchange in the Arba'in community (Moinipour, 2015).

e- Fighting cruelty and seeking justice: Confronting oppression and oppressors in every position and belief as well as sympathy and affection for all the oppressed of the world is forever the main slogans of the Arba'in's march, as well as the uprising of Imam Hussein (AS). Seeking justice is acceptable to all, and oppression is denied to all. It is an absolutely innate human vision (Shah Mohammad Pour, 2015).

5.2. Investigating the Phenomenon of the Arba'in Community from the Perspective of the Ummah

a- The historical background and power of Arba'in's historicization: The history of this great congress dates back to 61 AH and is one of the attractions of this community (Solaimaniyeh, 2018). The power of Arba'in's historicization should not be easily overlooked. Its communities of millions, the characteristics of this community, and its participants are such that they cannot be ignored by history (Khojasteh, 2015).

b- The relationship between the community of Arba'in and the ummah: We know that the Hajj al-Tamattu has been accepted as the main ritual and gathering link for the Islamic ummah. In 2012, around 1.6 million people entered Saudi Arabia as pilgrims to perform Hajj rituals. Of course, many of Saudi Arabia's security, economic, and political considerations affect the allocation of attending Hajj to countries around the world, and these factors limit the demographic dimensions of the pilgrimage. However, the Arba'in ceremony takes place on a much wider scale. This exponential proportion of attendees at the Arba'in custom compared to the pilgrimage has its own social consequences at the level of an Islamic ummah analysis that deserves expert attention. This is a reflection of the specific characteristics of this phenomenon (Solaimaniyeh, 2018). No other way has been found for combatting the global culture of the modern world than to present and promote pure Islamic culture on a global scale and to use all the cultural and religious capacities of the Islamic world in this regard. One of these capacities is certainly the Arba'in community. In writers' eyes, the march of Arba'in and the manifestation of its pure human and religious manifestations have the potential to make the

tired man of today's modern mechanical world familiar with pure culture and provide the grounds for globalization in the orbit of this culture (Jamali, 2015).

c- The Arba'in community as the media of the ummah: The crowded custom of Arba'in is a good opportunity to bring the true image of the Islamic ummah to the world (Mousavi, 2015). It also neutralizes part of the Western cultural conspiracy called Islamophobia (Sharafaddin, 2015). The significant increase in the rate of loyalty to Arba'in in recent years cannot be analyzed without mentioning the important role of modern media outlets such as television, websites, news agencies, and social networks. Of course, in a 20-million-strong ceremony, many of whom are from countries other than Iraq, face-to-face communication should not be overlooked, nor its significant impact on global dialogue and reflection.

d- A cross-gender, transnational, and trans-religious custom**:** The Arba'in community has become a transnational custom in recent years and a ritual attended by many participants from various non-Iraqi countries such as India, Pakistan, Kuwait, Egypt, Lebanon, Bahrain, Yemen, Türkiye, Russia, and Iran, as well as some European, American, and African countries. Although Arba'in is an Islamic tradition, it is attended by great Christian and other religious scholars every year. This ritual has no understanding of big or small, male, or female, or age, as anyone can participate in it.

e- Identity representation: Every culture and civilization needs to develop its own norms and values through specific social norms to recreate itself. Arba'in is therefore an Islamic norm that promotes Islamic values. Arba'in can be viewed as an annual tradition contributing to the revival of Islamic identity and rejecting fabricated identities (Moinipour, 2015). Arba'in has created an opportunity to form an effective globally reflective religious gathering as a new collective opportunity to annually represent the unity of Muslims. Counter discourse such as ISIS and other terrorist groups is also one of the effects of this positive representation (Solaimaniyeh, 2018).

f- Attracting the world's attention: The ritual of the Arba'in march is the only annual gathering outside of Hajj of a large Muslim population that has attracted worldwide attention. Arba'in is an opportunity to draw the attention of the world to Islam's socio-historical existence and ideological potential.

g- Authoritarianism: The Arba'in community is the largest community in the world to come together for a single day. This community is an opportunity to show the greatness of the Islamic ummah by displaying Islamic unity and solidarity and by removing the feelings of weakness and loneliness in the face of colonialism and despotism. This community does not

fear the threats of enemies (Mousavi, 2015). Arba'in's other opportunities could be to lay the groundwork for presenting the Islamic discourse against the Western discourse and modernity, as well as for presenting the political authority of the Islamic world against the Western world (Hesam Mazaheri, 2018). The formation of a united Muslim front and the creation of a secure and strategic position for establishing the Islamic ummah and recognizing a common enemy are also authoritarian issues. Creating cross-cultural communication and strengthening the bond between countries is another one of the functions of the Arba'in authority. Today, human power is one of the backbones and main components of power in various political, cultural, and military spheres. Therefore, the most important issues in these areas are to bring people together and engage them for role-playing in different fields in order to increase the balance of power. As a result of this world and millions of events, what is proven is that all peoples of the world, regardless of culture and nationality, can come together under the umbrella of the Islamic ummah, achieve a new lifestyle, and move toward a lofty goal. This massive human exercise is a kind of expanding power and changes the components of human power in human societies (Shah Mohammadpour, 2015).

h- Economic and administrative model: Managing this flood of populations is a difficult task, but it is well done in the Arba'in community. The fact that the Arba'in mega event is managed by the people themselves is noteworthily important. In many cases, governments and governmental institutions must make policies that lay the groundwork for preserving Arba'in's natural structure (Moinipour, 2015). Arba'in has created a cooperative-based economic model that focuses on the issue of God's blessings and emphasizes concepts such as charity, promise, and endowment in contrast to the usury- and profit-based approaches (Mohammadi Sirat, 2016).

6. Conclusion

Globalization is something that cannot be shaped by existing Western and modern ideologies. Religion-based globalization is possible because religion is what can be fully responsive without requiring oppression or tool use. Islam has special comprehensive capacities for globalization and the formation of the Islamic ummah. In order to globalize Islam, one must recognize and act upon its discourse in the international environment, which is based on the internal philosophical layer of *fitrah* and the external operational layer of the ummah. The Arba'in community is a *fitrah*-based Islamic capacity focused on the ummah. The *fitrah* dimensions of the Arba'in event are as follows: the fading of instrumental rationality; shared spiritual experiences; the disappearance of social classes and discrimination; the creation of unity, empathy, and affection; the fight against cruelty; and the search for justice. The

Ummah dimensions of the Arba'in event are as follows: the historical background and power of Arba'in's historicization, the relationship between the community of Arba'in and the ummah, the Arba'in Community as the media of the ummah, its cross-gender transnational and trans-religious customs, identity representation, how it attracts the world's attention, its authoritarianism, and its economic and administrative model. In order to be able to form the Islamic ummah, the Islamic world must seek to globalize its other capacities for transnationalism, religiousness, and *fitrah* while providing an alternative approach to the Western world as its savior to the greatest challenge of the Islamic Ummah: Islamophobia.

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CHAPTER 5

DIGITAL UMMAH AND NOVEL WAYS OF BELONGING: THE CASE OF THE PAKİSTANİ DIASPORA COMMUNITY IN ATHENS, GREECE

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with Pakistani migrants in Greece. The Pakistani diaspora is one of the largest South Asian Muslim immigrant groups (excluding Albanians) to have settled recently in Greece. Drawing upon ethnographic field work in Athens, Greece and using qualitative research methods, this text tempts to explain the challenges faced by the Pakistani diaspora there. It also demonstrates the Pakistani migrants' use of information and communication technologies ICTs) to theorize how mediascapes are linked to novel forms of community and ummah, cultural reproduction, religious identity, and transnationalism among the Punjabi *Barelvi* Sufis who've settled in Athens. More specifically this research paper shows how followers of the transnational Sufi *Barelvi* missionary movement known as *Dawat-e-Islami* [Invitation to Islam] use ICTs to construct a community and transnational ummah as an expression of transnational Sufism among the Pakistani diaspora in Athens.

Keywords: Pakistani diaspora, Greece, ICTs, digital rituals, digital Sufism, transnational ummah and transnational Islam, Dawat-e-Islami

1. Introduction

In this era of migration and globalization (Castle & Miller, 1993; Lewllen, 2002), a ballooning growth of diaspora communities have emerged, resulting in the deterritorialization of cultural and religious values from their original contexts (see Papastergiadis, 2000; Lewllen, 2002; Inda & Rosaldo, 2008). After being ignored for a long time, the religious experiences of transnational and diaspora communities are increasingly emerging on the agenda of research, with religion being seen to offer additional strength in binding the diasporic consciousness (Vertovec, 2000).

Diaspora and transnational groups tend to maintain close connections with their country of origin and place of religious origins (Berns-McGown, 1999; Vertovec, 2000, 2003). The Internet and information and communication technologies (ICTs) can provide global diasporas with connectivity among themselves despite being situated in various locations (Cohen, 1997; Ignacio, 2005; Mallapragada, 2006; Wilbur, 1997).

This article is about the Pakistani diaspora population in Greece. It tries to show the use of ICTs by Pakistani migrants to theorize how mediascapes are linked to novel forms of community, the ummah, cultural reproduction, religious identity, and transnationalism among the Pakistani *Barelvi* Sufis settled in Athens. More specifically this research paper shows how followers of the transnational Sufi *Barelvi* missionary movement known as Dawat-e-Islami [Invitation to Islam] use ICTs to perform digital rituals and construct a community and transnational Sufism among the Pakistani diaspora in Athens, Greece. Drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork, the study mainly has used qualitative research methods in Athens and Pakistan. Moreover, the study has also performed content analyses of Dawat-e-Islami's web page (www.dawateislami.net) and Madni TV channel (www.madanichannel.com).

The paper begins briefly with the background and context of the autochthonous Muslim population as well as the emerging Muslim diaspora population in Greece. It then moves on to describe the Pakistani diaspora population in Greece, its main features, and the challenges they faced during migration. Furthermore, it discusses the transnational Sufi *Barelvi* missionary movement known as Dawat-e-Islami, its preaching methodology, and its use of ICTs to construct a community, transnational ummah, and transnational Sufism among the Pakistani diaspora in Athens, Greece.

2. Background and Context

In Greece as well as in Europe, Islam has become the second largest religion as a result of migration and globalization (sees Cesari, 2005; Dokas & Antonio, 2002). Greece has both

an autochthonous Muslim population as well as Muslim diaspora groups consisting of economic migrants and recently arrived refugees. The indigenous Greek Muslim population is a heterogeneous group consisting of local minorities, namely Muslim Roma groups, people of Turkic origin, and Pomakis. These local Muslims live in Northern Greece, which offers a unique case in how it presents a complex relationship between Greek Orthodoxy and secularism coupled with the legacy of Ottoman rule and the presence of a local Muslim minority (Evergeti, 2006). The autochthonous Muslim population of Greece number around 120,000 (see Alxandris,1988; Evergeti, 2006); their legal and constitutional rights are guaranteed by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. Despite cases of marginalization and discrimination (Evergeti 2011), this local Muslim minority is part of Greece's constitutional landscape and possess citizenship and religious rights.

Besides the presence of the local Muslim minority, Greece started attracting Muslim migrants in the early 1970s. Migration, especially Muslim migration, is a relatively new phenomenon in Greece compared to other Western European countries. Within the shifting trend toward immigration, Greece and Southern European countries offer an interesting case where new cultural encounters (King, 2001) are demonstrated in peculiar ways.

Out of these migrations, a Muslim diaspora population started to crystalize in Greece. Like elsewhere in the West, the Muslim diaspora in Greece have diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural contexts as well as national backgrounds living as minorities in a non-Muslim contexts (see Esposto, 2002; Dasetto, 2004: Turner, 2010). In the context of Greece, they originate from different ethno-national backgrounds of countries such as Pakistan, Palestine, Egypt, Afghanistan, India, Bangladesh, Syria, Lebanon, Morocco, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia. Official figures provide little information about the exact number for the Muslim diaspora in Greece. According to one estimate, the number of Muslim migrants is around 200,000 (see Tsitselikis, 2004). However, the exact number may be higher. Apart from economic migrants, Greece has seen a sharp rise in the number of refugees. Recent conflicts and wars in the Middle East, especially in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan, have pushed thousands of refugees to come to Greece as a transit migration point on their journey to other Western European countries for political asylum. The majority of Muslim migrants (both voluntary and forced) live in big urban centers such as, Athens and Thessaloniki owing to better job opportunities. The presence of Muslim diaspora communities has started to transform Greece's urban and demographic landscape.

Unlike the local Muslim population, the majority of those in the Muslim diaspora in Greece do not enjoy citizenship rights. A large majority of the Muslim diaspora in Greece are

Sunnis who have moved from a localized version of Islam based on their country of origin to a transnational and global Islam of the ummah. These Muslim migrants face a number of challenges in the context of Greece, such as identity crises, racism, Islamophobia, and the effects of the economic crisis on their livelihood. In addition, Greece has been experiencing an economic crisis since 2008, resulting in a decrease in GDP. The economic crises have affected broad populations of groups, from native Greeks to migrants (Cavounidis, 2018). Even before the economic crisis began, migrant populations had been exposed and subjected to the greater danger from vulnerability and marginalization than the local population. However, the gap broadened significantly following the crisis. The economic crisis also gave rise to anti-immigrant and xenophobic feelings and discourses in Greece, involving incidences of racist violence and Islamophobia.

The Muslim diaspora in Greece has largely organized themselves under institutions such as informal mosques, immigrant associations, ethnic restaurants, Internet cafes, call centers, and shops selling halal meat. Unlike the local Muslim population in Northern Greece, the Muslim diaspora in Athens has no place for religious worship that has been officially recognized by the Greek state. In the absence of any recognized place of worship, approximately 50 to 100 informal places of worship have been established in various parts of the immigrant neighborhoods in Athens to cater to the migrants' religious and devotional needs. After decades of delay and indecisiveness, the Greek government and Parliament voted in 2016 to construct the first official mosque since Ottoman rule. The mosque center was established in the Votanikos district of Athens and is expected to cater to approximately 300 male and 50 female Muslims of Athens's approximately 250,000 Muslim migrants (Speed, 2019). Muslims immigrant groups see this as a symbolic gesture in the form of the first official mosque, which they expect will soon be functional. The following section will describe the Pakistani diaspora in Greece and its main features.

3. The Pakistani Diaspora in Greece: Its Main Features and the Challenges They Face

The history and influx of Pakistani migration to Greece started in the early 1970s as a male labor migration for work in the Greek shipyards (e.g., Skaramaga at Piraeus) as a result of bilateral treaties between Greece and Pakistan (see Leghari, 2009; Triandafyllidou, 2010). However, these Pakistani migrants to Greece only numbered a few hundred. Pakistani immigrants were the first migrants who came to Greece. The breakup of the Eastern Bloc led to the post-1990 influx of migrants from Balkan countries such as Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania. During the subsequent decades, Pakistani migration increased as result of chain migration, re-

sulting in the present scenario where the Pakistani diaspora numbering approximately 50,000-70,000 (see Tonchev, 2007; Leghari, 2009). According to estimates from the 2011 Greek census, the figure for Pakistanis in Greece is 34,177 (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2013).

However, owing to the economic crises that severely hit the Greek economy, thousands of Pakistani immigrants retuned back either to Pakistan or migrated to other European countries. Due to the unavailability of official data, the current numbers of Pakistani migrants is difficult to estimate. According to key information, the number of Pakistani migrants in Greece is approximately 30-40 thousand people. The exact number of Pakistani migrants in Greece is also unknown due to the presence of a large number of undocumented irregular migrants (Broersma & Lazarezcu, 2009).

Pakistani migration patterns in Greece differ in comparison to the Pakistani migration population to the UK, where the long-standing Pakistani diaspora is well recognized with offspring connecting several generations (e.g., Bolognani, 2007; Charsley, 2007; Werbner, 2004). The migration experiences of the Pakistani diaspora in Greece may seem fairly comparable to other Southern European countries where migration has been a more recent phenomenon (e.g., Kalra, 2009; Ahmad, 2009).

Most of the Pakistani migrants in Greece do manual work in professions such as laborers, welders, masons, and mechanics, or in Greece's agricultural sector. Pakistanis also work in processing industries, construction sector, and service sectors. The employment and work conditions of Pakistani migrants in Greece are characterized by low pay, long work hours, and social/physical isolation (see Leghari, 2009). Pakistani immigrants are also found who run private ethnic businesses or entrepreneurships such as grocery stores, travel agencies, Internet cafes, or Pakistani restaurants. These ethnic businesses cater to the needs of the immigrant community, and these small-scale businesses are run through local social networks of relatives, friends, fellow village men, and members of the *Biradari* [Kinship group]. The majority of Pakistani immigrants in Greece is semi-literate and resides in poor overcrowded bachelor housing conditions. The Pakistani diaspora often use social networks to search for work and settle in a foreign context (see Leghari, 2009). The prominent feature of the Pakistani migrants in Greece is that they predominantly consist of males of various ages. These migrants are largely first-generation males with very low levels of family reunification trends due to bureaucratic and administrative barriers in the Greek immigration system. Pakistani immigrants constitute an ethnically homogenous community, as the majority of them come from the Punjabi ethnic group originating from some specific areas of the Gujrat district of rural Punjab.

4. Religious Description of the Pakistani Diaspora

Religiously speaking, the large majority of Pakistani diaspora in Greece follows Sunni Islam and identify with the *Barelvi* movement or tradition. *Barelvis* are also called *Ahl as-Sunna wal Jamaat* (Sanyal, 1996). This is followed by *Deobandis*, which is followed by a small Shia minority among the Pakistanis in Greece.

Both the *Deobandis* and *Barelvis* have their geneses in British India. The *Deobandis* derive their origin from the town of *Deoband* in India. The first ever *Deoband* seminary, known as *Darul Uloom* [House of Knowledge] was established in 1866. *Deobandis* followers have puritanical understandings of Islam (see Metcalf, 2005). In the context of Greece, *Deobandis* are represented by the *Tablighi Jama'at*, which involves *Dawa* and a preaching movement. The *Tablighi Jama'at* is a transnational missionary movement that has spread across the globe alongside Muslim migrations.

The *Barelvis* take their origin from Ahmed Raza Khan of Bareilly, a town in India (1856-1921). *Barelvi* tradition emphasizes veneration of Hub-e-Rasul [love of Prophet Muhammad] (see Sanyal, 2005). They perform Sufi rituals such as a pilgrimage to Sufi shrines, *Sama* [musical sessions to induce religious ecstasy], *Ur*s [celebrations of the birth of Sufi saints], and dhikr [remembrance of Allah]. The *Barelvi* groups in Greece can be identified by three religious currents: Dawat-e-Islami, *Minhajul Qur'an* [Method of the Qur'an] (MUQ), and different branches of transnational Sufi orders based in Athens, such as the Sultan Bahu Trust, Karam Foundation, and Mehria Naseeria. These religious groups in Athens manage and run their own informal mosques in the different immigrant neighborhoods. Keeping true to their Sufi legacy, *Barelvi* adherents celebrate *Eid Milad-un Nabi* [commemoration of the Prophet's birth] and *Urs* rituals celebrating the birth of Sufi saints like Hazrat Qadir Gillani, Ahmed Raza Khan *Barelvi*, Data Hajweri, Sultan Bahu, and Pir Golra Sharif (Leghari, 2009). The following section details Dawat-e-Islami, its preaching methodology, and the use of ICTs to construct a community and transnational ummah as an expression of transnational Sufism.

4.1 Dawat-e-Islami: Its History, Origin, and Methodology for Preaching

Dawat-e-Islami [invitation to Islam] is a transnational Sufi missionary movement initiated by Muhammad Ilyas Qadri (b. 1950) in 1981 in Sindh province in Karachi, Pakistan. He is considered *Shaykh-e-tariqat* [Sheikh of the movement] and *Ameer-e-ahl-e-sunnat* [Commander of those who follow the Prophet's laws] among its followers (*Ilyas Qadri*, n.d.).

This movement has expanded across the globe alongside the Pakistani diaspora to the West and around the world, claiming a presence in 194 countries. The major emphasis of Dawat-e-Islami is on preaching, reforming, and making Muslims better and more pious. Its official slogan is "I must strive to reform myself and the people of entire world" (*Dawateislami*, n.d.).

The main book of Dawat-e-Islami is *Faizan-e Sunnat* [Spiritual Benefits of the Sunnah]. Its world headquarter is named *Faizan e Madina* [Grace of Medina] and located in Karachi. The American headquarter is in Chicago, while its European headquarters is in the UK, with various other centers functioning in other European cities. Travelling for the sake of preaching in Dawat-e-Islami is called *Madani Qafla* [The Madni caravan], and its preaching methodology has a close resemblance with the Tablighi Jamaat. Both the Tablighi Jamaat and Dawat-e-Islami are transnational movements originating from South Asia. While the two movements have a clear base in Sufism, the disposition to Sufism is clearly more visible in Dawat-e-Islami. *Tilawat* [reciting the Qur'an], *Naat* [praising the Prophet], dhikr, and dua [supplication to Allah] are frequently used in Dawat-e-Islami (see Gugler, 2011).

4.2. Dawat-e-Islami in Greece

In Greece, Dawat-e Islami started its missionary and *Dawa* works in the 1990s (ca. 1998) in Athens and established its first center in Omonia Square in 2003. It has established four centers in Athens. Omonia is an old city center where most of the migrant ethnic shops and businesses are located. During its course of expansion in Greece, Dawat-e-Islami has established approximately 14 centers in the informal mosques in various Greek cities. The numbers of these centers are difficult to verify as they keep opening up and closing down.

The European headquarters of Dawat-e-Islāmī is in the UK, which has a well-established Pakistani diaspora. In the UK, Dawat-e-Islami claims to have a presence in all the major cities, with approximately 50 centers all around the UK (see ((*Dawat e Islami*, n.d.). Due to Muslim migrants in Greece facing a wide range of challenges such as economic crises, minority status, racial discrimination, Islamophobia, and sometimes violence, all religious groups capitalize on these conditions. In the context of Greece, these centers often function as informal mosques that are used not only for places of worship but also as places to socialize and united under a common religion.

Dawat-e-Islami often uses Madani prefixes in their everyday religious discourses, such as *Madani Qafla* [Madani carvan], *Madani in-Amat* [Madani gifts], *Madani Tahreek* [Madani movement], and the Madani Bhai [Madni Brother]. These terminologies are used to express

their devotional *Hub Rasool* or *Ishq Rasool* [love of the Prophet] which is the hallmark of Sufism. Dawat-e-Islami and its popular discourse of pietism promote Sufism. In order to accomplish its mission, Dawat-e-Islami uses various preaching methods such as *Infiradi Koshish* [individual effort], *Sada-e-Madina* [the wakeup call], *Ilaqae dora Braye Naiki Ki Dawat* [door-to-door invitation], *Hafta War Ijtima* [weekly Congregation], *Madani Halqa* [Madani circle] and *Madani Inamaat* [Madani rewards].

Madani Qafilah is one of the main significant tools of face-to-face preaching for Dawat-e-Islami. Through *Madani Qafilah*, Dawat-e-Islami urges and preaches the immigrants to join them. The participants in *Madani Qafilah* normally stay in the mosques or centers of Dawat-e-Islami. For this purpose, the lay preachers may travel for 3, 12 or 30 days locally, nationally, and globally. Another main activity of Dawat-e-Islami is the door-to-door Invitation (*Ilaqae dora Braye Naiki Ki Dawat*). In this activity, lay missionaries guided by a *Nigran* [caretaker] go door to door in their respective immigrant neighborhood to invite migrants to act morally and piously. They invite migrants to come with them to the area mosque where they are guided to spend their lives in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. This travelling group is assigned duties; for example, one person is assigned the role of giving invitations while the Amir or *Nigran* decides which migrant area to visit. The *Negran* has the duty of making dua when leaving.

