



# Salafism and the internet in contemporary Indonesia

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Through a case study of Salafism in Indonesia this thesis examines the relationship between religious fundamentalism and the internet, arguing that the use of the internet to advance religious identity and reinforce local and seemingly anti-modern beliefs highlights the failings of secularisation theories that see technology as an inherent modernising force that eventuates in the demise of religious consciousness. The thesis does well in comprehending and mining the sociological literature in the diverse areas of technology and religion, both being fields that lack of a clearly articulated canon of research. While ambitious the general thesis being advanced in the thesis is also at the forefront of sociological thinking.

Overall, the thesis is a significant piece of research that clearly fits within a more empirically grounded tradition of sociological analysis with a strongly conceptualised and logical relationship between theory, method and data. In my opinion the thesis is the equivalent to a 20,000 word length honours thesis and it demonstrates the potential for the student to go on to successfully complete PhD research and I hope to further illuminate the complex and at times seeming paradoxical relationship between economic, technological and cultural forces of religion in developing and developed nations.

Prof. Riaz Hassan and Dr. Brad West

## Abstract

This study deals with the relationship between religious fundamentalism and the internet. It aims to be a critique of the conception that religion and modernization are inherently incompatible; that modernization leads to the death of religion, as advocated the secularization theorists. It argues that the notion is an inaccurate characterization and understanding of the interplay between the forces of religion and modernization; rather, both co-exist and mutually reinforce one another. It also argues that it is inappropriate to label religious fundamentalism as an anti-modern movement; it might be true that it is ideologically ultra-orthodox, but it is technologically a modern movement. The value of this study lies in its findings that the most conservative religious groups like the Salafi community not only persist in the face of modernization, but also transform realities of modernity like the internet into a new form of modern product that serves well their religious needs and interests. To support this, I analysed Salafism, a transnational Islamic fundamentalist movement, and its use of the internet within the Indonesian context to uncover how they employ the technology. I examined the ways the Salafis use the internet in accordance with their ideological purposes in the frameworks of ‘cultured technology’, localization process of global force of information technology, appropriation of global media, and spiritualizing technology. Textual analysis was mainly employed as a method to understand the Salafi web contents and uncover the ways the Salafi use the internet.

Keywords: Salafism, Salaf, the Salafi movement, the internet, religious fundamentalism, modernization, Indonesia.

Words: approximately 24,000

## **Declaration**

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree of diploma in any university and that to the best of knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed,

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