Yet another main activity in Dawat-e-Islami is the weekly *ijtema* [congregation]. This is held in the centers or informal mosques they operate every Saturday evening in Athens, Greece. After the Maghreb prayer, the weekly congregation begins with the recitation of the Holy Qur'an, followed by a *Na'at* [poetry praising the prophet], then a *dars* [lecture] carried out by the preacher. A person then speaks about the importance of *durood* [praise of the Prophet] and dhikr. The main feature during the weekly *ijtema* is the *Fiqr-e Medina* [meditating on one's deeds] and repentance of sins by praying *Touba, Touba*, which seek forgiveness for one's sins and to show embarrassment for those sins. After this activity, all people stand up to offer *Durood o Salam* [peace and praise to the Prophet] and end by offering *dua* [prayer]. After that, the Adhan [call for prayer] for Isha is delivered. The majority of the people read *Faizan-e-Madina*, which is the main book of Dawat-e-Islami.

4.3. Madni Rewards (Madani Inamat)

As a missionary movement, Dawat-e-Islami presents a comprehensive plan for individual and self-reformation in the form of *Madani Inaamat* [Madani rewards]. This is a kind of check list on self-accountability for doing good deeds and avoiding forbidden and sinful things. Men

have 72 *Madani Inaamat*, while women have 63 and children have 40. These 72 instructions or guidelines serve as a course of action for evaluating the daily routine on a Madani card, which is then submitted to the *Negran* in charge at the end of the month.

Dawat-e-Islami urges all immigrants to become good Muslims while living in Western environments where the challenges of secularism and modernity are focused. Immigrants are expected to get the booklet of *Madani Inaaamat* from any branch of *Maktaba-tul-Madina* and fill it out daily while performing *Fikr-e-Medina* [meditation on one's deeds]. These booklets can be downloaded free from its webpage. A user friendly *Madani Inama'at* mobile application has also been developed for this purpose. Dawat-e-Islami also recommends its preachers and participators to make a habit of filling them out and returning them back to the person responsible for *Madani Inaaamat* each month.

The aim of these *Madani Inaaamat* is to get the Muslim immigrants into the habit of acting upon the obligatory and incumbent acts, the Sunnah, and the desirable acts and to become pious Muslim in terms of improving their conduct and refraining from sin. In this way, these missionary movements serve as a central force for migrants who are dislocated and disoriented in terms of being a foreign migrant.

The organizations translation section has translated many books into approximately 35 languages of the world. having translated almost a dozen religious books into Greek to disseminate its message to native Greeks. Similarly, its books can be downloaded from various sources such as Dawat-e-Islami's main webpage or from the online store Maktaba-Tul-Madinah. A free mobile app is also used for online downloading.

Apart from the preaching and missionary activities, Dawat-e-Islami also takes part in social welfare activities such as earthquake, disaster, and even COVID-19 relief in the country of origin and country of settlement. Pakistani immigrants faced a difficult time due to Greece's economic status and lockdown due to COVID-19. Along with the leaders of migrant associations, Dawat-e-Islami and other religious groups try to help migrants by providing them with food supplies.

5. Dawat-e Islami and the Use of ICT'S

5.1. Madani Channel

Dawat-e Islami's TV channel (*Madani Channel*, 2015) started its transmission from Karachi in 2008. Its transmissions are broadcast in different languages such as Urdu, English, Bengali, Arabic, and other regional languages. The channel broadcasts 24/7 to spread its

message around the world, especially to the Pakistani diaspora living across the globe. The channel also provides live Internet streaming, with various transmissions and programs focused on religious *Islah* or on reforming its followers. Through these modern tools, they have attracted a large number of followers. The online congregations and *Muzakraat* [talks] are broadcast through their TV channel. Animated characters and cartoons are also produced and broadcast for children to attract them toward Islam. This channel is present through the use of Internet TV IP boxes.

Preaching is also done using different communication tools such as hand-held digital Qur'ans, portable digital assistants (PDAs), mobile phones, and handheld iPods, as well as MP3, MP4, and MP5 players. These communication tools provide a better understanding of religion by using visual text displays and translations of Quranic verses. Another program named Darul Madina Online recently started on Skype (a social media platform), where preachers teach immigrants how to recite the Qur'an with correct pronunciation. This is a popular system for diaspora Muslim communities in Western contexts where Muslims are faced with uncertainty, racism, and minority status. It provides them easy access for learning the Qur'an via Skype. Other preaching methods include video compact disc (VCD) congregations and MP3 memory cards. The VCD congregation uses VCDs for watching and listing to the preachers of Dawat-e Islami, thus using this way to digitally preach.

5.2. Preaching Through Web Pages

As the current age is the era of technology, interconnectivity, and globalization, Dawat-e-Islami utilizes various types of computerized, digital, and electronic and social media platforms to spread its message. It has its own sites such as www.alahazrat.net. These webpages are very effective among the diaspora Pakistani population as they offer novel ways of belonging and attachment and can reach wider audiences. Dawat-e-Islami also provides its followers another service through its online webpage specifically for people in diaspora communities. Through its webpage, migrants can ask questions and gain guidance about the knowledge of religion through its "Ask the Imam" tab. In this context, migrants can ask the religious questions confronting them while living in a diaspora as a minority. They get their answers digitally. In this way, Dawat-e-Islami is playing the role of online Mufti. It also works on Android and iOS devices through an application. *Darul Ifta AhleSunnat* is a significant section of Dawat-e-Islami that is involved in disseminating information on Islamic sharia.

Through their webpage at https://www.dawateislami.net/rohaniilaj/tawizateattaria#, immigrants use online spiritual healing service, amulets, and *Istikhara* [seeking goodness from

Allah]. This service has them fill an online form detailing their issues and address, and then they receive a reply. Its followers fill out this online form for finding solutions to personal issues such as unemployment, djinn, supernatural possession, and the evil eye. They get amulets through an amulet service. This is a good example of how a Sufi organization appropriates modern communication tools to preach to migrant communities.

Dawat-e Islami also utilizes its web page for giving online discipleship, providing easy access to people around the world so they can become an online *Murid* [disciple] through its webpage, SMS service, WhatsApp, and Facebook. Becoming a *murid* and getting Bayeit has always been a traditional part of Sufism. However, this online social media platform is a novel way to grant discipleship to its followers. In this age of modernity and globalization, Sufi rituals are becoming increasingly digitalized.

Followers of Dawat-e-Islami also get *Istikhara* through the online website and social media. One can easily get a *Taweez-e Attaria* [Attari Amulet] through their web portal for solving or figuring out daily life difficulties as a migrant. They also provided another online facility for online *Kaat* [cures] for the evil eye, obsessions, magic, and settlement of household affairs. Dawat-e-Islami has a wide presence on social media and runs accounts successfully on Instagram, Facebook, and X. Its Facebook page is for propagating its message. Its Instagram account (https://www.instagram.com/dawateislamiofficial/) has 402,000 followers. This account is maintained by the IT Majlis of Dawat-e-Islami. Its X account for the Madani channel (https://twitter.com/madanichannel) has 80,000 followers. Similarly, its Facebook account (https://www.facebook.com/dawateislami.net/) has been liked by 7,060,418 people and followed by 8,163,880 people.

Media tools are used widely and vigorously to attract followers. Online books regarding the Qur'an and the Sunnah are available on the Dawat-e-Islami website, enabling migrants who seek guidance via an online webpage. This missionary movement works effectively in terms of communication technologies by using the Google application store. Online apps regarding Islam are also available on the app store for download on mobile phones free of charge. Various Islamic mobile app, desktop applications, memory cards, and MP3 CDs can be downloaded from its official webpage. Dawat-e-Islami also provides career opportunities to people around the globe, and anybody can apply as a volunteer through their website.

These communication tools show novel ways and means of belong to the ummah and are a manifestation of transnational Islam. These also show how Islamic networks are developing and disseminating their message in a rapidly changing world, with these electronic and social

media tools appearing new and ground-breaking in terms of how traditional religious groups apply digital media tools. Muslim immigrants explore how these changes and impacts play an important role in diverse Islamic cyber environments and in how they respond to shifts in technology and society. The use of communication tools has had a visible influence on Muslim practices during life in a diaspora.

6. Conclusion

With the advancement of ICTs, diaspora communities, religious groups, and actors have appropriated ICTs in the context of their social and cultural milieu. These diaspora groups are the de-territorialized and displaced groups who disseminate and propagate their religious message using social and new media tools to disseminate their message to a wider audience. As results of developments in ICTs the concept of the transnational Muslim public sphere (see Eickelman & Anderson, 1999) is opening and unfolding via the use of ICTs. The Pakistani Muslim diaspora community is also using this sphere in a novel way.

This article has also described how ICTs are interconnected by the shaping of liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000) and how these ICT tools are being appropriated by traditional religious groups such as Dawat-e-Islami. The article has also described Pakistani migrants' use of ICTs to theorize how mediascapes are linked with novel forms of community, the ummah in diaspora, cultural reproduction, religious identity and transnationalism Sufism among the Punjabi *Barelvi* Sufis settled in Athens, Greece. This novel practice of digital religiosity and rituals has emerged as a topic of research that has a significant effect on diaspora communities. In the rapidly developing globalized world of ICTs and religion, however, the full effects of this has yet to be determined and remains an issue for future research.

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CHAPTER 6

TRANSNATIONAL ISLAM IN PAKİSTAN: A CASE STUDY OF ROHINGYA MUSLIMS

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ABSTRACT

The Rohingya are one of the most repressed communities of the world and live in Myanmar under miserable conditions. This study elaborates upon the impacts, issues, and activities of Rohingya Muslims living in Pakistan with reference to transnational Islam. Transitional Islam has arguably captured the attention of academic researchers in recent years, with many studies and reports available on the impacts, issues, and crises of transnationalism and transitional Islam. The crisis of the Rohingya people is undoubtedly a growing transnational challenge, as they are systematically discriminated against and compelled to leave Burma to find refuge in various countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Malaysia. They face many problems in Pakistan, such as being stateless because Pakistan considers them Bengali (i.e., a community originating from Bangladesh) while Bangladesh considers them as Burmese citizens. The Rohingya have faced decades of statelessness and targeted violence, as well as the brutal murder of innocent men, women, and children. Many reported cases are also found of women being raped and children being burnt during these tragedies by Burmese forces. These are violations of the United Nations charter on human rights in the age of globalization and civilization. This study aims to examine and highlight the current situation regarding the education, job opportunities, and healthcare services available to them in their host countries. The Rohingya seem to be in a very poor state and to be living a miserable life in most of the areas of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India. The dire need exists to provide them with citizenship and other human rights in the host countries. The Rohingya also need legal and constitutional protection in Pakistan and should be allowed to participate in national politics for the welfare and service of their community. This study has adopted the analytical and historical research methodologies using a qualitative approach.

Keywords: Transnational Islam, historic context, Rohingya Muslims, Pakistani perspective, Issues & Challenges, Way forward

1. Introduction

In modern times, Muslim and non-Muslim minorities face many crises in the so-called civilized and educated world. These crises can range from religious and political to social and economic issues. One of the most important issues and human tragedies is the crisis of the Rohingya people,[1] who have been compelled to leave Myanmar (formerly Burma until 1989). Burma is their homeland, but now they are searching for refuge in neighboring countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India. The Rohingya people is commonly used as a term to refer to the community of Muslims concentrated in Rhakine (formerly Arakan) State, Myanmar, as well as other parts of the country and refugee camps in neighboring countries (Chan, 2023). They are also known as the Boat People in international media. According to (Smith, 2017) Views the 'boat people' crisis won't end until Burma stops persecuting the Rohingya', The Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar are an ethnic minority who originated from the Indian subcontinent after the spread of Islam in the 8th century. For several centuries, they have been living predominantly in Rhakine State and as Muslims for generations. The Rohingyas are not officially recognized as citizens by the government of Myanmar, and Myanmar's Buddhist majority has been accused of subjecting them to discrimination and violence for decades, especially after the discriminatory legislation of 1982 that was passed by the government of Burma, according to which the Rohingya people were no longer considered citizens of the state of Burma (Violence and Abuses in Burma, July 31, 2012). Consequently, the Rohingya Muslims sought refuge in neighboring countries. Pakistan has bene one of the most important hosts of the Rohingya Muslims, with limited resources to host refugees. More than 300,000 Rohingya refugees are found living in crowded camps in Karachi. The children are unable to register in government schools for education, nor are their parents eligible for work. They cannot avail themselves of any health care services offered by the government, nor are they allowed to take part in national politics. The deprivation of basic needs such as education and livelihood is a clear violation of human rights and goes against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948). After a careful and deeper look into this human crisis, elaborating upon the despondent state of Rohingya Muslims appears needed in order to take the appropriate measures, including the issuance of citizenship and legal and constitutional protections in Pakistan, as they should be allowed to participate in national politics for the betterment of their community. The current study will examine the issues, challenges, impacts, and activities of the Rohingya Muslims in the context of Pakistan. This study also will suggest possible way forward in light of national and international laws.

1 The Rohingya people are a stateless Indo-Aryan ethnic group who reside in Rakhine State, Myanmar. There were an estimated 1 million Rohingya living in Myanmar before the 2016–17 crisis. By December 2017, an estimated 625,000 refugees had crossed the border from Rakhine, Myanmar into Bangladesh since August 2017.

The Rohingya are a Muslim religious ethnic group of the Myanmar state, a Buddhist-majority country. They have been driven from their homeland in Rhakine State and now they are wording place to place for their rights, privileges and protection. Furthermore, they are considered the world's largest religious community to have been forced to leave their homeland in (Burma), Myanmar. Many studies and much research have been carried out by various scholars across the globe to point out their issues and problems in recent years. These projects focus on general problems and solutions. Nevertheless, their presence in neighboring countries, especially in Pakistan, along with the challenges they face in the host countries as a minority group need to be addressed. Apart from the core issue, it is known to be a humanitarian one, the problems related to their improvement and environment cannot be ignored.According to studies of (Soroos, 1990) and (Nagel, 1990), the refugee problem is both a transboundary and shared one, and both are applicable to the Rohingya crisis. A large volume of literature is found on refugees (Stein, 1981). In recent years in particular, much progress has been made on examining various aspects in this regard. (Bond, 1987).Some more recent studies (e.g., Ahmed, 2010; Mathieson & Scott, 2009; Parnini, 2013; Ragland, 1994) are notable for their focus on the Rohingya issues regarding human rights violations, statelessness, critical repatriation, and other related crises in the border areas. However, hardly any comprehensive studies on Rohingya are worth noting that have looked at the problem with a holistic approach by conceptualizing the non-traditional security crises created on the basis of racial differences and governance problems.Due to their helpless position and lack of political authority, the Rohingya people also face many crises in refugee countries. Some studies have focused on this, such as Blocher and Gulati (2016), Pittaway (2008), and Rahman (2010), who shed light on this issue in the context of Bangladesh. Regrouping the analyses is needed to uncover the root causes of and solutions to the Rohingya crisis. The crises affecting the Rohingya people have caused them to become victims of domestic governmental discriminatory policies stemming from insufficient governmental architecture. Some studies reported that since independence, Myanmar has been afflicted by several socio-economic and political setbacks including a number of armed conflicts and ethno-religious tensions (Alam, 2018). Myanmar's historical records show how freedom has remained a fable, particularly for the ethnic minorities. Although the majority of the conflicts have been on the question of autonomy, tensions also persist within the ethnic minorities (Tayler, 2009).That is why the significance of this study lies in researching the Rohingya issue with a focus on the Pakistani context as well as with reference to transnational Islam by exploring the significant role of international organizations and the Islamic community so as to fill the gap on how to rescue Rohingya from further loss of human life.

This study involves an effort to highlight some substantial issues and problems of the Rohingya Muslims in Pakistan through their historical background in Myanmar. Moreover, this study suggests some reasonable solutions for addressing this issue in Pakistan. This study has adopted analytical and historical research methodologies using a qualitative approach. Historical and current data in the form of books, encyclopedias, lexicons, research papers, and reports have been collected and analyzed using all possible means. Modern research tools such as interviews, surveys, questionnaires, and digital sources have also been used to gather data regarding the issue. In addition to the traditional and modern sources, the study has also benefitted from expert opinion and incorporated it into the study.

2. The Genesis of Buddhist and Muslim Communities in Myanmar

The arrival of Buddhism into Arakan started around the 8th century CE when Buddhists in India under the Hindu revivalist leader, Shankar Achariyah,[2] were persecuted on a large scale. In Magadha, which is in India's southern Bihar region, Buddhists were so ruthlessly oppressed by chauvinist Hindus and the rival Mahayana sect of Buddhists[3] that large numbers of Hinayana Buddhists were compelled to flee eastward, ultimately finding shelter in Arakan(Harvey, 1925). In the 10th century CE, Arakan was conquered by a historic Buddhist king, Anu Radha, while the separate identity of Muslims remained in the country. After Anu Radha, however, the relationship between Muslims and Buddhists had actually been unpleasant since the 13th century CE. Muslims ruled over Arakan, Rhakine , and Rohingya for nearly 500 years. Afterward, the relationship between Muslims and the Burma government became unsatisfactory and rough. In fact, the relationship can be said to have become worse to the extent of enmity and hostility as a result of some religious, tribal, and political reasons following the British conquest of Burma in 1824 (*Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1908). According to the British census of 1931, 27% of the population in Burma were Muslim. The educational trend in the Muslim population was very good, and most Muslims were employees of the British government in Burma. During the great economic crisis of 1930-1938 in Burma, the Muslim community was badly targeted and tortured by the Buddhist inhabitants of Burma. In 1942 during World War II, Japan attacked Burma, and several Muslim traders were compelled to migrate to India. After the war in 1945, the local Muslim politicians succeeded in establishing the political party known as the Muslim Congress of Arakan. Two Muslim leaders, namely Mr. Abdul Ghaffar and Mr. Sultan Ahmad, were even members of the British government in

2 Shankar Achariyah was an Indian Vedic scholar and teacher whose works present a harmonizing reading of the sastras, with liberating knowledge of the self at its core, synthesizing the Advaita Vedanta teachings of his time.

3 The most common classification among scholars of Buddhism is threefold: Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana.

Burma at that time, hailing from the Burma Muslim Congress (Al-Hajj MA, 1999).

One important point is that a Buddhist monk, Munden,[4] emerged as the leader and king of Buddhist religious politics in the British Burmese Government from 1853-1878. This era is normally known as a peaceful age for the modernity, science, and reconstruction of Buddhism in Burma. Afterward, the freedom movement started in Burma, and Muslim and Buddhist unitedly fought this freedom movement in 1947. In 1948, Burma succeeded in gaining complete independence from the British Empire. After the end of British rule on the subcontinent and the division of India and Pakistan, the Union of Burma was established with the permission of the British government in 1948. Arakan had the most Muslim inhabitants and was made part of Burma as Rhakine State in 1950 after an army coup under the supervision of a Burmese Army General. The Muslim majority populating the province of Arakan was now part of the Union of Burma, despite having been an independent state in the past. However, the civilian government was there, and all political, ethnic, and religious groups were partnered with Burma. Therefore, the era from 1948-1962 was mostly an era of communist politics; it did have a loose federal system with reasonable freedoms for all communities and faiths (Taylor, 2009). Another army coup in 1962 started a difficult era for the Rohingya Muslims. This war was triggered by the government of Burma with the help of extremist Buddhist monks, in which thousands of Muslims were killed, tortured, and expelled from Burma to neighboring countries, with thousands being compelled to live in refugee camps.

In 1962 after the second military coup, Burma was officially declared the Union of Burma. Tayler Robert's analysis, the 1962 Burmese coup d'état on March 2, 1962 marked the beginning of a one-party rule and the political dominance of the army in Burma that would span the course of 26 years. During the coup, the military replaced the civilian AFPFL-government headed by Prime Minister U Nu with the Union Revolutionary Council, Chaired by General Ne Win (Taylor, 2009). Afterwards, these politics converted into an extreme national sectarian religious policy against the Muslims of Arakan in 1962 marked the beginning point of the Rohingya Muslims' difficulties and persecution at the state level in Burma. In 1966, the Muslim population in Burma was 3 million. After the establishment of the Union of Burma and occupation of Arakan by the Burmese Army, the situation became bad for the Arakan Muslims in this country. Thousands of Muslims were killed, including women and children. Hundreds

4 The Buddhist monk Munden was the mad king of British Burma from 1853-1878. Some scholars consider him to be the founder of modern Buddhism. He supervised the Fifth Biudh Council in 1871 and 1878. In this age, the Bodh sacred literature, named the Paly cannon, was revised for its new compilation and the reconstruction of a new edition. This book is known as the world largest book of the stones and is still present in Burma. This age is also called the clash between Religion (Buddhism) and Science.

of Rohingya Muslim women were looted and raped by the Burmese Army, and millions of Rohingya Muslims were compelled to leave their homeland and take refuge in neighboring countries such as Bangladesh, Malaysia, India, and Pakistan. Over 300,000 Rohingya Muslims live in Pakistan nowadays. The majority of Rohingya Muslims live in Karachi, a cosmopolitan city of Pakistan. They have influenced the economic, political, social, and religious narrative of Pakistan since 1948. All of them made a perilous journey across Bangladesh and India before settling in Karachi. The majority of Rohingya Muslims living in Karachi have since obtained Pakistani citizenship. These Rohingya Muslims are facing many challenges in Pakistan. For example, some of them have no proper citizenship because Pakistan considers them Bengali, while Bangladesh considers them Burmese citizens.

Furthermore, the United Nation, international community, and Muslims states in particular being silent on such atrocities committed by the Burmese government is sadly a bitter reality. Only some Muslim states like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Iran have taken interest in these human crises. The Burmese government brutally kills innocent elders, women, and children. Many cases have also been reported of women being raped and children being burnt by Burmese forces during this tragedy. This is a violation of human rights and the UN charter in this age of globalization. Possessing minimum facilities, they live miserable lives seeking refuge in neighboring countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh.

3. The Historical Background of Rohingya Muslims

Muslims are not new in Myanmar. They have lived there for many centuries and possess a rich history of social, religious, cultural, and political contributions there. They had their own state and government in the Arakan State in Burma. Many studies and historical evidence reveal this fact. Islam had reached Burma since its early history. Islam had accessed Burma through Arab traders. When Islam reached Burma, the majority of people accepted Islam. Some historians have even indicated the arrival of the companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in Burma to have occurred in the 7th century. According to a research study by Abu al Fazal ‘Ezati (2002, pp. 481-82):

> *The first Muslim to arrive at Myanmar was Syed Moḥammad al-Ḥanafiyyah, one of the sons of Caliph ‘Alī in A.D 680. He first reached north of Maungdaw in northern Rhakine with his followers and confronted the native Queen Kaya Pari. When he won a battle, the queen and her followers converted to Islam, and he married the queen. However, his arrival to Myanmar has no written evidence, the tombs of Syed Mohammad al-Ḥanafiyyah and his wife still exist on the peaks of Mayu Hills, near the Maungdaw region.*

Most of the local people accepted Islam due to the preaching and spiritual impact of these *Sadat*.[5] After accepting Islam in Arakan in this way, the first Muslim state was established in the name of Arakan. Once the majority of the local ethnicities of Arakan (i.e., Rhakine) had embraced Islam, the first government of Rohingya Muslims was established by a Muslim ruler and religious scholar, Sheikh Abdullah[6] in 825 CE. History also reveals that the Buddhists arrived at and settled in Arakan after the Muslims. According to a Western historian's (Harvey, 1925) investigation, Islam spread in this area with the arrival and efforts of Arab traders, Muslim fighters, preachers, saints, and conquerors. One such famous figure was Badar 'Ālam[7] and some of which are still in existence. He spread Islam and made mosques and temples called Badar Muqam that can be found even nowadays in Rhakine .

In the 10th century CE, Arakan was conquered by a historic Buddhist king, Anu Radha, but the separate identity of Muslims remained in the land. The relationship between Muslims and Buddhists in fact later became unpleasant in the 13th century CE. Muslims ruled over Arakan and Rohingya for nearly 500 years. Afterward, the relationship between Muslims and the Burmese government became unsatisfactory and rough. In addition, the deteriorating conditions of the Muslim community in the region has become so bad, unlike anything ever seen before in the history of Buddhist–Muslim relations. The Rohingya Muslims' history of being persecuted in Myanmar continues to the present day. Regarding this worsening situation, Andrew Selth's investigation (Selth, 2003, p. 9) at the Strategic and Defense Studies Centre, Australian National University states:

> *Myanmar is a Buddhist majority country with a significant Muslim minority. While Muslims have served in the government since 1962, the situation changed with the 1962 Burmese Army coup. While a few continued to serve, most Muslims were excluded from positions in the government and army. The largest Muslim group in Myanmar are the Rohingya people; the Rohingya have been the most persecuted group under Myanmar's military regime.*

In fact, the relationship can be said to have become worse due to some religious, tribal, and political reasons following the British conquest of Burma in 1824. According to the

5 *Sadat* is an Arabic term meaning noble. The people who belong to the family of the holy prophet (PBUH) are called the *Sadat*.

6 Sheīkh 'Abdullah is one of the most important figures in Arakan Muslim history. Despite having less information about him, according to some historical sources he was the dynamic Arab preacher and first ruler of the local Arakan Muslims in Burma between 825-837 CE**.**

7 Badar Alam was a famous saint and scholar of Islam. He spread Islam in Burma in the 8th century. His followers called him Badri.

British census of 1931, the Muslim population in Burma was 27%. The educational trend among the Muslim population was very good, and most Muslims were employees of the British government in Burma. During the great economic crises of 1930-1938 in Burma, the Muslim community had been severely targeted and tortured by the Buddhist inhabitants of Burma. In 1942 during World War II, Japan attacked Burma. Several Muslim traders were killed, and a large number of Muslims were compelled to migrate to India. In 1945 after the war, the local Muslim politicians succeeded in establishing the political party known as the Muslim Congress of Arakan. Two Muslim leaders were members of the British government from the Burma Muslim Congress in Burma at the time. According to researcher Haruhiro Fukui (Fukui, 1985, p. 119):

> *The party was founded around the same time as the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), with which it became affiliated in December 1945. The party's first president, U Razak, became president of the AFPFL's Mandalay branch in 1946. After Razak's death, secretary-general U Khin Maung Lat succeeded him as party president. He became a member of the AFPFL Supreme Council and was appointed Minister of Justice in 1950, a post he held until 1958.*

After the separation of India, the Muslim Congress demanded its affiliation with Pakistan, but the local parliament did not accept this.

> *In 1948, the Union of Burma was established by permission of the British government. Arakan State and its majority Muslim population joined Burma in 1948 after an army coup. Arakan now became part of the Union of Burma. But in the past, it had been an independent state. In ancient times, Arakan had been divided into two kingdoms, South Arakan (i.e., Sandoway) and north Arakan as Arakan proper*. (Parashar & Alam , 2018, P. 98)

The two parts were combined in the last quarter of the 13th century, and Arakan remained like this until 1785 CE. A Buddhist monk, Munden, was the leader of the Buddhist religious politics in Burma against the British government.

The bitter reality is that, throughout history, the combination of military dictatorship and Buddhist national religious politics had created trouble for the Muslims of Burma, especially for Arakan and the Rohingya people. Even they had no citizenship rights according to the new laws and constitution of Burma. A Human Rights Watch report confirmed this with evidence in 2012. In 1982, the government had introduced regulations that denied citizenship to anyone who could not prove Burmese ancestry from before 1823. This disenfranchised many

Muslims in Myanmar, even though they had lived there for several generations. It's said that there is a history of persecution of Muslims in Myanmar that continues to the present day. *(Jesudas, 2015,p.194).*

Consequently, the Rohingya people became refugees in their own country where'd they been living for centuries. According to this legislation from 1982, more than a million Rohingya Muslims lost their identity in Burma. In addition, children born in Arakan after 1982 have been neither registered, provided with birth certificates, nor allowed to have more than two babies. These are certainly serious violations of fundamental human rights according to the UDHR[8] and are happening in a more civilized world in the presence of several human rights commissions and many legal entities, both nationally and internationally. According to the UDHR commission, Articles 28 and 30 state: "A Fair and Free World; there must be proper order so we can all enjoy rights and freedoms in our own country and all over the world… In addition, no one can take away your human rights" (UDHR, 1948).

The condition of other human rights and liberties have also gotten worse in Myanmar, such as the rights to education, to marriage and family, to free mobilization, to property, to freedom of expression and criticism, and to freedom of religion and thought. Myanmar's Muslims have no rights or liberties and face difficulties throughout their life. According to a Human Right Watch report on the Rohingya issue that Both the UN (United Nations) and the US (United States of America) Congress have noted that legal restrictions on freedom of movement for the Rohingya people severely affect basic rights to access livelihoods, food, water, sanitation, and education.(Human Rights Watch , October 8, 2020)

The democratic government of Myanmar under the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi[9] has done nothing on this issue except to defend the military and Buddhist monks' attacks on the Rohingya people. Many reports have declared this to be a clear genocide on the basis of religious sectarianism in the modern era. According to the Human Rights Comission report (HRC, 2018), In August 2018, the United Nations recognized Rohingya persecution as genocide and ethnic cleansing and called for the arrest and prosecution of Myanmar's top generals responsible for crimes against humanity. Even acacording to the Al-Jazira report it also observed

8 The UDHR is a historic document adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in its 183rd session on December 10, 1948 as Resolution 217 in Paris, France. All countries of the world are members to it and no one legally can violate these rights.

9 Aung San Suu Kyi was born on June 19, 1945. She is a Burmese politician, diplomat, author, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate (1991). She is the leader of the National League for Democracy and the first and incumbent State Counsellor, a position akin to a prime minister. She is also the first woman to serve as Minister for Foreign Affairs, for the President's Office, for Electric Power and Energy, and for Education in Myanmar. Now her party is the ruling party of Myanmar.

that the government of Aung San Suu Kyi is committing crime to cover up crimes against Rohingya and failed to offer them protection. (AlJazeera , November 15, 2019)

Meanwhile, some reports and papers are found on the reforms during the Civil Government Era from 2015-2020. In 2015, the then government brought changes to the laws related to religion and race, implicitly keeping the Rohingya people in mind. Hereafter, the laws were made more stringent, preventing them from violating human rights (Miles, 2015). The democratic Government is assumed that it have been a weak and puppet government and the actual power has been remain with the Myanmar Army and to Buddhist extremists. Therefore, the result of this leaning was to take no action against religious extremist leaders in Myanmar.

4. Transnationalism, Transnational Islam and Rohingya Muslims

At present, the transitional Islam have become one of the most illustrious studies and terms in the academic sphere. Numerous concepts, meanings, and approaches are found related to transnationalism based on the sociological perspective. Some scholars have connected it to migrations that may have religious, economic, ethnic, or social bases. As a Western scholar, Vector Roudometof argued:

> *The term transnationalism was originally connected to immigration cohorts, but today the concept has been expanded to include a whole array of activities across borders. The term transnationalism broadly refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of modern nation-states. (Vector, 2005, p. 115)*

Most of the scholars consider transnationalism as a cross border activity that occurs due to many social, economic, and religious reasons. Transnationalism is a social phenomenon and scholarly research agenda grown out of the heightened interconnectivity between people and the receding economic and social significance of boundaries among nation states (Steven, 2001, P. 576. Although transnationalism as a practice is very old, it has been recently highlighted as a concept and theory. It was first introduced by American writer Randolph Burne in the early 20th century in the context of Jewish migrations to America. Transnationalism as an ideology, theory, and experience has produced a good deal of literature in the humanities and social sciences. As an experience, transnationalism denotes the growing practical combination of processes that involve the cross-border or transborder relations of individuals, groups, and firms and mobilizations that occur beyond state borders. In other words, transnationalism refers to individuals, groups, institutions, and states that intermingle with each other in a different international arena where socially and dogmatically distinctive aspects of national societies are connected to developing multilevel and global events. Another perspective views

transnationalism as a chunk of the procedure of capital globalization. Therefore, a scholar considers transnationalism to be the transborder activities of groups, individuals, and races. According to Moore (2015, P. 397), the concept of transnationalism refers to:

> *Multiple links and interactions, linking people and institutions across the borders of nation-states. Although much of the more recent literature has focused on popular protest as a form of transnational activism, some research has also drawn attention to clandestine and criminal networks, as well as foreign fighters, as examples of a wider form of transnationalism.*

Many studies and reports are found to have examined the impacts, issues, and crises of transnationalism and transitional Islam. From the perspective of transnationalism, Islam as a religion is one of the most popular religions in modern time, and the academic sphere sees various reasons for transnationalism in Islam. One of the fundamental reasons and causes of Islamic transnationalism is the consequence of terrorism and racial discrimination against Muslims. In the modern era, the Rohingya Muslim crisis is one example of these reasons. The following paragraphs of the study will try to describe the historical and political background of the Rohingya Muslims.

5. The Activities and Impacts of the Rohingya in Pakistan

Due to these violations of fundamental human rights, the Muslim population in Myanmar has been affected awfully. Even the population rates have changed, with the majority having become the minority and the minority the majority. In 1966, Burma had a Muslim of 3 million. After the establishment of the Union of Burma and occupation of Arakan by the Burmese Army, the situation of Arakan Muslims became really bad there, with the ratio of emigrated people being higher than in other countries. According to research on the Rohingya issue, "After Africa and the Middle East, Asia is leading in producing refugees. Southeast Asia (SEA) is one of the highest refugees generating region in this region and Myanmar is the largest contributor" (Ragland, 1994, p. 307).

The emigrated and refugee populations of Rohingya Muslims is currently greater than the rest of the population in Myanmar. Thousands of Muslims, including women and children, have been killed. Hundreds of Rohingya Muslim women have been looted and raped by the Burmese Army, and millions of Rohingya Muslims have been compelled to seek refuge in Thailand, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, India, and Pakistan. Once Sheīkh Ḥasīnah Wājid said in the UN General Assembly 73rd Session in 2018 (UN, 2018) that 1.1 million Rohingya Muslims are living in Bangladesh refugee camps. When studying the popu-

lation in and migration of Rohingya Muslims to Pakistan, the numbers are surprisingly higher than for any another Muslim or non-Muslim country. According to *Reuter*'s (September 10, 2017) report on Rohingya Muslims migrants in Pakistan.

> *Millions of Rohingya Muslims are living in Pakistan, and they have been influencing Pakistani economic, political, social, and religious narrative since 1948. According to various Pakistani government sources and the Arakan Historical Society, some 300,000 Rohingya refugees are residing in Pakistan. All of them have made a perilous journey across Bangladesh and India and have settled in Karachi.*

An additionally striking point is that more Rohingya people are living in Pakistan than in any other country, even than in Bangladesh or Thailand. According to many authentic reports, approximately 30,000 Rohingya people have migrated to and are now living in Pakistan. Kanwar Shāhid (June 11, 2015) said, "It is important to mention that Pakistan has been one of the countries hosting the most Rohingya refugees, along with Bangladesh. Those are refugees from an earlier exodus, in the 1970s and 1980s." Most of the Rohingya population live in the port city of Karachi in important colonies such as Arakan Abad, the Burma Colony, and Burma town. Acacording to the UNCHR Pakistan is ranked as one of the largest country of hosting migrants in all over of the world (UNCHR, 2022). With refrence to Rohingya immigrants Pakistan has more than 5, 50,000 people in his state as migrants since 1948, which is considered 3rd most populated are of Rohingya Refugees. (CNN, September 11, 2017). The newspaper *Dawn* (September 17, 2017) reported the Rohingya Muslim in Karachi to have now obtained Pakistani citizenship. A report on human trafficking stated that Burmese people make up 14% of Karachi's undocumented immigrants. The large-scale Rohingya migration to Karachi made it one of the largest Rohingya population centers in the world after Myanmar. These being some speculative studies and media coverage show the dire need to exist for an authentic study on the actual records of Burmese migrants living in Pakistan, whose Rohingya Muslim community can be divided into three major categories.

Category 1 involves the students of different Islamic religious education centers (*madrasah*s). Most of the Rohingya community students study in such Karachi *madrasah*s as *Jam'iah Banuriyyah*, *Jam'iah Faruqiyyah*, or *Jam'iah' al-Rashid*. However, some children study in the local schools of the community that the local district government of Karachi has established in these areas. According to UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, (December 13, 2017) :

> *Until age of 11 Areeba a Rohingya migrant girl was unable to enroll in any school, not because there were not any schools nearby, but because what they had to offer was*

> *not what her family wanted and they remained fearful of her 'undocumented' status as a migrant. Instead, she was enrolled in a nearby madrassa to learn the Quran, something all Muslims must do, especially girls prior to being married off early, as per family customs.*

Category 2 involves laborers who do different jobs and mental work in Karachi. A number of Rohingya people living in Karachi are low-cost laborers, with the majority of the Burma Colony in Karachi working at the Korangi industrial area. According to the *Dawn* (September 17, 2017) newspaper report on Rohingya Muslim in Karachi:

> *The Burmese Colony is located on the edge of the Korangi industrial area, perhaps the mega-city's largest industrial zone. Apart from products, Korangi and the adjoining Landhi area produce the largest number of low-wage workers living in small settlements off the main road running across the two zones. The Burmese Colony, like the others, is organized along ethnic lines.*

Category 3 involves the business community. Some of the Rohingya Muslims have succeeded in establishing their businesses and shops in Karachi and other cities of Pakistan. Although their businesses are not large scale, they do have some shops in Arkanabad and the Burmese Colony and some shops in Ṣaddar in Karachi. Furthermore, some Rohingya people are engaged in imports and exports. They import plastic, cosmetic items, cloth, shoes, and also some crockery items import from China. Moreover, a good number of people are in the fish business in Karachi, due to being a low-cost business as well as a family business with regard to their hometown in Myanmar.

When analyzing the activities of the Rohingya people in Pakistan, especially in the cosmopolitan city of Karachi, no extraordinary work or accomplishments are found from them. The majority are poor people living in low-cost sheds who are compelled to work for low wages. They have no leader or representative to fight for their rights or to resolve their issues and problems. As a *Dawn* columnist, Ahmad Yusuf (September 17 , 2017) said the following about their dreams that We need a leader from within who can inspire the community,' replied Iftīkhār, 'But in the meantime, we have decided to enter all political parties for representation. The more we penetrate the mainstream, the louder our voice will be.

6. The Major Problems of the Rohingya in Pakistan and Their Solutions

When studying the issues and problems of the Rohingya Muslims in Pakistan in detail, most of the population of Rohingya Muslims are seen to live in Karachi, followed by Lahore, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, and Gilgit-Baltistan. Karachi and Islamabad have towns called Bur-

mese Colony. Of the majority of Rohingya Muslims who have been living in Karachi since 1948, some have now succeeded in obtaining Pakistani citizenship, and others live as relatives of these people. According to the CNN report (Sophia, September, 11, 2017):

> *Unfortunately, here too, these Rohingya people have had difficulties renewing or obtaining Pakistani identification cards, without which it is impossible to have access to healthcare, education for the young generation, and employment; and they are said to be harassed by police, especially those living in the Arakan Abad slum in Karachi.*

The following subsections of the study will describe the issues and problems of the Rohingya community and then attempt to suggest the possible solutions to these problems.

6.1. Issue of Identity

Identity crisis is one of the most crucial issues of the Rohingya People in Karachi, Pakistan. Although some have obtained their identity cards, most have not despite having lived in Karachi since 1980. As a result, they are harassed by the Karachi police. *Dawn* journalist Żīā' ur Rīḥān (February 23, 2015) reported the following on the Rohingya crises:

> *Harassment at the hands of Karachi police has become a routine matter for our community, as we do not have Pakistani national identity cards despite having lived in the country for the past 35 years," says Hassan, a Burmese Muslim known as a Rohingya, who was born in Karachi. Hassan is one of thousands of young Rohingyas whose parents fled persecution in Burma over the past 35 years to Karachi.*

The solution of this issue is that government of Pakistan should immediately register all Rohingya and Burmese[10] people in accordance with UDHR (UN, 1948) rules and recommendations. Pakistan may also issue identity cards and provide citizenship or residence permits on a temporary basis in accordance with international law on short- and long-term policies. Afterward, this can be updated to a permanent status on the basis of their conduct and character. In this way they can participate in the market and be eligible for jobs, business, and work involving other fundamental rights and services. Taking steps for legislation regarding migrants, refugees and foreigners in Pakistan is very important for resolving this issue. Pakistan is one of the countries that lack enough legislation about refuges and migrants. Another important thing is that no country can expel them according to international law. Therefore, legislation regarding their status and rights becomes more important in this situation. According to the UN human rights protocol about refugees and migrant, "People seeking asylum must not be

10 In Pakistan, especially in Karachi, the Rohingya people are called Burmese (*Burmize*) in the native Urdu language.

expelled or forced to return to situations where they are not safe. The principle of non- refoulement[11] is a firmly established prohibition in international law" (UN Protocols, 1951).

6.2. Issues of Health and Education

Problems with health care and education are also major issues for the Rohingya community all over the world as well as in Pakistan. They have no permission to get an education or health care from public institutions due to security reasons, but they do have some schools and dispensaries in their colonies like Arakan Abad and the Burmese Colony. They have no proper health care or schooling facilities in Karachi. According to a GEO TV (November 30, 2018) report that in the slums of Karachi, lack of proper documentation prevents Rohingya migrants from enrolling their children in schools and deprives them of public healthcare and employment opportunities. The basic reason for Rohingya Muslims' lack of education and health care issues in Karachi is due to the lack of a national identity card and legislation. According to many international and regional laws, migrants and refugees are eligible for education and health care. According to the UN Office of High Commission on Human Rights (OHCHR, 2016):[12]

> *The International covenant on economic, social, and cultural rights guarantees irregular migrants the right to health. In addition, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families stipulates that each child of a migrant worker shall have the basic right of access to education on the basis of equality with nationals of the State concerned.*

6.3. Business-, Work-, and Job-Related Issues

The right to protect life is an undeniably internationally recognized right for every person, and protecting this right is necessary for business, study, and work. The right to have access to work and a job has the most importance for refugees. Unfortunately, most countries are hesitant to give them access to work and the labor market. The same is the case for the Rohingya people in most of the host countries, including Pakistan. Most of the Rohingya people in Pakistan have no proper facilities and opportunities of these issues. According to *Dawn* (Ahmad, September, 2017), It's a curse living here,' says 25 years old Mohammad, 'People reject our job applications and all doors of opportunity are always shut in our faces when people find out that we are from the Burmese Colony.

11 The principle of non-refoulement is a fundamental principle of international law that forbids a country receiving asylum seekers from returning them to a country in which they would be in likely danger of persecution based on "race, religion, nationality, or member of a particular social group or political opinion."

12 The mandate of the OHCHR is to ensure universal enjoyment of all human rights, to remove obstacles to their effective implementation, and to enhance coordination and cooperation of human rights-related activities throughout the United Nations *system.*

The International Convention on Refugees and many other international studies recommend giving them access to the workplace, job, and labor market etc. According to Roger Zeter's investigation and research: Remarkably little consistency exists in legal provisions on refugees' right to work, either among the signatory states of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol (e.g., the United Kingdom, Germany), or among non-signatory states such as Pakistan, Lebanon, and Jordan. These counties are among the top refugee-hosting countries. Researchers think governments, labor and trade unions, national and international donors' agencies should play a dynamic role in accommodating the Rohingya refugees in Pakistan. Otherwise, their issue will become more severe and create more trouble and difficulties for their survival (Zeter, 2016).

These are several important issues and problems of the Rohingya community in Pakistan. The scope of this study does not allow all these issues and problems to be covered comprehensively. Studies and research projects need to be carried out to discuss the relevant challenges separately as well as comprehensively. For example, the problems pertaining to economics, politics, religion, health care, and education should be studied through all the necessary details.

Despite the need to do much more than what is being done to resolve these issues, Pakistan is undoubtedly doing its best according to its capacity. Pakistan's current economic and political situation is obviously not very good due to some external and internal factors. According to the young lawyer ʻUsmān ʻAlī:

> *In Pakistan's case, the situation is slightly different. Though we genuinely care for the Rohingya cause, it is almost impossible for us to take them in. This is because we are already hosting the second largest refugee population in the world, with over a million Afghan refugees. Furthermore, a protest was organized in Karachi where hundreds raised their voices against the brutal genocide of Rohingya Muslims (Virak, September 11, 2017).*

Various studies including this one have perceived the Muslim world to not be doing sufficient work to accommodate refugees, especially in the case of Rohingya Muslims. In the case of Myanmar, the issue is more severe because they are seen as boat people who have no importance to any country. But they are part of the Muslim Ummah, and we should try our best to accommodate them in terms of economics, politics, society, and religion. The people of Pakistan from all spheres of life should raise their voice to solve their problems within their country and internationally. This study's conclusion would be better by views of Mr. Shams,

finally, there is a phenomenon of hypocrisy within the Muslim world, based on ignoring the treatment of religious, ethnic minorities in Muslim majority countries like Pakistan, about how the Government of Myanmar represses its Muslim population (Shams, 2017).

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has drawn the following results and recommendations. The Rohingya people are the most neglected ethno-religious community in the modern world due to their religious, social, and ethnic backgrounds. Their case is not just one of forced migration but also of genocide and planned killing at the hands of Burmese forces and Buddhist terrorists under the silent approval of their so called democratic government.

Rohingya people are the local and native community of Myanmar (formerly Burma) with a Muslim identity. It had been their own state and government in the name of Arakan until 1826 when the British Empire conquered Burma. Muslims took an active part in causing British forces to leave Burma and played a dynamic political role under the British Empire since 1948. Muslims have had their own political identity under the umbrella of the Muslim Congress of Burma.

After the 1962 military coup in Burma and Arakan, the Muslims' situation became much worse. The military government tried its best to eliminate the Muslim identity and symbols in Burma and Arakan with the active help of Buddhist monks. In 1982 after the notorious citizenship legislation, Burma began calling itself Myanmar, and the Muslims lost their identity in their own homeland. According to this law, the Rohingya community were not accepted as citizens of the Myanmar state.

Due to the denial of citizenship, they have had no social, religious, political, or economic rights or services in Myanmar. Most have been compelled to seek refuge after the terrible persecution from Myanmar forces and Buddhist monks. Most of the Rohingya people have sought refuge in Bangladesh, India, Thailand, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. Pakistan's Rohingya population is more than 5 million, most of whom live in the cosmopolitan city of Karachiin one of three major towns: Arakan Abad, the Burmese Colony, and Islam Pura.

Most of the Rohingya people in Pakistan are laborers, fishermen, and madrasah students, with some shop keepers. The Rohingya people in Pakistan face some issues and problems, the most important of which are identity card issues, no proper right to access the labor market or workplaces, and an insufficient right to education and health care faculties.

As evidenced in this study, the problems faced by Rohingya people particularly in Pakistan should be solved, and they should be registered according to UDHR regulations. Revising the

legislation on refugees and migrants is also recommended so that it caters to their basic needs, including access to the labor market and the right to health care and education in public institutions. Moreover, international agencies for donations, NGOs and migrant organizations should also play a significant role in trying to resolve their issues with help of UNO and the government of Pakistan.

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CHAPTER 7

EUROPEAN CONVERTS' QUEST FOR TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIVITY WITH THE ISLAMIC UMMAH

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ABSTRACT

Studying the concept of the ummah is appealing in light of transnational Muslim networks' activities toward operationalizing the essence of ummatic unity. Converts comprise a growing segment of the Muslim ummah in the West. With the ambition of changing the dominant stereotypes of Islam as a non-white religion and its negative imagery in Western mentality, white converts have the potential to contribute to changing the future of the entire Muslim world. This article contributes toward understanding converts' perception of the ummah. The essence of ummah is seen through transnational Muslim solidarities that are best understood as forms of mobilization for social change premised around a particular set of values or discrepant normative visions and seldom articulate a vision of ummah as a political entity (Mandaville, 2011). Ummah is essential for providing a mechanism for coping with the difficulties converts endure through the course of conversion from their Western community. Converts undergo a re-racializing process where they become non-white or not-quite-white and lose accessibility to white privilege as they had before. As a result, they experience a subtle and discreet form of Islamophobia. Moreover, their religious authenticity is scrutinized lifelong Muslims and racialized because they do not look like a Muslim. They become the other white person who can never be entitled to the ummah, which increases their vulnerability. Practicing the ummah's principles starts in public spaces that facilitate open discussions and reflections such as mosques. The study suggests empowering the ummah from below in a framework of transnational collaborative partnerships that focus on inclusive Muslim communities to revitalize the essence of the ummah.

Keywords: Authentic Muslim, European converts, ummah, transnational solidarity, belonging, mosque

1. Introduction

The era of fast-growing societies, globalization, and booming technologies has affected the sense of belonging to a certain group, and the Muslim ummah is no exception. Many emerging constrains are found to face humans in general, such as the crisis of refugees, migration, and global warming, but the Muslim ummah has another layer of challenges that was forged through the aftermath of 9/11, the day of the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center in 2001 and revival of the debate about the clash of civilizations (Huntington, 1998). Shortly after 9/11, Arabs and Muslims not only in the United States, but also elsewhere in the world found themselves in the precarious situation of belonging. The War on Terror that the USA waged on Islamic countries was followed by a wave of Islamophobia that targeted Muslims wherever they were. Despite the fact that Islam has been otherized since the Orientalism of Edward Said (1978), this antagonist relationship with Islam has not changed over the past decades. These days, the word Islam undoubtedly evokes the idea of violence and oppression committed in the name of Allah in the mind of the average European (Arkoun, 1994). Moreover, Europe in the last decades and Western Europe in particular have been shifting toward more atheistic communities. In Western European counties, people who happen to believe more often seldom attempt to belong to their religious community or actively participate and practice their religion (Davie, 1994). For example, a survey in Belgium in 2004 showed 42% of Belgians to not belong to any religious community (Le Soir, 2004; as cited in Pedziwiatr, 2008), and only 14.4% of Flemings, 6.8% of Walloons, and 6.2% of the inhabitants of Brussels had gone to mass on Christmas in 2006 (Laporte, 2008).

On the very first day of my study year in Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven) in 2018, a young man on a bike approached me and handled me a leaflet from the International Muslim Students Association of Leuven (IMSAL). Founded in 1984, IMSAL is an independent students' association that represents Muslim students who come from every corner in Belgium and the world to pursue their studies at KU Leuven and other educational institutions in Leuven (IMSAL website, n.d.). Its core objective is to provide an Islamic meeting space for Muslim students, one where they can find support in their integration process, whether with the Belgian or Muslim community. Through other students attending KU Leuven, I learned that this association provides significant assistance to Muslims coming to a foreign non-Muslim country, especially in providing a mechanism to cope with time away from home. By attending their recreational activities, I was introduced to the first ever Muslim converts in my life. I had grown up in a country with a Muslim majority despite its secular governmental system. Henceforward, I kept engaging in conversations with Muslim converts who showed

ultimate commitment to attending Islamic events such as Ramadan iftars and Jumma prayers, to name a couple. They acknowledged that Islam is central to their self-understanding and assertions of who they are. Despite their commitment to engage with the Muslim community, many revealed frustration with the status quo of the ummah, whether in Belgium or in the broader picture of the transnational ummah. Transnationalism refers to the multiple ties and interactions that link people and institutions across the borders of nation-states. The transnational ummah links Muslims everywhere on Earth with brotherhood ties. Muslim converts persist in strengthening bonds with the Muslim community, hoping for the day when the state of the ummah changes. In fact, many are neither students nor live in Leuven. They cross miles from all over Belgium to come to IMSAL events. Surprisingly enough, some of them come from the Netherlands to attend a one-hour event.

Despite the prolific studies on Muslim communities in Europe and North America, more specifically on second-, third-, and fourth-generation Muslim migrants, less attention is paid to Muslim converts. Converts comprise a growing segment of the Muslim ummah in the West. Their actual numbers cannot be known, due to religion and race having been dropped from the official identification over the last century in Europe. For example, limited studies and memoirs have explored the issue of conversion to Islam (Kose, 1996; Moosavi, 2012, 2014; Rogozen-Soltar, 2012; Van Nieuwkerk, 2006; Wilson, 2010). Roy (2004) suggested that Muslim communities in the West have crucial importance to the future of Islam and the globalization of Muslim life as a result of experiencing a massive process of identity reconstruction, subculture creation, neo-ethnic groups, and religious solidarities that challenge ancestral traditions. Roy also argued that Muslims, not only in the West but also globally, have privatized religion and have cultivated an individualized self through symbolic markers of faith and culture. Nevertheless, the visual presence of Islamic culture (women wearing hijabs, clothing, halal food, Islamic art, and religious spaces like mosques) is notable in the West. By acknowledging converts' importance to the ummah, this study aims at exploring the interpretation of the concept of ummah among Muslim converts, highlighting their challenges and efforts at belonging and practicing their rightful membership in the ummah and addressing the role of Islamic spaces in fostering ties with the ummah.

2. What is Ummah?

A chronological development is found for the concept of ummah, which occurs around 62 times in reference to a religious community (Akram, 2007). The concept frequently emerges in discourses among nationalists, Islamic scholars, and others who are interested in Muslim societies. The discourses vary between those who seek the operationalization of the concept

as a way to enhance the Islamic world and nationalists who consider their loyalty to the nation-state rather than to the broader ummah. Tracing the evolution of the concept on the Muslim consciousness and its historical roots in Muslim societies is important here.

At the very beginning of Islam, ummah was used as an equivalent to a religious community such as Jewish, Christian, and Muslim ummah. However, in the prophet's period in Madina, the Quran began to address ummah as an entity more specific to the emerging Muslim community (Denny, 2004). Watt (1956) analyzed the Medinan ummah as an innovative, theocratic sociopolitical order in the way in which it transcended tribalism by basing itself on common faith rather than kinship. According to Watt, Allah is characterized by the Muslim community as the head and director of it, and all who participate in it enjoy divine security and protection. Therefore, the ummah's establishment as a community with political authority and autonomy, as well as religious and social characteristics, had occurred in Medina.

Immediately after Prophet Mohammad's death, the concept of the ummah underwent important developments. The exercise of selecting the leadership (i.e., *Shura*) was one concrete example of the development of the concept in legal and political forms due to the appointment being conferred by the majority of the ummah, thereby investing ultimate political authority in the ummah and its consensus. Preserving its unity through one nominated imam was essential for the ummah. Watt (1956) argued the idealization of the first four caliphs' leadership of being rightly guided to have been more than a creation of the historical imaginings of later generations of Muslims, in particular the Sunni; it was a period in which important Islamic ideals were actually conceived and thus impacted future generations regarding how the ummah should be. In other words, this initial period had articulated the principles of the unity of the ummah and the ummah as the primary source of political authority. Upon the expansion of the Islamic world and other ethnicities besides Arabs joining the ummah, its fabric led to the gradual loosening of political centralization. During the Abbasid dynasty, the caliphs were perceived as symbols of the unity of its ummah, which had been significantly developed by Islamic cultural tradition. As traditionalists and Islamic scholars have emphasized, Islam is preserved simply by keeping the unity of the ummah's fabric, which is distinguished its members' shared beliefs. Membership in the ummah was given by being born to Muslim parents or voluntary converting to Islam; hence, no prescribed methods or ritual requirements exist for membership in the ummah. Watt (1956) noted the status of Arabs within the larger ummah; they had hegemonic political power and centrality in the ummah, which they had basically gained due to their Arabic language and by being the primary community to whom Mohammad had been sent. As a result of transnational movements and the expansion of the

Islamic empire, Arabs' political hegemony receded, as did the cultural tensions between them and other ethnic groups. Furthermore, the ummah in the late 19th century had become relevant as a form of modern political discourse when Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897), an intellectual activist, sought to mobilize Muslims using the concept of Islamic unity and deploying it as a form of anti-colonial discourse. He should be noted to have not criticized nations as a model of political community, nor to have called for the establishment of a single, global Muslim polity. Mandaville (2011, p. 9) suggested, "It was a form of civilizational discourse that posited Islam as an alternative to the prevailing hegemony of European imperialism and sought to articulate it to a social movement of anti-colonial liberation."

In the contemporary world, the study of Islam and Muslims has attracted many scholars from Islamic and non-Islamic backgrounds. The proliferation of such studies has phenomenally increased with the rise of right-wing politics in Europe. Akram (2007) indicated how studying the concept of the ummah is appealing in light of transnational Muslim networks' activities toward operationalizing the ideal of ummatic unity. Reading scholars' current works on the ummah reveals a discourse on the interpretation of the concept: Many scholars have debated its monolithic aspect, such as Daniel Pipes (1983) who according to Akram (2007) had discussed it from a negative perspective. Other scholars who've examined the impact of this concept on Muslim consciousness are Nasr (2002) and Esposito (1992). Mandaville (2011) argued against the idea of the ummah having been shaped as a primary reference in contemporary Muslim debates about identity or as a form of globalized political consciousness. In the context of the nation-state, Mandaville argued Islamic political mobilization (or what he called post-Islamism) to sometimes attempt to reconstruct an alternative order rather than structure the ummah.

3. Research Methodology

In this ethnographic research, I explore the accounts of young Muslim converts of European origins in their search for membership in the ummah and for a transnational connection while living in non-Muslim countries. The data were extracted from a selected sample of converts who happened to live in Belgium during the 2018-2019 school year. Converts included both men and women between the ages of 17-46 who'd come from different education background (most had postgraduate qualifications). They came from 12 European nationalities such as Belgium, Estonia, Ireland, Germany, Poland, Russia, and the Netherlands. The study took place between December 2018 and October 2019. The research employed the snow-ball sampling technique to reach more participants. This also helped reach participants from different locations in Belgium. There was an overwhelming response to participate in

the research, especially when I requested in-depth interviews. I observed their willingness to cross miles to discuss the issue as signals of the commitment they were attempting to show for the ummah and their desire to have their voices heard by other Muslim fellows. The data were collected through participant observations, two focus groups, and 13 semi-structured in-depth interviews, as well as 17 somewhat informal interviews during the various events I attended over the discussed period. The focus groups were fruitful to the research as they explained any social phenomena and allowed access to an additional dimension beyond the individual interviews, yielding interactive verbal and nonverbal information (St. John, 1999). This gave me an opportunity to hear answers from different participants and to engage with them while allowing other participants to raise questions to each other and to ask for more detailed viewpoints. This interaction enabled the participants to "compare their own personal reality to that of others" (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 17). The easiest way I found to start the discussion was by asking about their conversion journey and how they had arrived at Islam, which of course was not the objective of the study. I observed that they were enthusiastic to share this information, in particular that the majority of them had converted at an early age in their life, some as early as 15 years old. One female interviewee started her researching Islam when she was six years old. A few of them were practicing Islam in secret due to family restrictions and the fears of losing their initial ties and belonging to other groups that perceive Islam as a "terrorist" religion. Two of them are still researching Islam despite their intention to convert; however, they have no clue what the ummah means. Sometimes keeping my interviewees on track was challenging, as they wished to elaborate more on their journey through Islam rather than discuss the research objectives. As a result, being firm and maintaining the focus of the discussion became essential. As van Manen (1997, p. 98) noted, the art of the researcher in hermeneutic interviews is to keep the question (of the meaning of the phenomenon) open while keeping oneself and the interviewees orientated toward the substance of the thing being questioned.

3.1. Research Findings

The intellectual and political imagination of classical Islamic thought had played an important role in the creation of the Muslim ummah during the early stages of Islam and of contemporary Islamic thought throughout it historical course. The deterritorialization and transnational understandings of the ummah may enable new policies to be set that enhance Muslim ties and bring positive change to their communities. Moreover, seeing the ummah from a Muslim converts' eyes may be able to emphasize its reconceptualization in a language befitting The contemporary world, assuming that the concept as has been known is outdated.

3.2. Developing the Concept of the Ummah Among Muslim Converts

The majority of my interviewees had learned about the concept within months or years of their conversion. Six of them still did not know what ummah means, which signals that the concept itself was not attractive to them in their early stage of researching Islam as a newly adopted religion, in contrast to understanding the consequences of being a new Muslim in a non-Muslim society. This contrast with the finding from the Pew Research Center Survey (2017), which suggested 10 percent of Muslim converts to be Christians who'd been motivated mainly to belong to a community.[1] My interviewee Elizabeth asserted, "The appeal of the ummah was not the premise of why I converted. I did not expect anything from other Muslims. But later I looked to Muslims to help me understand the religion and to find someone to talk with about my difficulties."

Based on their experiences of attending IMSAL events, the new converts had become fascinated about the mechanism that allows diverse Muslims to be one united community. Olivia[2] said,

> *It was my second time in a mosque when I visited IMSAL. I immediately felt at home. The place was full of diverse people from different nationalities. I felt a part of this community despite the fact that I am not a KU Leuven student or live in this neighborhood. It was like family.*

When asked to elaborate on what family means in this context, she said, "Everyone accepted me. I did not feel any worries or fears. I felt comfortable being me."

Emma asserted the name of the organization itself containing the word international to promote the feeling of being accepted before her actual visit to IMSAL. IMSAL for her represents a model of what the ummah should be: one big transnational family. She said,

> *Ummah means family. It goes further than land borders or any kind of borders such as race, ethnicity, or nationality for me… Being born in a Muslim family, whether you may consider it luckily or unluckily, these do not guarantee you this connection with the entire ummah. It is a personal thing*.

This understanding was confirmed by John, who said, "What define the connection is the person's acceptance of Allah and the Prophet's teaching, which entails going beyond any kind of boundaries. It is a bigger picture than our smaller worlds."

1 For more about this survey, visit https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/26/the-share-of-americans-who-leave-islam-is-offset-by-those-who-become-muslim/

2 The interviewees have been given different names to protect their identities, as some of them are practicing Islam in secret or fear their connection with the local mosques will be affected by the information they've provided.

Lucas who'd converted as a teenager and found no other Muslims in his neighborhood, asserted, "The ummah has come gradually into my life. When I read the Prophet's biography, it didn't start out as a strong concept for me. The lack of a Muslim community around me was challenging to think about." From his discussion, he clearly is aware of the ummah's function as a politically significant form of Muslim collective identity, but he doubted its applicability in Europe due to living beyond the Islamic world, thus a virtual ummah is more viable. The young generation is taking advantage of new technologies and different social media outlets to communicate with other Muslims around the world.

The concept of ummah entails diversity, acceptance, transnationality, difference, shared belief, personal dimensions, and temporality for my interviewees. Nevertheless, it had had no meaning before practicing membership and engagement with the surrounding Muslim community. Furthermore, after accepting Islam, they searched for a way to root themselves within the Muslim community by staying alert about events and activities that have the potential for meeting other Muslims. Mila noted,

> *Ummah means the Muslims around me, especially my sisters. But it also is the idea that wherever you meet a Muslim, man or woman, in Belgium or abroad, some sort of recognition occurs, a mutual respect and the idea that I can always ask this person for help.*

Converts often attempt to practice their right to membership in the ummah by socially engaging in activism, transnational solidarities, collective actions, and different forms of heterogeneous and fragile mobilizations that include volunteer works targeting Muslim fellows, participating in everyday activities of the Muslim community in their neighborhood, secretly praying dua for their underprivileged and poor brothers everywhere, raising awareness to inform their non-Muslim friends about the inequalities and injustice other powerless Muslims endure, as well as attending Eid prayers, Ramadan Iftars, and Islam and Arabic language classes and any other organized events such as BBQs, hikes, children's daytime activities, and small Qur'anic study circles. Despite that, mobilizations for social change that are organized around and through Islam continue to be of interest to the younger generation today. They do not involve any understanding of transformative politics that aim to capture the state power or lead to a sustainable political mobilization (Mandaville, 2011). Therefore, transnational Islamic aspirations must not be understood as the expression of loyalty to an ummah or a higher form of social affiliation but rather as one of many mainstream discourses on topics such as human rights, social justice, gender equality, climate change, and LGBTQ that hope for a better world. The growing body of heterogeneous networks and groups in the

Islamic world and of Muslim communities in the West that are organized around a particular discursive referent (e.g., justice, development, prosperity, or social change through proper Islamic observance) share certain characteristics with the new social movement theory. They are organized primarily around the promotion of particular values, cultures, or ethos rather than economic change or public policy (Mandaville, 2011). Projects related to the new social movement are different from the traditional model of social movements that were found in the 19th and early 20th centuries that had tended to focus on material conditions, class interests, and achieving changes in the existing political or economic order. According to Buechler (1999), the new social movements demonstrate their post-material character by grounding themselves in values, cultural systems, and identity politics (e.g., human rights, ecological thought, queer identities). Melucci (1989) argued participation within such movements to be considered a goal in itself, without any aspiration to translating this mobilization into formal political activism. Actors self-consciously practice in the present the future social changes they seek. Melucci (p. 6) notes, "They are no longer driven by an all-encompassing vision of some future order. They focus on the present, and consequently their goals are temporary and replaceable, and their organizational means are valued as ends in themselves." Furthermore, Mandaville noted how the transnational Muslim solidarities represent an intermediate space of affiliation and sociopolitical mobilization that exists alongside and in an ambivalent relationship with the nation-state.

4. The Conflict of Belonging

Miller (2002, p. 218) contended that belonging, what she calls "ontological belonging," is a state of being in fit connection to people, time, and space. This comprises mutual belonging as a feeling of easiness with ourselves and a sentiment of concurrence with the various corporeal and social circumstances in which we live. The majority of convert interviewees shared obstacles despite their tremendous efforts at belonging to the Muslim community around them. My interviewee Lina travels over 80 km to meet with other Muslim women. She said,

> *"I seldom joined activities in church. I went in certain events like Christmas and Easter to please my parents. It was a nearby church. But when I converted, I keen to belong to a group who share same belief like mine."*

The ummah is essential for helping converts cope with the difficulties they face in the early stages of conversion. For example, Lucas was abandoned from his teenage friends who told him, "You aren't (fun)." Therefore, he needed people who have the same definition of fun as he does. The announcement of conversion to their families were met with anger, tears, and

boycotting. This negative reaction is understandable, as Europe has been shifting toward more atheist communities and religious belief has fallen somewhat out of fashion (Davie, 1994; Moosavi, 2014, 2012). According to Johns and Saeed (2002, p. 209), "Islam is commonly stereotypical lenses, and conversion to Islam is regarded as an aberration." Meanwhile, Kose (1996, p. 137) observed, "Converting to Islam in a non-Muslim society may mean social suicide and boycott for some converts, and some parents treat their son/daughter's conversion as a social death." Because the word Islam evokes the image of violence and oppression in the West (Arkoun, 1994), Islamophobia has grown over the past decades (Allen, 2010; Esposito & Kalin, 2011; Kundnani, 2007; Moosavi, 2014; Poynting & Mason, 2007; Sayyid & Vakil, 2011).

My interviewee Olivia added, "I am floating between two worlds. My family angrily demanded me not to bring Islam inside our house." Another one said, "My parents told me, 'We cannot stop you, but we do not want to see it.' They do not want me to interact with any *Moroccans* [referring to Muslims in her neighborhood], to pray in a place where they can see it, or to wear the hijab… They do not want to see Islam." Referring to Muslims as Moroccans indicates the way in which Muslims have been racialized due to certain ethnicities being associated with particular religions in distinct locations (Franks, 2000). Moosavi (2014, p. 43) pointed to how white converts are re-racialized as non-white when they are called "Paki" or "(dirty) Arab" in Britain. He explained that the degree of whiteness was contextual: Converts are still considered "white" to some extent but as having a tarnished "whiteness" or being "not quite white." Therefore, they might no longer be able to access white privilege as they once had and are otherized. Inevitably, "They experience persistent Islamophobia which typically appears in a nuanced and discreet manner, thus exposing the most common manifestation of Islamophobia, a subtle and discreet form"(Moosavi, 2014, p. 42). In the Danish context, Jensen (2008) noted how converts may be regarded as highly contradictory and dangerous beings because of the Danish way of dealing with the relationship between self and other, in a sense they celebrate sameness and exclude what they perceive as differences that threaten national unity (Sjørslev, 2004, p. 90; Jensen, 2008, p. 390).

Delving more into the study has revealed the ways in which converts endure two layers of otherness: one from the primary European communities and one from the new Muslim community which, from their perspective, does not resonate with their understanding of the concept of ummah. The 19-year--old Sarah pointed out how she has to explain herself every time she purchases Islamic products. For example, when she entered a Moroccan shop to buy a prayer rug, the shop owner looked strangely at her and aggressively answered, "This is for

praying, not for decoration." In this sense, converts are racialized because they did not look Muslims and became the white other who can never be worthy of the Muslim ummah. Their Islam is scrutinized by born Muslims. As Olivia explained,

> *My dress code defines my membership to the ummah. Nobody believes I am a Muslim because I do not wear a hijab. I am floating between two worlds. My family angrily demanded me not bring Islam inside our house, and Muslims do not see me as a Muslim because of my outfit.*

Converts are anxious of not being authentic or good Muslims. Lucie alluded, "It looks like my skin tone identified my membership to an ummah. Being white for them is equal to being Christian, they did not accept me." Ideally, once a person utters the *shahada*[3], they immediately belong to the ummah, as no separate category exists for converts in Islam. This person is treated as any Muslim born and raised as such, and the only way to differentiate them is their degree of *taqwa* [piety]. Al-Qwidi (2002), who studies British converts, asserted that many lifelong Muslims still fail to accept Muslim converts as authentic Muslims. Therefore, converts often are advised on how to become a good Muslim, which may keep them later on from attending Islamic spaces. As Lina said,

> *Another practice is the way Muslims give advice to each other. The line between offering advice and judging is really thin. For example, some sisters will offer advice about our dress style. Muslims should do this in a nice manner without insult. We are trying to be good Muslims, the ummah should help us in doing so.*

However, being fully or partially excluded from spaces might be the result of the converts' insecurity. As Mila noted, "I do not think I felt fully excluded from the ummah, though I can get some strange glances from born Muslims. Perhaps that can also be my own insecurity which interprets it like that." Roald (2004) clarified the three positions any convert may go through in regard to cultural belonging and religious orientations: "From a stage of falling in love with the religion, through the crucial stage of disappointment or rejection, [and] to a final stage of maturity and understanding in which the convert manages to integrate his or her plural identities" (Roald, 2004, p. 281). Roald (2004) pointed to the phenomenon of *convertitis* which refers to self-awareness of the identity transformation in becoming the "other" and the need to demarcate and affirm one's new identity convincingly, both in relation to oneself and to others. Moreover, converts might also choose to step away from lifelong Muslims due to frustration when interacting with real Muslims. As John explains, "I knew ummah and

3 The *shahada* is first of the five pillars of Islam, the Muslim profession of faith. It usually occurs by saying, "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah."

Muslims through examples in the Qur'an, Hadith, and the prophet's Companions. Those are examples of very high standard. I was disappointed by real people." Roald (2004) also explained that new converts often exhibit a so-called fanaticism with Islam, which is expressed in completely ritualized behavior such as only wearing Islamic dress and a preoccupation with the Islamic rules of what is halal (allowed) and haram (forbidden). As a result, converts create a sub-ummah to avoid any potential tension with lifelong Muslims. As Lina highlighted, "The connection between Muslim converts is more strongly seen. I consider it a sub-ummah. maybe from sharing the same challenges, exchanging stories of discrimination based on wearing scarfs, and being judged from people (other Muslims) around."

Understanding the challenges that converts experience from lifelong Muslims and their fear of never attaining the status of being an authentic Muslim should be addressed in order to improve the transnational dialogue between members of the ummah.

5. The Role of Mosques

Mosques are an intermediate space of affiliation and sociopolitical mobilization for the interviewees in that this is where they seek synergies and solidarities through their conversion. However, As a house of Allah, mosques become a place where ordinary people practice authority. Lifelong Muslim groups in Belgium are comprised of three to four generations of peasant migrants that date back to the 1950s. They are mainly Moroccans and Turks who've formed an urbanized ethnic minority through a religion the Belgian non-Muslim mentality conceives of as imported or even imposed. Each ethnic group has its own mosque. My interviewee Sofia is a community activist who converted seven years ago. With melancholy, she told of her experience when a foreigner Muslim had passed away in Belgium, and some people referred to her for the process of washing and burying. She approached one of the mosques in Leuven knowing it had a dozen formal washing and shrouding women, but the Imam was extremely outraged. He shouted, "Why did they refer to you? They should asked me directly." Upon his refusal for having sent a woman, she drove to Antwerp to find a mosque. Some Muslims can be said to seek domination and power through a mosque and to try to distance active converts from social and political activities. In this context, converts' engagement is seen as a threat to the micro-ummah. While Mandaville(2011) argued that trans-local forces have been leading the emergence of a wider Muslim public sphere, the authoritarian forces in this anecdote could be perceived at the micro-level between transnational minorities and the quest of sovereignty over Muslim practices and everyday life as a way of claiming power in the larger ummah. In this regard, the role of Muslim scholars in adhering to ummatic ties and fostering cooperation in transnational communities is worth mentioning. This can be seen in

the polarity of leadership nowadays between Türkiye and Saudi Arabia. Moreover, Sofia's anecdote raises a question of the role of gender in remaking the ummah in the Muslim world and in a diaspora. Tourage (2013) studied prominent (white male) converts and pointed out how no single woman (whether a convert or a lifelong Muslim) occupied the same prominent position that male American imams and sheikhs like Hamza Yusuf do. This is understandable, because as many studies have shown, white women do not have the same relation to power as white men. White women do stand for white power but simultaneously "are shown to be unable either to exercise it effectively or to change what they perceive to be its abuses" (Dyer, 1997, p. 30). The issue of gender was also highlighted in regard to designing spaces, especially mosques. As Emma explained,

> *People in charge are old and come from a certain Arabic-speaking nationality. They segregate the mosque, and it is only used for prayers with very few activities throughout the entire year. When I came to IMSAL, it was an extremely different experience. Maybe because it promotes a sense of belonging for all and is a diverse mixed space. So we focus on our belief, which make us united.*

Despite the fact that ummatic unity was fascinating to the majority of my interviewees, some expressed a failure at dealing with differences inside Islamic spaces like mosques. They indicated that differences must negotiated rather than eliminated. For example, Gabriel, who had experienced exclusion inside different mosques several times, noted,

> *Diversity should be a key element of the mosque. It is not your mosque. Why should anyone accept that someone for any reason has control over the mosque. The prophet said in the last sermon, "All mankind is from Adam and Eve. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab. Also, a white has no superiority over a black, nor does a black have any superiority over a white except through piety and good action. Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that Muslims constitute one brotherhood. Nothing that belongs to a fellow Muslim shall be legitimate for another Muslim unless it is given freely and willingly."*

Moreover, the findings suggest a significant correlation between strengthening the relationship with the mosque and strengthening the ummah at large. As John said, "It is very annoying what is happening in some mosques, Chasing people away from the mosque, this is breakdown our ummah apart and weakening us." Excluding converts from mosques was noted to not only weaken their emotional connection with the ummah but to also be seen to

emphasize a negative representation of Islam. Furthermore, the idea that Muslims cannot practice the exchange of power and authority inside small spaces like a mosque leads one to doubt any efforts at reaffirming the ummah as a political entity similar to the earlier model in Islamic history, especially as the number of diverse Muslims increases around the world.

Acknowledging the fact that Islamic leadership has failed to reform the spirit of ummah but instead has increased division among Muslims opens the door to empowering the ummah from the ground up, namely working with small-scale communities to unify the ummah for the common good of Muslims and the world. Lucas extensively explained,

> *My mechanisms for fostering the ummah is to liberate it from existing governments in the Muslim countries. They are the garbage of the colonial era which sought to gain power over people. They never have any plans to remove the borders given to them by colonizers. They have no intention to change the current situation of the ummah… We should work with transnational communities to reach people on the ground away from their governments using the virtual world. It has to be a grassroots effort. But my concern is that these grassroot movements need to reach a consensus on unification, one where people talk with each other… We do not trust each other.*

Empowering the ummah means that each and every Muslim has responsibilities that need to be fulfilled. As Emma noted,

> *"None of you is a true believer unless you wish for your brother what you wish for yourself." We strive for Jannah, for the goodness of our family, for food, housing, family, water, a sense of belonging. Being a European Muslim, I feel safer here and have rights. Yet, I think of other Muslims elsewhere in the world and keep them in my prayers and dua. We should step out of our egoism, think of our similarities and struggles, and unify our efforts to save the ummah. If we want mercy from Allah, we should be merciful to each other.*

A framework of collaborative partnerships among communities is what is needed to support organizations that revive the essence of the ummah and promote open discussions on shared interests and collective needs similar to IMSAL in order to bring about social change and improve quality of life for all.

6. Conclusion

The growing number of white converts has made Western countries' attempts to maintain the image of Islam as a foreign, other, and non-white religion more difficult (Zebiri (2008).

Converts are suggested to be "making a disproportionate contribution to the indigenization of Islamic practice, thought, and discourse in the West" (Rogozen-Soltar, 2012, p .618). With converts' ambition of playing a positive role in changing the future of Islam, understanding converts' perception of the ummah and the ways in which they try to practice their legitimate affiliation with it are important.

Since the elimination of the Islamic caliphate in 1924 at the hands of Ataturk, Muslim scholars and leadership have been attempting to recreate the sociopolitical vacuum that was caused by the absence of a unified Muslim leader, the caliph. Despite the fact that Muslims continue to use the notion of ummah throughout Islamic history (Mandaville, 2006), the findings of the study urge for it to be redefined, perhaps updating it to align with the contemporary circumstances of the Muslim world, where nationalism speaks louder than religion and diasporic communities are increasing every year. Converts often attempt to practice their rightful membership in the ummah by socially engaging in activism, transnational solidarities, collective actions, and different forms of heterogeneous and fragile mobilizations. The sense of ummah seen through transnational Muslim solidarities expresses a diverse range of political and normative agendas yet seldom articulates a vision of the ummah as a political unit. It is best understood as forms of mobilization for social change premised over a particular set of values or discrepant normative visions (Mandaville, 2011).

Despite living in a secular non-Muslim country, Muslim converts extensively try to belong to the ummah after being introduced to it. These attempts lead to different forms of discrimination and to two-layers of otherness being experienced, firstly and most obviously from their European family and friends because of the existing stereotypical view toward Islam and the increased levels of Islamophobia. Conversion may mean a social suicide and boycott for converts. Converts undergo a re-racializing process where they become non-white or not quite white and lose accessibility to white privilege as they had had before. As a result, they experience a subtle and discreet form of Islamophobia (Moosavi, 2014). They secondly experience re-racializing from their Muslim fellows who scrutinize their religious authenticity for not looking like Muslims. They become the 'other' white who can never be worthy of the ummah. These negative encounters do not resonate with their perception of the concept of ummah. Understanding the challenges that converts experience from lifelong Muslims and their fear of never attaining the status of being an authentic Muslim should be addressed in order to improve the transnational dialogue among the members of the ummah. Therefore, the essence of the ummah is critically important for converts to be able to deal with all the psychological and social challenges they face upon converting.

The study has discussed the role of mosques in the process of remaking the ummah in a non-Muslim country. However, it has also paid attention to how mosques have become a place where lifelong Muslims control Muslim practices and everyday life. Moreover, the study has questioned the role of gender in remaking the ummah in the Muslim world and among diasporas. No shortage of contemporary learned Muslim women are present from among both converts and lifelong Muslims, but their presence in the ummatic discourse and in recreating activities is very limited. For example, the study has shown how one female activist who'd gained a prominent position was fought and excluded.

A sense of ummah is crucial in the contemporary era in order to be able to mobilize communities for the common good and their development, as well as to support Muslims in need everywhere. Acknowledging the failure of Muslim leaders to reform the spirit of the ummah led to the suggestion of empowering the ummah from the ground up by working on and with community grassroots movements. This would become a framework for collaborative partnerships and cooperation among transnational communities.

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CHAPTER 8

FROM TRANSNATIONAL ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS TO INDIVIDUAL RELIGIOSITY: THE CRISIS OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY IN WESTERN EUROPEAN MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

Islam has evolved in form over recent decades in Western European countries, where its lack of institutionalization and official representation allow different ideological trends, movements, and religious organizations to compete for orthodoxy. This paper first proposes to synthesize the development of major religious trends within Islamic communities in the West over the last three decades. It drafts a tripartite periodization of dominant Islamic trends represented by Embassy Islam, transnational religious movements, and new types of local grassroots associations that are often youth-driven and mostly independent from Islamic organizations. The study assesses how these three steps represent a common evolution across various European countries. The paper first argues for a distinction between the Islam of the initial migrants and the Islam promoted by transnational religious organizations such as the Tablighi, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the various currents of Salafism. Secondly, it shows how even these transnational movements and the organizations underpinning them have already lost much influence due to Muslim citizens launching many Islamic associations and charities totally independent of both transnational religious movements and foreign religious organizations. Often associated with reformism, this trend implies a religious and ideological rupture with previous religious institutions. Different factors should be considered such as a global crisis of authority in Islam, the diversification and multiplication of religious sources of knowledge, and finally an individualization of religiosity in order to help understand the transition from the domination of transnational Islamic movements to the multiplication of religious actors and ideologies. Finally, this paper aims to inspire further research to explore new ways of understanding Islam in the West and to understand the latest interactions among Islamic schools of thought, ideologies, theology, and activism within social and political spheres.

Keywords: Activism, charity, Islam, reformism, religious movements, Salafism, faith-based organizations

1. Introduction

Three main religious phases can be identified over recent decades within Islamic communities in Western European countries. Initially, Islamic associations depended on the institutions from migrants' home countries (Césari, 1998). Next, the development of Islamic organizations became connected to transnational religious movements such as the Tablighi movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Salafism, all of which more specifically addressed young Muslims who had been born in those countries (i.e., second-generation immigrants). Their religious approach was particularly differentiated from the Islamic trends the migrant parents had followed, as they implied activism within the country of residence and rejected ethnical boundaries (Amghar et al., 2007) Thirdly, a new type of local grassroots associations arose, often youth-driven and mostly independent from the Islamic movements mentioned above (Barylo, 2017; Brodard, 2023). These three steps represent a common evolution observed in various European countries over the last three decades. The first purpose of this paper is to outline recent shifts in the Islamic ideological influences in mosques and religious discourses over recent years in Western Europe by highlighting the transitions between these three phases. The second purpose concerns the new challenges that have issued as a result of the decline of traditional authorities and that are expressed alongside the increase of personalized discourses on Islam and the multiplication of religious offers.

1.1. Overview of the Academic Output on Islamic Movements in Europe

Islamic movements and organizations in Europe have been studied over recent decades. However, most research has focused on specific Islamic movements and organizations and failed to provide an overall insight into Islamic trends within a country or even a city. Indeed, studies have mostly described specific movements such as the Tablighi and the Muslim Brotherhood through the lens of their concrete activities within deprived neighborhoods, mostly in France (Kepel, 1987; Khedimellah, 2001). Other studies have indirectly addressed transnational organizations and religious movements while focusing on specific subjects such as religious education or social welfare services (Césari, 1998). In the British context, Hamid's (2016) book *Sufis, Salafis and Islamists: The Contested Ground of British Islamic Activism* offers an apt description of the main ideological and organizational influences on the Islamic landscape. Samir Amghar (2013) also provided an accurate presentation of influential Islamic movements in Europe by focusing on activism and political Islam but extending his description to other transnational movements. Two limits can be identified in his work. First, most

of his research focuses only on the French context, despite its European purpose. Secondly, the macro perspective of the research mostly approaches the studied phenomenon from the top down. Amghar studied the strategies and objectives of Islamic organizations under the assumption that these would materialize in concrete actions. However, contrary to what this approach suggests, I would argue that these ideologies and religious norms observed or articulated at the level of Islamic organizations or by those individuals who claim some form of Islamic or religious or scriptural authority for their views are not simply or blindly implemented by the actors who follow or appear to follow them. While they may incorporate these norms, they can also transform and redefine them according to their own particular context and interests. I identify a gap in the academic literature between macro research studies grounded in political science, which provide an insight into the main Islamic organizations and religious movements exploring their global strategies, and micro-empirical research that uses ethnographic tools and study concrete local phenomena such as the influence of Islamic discourses among youth. However, these latter studies often fail to connect their findings to ideological religious trends that have been implemented from above. Therefore, to complete such a top-down approach to the field, it needs to be investigated using qualitative methods such as observations and in-depth interviews in order to identify concrete practices and discourses beyond the official statements and top-down strategies and norms articulated at the organizational level and by the organizations themselves.

1.2. Methodological Approach

This paper aims to provide a rare but much-needed longitudinal view on Islamic ideological trends and their influence in Western European countries, in particular in France and Switzerland. In this respect, the paper references the academic literature as well as numerous field observations made from 2005-2018 in different countries such as France, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and Belgium. This field research is grounded in an ethnographic approach and includes both participant observations and informal interviews.

In addition to these background data, the paper mainly references empirical data collected through a doctorate research study (Brodard, 2023) focusing on Islamic organizations that provide social welfare services. These data are based on the in-depth case study held from 2016-2018 in Switzerland and Britain focusing on grassroots Islamic social work organizations and charities that implement social welfare services for both Muslims and non-Muslims. That research was mostly based on ethnographic immersion and participant observation, which allowed data to be collected far beyond official discourses. From that perspective, informal interviews were particularly needed to explore the hidden practices and discourses often not highlighted in

official discourses nor in semi-structured registered interviews (Lanzarini & Bruneteaux, 1998). Finally, such qualitative research based on ethnographic tools led to a deeper understanding of the issues related to ideological influences and theological diversity within Islamic movements and organizations. The data and claims provided in this paper have been directly extracted from the field observations and interviews except where bibliographic references are specified.

1.3. Assumption

In addition to the academic literature, field research studies have led to the identification of major trends in Islamic thought within specific temporal and geographical contexts. At the beginning of the 2000s, what Islam had to offer in Europe was shared on one hand among transnational movements that were characterized by their activism and inclusiveness of Muslims regardless of one's ethnic backgrounds and on the other hand among Islamic organizations that depended on foreign states. The first outcome of this paper is to present these main Islamic movements and their features by focusing on their implication in social areas.

Furthermore, the paper argues a new configuration to have been entered, one in which transnational movements and the organizations underpinning them have already lost much influence, although they still offer numerous services and activities. Over recent years, Muslim citizens have launched many Islamic associations independent from both transnational Islamic movements and foreign religious organizations. They designed some to meet social and educational needs and others to focus on advocacy and the inclusion of Muslims in society. Their major feature involves a religious ideological rupture from previous Islamic organizations. Hence, new ways to understand Islam and to follow religious norms have arisen, particularly among youth. Observations show these new youth-led organizations to still search for ways to approach Islamic knowledge and to navigate among various religious influences. Their common trend is their desire to understand Islam in light of their local culture and society, which implies the contextualization of certain Islamic norms. In this respect, their quest for knowledge contests the traditional frameworks they had previously encountered in mosques.

The study will use Islamic social work as an example to illustrate this shift. Two ethnographic studies (Brodard, 2019, 2023) show that Islamic associations involved in social work are increasingly independent from transnational movements and religious organizations. They shed light on a new religiosity that goes hand in hand with Muslims' growing independence from the major Islamic religious organizations and movements.

More broadly, the development of such independent Islamic associations is an expression of the increase in new ideologies and trends within the community. Over recent years, Islamic

discourses have become increasingly spread through the Internet, leading to the success of independent preachers whose reformist views compete with traditional and mainstream Islamic teachings. In brief, this shift within the trends observed in European Islamic communities revolves around three main aspects:

- *Personalization and individualization of religiosity*. In a secular environment, many Islamic interpretations are available on the market. Muslims can therefore choose and build their own religiosity (see Roy, 2001).
- *Crisis of authority*. The diversification and multiplication of religious sources of knowledge, coupled with their free access, gives many options to Muslims searching for Islam. This leads to the individualization of religious choices.
- *The integration of Muslims in Western societies contributes to defining a local Islam.* This local Islam tends to claim independence from both foreign organizations and transnational movements. Islamic texts are then read in light of the new context (see Hamid, 2008).

In this context, the multiplicity of religious offerings and Islamic positions leads to competition for orthodoxy in the construction of a new Islamic normativity, or conversely in the maintenance of previous religious models.

2. Islamic Organizations and Transnational Movements: Religious Activism and Welfare Services

This section aims to present recent changes in Islamic ideologies and their influence in mosques and public discourses over recent years in Western Europe. Firstly, it will address the transition from foreign Islamic organizations (i.e., Embassy Islam) to transnational Islamic movements. Secondly, it will explore the development of local associations and their new role within Muslim communities.

In Western Europe, Islamic collective engagement has been largely structured into organizations and have often been penetrated by transnational religious movements. The landscape of Islamic movements slightly differs depending on the country. However, the main transnational movements are active in most Western Europe countries, and common trends can be identified beyond national borders.

2.1. From Migrants' Organizations to Transnational Islamic Movements

In some countries, particularly in France, some researchers have drawn a distinction between the Islam of the initial migrants (i.e., fathers' Islam; Césari, 1998), logically linked to

their home countries and highly dependent on national structures, and the Islam followed by their descendants who were born or at least raised in Europe and often influenced by transnational religious movements. The Islam of the initial migrants has generally remained discreet and confined to the organization of worship, giving rise only to rare demonstrations in public spaces. In France, places of worship were at that time created around an ethno-national reference, with migrants constituting different mosques according to their origins (Césari, 1997, p. 46). In contrast, the Islam promoted by transnational religious organizations that often proselytize tends to involve broader activism and engagement in both the Muslim community and the public sphere. Moreover, Césari (1997, p. 48) mostly associated Islamic practices and religious trends to a generational belonging that opposed the religious practices of migrants in line with their previous education in their home countries, with an understanding and practice of Islam as adopted by their descendants born in France. Often breaking with the family's religious background, many of these young French Muslims have followed one of the dominant transnational movements at least at once in their lives.

In France, as in other European countries, three major transnational movements have been particularly influential since the end of the 20th century: the Tablighi, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Salafism. As the Tablighi and Muslim Brotherhood organizations have had the greatest impact in the public arena, particularly in France, their case is discussed in more detail below.

2.1.1. The Tablighi Movement (Tablighi Jamaat)

The Tablighi Jamaat is a transnational Islamic movement, founded at the beginning of the 20th century in the Indian subcontinent by Muhammad Ilyas (Khedimellah, 2001). Focused on preaching and having a puritanical apolitical discourse, it developed in many countries after the 1950s, particularly in Western Europe. The European headquarters are located in the small English town of Dewsbury, home to a large Pakistani community. In France, the movement has been active since the 1960s and been registered as an association since the early 1970s. Researcher Gilles Kepel (1987) devoted part of his book to this movement, considering its importance and rapid development. More than 20 years later, Kepel (2011) wrote again about the Tablighi in his considerable empirical study of the deprived towns of Clichy-sous-Bois and Montfermeil, situated in the suburbs of Paris. His survey collected the testimonies from residents speaking about the side effects of the religious movement's proselytizing activism in those deprived neighborhoods, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. In particular, the Tablighi played an important role against drug addiction and crime by attracting many young offenders to the daily consistent practice of Islam, particularly in the United Kingdom (Pieri, 2015, p. 24) and in France (Kepel & Arslan, 2012, p. 418).

Some publications reflect the perspective of others, such housing projects' inhabitants who often witness or have benefitted themselves from the activism of those Muslim groups. These testimonies highlight the good reputation and popular success of the Tablighi and other Muslim organizations by giving both factual information on the concrete actions of religious groups as well as the actors' subjective perceptions (Beaud & Amrani, 2004; Abd al Malik, 2004).

Khedimellah's (2001) paper is also a helpful tool for studying the Tablighi movement more formally by identifying several phases of engagement with the Tablighi movement in France. In their first phase, young men are far removed from any religious practice and live a life of deviance (mostly including petty crime or drug addiction). Next, they move onto a daily practice of Islam by regularly attending the Tablighi movement's activities. The author then indicated the last phase to involve a return to society for young Muslims who are then transformed by their investment in the Tablighi. This generally involves distancing from the religious movement accompanied by a more flexible religiosity.

Meanwhile, one French study highlighted the reorientation of many Tablighi followers toward Salafism (International Crisis Group, 2006). The same tendency was observed in my field studies (Brodard, 2023) in France between 2006-2011, as many former Tablighi followers tended to turn to Salafism and Wahhabism after a disagreement with the movement.

2.1.2. The Salafi Movements (Wahhabism)

Wahhabism (a branch of Salafism) has developed in recent decades in Western Europe in distinct and competing organizations. First, the terminologies of Salafism and Wahhabism are used here for the sake of precision, despite the refusal of some of their followers to be labelled as such. Salafism is commonly used by these groups as a self-definition; as a term, it is too broad and lacks precision: indeed, it encompasses different tendencies despite of its constant and interconnected features (Haykel, 2014, pp. 38-39). Moreover, it is often misused by the media and in political discourse. Salafism indicates a methodology and approach that promotes a return to the sources of Islam, which is therefore shared by diverse Islamic movements. Wahhabism refers more precisely to the religious doctrine formulated by Muhammad ibn 'Abd-al-Wahhab in Arabia in the 18th century (Farquhar, 2017, pp. 6-8). Wahhabism is therefore more appropriate and precise than Salafism in designating the movements and associated groups discussed below. Namely, Wahhabism is a more specific sub-branch of Salafism.

Although the researcher Sadik Hamid (2018) proposed a more complex division in the British context, Wahhabism and Salafism as currently present in Western Europe can be divided into three main currents:

- *Quietist and apolitical Wahhabism*. This leads to a withdrawal from the social and political space.
- *The activist Salafism of the Muslim World League*. This promotes activism and political participation as for the Muslim Brotherhood.
- *Jihadist Salafism*. This is subversive and promotes political violence.

Apparently apolitical and majoritarian, the first current involves strict adherence to several Muslim scholars who are generally linked to Saudi Arabia. This current implies a withdrawal from Western society, which is normally considered unholy, while promoting migration (*hijra*) to a Muslim land. Particularly influential among young people, it normally prevents social and charitable engagement in society due to how it follows a sectarian logic to promote withdrawal from societal space. Yet, like the Tablighi, it can have an indirect social effect, particularly in the context of neighborhoods that include many of its followers. Arslan and Marlière (2014) noted how the growing presence of Salafism and Wahhabism in the suburban town of Gennevilliers, France has led to a decline in traffic and in the use of hard drugs in popular neighborhoods. The perspective here is the same: Islamic preaching and the new religiosity promoted in these neighborhoods by Islamic movements have led to new social and individual behaviors that prevent drug consumption and crime.

The Muslim World League promotes a second current. Unlike the dominant quietist movement, it maintains more flexible relations with other Islamic movements, in particular the Muslim Brotherhood (Schulze, 2022). Amghar (2011) noted that the Muslim World League combines religious activism with social and educational activism, which brings it closer to the Muslim Brotherhood tradition. This proximity explains the development of activities that go far beyond worship, including intellectual, cultural, educational, and charitable projects.

The third current of Salafism promotes the political and military struggle against Arab regimes and others. It includes so-called jihadist groups of Salafist inspiration such as Al-Qaeda. Because of its minority status, illegality, and withdrawal from the public sphere in Western European countries, it has not been developed in this paper.

2.1.3. The Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood is a transnational Islamic organization founded in Egypt in 1928 by Hassan Al-Banna, which has subsequently expanded to several other countries (Ortega Rodrigo, 2014, p. 7) including in the West (Maréchal, 2008, p. 27-29). In Western Europe, most organizations related to the Muslim Brotherhood movement are independent and take

different names. Therefore, identifying them with the Muslim Brotherhood could seem difficult, especially as some of their leaders publicly deny this connection. Concretely, this means that Muslims often attend mosques or associations without knowing they are connected to the Muslim Brotherhood movement. However, several social scientists have written about the Muslim Brotherhood movement and its influence in Europe, highlighting the link between Islamic organizations and the transnational movement (Maréchal, 2008). From a macro perspective, political scientist Amghar (2007, 2009) broadly described the Muslim Brotherhood and its network in Western Europe. Another methodological approach (De Lavergne, 2003; Hamid, 2016, Dazey, 2019, Brodard, 2023) used ethnographic tools to explore local organizations linked to the Muslim Brotherhood from a micro perspective. This can therefore complete the macro data provided by Amghar's (2007, 2009) studies and similar research, highlighting concrete discourses and practices in mosques and grassroots organizations.

My previous ethnographic research studies and field works (Brodard, 2008 and 2011) in France[1] from 2007-2008 and from 2009-2011 discussed mosques and showed how the Muslim Brotherhood was the first Islamic movement to implement social and educative projects, particularly in deprived neighborhoods. These observations were in line with the quotes found in Kepel's (2004, p. 309) work, which highlighted social activism from Muslim Brotherhood organizations within society. However, Kepel considered social work and activism in society as tools for Islamization. He then seems to believe in the existence of a hidden agenda, which is in line with Davis and Robinson's (2012) popular thesis. Further interesting to note is that the Muslim Brotherhood in Western Europe generally targets a more educated and privileged public than the Tablighi and Salafi movements, whose supporters and members come from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

2.1.4. Other Islamic Movements in Western Europe

The three Islamic movements described above have been the more predominant and visible in Western Europe countries for over two decades. However, other foreign and transnational movements are found that are more or less locally influential depending on the context and the city.

In addition to the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafism, and Tablighi, al-Ahbash has also become one of the most influential Islamic organizations in several European countries, including Switzerland, France, and Germany (Avon, 2008). Officially named the Society of Islamic Philanthropic Projects, this Lebanese association combines Sunni traditional views in *aqidah*

1 Other short consecutive field studies were occasionally conducted to monitor the evolution.

[creed], *fiqh* [Islamic jurisprudence], and Sufism (Hamzeh & Dekmejina, 1996). Al-Ahbash have opened mosques and Islamic centers in Europe and North America, where it offers a religious education that confronts Wahhabi views. Al Adl wal Ihsane is another Islamic organization that comes from the Muslim country of Morocco and has spread to different Western Europe countries with a significant Moroccan diaspora, such as France and Belgium (Yafout, 2017). Based on the view of its Sheikh Abdessalam Yassin, the organization combines a Sufi perspective with activism in a way similar to that of the Muslim Brotherhood.

In addition, a resurgence of a traditional Islam (Van Praet, 2018) can be observed in various European countries, particularly in France. This commonly refers to affiliation with one of the four schools of thought (*madhhab*s) regarding *fiqh* and adherence to the Ash'arism or Maturidism doctrines. Traditional Islam is also called neo-traditionalism by other scholars (al-Azami, 2019; Quisay, 2023), whose representatives include Hamza Yusuf in the USA, Bin Bayyah and Habib al-Jifri in the UAE, and 'Ali Gomaa in Egypt, among others. To refer to the same theological trend currently opposed to Islamist ideologies, Thomas Pierret (2011) used the denomination of Maddhabism. While traditional Islam has always been widespread in the United Kingdom, it has long been eclipsed in France by the above-mentioned transnational movements. Traditional Islam was then only visible among first-generation migrants, in the manner of the Islamic embassy mentioned earlier. In recent years, however, traditional Islam has been revitalized among youth, where it competes for orthodoxy against Salafism (Van Praet, 2018).

This descriptive part of influential Islamic trends and currents in Western European countries is important for understanding the local Islamic landscape and competitive relationships among ideologies. Furthermore, it helps one grasp the organizational frames in which political, social, and charitable projects have been launched within an Islamic framework. From this perspective, the Islamic movements and organizations outlined above have competed in Western countries in the quest for legitimacy and for clients.

2.2. Loss of Influence in Transnational Islamic Movements and the Development of Local Muslim Associations

While Islamic engagement in France and other European countries remained closely confined to religious organizations that were linked to a few well-defined transnational Islamic currents in the early 2000s, the emergence of Muslim associations in the social work sector a few years later in France (Brodard, 2011) as well as in Great Britain (Warden, 2013; Barylo, 2017) reveals an increasing tendency toward independence from Muslim groups. This trend

could be considered a significant step toward the development of an indigenous Islam that can gradually break away from foreign influences.

2.2.1. New Islamic Social Work Associations in France

Between around 1980-2010, social welfare services Muslims implemented in the name of their faith were intimately linked to these religious movements that were particularly active in the public and community spheres outside of worship activities. In France, many cases of social, charitable, or educational projects linked to Islam concerned the associations affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood. Islamic social work also developed informally at the local level around the projects and initiatives of Muslim groups that were not very institutionalized nor linked to important organizations. For instance, Bouzar (2001) conducted research in Lille on the role of Muslim preachers and imams in preventing and solving social problems such as urban violence and youth crime in disadvantaged neighborhoods. A few years later, Barbey (2007) also emphasized the role of Muslim preachers in civic education and in preventing incivilities and delinquency in the sensitive context of low-income housing projects in Marseille. In both these examples, religious work and education was supposed to impact the surrounding society and communities, particularly by preventing misconduct and bad behavior, as well as by providing youth with values and norms that would ultimately tend to benefit the whole neighborhood. In those cases, however, social work and civic education could be perceived more as a side effect than a purpose, because the main objectives of those mosques and Islamic associations remained the organization of worship and of religious education.

Conversely, several independent Islamic associations were set up after 2008 with the central aim of providing social welfare services to both Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Between 2008-2015, dozens of such associations were created in the Paris area, mostly to address homelessness and to provide poor people with free meals. One main feature of these associations was their independence from transnational Islamic movements and religious organizations. They gathered Muslims from heterogeneous theological and ideological backgrounds. Mostly launched by Muslims born and raised in France, these associations indicate a new step toward a contextualization of Islam within the country, one that goes hand in hand with distancing itself from the previous religious trends imported from abroad. Therefore, the important rise of new Islamic social work associations in France for a few years also suggests the decline of the transnational Islamic movements and organizations that have lost control over a significant part of practicing Muslims who now express their faith through independent projects and tend to construct their own Islamic reference system.

2.2.2. Youth-Led Islamic Organizations in Switzerland

In Switzerland, the Islamic landscape has also considerably changed over the last decade. Youth-led Islamic organizations have been created in many cities and towns in response to the monopoly of Muslim organizations controlled by first-generation migrants. As is the case in other European countries, the Muslim organizations migrants had founded were generally linked either to foreign states and organizations or to transnational movements. Conversely, the youth-led Islamic organizations are independent from any foreign movements and normally do not belong to specific theological schools. Rather, their projects are launched for specific purposes such as education, advocacy, or welfare activities.

Several such youth-led organizations can be named, such as Frislam in Fribourg, DIAC in Geneva, Ummah in Zurich, and Niya in Neuchâtel. Despite their differences, they all express independence from dominant Muslim organizations and foreign Islamic movements. Moreover, most have established partnerships and gather through the Young Swiss Muslim Network.

2.2.3. In the British Context

In the United Kingdom, Islamic social work organizations as well as youth-led Islamic associations have also been growing in number. The InTouch Foundation in Bradford is a Muslim charity created to feed the homeless. Kumon Y'All in Dewsbury addresses the needs of young Muslims and tackles not only extremism and radicalization, but also racism and exclusion. It aims to build bridges between Muslims and non-Muslims and to bring people together regardless of their origin or religion. Rumi's Cave in London is another interesting example of a youth-led Muslim association that develops a wide range of religious, educational, and social services also aimed at both Muslims and non-Muslims (Brodard, 2023). All these organizations focus on a specific purpose rather than theological or ideological affiliations. As a result, they can bring together Muslims of various denominations and sensitivities around concrete objectives related to their local context. In this regard, these organizations also contribute to undermining the influence of transnational movements by providing alternative ways to understand and practice Islam collectively.

Moreover, British scholar Sadek Hamid (2008) already noted how Salafism in Britain had split into several movements and organizations. The local context influences how Salafism is understood by its followers and has become for some more of a methodology than a theological movement, whose main teaching theoretically[2] prescribes the following of the Quran

2 Nevertheless, this theoretical injunction is being questioned by the strong prevalence of the influence of certain schools within the Salafist movement, such as the *Athariyyah* in terms of dogma and the *Hanbali madhhab* regarding the *fiqh* methodology.

and Sunnah without the mediation of dogmatic *('aqeedah*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) schools (Hamid, 2016, p. 141). Here again, older and formerly predominant organizations and transnational movements appear to have lost some of their influence, as local actors constantly redefine their religiosity.

In short, this paper highlights a new configuration of Islamic activism in the West, one in which transnational movements and the organizations underpinning them have already lost much influence despite still offering numerous services and activities. In recent years, Muslim citizens have launched many Islamic associations completely independent from both transnational Islamic movements and foreign religious organizations. Some are designed to meet social and educational needs, while others focus on advocacy and the inclusion of Muslims in society. Their major trend involves a religious ideological rupture from previous religious institutions. Arguably new ways of understanding Islam and following religious norms have arisen, particularly among youths. Observations show these new youth-led organizations to still look for ways to approach Islamic knowledge and to navigate between different religious influences. Their common trend is the desire to contextualize Islam in light of local social realities and their quest for knowledge to tackle the traditional frameworks they'd previously encountered in mosques.

3. Traditional Authority's Decline, New Religiosities, and Contemporary Challenges

Based on the assumption that the major transnational Islamic movements have already lost part of their influence, this section explores the concrete and possible consequences linked to the multiplication of religious interpretations and associations that provide alternative ideologies. As mentioned above regarding Islamic social work and new independent associations, remembering that their managers generally share a deep commitment to Islam while refusing to belong to a specific religious movement is important, as was the case few years earlier. These empirical observations shed light on a new religiosity related to a certain independence Muslims feel toward the previous major organizations and religious movements. More broadly, the development of such independent Islamic associations is an expression of the increase in new ideologies and trends within the community. In recent last years, Islamic discourses have increasingly spread through the Internet, which has led to the success of YouTube preachers and 'independent' Imams whose reformist views compete with traditional and mainstream Islamic teachings.

As mentioned in Section 1.3 (Assumptions), three main factors should be explored to better understand the transition from the former domination of transnational Islamic movements to the more recent multiplication of religious actors and ideologies. These are: (1) a crisis of

authority in Islam, (2) the diversification and multiplication of religious sources of knowledge, and (3) religiosity and individualization as personal ways to interpret and practice Islam.

3.1. The Crisis of Authority in Islam

Hamid (2008) contended Salafism to be evolving in the United Kingdom, implying a distancing from formal movements on the part of Muslims who increasingly reject affiliation to a particular group or organization. He described this post-theological trend as "a literalist reading of scripture, but which is not aligned with any particular group or institution; or those who might be described as 'post-Salafi'" (p. 11). Hamid went on to emphasize a new trend among European Muslims and how they tend to move away from ancient Islamic movements and organizations and develop their own ways to understand and practice Islam. These comments converge with my field observations, particularly on Islamic social work as discussed above.

The decline in religious authorities from the previously dominant transnational movements implies a crisis of religious authority within Islam in Western countries, one which allows other interpretations and views to develop and seek their own public. Therefore, one could observe an increase in Islamic discourses held by organizations and independent preachers in some countries. In this context, denying that Muslims in the West are facing an increasingly wide range of competing Islamic interpretations seems impossible. To the extent that no religious institution can impose its own interpretation of Islam, consensus appears less regarding orthodoxy, and this is combined with a diversification of religious thoughts. Indeed, every preacher or organization claims their view to be in line with Islam.

In addition, importance is had in understanding that Islamic norms and views are not only implemented through a top-down approach. In the introduction, the critique of macro perspectives and the political science approach to Islamic ideologies and movements made clear that the analysis of organizations' strategies and preachers' speeches was not enough to provide a deep understanding of the subject. Complementing this with an examination of the concrete practices of Muslims is also crucial, and this justifies the use of ethnographic methods. Therefore, assuming that Muslims' practices simply reflect preachers' discourses is wrong. Rather, Muslims in the field redefine Islamic practices in line with their own context.

Referring to Asad (2009) as well as Amir-Moazami and Salvatore (2003) while talking about the German context, Bendixsen (2013, p. 284) explained how "youths' beliefs and practices (the religious culture) of Islam must be situated within a discursive Muslim tradition that is constantly subject to internal transformations." Discussing the young Muslims in Berlin, she added, "Their religious practices become localized within the Berlin context,

encouraging them to find ways to practice Islam in the manner best suited for their specific socio-cultural sphere" (p. 284). These comments converge with my field observations both in Switzerland and in France, where new ways to understand, live, and practice Islam are constantly being developed by youths according to their life context and personal experience. Based on this idea, understanding the distinction between the religious discourses and positions of theologian leaders such as imams and community Muslim scholars, which are based on religious reflection and tradition and spread from above through authority arguments and scholarly legitimacy, is important, as is understanding the religious culture and understanding of Muslims at a grassroots level.

From that perspective, sociologist Göle (2013) proposed a distinction between the production of an ideological corpus and that of collective imaginaries within the Muslim community. In her understanding, the Muslim habitus is not so much the result of the internalization of norms derived from the ideological corpus as it is adherence to the codes of a collective imaginary. This remark implies a certain gap between theological discourses from above that thinkers, theologians, or Imams convey and the popular views Muslims have about Islam. The latter refers to individual religious views that are not built on theological discourses despite being collectively shared. Göle thus emphasized these new Muslim collective imaginaries in Western Europe countries, in contrast to the theological norms conveyed and spread in the speeches of imams and scholars.

The individualization of religion implies the redefinition and re-appropriation of religion by believers, unlike vertical relationships in which the norm would pass through traditionally recognized authorities. The individualization of religion can naturally take very varied forms, but these remain paradoxically collective in the sense that they rally individuals who share the same understanding. This refers to the rise of new standards or the updating of old ones in the current context. These can range from the most stringent and restrictive postures to the most liberal and progressive opinions.

Linked to the collective imaginaries, the Muslim habitus mentioned above is not clearly defined and above all differs according to context. Talking about it in the plural would be more prudent, noting how the emergence and affirmation of the Muslim habitus are always embedded in limited social, temporal, and geographical contexts. The Muslim habitus seems to somehow constitute religious trends, such as the adoption of certain modes of consumption and above all the prohibition of practices deemed prohibited by the group, regardless of whether the prohibitions are respected by the followers. For example, shaking hands with a person of the opposite sex may be considered religiously prohibited in some limited contexts,

and such a rule may eventually become the norm in some confined community environments. Various observations show that even those who openly violate the norm in those environments promote it in their speech. For instance, a woman who has physical contact with men and who does not dress according to the so-called Islamic standards publicly claims that shaking hands with the opposite sex is *haram* and that the veil is compulsory for women. Rather than her compliance to these practices, her statements and overall adhesion to the collective norms is what allows her to be considered a member of the community. Another example is the practice of the *muqabala*[3] as a legal way of meeting one's future spouse; this has spread in some Muslim youth circles in France to the point that it seems to have become a shared norm according to many Muslims. However, this practice was not a result of theological discourse. Rather, it began to be considered as an Islamic norm by some young Muslims who promoted this new practice around them until it was accepted as an Islamic practice. This is another example of the gap between Muslim cultures and theological norms. In brief, the Muslim habitus involves compliance with the specific discourses and practices that allow the mutual identification of actors as members of the imaginary community. From that perspective, the concept of subculture as illustrated in David Lepore's (1997) ethnographic study is very helpful for understanding these new trends and their expression in the public space.

Often in contrast to the discursive norms religious authorities disseminate, the Muslim habitus refers to a popular religiosity that evolves rapidly over time and space. Because of its independence from legitimate normative frameworks and scholarly discourses on Islam, it participates in both a personalization of religion and a communalization as it implies the sharing of characteristics at a collective level.

Roy (2001, p. 78) insisted on the "loss of religious evidence," taking as his main illustration the gap between the Islam followed by the first generations of migrants and that of their children born in Europe. He argued that re-Islamization is precisely a rupture with the forms of identity acquired as a result of the migration phenomenon. Roy (p. 80) gave three reasons to explain the change in terms of religiosity following migration from Muslim countries to the West: the "dilution of the identity and ethnic community of origin," the "absence of legitimate Islamic religious authorities in host countries," and the "impossibility of legal as well as social, community and customary coercion."

3 *Muqabala*, an Arabic term simply meaning meeting, refers in that context to the meeting between a man and a woman with a view to a planned Muslim marriage, conditional on the presence of a *mahram* (guardian) for the woman, in most cases her father or one of her brothers.

As a result, Muslims participate in the definition of their self-imposed standards by being able to use them over a wide range of religious positions. This shows a freer personal relationship with religion. Roy (2001) added that the individualization of religiosity also concerns the themes Muslims address in the West. Indeed, a rise has recently occurred regarding feminist demands in the Muslim community circles in Switzerland and other European countries. In some cases, gender theories inspired by neo-Marxism ideologies have been promoted, which shows how an ideology external from the Muslim community can redirect the Muslim debate in each context by fostering new norms that were previously foreign to the Islamic reference system.

Based on these remarks, the fact that the religiosity of Muslims in Europe increasingly depends on the personal re-appropriation of religious teachings available on a particularly heterogeneous and broad market becomes clear. That said, the major ideological movements and organizations that depend on them at different levels continue to transmit certain so-called orthodox norms their audiences accept.

In short, the individualization of religiosity remains conditioned by a field of possibilities and impossibilities, and this contributes to the maintenance of certain major rules and consensual positions. This takes one back to Talal Asad's (2009) concept of the discursive tradition, as well as to Esack's (1997) comment arguing that the Qur'an can say many things and open the field of possibilities far enough while also noting that the Qur'an cannot justify everything and that certain bases and limits remain in the texts despite the wide possibilities of interpretation.

3.2. The Diversification and Multiplication of Religious Sources of Knowledge

The decline in the influence of transnational Islamic movements and Embassy Islam has fostered the diversification of alternative Islamic viewpoints and teachings. If the Internet plays a crucial role in this multiplication of the sources of religious knowledge, the fact that the Internet only relays religious viewpoints that have previously been developed in the field, either in local mosques or in grassroots associations, is important to note. Indeed, the so-called YouTube imams are generally Imams who work in local mosques, who had been active for a long time in the community before being exposed online, and whose students often spread their conferences and speeches. Hence, these imams should be considered as religious thinkers and community activists before being viewed as YouTubers or bloggers. Nevertheless, the success of many has been possible only through the Internet, which has allowed them to dis-

seminate their speeches far beyond their mosque, neighborhood, and sphere of influence. Over the last decade, the democratization of the Internet has fostered free access to various Islamic sources of knowledge. Nearly every group, movement, and organization is active online. Field observations emphasize that many Muslims, particularly more among the youth, use the Internet on a regular basis for their religious education needs. They refer to the numerous imams, preachers, and activists they follow on social media. Mentioning some of these Imams whose views and understandings of Islam are independent from the traditional frameworks and major transnational movements mentioned above would be useful here.

For instance, Adnan Ibrahim has become a well-known imam and Muslim scholar. Employed as an imam in an Austrian mosque, he has acquired a great notoriety in many Arabic-speaking countries and beyond. In France, Mohamed Bajrafil is considered an important reference within the Muslim community. After having grown up in the Comoros Islands within a family of Muslim scholars who follow the *Shafi'i madhhab*[4], he came to France and began serving as an imam near Paris. His approach combines references to the Islamic tradition and critical stances, and his methodology implies a return to the Qur'an as well as to logical reasoning to sort out what is accurate or not in the tradition. Therefore, although he could be considered a *Shafi'i* scholar, this imam gives statements that often go against the dominant orthodox positions. Still in France, imams Tareq Oubrou and Islam ibn Ahmad can also be cited and have quite similar methodologies. Both believe in the Qur'an as a revelation and emphasize the sacred Book. However, they treat the other traditional texts carefully, including *ahadith*[5] and *fiqh* by estimating that some *ahadith* are not from the Prophet despite being compiled in Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim. Furthermore, they assume the *fiqh* literature to be a human production and therefore must be reviewed and criticized.

To sum up, the decline in the influence of dominant transnational Islamic movements and the rise of new Muslim thinkers have led to an increase in the diversity of religious offers. In this context, Muslims in Western European countries have access to a large set of religious discourses and ideologies. They also participate in the construction of new so-called Islamic trends by bringing their own understanding and reflection. This may involve the risk of an individualization of religion and thus raises the question of a possible dilution of Islam within relativist and subjective religiosities.

4 One of the four main schools of *fiqh* [Islamic jurisprudence].

5 Religious traditions and sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammed.

3.3. Religiosity and Individualization: Personal Ways to Interpret and Practice Islam

In the current context of Western Europe countries, the multiplicity of religious offers and Islamic interpretations has led to a competition for the orthodoxy in constructing a new Islamic normativity, or conversely in maintaining previous religious models. This multiplication of religious views within the Muslim communities also benefits marginal branches such as so-called progressive and liberal Islam, which is fostered by certain Western ideological trends. Therefore, not only imams and Muslim thinkers compete for legitimacy but also Muslim activists and a broader range of movements that strongly diverge from one another. So far, estimating the limits and consequences of this increase in Islamic trends and ideologies has been difficult. Mosques in Western European countries continue to be controlled and managed by the main Islamic organizations and transnational movements. However, feminist and progressive movements have also set up associations and grassroots projects in various towns, thus contributing to redefining the Muslim landscape.

For instance, some Muslim activists and preachers have campaigned for the right for women to lead ritual prayers. They argue that women should be allowed to be imams based on the rationale of gender equality. They have set up associations and sometimes even mosques to promote their views, generally benefitting from significant support from non-Muslim organizations. In Switzerland, a Christian organization's manager explained once that he expected his Muslim partners to comply with gender equality standards. When asked about the concrete modalities of such standards, he argued that it could imply the possibility of women being imams just as men can. Therefore, such partnerships that allow Islamic organizations to obtain funding as well as public recognition may also influence these organizations to orientate their discourses and practices toward specific directions. That such orientations, despite being in opposition to the interpretations of the vast majority of Muslim organizations, still find their place within some Muslim communities in Western European countries is interesting to note. This could raise the question of limits regarding the personalization and adaptation of Islamic norms to local standards and Western ideologies.

Finally, the reasons for the multiplication of Islamic views in Western European countries could be summed up in two ways that complete one another. Firstly, an individualization of religiosity occurs, as Roy (2001) already clearly stated. In a secular environment, many Islamic interpretations are available. Therefore, Muslims have the possibility to choose what is relevant to them and to build their own religiosity. Secondly, the integration of Muslims in

Western European countries has contributed to the definition of a local Islam, one which tends to claim its independence from foreign organizations and transnational movements. Islamic texts are then read in the light of the respective context.

4. Conclusion

The Muslim landscape has become increasingly complex, particularly in Europe. An overall insight into Islamic movements and their development over the last few decades in Western European countries has been needed to better understand the current challenges related to the evolution of Islamic thought in this part of the world. This insight has implied the need for a multidisciplinary approach deeply grounded in qualitative research, including participant observations and informal interviews. Moreover, it has required longitudinal insight, as it aims to apprehend the evolution of a phenomenon over time. Finally, it remains a subject of high importance, as new Islamic ideological and theological trends are expected to have a transnational impact and to contribute to the ongoing definition of the worldwide Ummah.

Several results can be emphasized. First, transnational Islamic movements have played a crucial role in Muslim communities of Western Europe for several decades. They have designed the major trends in Muslim communities, Islamic identities, and norms and taken part in building a strong Muslim presence in various countries and cities. Their transnational feature implies similarities beyond the countries and regions that have produced common trends in Western Europe despite national differences. Secondly, these transnational movements appear to have begun losing their influence and legitimacy in various countries, particularly in France and Switzerland. This shift has been explained above by different factors, including the rise of new discourse, the decline in traditional legitimacy and the multiplication of sources of knowledge related to Islam. The production of new interpretations of Islam constantly drives higher competition among thinkers, schools of thought, and organizations. Islamic legitimacy and religious scholarship seem to be increasingly deregulated in countries where Islam as a minority suffers from a lack of institutionalization and representation. Future and more in-depth studies are really needed to address this important topic in order to apprehend the ideological and theological diversity of Islam within non-Muslim societies and to understand the relations among religious actors, organizations, and religious movements.

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CHAPTER 9

CHALLENGES TO MUSLIM IDENTITY IN TRANSNATIONAL SPACES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DIASPORA FICTIONS AFTER 9/11

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ABSTRACT

The increase in terrorist attacks at the verge of the 21st century and the politics of associating Islam with violence and Muslims with terrorists have brought the subject of Islam and Muslims under serious investigation among scholars of the humanities and social sciences. New vocabulary words such as *jihad* [struggle], *Sharia* [Islamic law], *Dar al-Harb* [house of war], *Dar al-Islam* [house of Islam], *hijab* [headscarf], *al-Qaeda*, *mujaheddin* [jihadist], *Taliban*, and *kafir* [disbeliever] were introduced into political and intellectual debates along with new phraseologies such as Islamic terrorism, Islamic extremism, Islamization, Talibanization, Islamic fascism, Islamic jihad, the Green Terror, and Islamic bomb into the daily lexicon to malign the image of Islam and Muslims and to strengthen biased arguments. This chapter aims to analyze the literary response of Muslim writers regarding diaspora and the negative projection of the Muslim identity and stereotypes, especially after the 9/11 incident. The questions are addressed through select literary texts on topics such as how the Muslim identity and hijab identity came under the spotlight of racial and cultural discrimination in Western societies. The study discusses texts such as the Pakastani-Brit H.M. Naqvi's (2009) *Home Boy*, Pakistani-American-Brit Mohsin Hamid's (2007) *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Lebanese-American Laila Halaby's (2007) *Once in a Promised Land,* Palestinian-Egyptian-Australian Randa Abdel-Fattah's (2005) *Does My Head Look Big in This*?, Indian-British Shelina Zahra Jan Mohamed's (2009) *Love in a Headscarf*, and Bangladeshi-British Monica Ali's (2003) *Brick Lane*. The chapter argues that, despite the ongoing international propaganda campaign against Muslims, they have revisited and reclaimed their identities and resisted and exposed the biases in the contemporary discourses against Islam and Muslims.

Keywords: Islam, Muslim, diaspora, identity, transnationalism, 9/11, Islamophobia, Muslim writings

1. Introduction

The increase in terrorist attacks at the verge of the 21st century and the politics of associating Islam with violence and Muslims with terrorists have brought the subject of Islam and Muslims under serious investigation among scholars of the humanities and social sciences. New vocabulary words such as *jihad* [struggle], *Sharia* [Islamic law], *Dar-al-Harb* [house of war], *Dar al-Islam* (house of Islam), *hijab* [headscarf], *al-Qaeda*, *mujaheddin* [jihadists], *Taliban*, and *kafir* [disbeliever] were introduced into political and intellectual debates along with new phraseologies such as Islamic terrorism, Islamic extremism, Islamization, Talibanization, Islamic fascism, Islamic jihad, the Green Terror, and Islamic bomb into the daily lexicon to malign the image of Islam and Muslims and to strengthen biased arguments. If a Muslim commits an act of terror, it is associated with their religion and community, but if the same act is committed by a parson from other religion, then it's considered an individual act and not branded as a collective act as occurs in the case of Muslims. Thousands of such examples of biased media projection and so-called intellectual discourses are found. Nazrul Islam's (2005, p. 4) *Islam 9/11and Global Terrorism: A Study of Perceptions and Solutions* also asks, "When some Christians or Jews resort to terrorism, they are not generally called Christian terrorists or Jewish terrorists. Then why do they refer to Muslims who resort to terrorism as Muslim terrorists?"

The attacks of September 11, 2001, also known as 9/11, on the World Trade Center (WTC) in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. changed the world narrative. After this incident, one can see that a serious global propaganda occurred to besmirch the image of Islam. Many intellectuals considered 9/11 to be a conspiracy. African-America poet Amiri Baraka's (2003, p. 200) poem "Somebody Blew Up America" unveils the hidden story of 9/11:

Who found Bin Laden, maybe they Satan
Who pay the CIA,
Who knew the bomb was gonna blow
Who know why the terrorists
Learned to fly in Florida, San Diego

After writing this poem, his poet laureateship was rescinded. Similarly, when German Poet and Nobel Laureate Gunter Grass (2012) wrote "What Must be Said," he was denied entry into Israel. The post-colonial thinker Hamdi Dabashi (2011, p. 67) observed that the "U.S. propaganda machinery [has been operating against Muslims since 9/11] both domestically and globally." The Muslim countries (i.e., Iraq and Afghanistan) that were allegedly suspected to be responsible for 9/11 were destroyed in the name of the War on Terror.

Muslims living in America, European countries including the United Kingdom (UK), and Australia have been targeted and made victims of racial profiling, discrimination, suspicion, attack, and violence since 9/11. They have faced identity crises and issues regarding culture, citizenship, and nationality. Their loyalties to their respective countries have been questioned. Muslim and Islamic identities mostly in the transnational spaces of non-Muslim majority countries have been further subjugated, marginalized, and suspected. 9/11 has rejuvenated anti-Muslim feelings, misconceptions, misrepresentations, and Islamophobia and has also reshaped the world order and narratives. In fact, 9/11 has initiated a new Crusade against Islam in the name of the War on Terror. Muslims have been placed under surveillance, and the Muslim identity has become an object of suspicion in transnational space, especially in the West. Muslim dress codes such as *kurta* [loose upper-body garment], *topi/taqiyah* [prayer cap], *payjama* [loose pants], beard, Muslim names, race, and *hijab* [veil/headscarf] became the first targets for Islamophobic attacks in the post-9/11 world. Amidst this, the Muslim writers living in diasporas have tried to counter the grand narratives of the West and resist the neo-Orientalist projections and misunderstandings through their writings. Writers and works such as Pakistani-Brit H.M. Naqvi and his *Home Boy* (2009), Pakistani-American-Brit Mohsin Hamid and his *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), Lebanese-American Laila Halaby and her *Once in a Promised Land* (2007), Palestinian-Egyptian-Australian Randa Abdel-Fattah and her *Does My Head Look Big in This?* (2005), Indian-Brit Shelina Zahra Janmohamed and her *Love in a Headscarf* (2009), and Bangladeshi-Brit Monica Ali and her *Brick Lane* (2003) have portrayed the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims before and after 9/11 and also addressed the issues and challenges raised for the Muslim ummah in transnational space.

2. Diaspora

Before beginning a discussion of Muslim diaspora and Muslim diaspora novels after 9/11, looking at what constitutes a diaspora briefly would be helpful. Diaspora is a Greek term διασπορά meaning *dia* [across] + *speirein* [scatter] or scattered across/about. It was first used in the context of the Aegean population of Greeks then later in the context of Jews. Here I have created Table 1 (all italics are mine) of the basic features of a diaspora, as given by Cohen (1997, p. 26) and Safran (1991, pp. 83–84):

Table 1. *The Basic Features of a Diaspora*	
Robin Cohen	**William Safran**
1) *Dispersal* from an *original homeland*- expansion from a homeland in search of work, trade or to further colonial ambitions;	1) *Dispersed from a specific original "center" to two or more "peripheral" or foreign, regions;*
2. A *collective memory* and *myth* about the homeland, including its location, history, and achievements;	2) A *collective memory, vision, or myth* about their original homeland—its physical location, history, and achievements;
3. *Idealization of home* - collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety, and prosperity, even to its creation-return movement;	3*) An ancestral homeland* as their [true home to which they'll] eventually return once conditions are appropriate, and a collective responsibility to maintain, restore, and safeguard it;
4 A strong *ethnic group consciousness* sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate;	4) Relation with the homeland, ethno-communal *consciousness* and *solidarity*;
5 *Troubled relationship* with host societies; *solidarity* with co-ethnic members.	5) Believe that they are not, and perhaps cannot be, fully accepted by their host society, and therefore feel partly *alienated* and insulated from it.

The words I have italicized are concepts that can be seen in every diaspora community. To me, diaspora is a post-migration phenomenon, be it voluntary or involuntary, crossing national or international border, and has much to do with the psychology and behavior of the host and migrant communities toward each other. Diaspora today is studied though the socio-cultural, economic, and political perspectives. I personally feel that the socio-cultural setting and identity plays a crucial role in defining diaspora. A diaspora starts formulating once the migration takes place from one sociocultural setting to another different one. Sociocultural setting includes attached feelings, memories, and familiarities with the things an individual loved, lived, and experienced at the primary stage of life. This similarity can span to the settlement category; for example, a locality can be a sociocultural setting, or a city, region, state, country, or continent can be a sociocultural setting. It varies from place to place depending upon the sociocultural similarities and dissimilarities. It can also be a setting that is marked by a social category, such as the dominance of a particular race, culture, religion, ethnicity, and language group that also constitutes the identity of a settlement category. A person who migrates from one sociocultural setting to another sociocultural setting experiences a difference in the host society, and this experience of being different in a different sociocultural setting refers to post-migration feelings and a diasporic sense (Chapparban, 2019). The similarities and dissimilarities between the sociocultural settings of the home and host countries also play a significant role in making and shaping a diaspora. For example, a Muslim from a South

Asian country would have a different experience migrating to a Gulf country such as Saudi Arabia than they would have migrating to Europe. Similarly, a Christian migrating from Asia to America or Europe would have a different experience than if they had migrated to a Muslim country in the Gulf. Although they might also be otherized in Europe because of their racial features, they won't be the obvious other that a Muslim migrant in Europe would be because of the sociocultural similarities. Some scholars argue that crossing international or international borders is one of the defining factors in labelling individual or a group of people as a diaspora. However, I challenge this notion and posit that mere crossing an international border does not automatically create a diaspora or shape diasporic experiences; it is the crossing of socio-cultural settings that truly defines diaspora. For instance, a Nepalese person moving to India, or a Qatari migrating to the UAE, or a Bahraini relocating to Qatar (and vice versa) may not encounter significant changes in the socio-cultural settings between their home country and their destination (host land). While they might face challenges related to migration, the mere act of moving across international borders does not lead to the formation of diaspora. In contrast, if these migrants were to move to the US or EU, they would experience noticeable differences, triggering diasporic sentiments (rootlessness, belonging, difference in culture, memory of home, home land, return to homeland, nostalgia, and potentially leading to the formation of a diaspora (missing home, creating home away from home, imagining home, maintaining distinct identities of culture, language, religion, food, etc.) The socio-cultural settings in the USA and EU significantly differ from those in India and Arab countries, fostering a distinct sense of diaspora among these individuals. Furthermore, I observe that diaspora can also exist within a single country, such as in India. A Marathi person migrating to Kashmir, a Kashmiri relocating to Maharashtra, a Tamilian migrating to Delhi, or a Bihari moving to Kerala (and vice versa) may encounter similar challenges as those found in diasporic spaces. This similarity arises when there is a change in socio-cultural settings. The socio-cultural environments of these states vary in terms of language, food, culture, and more, leading to diverse experiences akin to those in international diasporas merely because difference in socio-cultural setting of these states within a country. Hence, there can be a diaspora within a country. Therefore, what is important here to understand is that crossing mere international or national border dose not led to formulation of diaspora but a change in socio-cultural setting.

3. Muslim Diaspora

Was not the Earth wide enough for you to migrate therein?

Qur'an (4:97)

Migration in Islam is as old as its history. Before the notable *hijrat* [migration] of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his followers from Mecca to Medina, earlier prophets of Islam such as Adam, Abraham, Lot, Jonah, Jacob, and Moses (peace be upon them) also migrated from their home to various destinations for various reasons such as to survive a natural calamity, to preserve their faith, or to avoid persecution. Leaving one's birthplace is always a troubling experience and is also a characteristic of diaspora. I find glimpses of diaspora in both the historical migration of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the contemporary patterns of Muslim migrations to the West; therefore, I call it the Muslim diaspora.

Some intellectuals are hesitant to refer to Muslims as a diaspora due to various reasons. For example, when I asked the writer H. M. Naqvi (novelist of *Home Boy*, 2010) his opinion on the Muslim diaspora in an interview, he replied, "It's like asking about the Christian diaspora. After all, Muslims are so varied, from say Mali to Malaysia, that it would be beyond my intellectual capability to comment on the matter." But as I've said, Muslims, especially, in the West, either settled long before or have just arrived as refugees or migrants. As William Safran (1991, p.84) said, "They are not and perhaps cannot be fully accepted by their host society, and therefore feel partly alienated and insulted." They also have "troubled relationship with host societies" (Cohen, 1997, p. 26). They experience a diasporic sense and feel nostalgic about their food and culture; they face discrimination and experience an identity crisis. These things suffice for my argument about a Muslim diaspora. And there can be a transnational Muslim diaspora(s) with multiple homelands with a center(s).

Religiously and historically, migration has played an important role in shaping Islam. Many hadith and Quranic verses are found in which believers are instructed to migrate for the sake of *deen* [faith] and if circumstances are uncomfortable. In the Qur'an (4:97), Allah says to those who did not migrate, "Was not the Earth wide enough for you to migrate therein?" The arrival of Adam from Heaven to Earth is also considered an act of *hijrat* in Islam. Therefore, "Heaven [becomes a] true ancestral homeland [for Muslims to which they or their descendants would (or *should*)] eventually return" (William, 1991, p. 83). The idea of returning to heaven is mentioned in the Quran about fifty times, such as "And towards Him is their return" (Qur'an 2:46) and "…then to Me you shall return…" (Qur'an, 3:55). A hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) states, "Umar visited the Prophet while he was sitting on a mat, and he said

to the Prophet that the Prophet should have a wonderful bed instead of sleeping on a mat. The Prophet responded in the following way: 'I don't have anything to do with this world. My story is like a rider in a desert who takes shade under a tree for a certain moment and then departs from there'" (Ahmad bin Hanbal. Al-Musnad, Volume 6, p. 40).

One of my recent articles on *hijrat* explores the types, history and various facets of the concept. *Hijrat* is the Arabic word for migration and came into prominence from the great migration of the Last Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (PBUH), and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE. The Prophet migrated, because believers in Islam are asked to migrate from an uncomfortable place to a comfortable place where one can practice and propagate one's *deen.* In traditional Islamic jurisprudence, the uncomfortable place for a Muslim is called *Dar-al-Harb* and is a place with no Islamic governance where Muslims face problems regarding their identity and faith. A place that is governed by Islamic law is called Dar-al-Islam. Hence, Muslims are asked to migrate from *Dar-al-Harb* to *Dar-al-Islam.* In the Qur'an (4:100), Allah says, "He who emigrates in the way of Allah will find in the earth enough room for refuge and plentiful resources. And he who goes forth from his house as a migrant in the way of Allah and His Messenger, and whom death overtakes, his reward becomes incumbent on Allah. Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate."

When Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was about to leave Mecca after seeing the hostile attitudes and behaviors of the Meccans, he stopped to turn back and say an emotional goodbye to his beloved home while heading toward Medina. Ibn 'Abbas narrated that the Messenger of Allah said, "How sweet of a land you are and how dear you are to me, and if it were not that my people expelled me from you, I would not have lived in any other than you" (at-Tirmidhi Hadith No. 3926, Vol. 6, p. 521). The Companions of the Prophet also produced plenty of literature about the hijra, especially poetry. It involved the grief and pain of leaving everything behind, the nostalgia and memories of Mecca mixed at the same time with a happy life in Medina. In Medina, both the *muhajir*s [migrants] and al-Ansar [the locals of Medina] lived a happy life. They built the first mosque, al-Masjid-an-Nabawi. The last characteristic of both Cohen and William (Table 1) fails here. This is one of the reasons why some scholars might disagree with talking about Muslims as a diaspora. For example, what Safran (1991, p. 83) observed in the case of other diasporas who "believe that they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host society and, therefore, feel partly alienated and insulated from it" was not the case for the *Hijrah* because both the migrants and hosts were living happily and peacefully.

Based on this ideal *Hijrah* of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Muslims are expected to migrate if circumstances do not support a peaceful life, and a Muslim (Dar-al-Islam) community

should welcome the ummah and facilitate their peaceful living because they are all part of the collective identity known as the ummah, just as the Ansar of Medina welcomed the *muhajir*s from Mecca. Yet this practice is not seen in contemporary times due to the rise of various domestic laws, nationalities, and nationalisms within the Muslim community. Muslims are denied access to citizenship and equal rights within other Muslim countries and communities. Many hierarchies and complications occur within a Muslim community such as the *Ashraf* [descendants of the Prophet], *ajlaf* [economically backward Muslims], *muhajir*s, *Arabi* [Arab], and *ajami* [non-Arab], which further complicate the idea of the ummah in practice. Bharain-based Indian writer Benyamin's (2008) *Goat Days* is an evidence-based novel and depicts how Muslim feels diasporic within a Muslim country. The novel captures the life of Najeeb Mohammed, an Indian Muslim immigrant to Saudi Arabia, highlighting the kinds of difficulties, abuses, and exploitations alongside the themes of loneliness and alienation he faced. Many similar novels exist, such as V. Muzafer Ahamed's (2018) *Camel in the Sky*, which describes the hardships and lives of immigrants in the scorching sun of the Arabian desert, and Saud Alsanousi's (2015) *The Bamboo Stalk*, which gives different pictures of the migrant and host relationships in Kuwait.

3.1. Muslims Diaspora Novels: Issues and Challenges for the Ummah after 9/11

What if 9/11 never happened?

Home Boy (Naqvi, 2010, p. 174)

When Muslims migrate from Dar-al-Islam (i.e., Muslim countries) to Dar-al-Harb (non-Muslim majority countries), they face greater discrimination and hardships because of their being the *obvious other*. Muslims in diaspora, especially in countries like America, European countries, Australia, and New Zealand, face racism, xenophobia, and other diasporic issues such as culture clash, cultural shock, and linguistic and food issues. However, 9/11 multiplied these hardships and challenges for the Muslim ummah in transnational spaces and in fact added more complicacies to Muslim existence because Muslims have been suspected, attacked, and discriminated against on religious grounds and made victims of Islamophobia and Muslim terror-phobia (i.e., where Muslims are considered as potential terrorists who would blew up whatever is un-Islamic or non-Muslim or turn into a terrorist at any moment). 9/11 reshaped not only the world order but also the world narrative. In fact, it initiated a new Crusade against Islam in the name of the War on Terror. Muslims have been placed under surveillance, and the Muslim identity has become the object of suspicion in transnational space.

Muslim dress codes involving such things as the *kurta*, *taqiyah*, *payjama*, beards, Muslim names, race, and *niqab*/*hijab* became the first targets of Islamophobic attacks in the post-9/11 world. Amidst this, Muslim writers living in diasporas have tried to project the experiences of the Muslim ummah in the West and also counter the grand narratives of the West and resist the neo-Orientalist projections and misunderstandings about Islam and Muslims in their novels after 9/11. Here are some of the themes that are highlighted from the selected novels.

3.2. Muslim and Non-Muslim Relations after 9/11

Before 9/11, the relationship Muslims had with their fellow citizens in the West was not very complicated. Jassim and Salwa, in the novel *Once in a Promised Land* (Halaby, 2007) are seen to happily have been working with their American colleagues. 9/11 hammered the relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims. Halaby said in my interview with her, "To believe you have a home and trust and to find that people are suspicious of you is devastating." What was more devastating is not the Islamophobic attacks on Muslims, but the loss of human relations, the loss of trust from fellow American citizen in Muslims, and this lost trust being replaced by suspicion, anger, disbelief, hatred, and enmity. The clients of Jassim and Salwa refused to give them work because they were Muslims. Marcus, who believed in Jassim as much as anyone, had to fire him because he'd stopped getting contacts; this was because Jassim was an Arab Muslim working in his company. After Jassim was treated with suspicion and fired from his job, he lost his faith in American society. He said, "I have spent my entire life trying to find ways to make sure water is safe and accessible for everyone. Just because I am Arab, because I was raised a Muslim, you want to believe that I am capable of doing evil" (Halaby, 2008, p. 232). Jassim was returning from swimming one morning and hit a boy by accident. The boy, who'd suddenly jumped in front his Mercedes, was a racist and hated Arabs. Jassim didn't know this, but this fact complicated the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) investigation. The issue wouldn't have been complicated, but since Jassim was a Muslim, it was assumed to have been a deliberate attempt instead of an accident.

Similarly, Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (Hamid, 2007) enjoyed and loved America and American life. He had an American girlfriend named Erica who changed after 9/11, similar to Jenny in the movie *Khuda Ke Liye* (Mansoor, 2007). An even more devastating example of the effect of 9/11 comes from the novel *Home Boy* (Naqvi, 2009). In this novel, Muslims started distancing themselves from their fellow Muslims who are on trial or under suspicion from the FBI. When the FBI came to Karim Khan's house and interrogated his 12-year-old daughter, waking her up from sleep and terrifying those in his house just because Chuck was driving a rental car. When Chuck was released and decided to return the key to

his cab, Karim lost his trust in Chuck (aka Shahzad). Karim shouted at Chuck, "You are the betrayer!... We are decent people. We don't want your types. You go do jihad some other place else" (Naqvi, 2009, p. 184). This is how 9/11 spoiled the human relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims. Some hope is also seen from people like Dora (aka Duck), the girlfriend of Jimbo (aka Jamshed) in *Home Boy* and how she came to rescue him when he was detained by the FBI.

3.3. In the Name of the War on Terror

We know who we are only when we know who we are not and often only when we know whom we are against.

The Clash of Civilizations (Huntington, 2000, p. 210)

After 9/11, then US President George W. Bush told in his address, "Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists." (Bush, 2001, n.p.). After 9/11, any terror attack that takes place is assumed to have been committed or likely been committed by Muslims. The reason being is the image of Muslims projected as potential terrorists, and this kind of justification was consistently given by pseudo-scholars to prove the false allegations. The divide and conquer policy, which is applied in the context of Muslims wherein the West divides a Muslim community (what Mahmud Mamdani aptly describes as into good and bad Muslims) to seek help from shallow Muslims against their fellow Muslims. Today, those who follow the Western ideology are considered to be liberal modern Muslims, and those who resist or reject the West are considered to be extremists or fundamentalists and a threat to the West (i.e., non-Muslims). Such discourses have strengthened the phobias and increased the violent attacks on Muslims. These kinds of approaches also justify the acts of terror and violence that have been committed on Muslim countries in the name of war. The US has killed millions of innocent Muslim citizens in the name of the War on Terror over the last two decades, since 9/11. Hence, this War on Terror has turned out to be a war on Islam. Arundhati Roy (2002, p. 242), in her *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, writes:

> *Nothing can excuse or justify an act of terrorism, whether it is committed by religious fundamentalist, private militia, people's resistance movements, or whether it's dressed up as a war of retribution by a recognized government. The bombing of Afghan is not revenge for New York and Washington. It is yet another act of terror against the people of the world. Each innocent person that is killed must be added to, not set off against, the grisly toll of civilian who died in New York and Washington.*

Novels such as *Diary of a Social Butterfly* (2008) by Pakistani-Brit Moni Mohsin, gives a vivid account of post 9/11 Pakistan and Afghanistan and how Afghanistan was destroyed in the name of the War on Terror. This novel covers the political event starting from "Al Qaeda attacks New York and blew up the Twin Towers" (p. 24) to American forces hunting "for WMDs in Iraq" (p. 84). Another Pakistani-Brit novelist is Maha Khan Phillips (2010) and her novel *Beautiful from This Angle*, which covers the role of media in projecting Islam as a violent religion in the eyes of non-believers. Naqvi's (2009) *Home Boy* tries to cover the tragic demise of Afghan *mujahidin* [Holy Warriors]. Ali Chowdhry, one of the characters in this novel, laments how these mujahidin fought the Red Army and World War II and who were also glorified as the "rebel freedom fighters" (p. 10). They were also invited to "Washington and, ah, compared them to the Founding Fathers. They were the good guys, chum. Osama B. was one of them" (p. 10), but today the same Mujahidin are labelled as terrorists. *Home Boy* also talks about the emergence of "the Taliban, the bastards of war!" (p.10).

4. Muslim Identity and Post 9/11 Novels

9/11 was not good publicity for Muslims. It created a palpable tension between us and the rest of the world. I know that there is general animosity between Asians of different religions, but I had never felt it. To me, we were all Asians in a predominantly white country, and we stuck together. 9/11 changed all that. Sikhs and Hindus became sick of being banded together with Muslims.

Life, Love, and Assimilation (Kia Abdullah, 2006, p. 53)

The Muslim identity came under attack after 9/11. Even those who looked like Muslims were also attacked. Many attacks happened to Hindus and Sikhs because they were mistaken as Muslims. The first incidence of an attack on Muslims after 9/11 was the killing of Balder Sing in Arizona. The attack on Sikh Gururdwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, USA in 2012 was a result of Islamophobia where the victims were not Muslims but looked like Muslims because of their beard, turban, and *kurta* and *payjama*. In the movie *Khuda Ke Liye* (Shoaib Mansoor, 2007), a Sikh man is noticed being attacked by Whites because he was mistaken for being Muslim. In another movie, *My Name is Khan* (Karan Johar, 2010), a Hindu restaurant is attacked because the owner has been mistaken as being Muslim.

Pakistani-Brit Mohsin Hamid's (2007) novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* depicts how Changez, the main character in this novel embraced his Islamic identity after 9/11 by growing a beard and how he responded to being a suspect for resisting and reclaiming his Muslim identity. He told the American agent, "Don't be frightened by my beard." Changez says, "I am

a lover of America" (p. 1). This novel also covers the issues of Muslims living in America in the shadow of 9/11. Changez was a Lahore-born American graduate working for Underwood Samson & Company, Manhattan. He enjoyed American life and melted into the melting-pot of America. He was proud of being American. His girlfriend Erica, who symbolizes Am+Erica, had also changed after 9/11. They'd lived like a couple on their trip to Greece. But i9/11 brought a bridge between them, splitting them up. Changez becomes a victim of the identity constructed for Muslims in post-9/11 America (i.e., Muslims as terrorists). Changez was suspected and arrested at the airport for having a Muslim name while returning to America after finishing some assignment abroad. As part of the resistance, Changez embraces his Islamic identity by growing a beard and ultimately decides to return to Pakistan.

Having a Muslim name was enough for the FBI to arrest and humiliate Muslims in the name of security and for white Americans to be suspicious. Naqvi's (2009) *Home Boy* begins with the most powerful line, which shows the situation of Muslims in post-9/11 America: "We'd become Japs, Jews, Niggers. We weren't before" (p. 1). Although, AC, Jimbo, and Chuck were assimilated into the hip-hop culture of America. They'd go to pubs and sleep with women and hardly practice the teachings of Islam or go to a mosque, similar to Jassim in *Once in a Promised Land* (Halaby, 2007). But they were still under suspicion and attack because of their appearance and Muslim names. They faced hatred after 9/11. When Chuck and his friend wanted to see Shamman's (Shah Mohammed) after 9/11, they stopped at a bar. A white American brawler started a fight with them because they were Muslims. He misunderstood these Pakistani Muslims as "*A-rabs*" (Naqvi, 2009, p. 23) and attacked them. The owner Jack came to Chuck and his other Pakistani friends and yelled, "NO ROOMS FOIR YOUS!" (p. 24) and they were kicked out of Jack's bar, which is when Chuck felt that "things were changing" (p. 25). They were also detained at the Metropolitan Detention Center.

Jassim was a Jordanian-American in Halaby's (2007) novel *Once in a Promised Land*, and did not realize or experience himself as an Arab until 9/11. Although Jassim was not a practicing Muslim and his wife Salwa did not wear a veil or hijab, their Muslim names and looks stopped them from getting assignments at their respective workplaces after 9/11. Salwa was a banker, but one of the customers refused to give money to Salwa in the bank because she was a Muslim. Jassim always thought that he was Lebanese-American. After learning from Salwa that Randa is worried about her kids because they might get hurt, hit, or kidnapped for being Arab or Muslim, Jassim tells her that people in America are not "so ignorant" to take revenge on a Lebanese family for some act of nonsense committed by a "few extremist Saudis" (p. 21). But his idealistic view of America and Americans faded when he heard the

news of a Sikh man being shot in Arizona because he was mistaken for being Muslim. It was a real incident. Baldir Singh Sodhi, a gas station owner, was shot and killed in Arizona because he resembled a Muslim. Lori Peek (2011, p. 28), professor of sociology, also mentioned this incident in her book, *Behind the Backlash Muslim Americans after 9/11*: "Sodhi was neither Arab nor Muslim but was apparently targeted because he had a beard and wore a turban as part of his Sikh faith." Jassim wasn't aware of how ignorant Americans could be until he realized they could mistake a Sikh man as a Muslim for his beard and turban and then kill him in broad day light. Peek (p. 28) notes:

> *Sodhi's killer, Frank Roque, left the scene and shot and wounded a Lebanese American clerk at another gas station and later opened fire on the home of a family of Afghan descent. As Roque was being apprehended for Sodhi's murder, he shouted, "I stand for America all the way! I'm an American. Go ahead. Arrest me and let those terrorists run wild!"*

Prior to 9/11 in America, "it's not where you're from, it's where you're at" (Naqvi, 2009, p. 15); but after 9/11 this got turned around. The origin of people became more important than their qualities and positions. After 9/11, posts and comments saying things like "Muslims go back" were quite common for Muslims living in the West. One of the interviews collected by IsmaU (2004, p. 50), a Human Right Commissioned Project in Australia, notes many abuses and the most common posts from racist groups such as "Islamic vermin are not welcome here … get out now. Go back to your war-torn countries where you belong. The only safe world is a world without Islam." In the novel, *Does My Head Look Big in This?* (Fattah, 2005), Amal also faced a similar problem when she pushed Tia at party after a verbal quarrel. Tia shouted at Amal, "You Bitch!... Why don't you just get out of our country and go back to some desert cave where you belong" (p. 240). Amal responds, "This is my country, and if you ever forget it again, I'm going to rip your head off" (p. 240). Like many other diaspora Muslims and Muslims in the West, Amal did love her country, and such conditions make her feel homeless. She expresses her feelings, saying, "I have nowhere to go and nowhere else I want to go. Once again, I don't know where I stand in the country in which I took my first breath of life" (p. 246).

In *Once in a Promised Land* (Halaby, 2007), Jassim had to leave the promised land forcefully because he was terminated from his job as senior scientist for being Arab. Salwa saw the rise of white nationalism which side-lined colored immigrants. The "patriotic breathing of those around [her made her more alienated.] American flags waving, pale hands willing them to go home or agree" (pp. 184-185) disturbed her a lot. All Muslims, be they from South Asia, Africa, or Arab countries, are all clubbed as Arabs after 9/11/

4.1. Islamophilia Amidst Islamophobia

Many Muslims amidst the growing Islamophobia after 9/11 embraced the Islamic and Muslim identity and became closer to Islam as a matter of resistance to ongoing prejudices. Here are some examples:

i. Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* started growing his beard after 9/11.

ii. Chuck in *Home Boy*, who had not been a practicing Muslim and who had lived life like a hip-hop adult of America by going to bars and sleeping with women, also changed. Once he was released from the "Metropolitan Detention Center" (p. 204), "America's own Abu Gharib" (p. 105), with his friends, he learned that Shamman had also been killed in a 9/11 attack through the newspaper. He took *wudu* [ablution] and offered prayers before he left for Pakistan. And he also prayed to God: "Accept these prayers on behalf of Mohammed Shah" (Naqvi, 2010, p. 214).

iii. Salwa in *Once in a Promised Land* realized how she had been taken far away from her roots and culture.

iv. Muslim women in diaspora embraced their *hijab* identity as part of a resistance and reclaiming of their Muslim identity that had come under attack post-9/11.

4.2. Hijab and Niqab after 9/11

The issue of the hijab and niqab in Islam has always been debated with great enthusiasm among feminist circles of both the West and among Muslim Feminists. Covering has remained the feminists' burden, just like the white man's burden was to liberate the oppressed and subjugated Muslim women from Islamic patriarchy. In the wake of 9/11, the hijab became associated with the terrorist identity, along with the object of female oppression and subjugation. However, amidst the growing Islamophobia in the West, a resurgence of Islamic identity was seen among the Muslim diaspora, particularly for the hijab identity. Almost all Muslim female characters in select novels embraced the hijab identity as a part of resistance and preservation of Muslim and Islamic culture in the West. Female Muslim diaspora writers Indian-Brit Shelina Zahra Janmohamed (2010) and her *Love in a Headscarf*, Bangladesh-Brit Monica Ali (2003) and her *Brick Lane*, Syrian-American Mohja Kahf (2006) and her *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*, and Palestinian-Egyptian-Australian Randa Abdel Fattah (2005) and her *Does My Head Look Big in This?* addressed the issues and challenges faced by the Muslim hijab- and niqab-wearing women diaspora post-9/11.

Poynting et al. (2002, p. 367) wrote that in Australia also, "Numerous Muslim women wearing their hijab in public areas were assaulted and abused and had strangers of both genders trying to tear their veils away." Lori Peek (2011, p. 4), in her interview with a Muslim woman, notes, "Aisha's family members had discouraged her from wearing the headscarf, as they feared she would be harassed and would not get a job" in America if she chose to wear a hijab like Amal in *Does My Head Look Big in This?* (Abdel Fattah, 2005). Bangladeshi-Brit novelist Monica Ali (2003, p. 368) in her *Brick Lane* also highlighted the difficulties faced by Muslim hijab-wearing women in the post-9/11era in England: "Sorupa's daughter was the first, but not the only one, walking on the street on her way to college; she had her hijab pulled off. Razia wore her Union Jack sweatshirt and it was spat on."

In Indian-American Saher Alam's (2008) *The Groom of Have Been*, an Arab man is seen at Heathrow airport begging the security guards to allow his wife to pass without removing her niqab. In *Home Boy* (Naqvi, 2009), Old Man Khan's daughter, Amo aka Amina, also wears a hijab.

Amal and her mother Jamila received comments like "Arab 'tent dwellers', 'wogs', 'nappy heads', 'foreigners', and 'person of Middle Eastern appearance' (Abdel-Fattah, 2014, p. 350) in *Does My Head Lok Big in This?* For wearing a hijab. Amal decided to wear her hijab at McCleans Grammar School despite the fact that "hard-core feminists" and her majority of Aussie friends would not like it. She says, "[Feminists] don't get that this is me practicing my right to choose" (p. 17). Fatima Mernissi (1975) in her *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Muslim Society* revealed why feminists in the West oppose the hijab and niqab. She rightly pointed out the alternate fear of the West, particularly among the heads of government, politicians, scholars, masses, and parliamentarians, of seeing the niqab and hijab as nothing but "the unconscious fear of demographic extinction" (p. 1). She continues, "The demographic fear of being invaded by Muslims-invoked for instance by those who advance the 'Eurabia' scenario-does not make sense, given the tiny size of this community in the overall European population, except as a projection of their fear of self-inflicted annihilation implied by the constant marketing of narcissistic pleasure" (p. 1). Fatima tried to unearth the fundamental thread of the whole feminist debate and discourse, one whose ultimate concern is the unconscious fear of demographic change. Similarly, Amal also faced the problems of suspicion and discrimination.

Amal says the hijab has given her realization of her "self" and her universal identity. At the Chadstone Shopping Center, she met some stranger girls who were also wearing hijabs. She knows nothing except that they are wearing hijabs. When their eyes meet, she received

the Islamic greeting *Assalam wa laykum*, to which she replies, "WalaykomWassalam" (Abdel-Fattah, 2014, p. 28). After this comfortable gesture she "understand(s) that there's more to this hijab than this whole modesty thing... [*sic*] These girls are strangers to me, but I know that we all felt an amazing connection - a sense that this cloth binds us in some kind of universal sisterhood" (p. 28). The hijab connected Amal to the universal identity of the ummah, and she experienced it after being greeted by girls she didn't know who were wearing hijabs. Amal's self-realization occurs after wearing the hijab and feeling more secure and comfortable in the hijab than in her skirt or bra. She never wanted people to judge and make assumptions about her character based on the "length of her skirt or [the size of her] bra" (p. 29). She was also not interested in the West's idea of beauty. She feels more "empowerment and freedom" (p. 29) while walking in her hijab on the Chadstone streets.

Another important reason why Muslim woman in diaspora wear the hijab is to deconstruct the post-9/11 stereotypes about this particular identity and to resist the post-9/11 slant on the hijab in the name of the War on Terror, security, and suspicion. It is also a sign of solidarity with the people who are wearing and facing attacks, hatred, and discriminations in the growing Islamophobia across the world. One such live example (see Figure 1) is the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Arden, who along with condemning the Islamophobic attack on two mosques on March 15, 2019, also wore a headscarf to cover her head among the Muslim gatherings in the post-Christ Church attacks. The images of Jacinda in a head scarf shows not just solidarity with the victims but also aims to discourage Islamophobia. This image went viral and was titled as the "image of hope" (Calla, n.p) and "The face of empathy" (McConnell, n.p.).



Image 1. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern in a headscarf at Friday prayer in Hagley Park, Christchurch, New Zealand (Photo from *New Zealand Herald*,2019).

The hijab was attacked once again in the name of the public sphere. Recently, the Danish Parliament passed a ban on the hijab and niqab in public spaces, following after France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Bulgaria and Austria. "Anyone who wears a garment that hides the face in public will be punished with a fine," says the law, which was passed by 75 votes to 30" (*France-Presse*, 2018, n.p.). The actual reason came out through the opinion of Danish Justice Minister Søren Pape Poulsen, who said, "[S]ome people do not want to be a part of Danish society and want to create parallel societies with their own norms and rules" (Kern, 2018, n.p). This shows how right-wing leaders are simultaneously conservative, anti-multicultural, and anti-Muslim. The politics is of public-space polices and surveillance of Muslims and their dress code. As Jurgen Habermas (1991) rightly says in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, the public sphere is not a public sphere but one that is structured through the imagination of a particular group of people, mostly the bourgeois. This is how the Muslim identities in diaspora are discouraged in the name of public spaces, all while the ultimate goal is to discourage Muslims.

The culture of wearing a hijab and niqab is not confined to Islam alone; instead it is also very much prevalent in religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism. But when it comes to Muslims, people have problems. Figures 2 and 3 show some photos of Christian nuns wearing veils that I took while traveling in Europe in June 2018.



Image 2. Photos I took in Wroclaw and Warsaw, Poland.

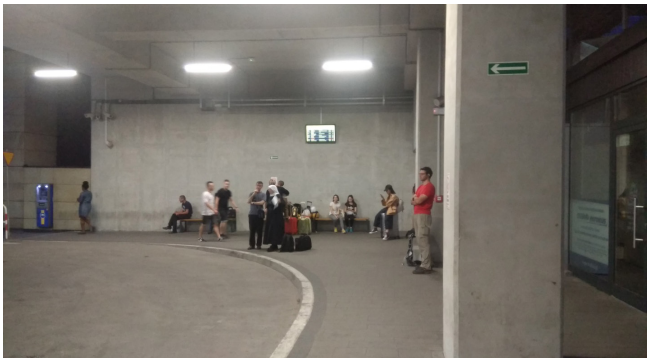


Image 3. Photo I took at a Berlin bus stop in Germany.

5. Anti-Immigrant or Anti-Muslim? The Rise of Rightwing Leadership

Europe's immigrant crisis has been heard recently, and a rise of anti-immigrant and anti-refugee rhetoric has accompanied it. This anti-immigrant and anti-refugee rhetoric of the right and far right leaders in the West is nothing but a policy of systematic exclusion and restriction regarding Muslims' entry into and mobility in the West. When analyzing this anti-immigrant rhetoric closely, it is found to be not anti-immigrant but anti-Muslim.

In the American context, the then Republican Party presidential nominee Donald Trump's anti-immigrant stance turned anti-Muslim when his Executive Order banned nationals of Muslim majority countries (i.e., Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen) from entering America. It clearly indicates how the new USA's anti-immigration policies after the rise of right-wing leader Donald Trump are based on religious grounds rather than racial. The former Mayor of New York City, Rudy Giuliani, who was also advisor to President Trump, stated that Trump had asked him to help legally ban Muslim from the US. "Mr. Giuliani and others decided to use territory as a proxy, and this idea is reflected in the signed order. There is over-

whelming evidence that the most recent executive order was likewise intended to discriminate against Muslims" (Cole, 2017, n.p.).

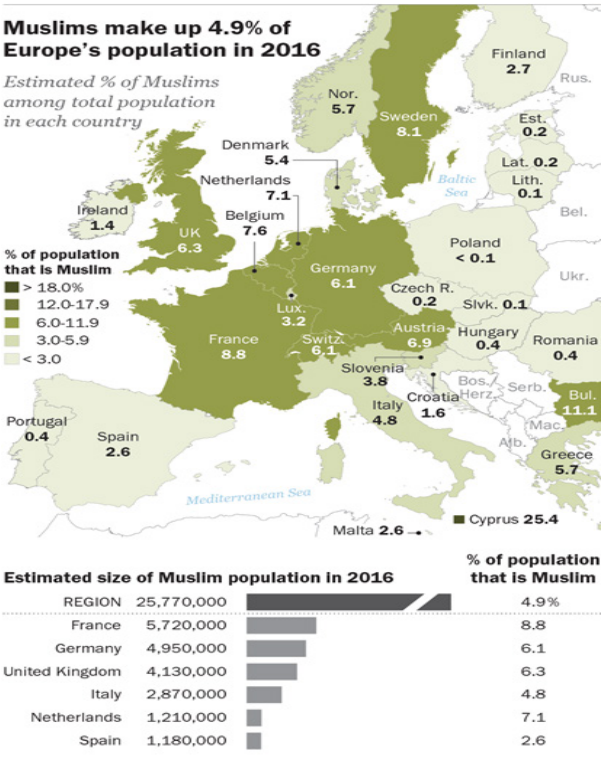
In the context of Europe, right-wing leaders such as Girt Wilders, Nicholas Sarkozy, and Angela Markel openly targeted Muslims in the name of an "anti-immigrant" stance. Although the Muslim population in Europe constitutes only 4.9% according to the Pew Research Center (2017), this number in most countries is less than 1%; still, Europe is always worried about the growth of the Muslim population and phobic about the Islamization. A map from the Pew Research Center shows the Muslim population in Europe as of 2016. Despite this tiny minority percentage, Muslims are constantly targeted. European countries are worried about not being able to accommodate, accept, and digest the existing invisible Muslim diversity into their monocultural, racist, and homogeneous society. This reveals the pseudo-nature of Western idealism and questions the principles of democracy, modernity, multiculturalism, freedom, and inclusiveness.

Lutz Bachmann's (2014) Patriotic Europeans against Islamization of the West, abbreviated in German as PEGIDA, is a German nationalist, anti-Islam, right-wing political movement founded in Dresden. It has also extended its network across Europe, with Austria, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, the UK, Ireland, and Switzerland, as well as Australia, also having PEGIDA branches. The PEGIDA protest in January 2016 in Germany demanded, "the strictest measures against migrants; we want to defend our women and children, all Europeans from them! (Muslims)" (RT, 2016, n.p.). PEGIDA mobilized people in the name of anti-Islamization with the following objectives:

The history of Western civilization could soon come to an end through Islam conquering Europe, thus formalizing their membership in the Fortress Europe coalition against that eventuality. PEGIDA has five central political objectives: a call for selective immigration, a call for the expulsion of religious extremists, the right to integrate, the duty to integrate, and tighter internal security.

The Prague Declaration was signed by the *Blokprotiislamu* [The Bloc against Islam] of the Czech Republic, the Conservative People's Party of Estonia, Lega Nord of Italy, the *Ruch Narodowy* party [National Movement Party] of Poland, and PEGIDA in Austria, Germany, Bulgaria, and the Netherlands have stood against Islam in the socio-cultural and political spheres of Europe.

Recently in Poland, "Muslims make up just 0.1% of the Polish population, or around 35,000 people, including indigenous Polish Muslims such as the Tatars and converts, as well as immigrants from all over the world" (Mandhai 2017). Despite this, Poland has the strong



Estimated size of Muslim population in 2016		% of population that is Muslim
REGION	25,770,000	4.9%
France	5,720,000	8.8
Germany	4,950,000	6.1
United Kingdom	4,130,000	6.3
Italy	2,870,000	4.8
Netherlands	1,210,000	7.1
Spain	1,180,000	2.6

Note: Europe is defined here as the 28 nations of the EU plus Norway and Switzerland. "Estimated size of Muslim population in 2016" column lists only countries with at least 1 million Muslims. Estimates do not include those asylum seekers who are not expected to gain legal status to remain in Europe, including roughly 320,000 Muslims in Germany and 140,000 Muslims in France.
Source: Pew Research Center estimates. See Methodology for details. "Europe's Growing Muslim Population"

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emergence of anti-Muslim sentiment. Around 60,000 far-right nationalist Poles marched in Warsaw calling for a "White Europe," "Clean blood," and "Pray for Islamic Holocaust" (*The New Arab*, 2017, n.p.).

The Dutch nationalist and politician Geert Wilders is one of the most notorious right-wing leaders to target Islam and Muslims under the banner of anti-immigrant rhetoric. He openly targets Muslims by calling Muslim migrants "scum" and the Qur'an "Mein Kampf" during his election rallies. He "vowed to end Muslim immigration and shutter the country's mosques if elected as Prime Minister in a general election on March 15, 2017" (Goldman, 2017, n.p.).

The former French President Nicholas Sarkozy joined the anti-multicultural stance by saying, "We have been too concerned about the identity of the person who was arriving and not enough about the identity of the country that was receiving him" and declared multiculturalism to be a "failure" (*The Telegraph*, 2011, n.p.). Similarly, then British Prime Minister David Cameron also criticized the idea of "state multiculturalism" (BBC 2011) and the need for a better integration policy for young Muslims. Wilders' (2011) speech showed how a rise in post-secular right-wing leadership had occurred in Europe, criticizing its own principles of modernity, democracy, secularism, the Enlightenment, human rights, and civil society for which it is known. Wilder stated:

> *Indeed, the premise of the multiculturalists' ideology is wrong. Cultures are not equal. They are different because their roots are different. That is why the multiculturalists try to destroy our roots… The multicultural society has undermined this rule of common*

sense and decency. The multicultural society tells the newcomers who settle in our cities and villages: You are free to behave contrary to our norms and values.

This speech from Wilders was a provocative and venomous doses against both immigrants in general and Muslims in particular. German Chancellor Angela Markel (2010, n.p.) also advocated one-sided-assimilation and criticized multiculturalism by saying that it "has failed, utterly failed… The multikulti concept, where people would live side-by-side happily , did not work, and immigrants need to do more to integrate, including by learning German."

6. Conclusion

In a nutshell, a rise in Islamophobia has occurred on one hand, while on the other hand has occurred a revisiting of Islamic identities among Muslims, particularly in transnational spaces. Muslim diaspora writers have taken up the issues and challenges pertaining to Islam and the Muslim Ummah before and after 9/11 in a timely manner. This diaspora Muslim authorship has resisted and deconstructed the propaganda maligning the image of Islam and Muslims. This paper has been an attempt to also question the West's principles of democracy, inclusiveness, and multiculturalism when dealing with the tiny Muslim diaspora minority. The increasing hemming and hawing, as well as the anti-immigrant stance hiding the true anti-Muslim sentiments in the homogenous and monocultural societies of the West show how accommodating and inclusive these modern developed countries actually aren't. The research opens up a wide variety of issues for further study in this area.

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