



What Does Salafism Promise to Us? -The Political Theology of Purification and Stability in a Chaotic World-

Seleflik Bize Ne Vaad Ediyor?

-Kaotik Bir Dünyada Arınma ve Sabitlik Arayışının Politik Teolojisi-

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Contribution Percentage: %40

Article Information

Article Type

Research Article

Date Recieved

01 June 2023

Date Accepted

01 December 2023

Date Published

31 December 2023

Plagiarism

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Cite As

“ Evkuran, Mehmet-Sayın, Yusuf. “What Does Salafism Promise to Us? -The Political Theology of Purification and Stability in a Chaotic World-”. *Kader* 21/3 (December 2023), 910-929. <https://doi.org/10.18317/kaderdergi.1385261> ”

Abstract

Salafism, derived from the root of 'Salaf' in the sense of 'the former' as a word, means 'the path of those who follow the footsteps of the former' and refers to a kind of religious fanaticism or conservatism. Salafism, which expresses a strict and literal adherence to Islamic tenets and a return to the pure origins of religion in the Islamic tradition, is today used as a synonym for religious radicalism in fields such as Islamic Sciences, Political Science, and International Relations. With its traditional form; Salafism, which establishes itself through a stance against religious rationality and being pro-interpretation, represents a 'return to the essence' reaction against intra-religion pluralism and secularism. The Salafi paradigm, which advocates a return to the essence of religion, is also skeptical of the intellectual and artistic achievements and products of the Muslim civilization, and in this respect it represents an anti-cultural attitude. The damage done by the Salafist activist groups to the Islamic civilization and other cultures is concrete examples of this. This study concentrates on the causes that lead to the Salafist flare in modern times. The study analyzes which religious and social concerns it represents in the face of social change, modernization, and secularization. It examines the relationship between Salafism and Sunnism and highlights the misleading aspects of approaches that try to show it outside of Sunnism. Approaching the subject with an interdisciplinary approach, the study includes analyzes on the intersection of theology, political science, and international relations.

Conceptual analyzes of Salafism reveal the pre-Islamic roots of this concept. In fact, the need to attribute a past essence and manage the present, which is common in every society, appears in the Arabs as 'following the way of the ancestors'. Sanctifying the past breeds suspicion of innovations and differences. 'Islamic essentialism', represented by Salafism, advocates constancy against change, essentialism against pluralism, nass against reason, and following over apostasy. Since it adopts a strict dogmatic (nass) and literal attitude in religious matters, it considers theology, philosophy and Sufism to be a departure from religion. As for the imagination of history, it embraces the idea of deterioration, separation from the essence and decay.

In modern age, the Islamic world has faced a multifaceted crisis and collapse. Problems that started in the political field have expanded into the field of identity and values. Concerns about protecting identity, essence and faith have nourished Salafism as a radical conservatism.

In the Islamic world, where crises continue to increase, Salafism attracts attention as a type of thought, belief, lifestyle and action. However, instead of producing a livable alternative, it represents a reactive stance and advocates a minimal and harsh religious life. Otherwise its harsh approach towards culture and art expresses a nihilistic view towards Islamic civilization. There is a confusion regarding Salafism in the Sunni world. This confusion is historically and theologically related to the adoption of Salafism by Sunnism. However, the growing new Salafism rejects the elements that make up the existing Sunni identity. This is an ironic situation for Sunnism. The theological tension between Sunnism, based on the knowledge of theology, fiqh and Sufism, and strict nass-based Salafism continues.

Keywords: Culture, Essentialism, Identity, Salafism, Secularization.

Öz

Kelime olarak 'öncekiler' anlamında selef kökünden türetilen Salafizm, 'öncekilerin izini takip edenlerin yolu' demektir ve bir tür dinsel tutuculuk ve muhafazakârlık anlamına gelmektedir. İslam geleneğinde *Islamic tenetlere* katı ve literal bağlılığı ve dinin saf asıllarına dönüşü ifade eden Salafizm, günümüzde İslami ilimler, siyaset bilimi ve uluslararası ilişkiler gibi alanlarda dinsel radikalizm ve köktencilikle eşanlamı olarak kullanılmaktadır. Geleneksel formuyla, dinsel akılçılığa ve yorum yanlısı olmaya karşı bir duruş üzerinden kendini kuran Salafizm, din içi çoğulculuğa ve sekülerizme karşı öze dönüşçü bir tepkiyi temsil etmektedir. Dinin özüne dönüşü savunan Salafi paradigma, Müslüman medeniyetinin dünsel ve sanatsal başarı ve ürünlerine de kuşkuyla bakar, bu yönüyle de kültür karşıtı bir tutumu temsil eder. Selefi eylemci grupların İslam medeniyetine ve diğer kültürlerle verdikleri zarar bunun somut örneklerini oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışma modern zamanlarda Salafizm parlamasına yol açan nedenler üzerinde yoğunlaşmaktadır. Çalışmada, toplumsal değişim, modernleşme ve sekülerleşme karşısında hangi dinsel ve toplumsal kaygıları temsil ettiği analiz edilmektedir. Salafizmin Sünnilik ile ilişkisi incelenmekte ve onu Sünniliğin dışında göstermeye çalışan yaklaşımların yanıltıcı yanlarını vurgulamaktadır. Disiplinler arası yaklaşımla konuyu ele alan çalışma, teoloji ile siyaset bilimi ve uluslararası ilişkilerin kesişme alanında analizler içermektedir.

Selefilik ile ilgili kavramsal analizler, bu kavramın İslam öncesi köklerini ortaya koymaktadır. Aslında her toplumda rastlanan ve geçmiş bir öz atfetme ve bugünü yönetme ihtiyacı Araplarda 'ataların yoluna tâbi olma' şeklinde belirir.

Geçmişin kutsanması, yeniliklerden ve farklılıklardan kuşku duymayı doğurur. Seleflik tarafından temsil edilen 'İslamî özcülük' değişime karşı sabitliği, çoğulculuğa karşı özcülüğü, akla karşı nassı, ibtida yerine ittiba'yı savunur. Dinî konularda katı nassçı ve literal tutumu benimsediği için kelim, felsefe ve tasavvufu dinden uzaklaşma sayar. Tarihe bakışta kötüye gidiş, özden uzaklaşma ve çürüme düşüncesine bağlıdır.

Modern dönemlerde İslam dünyası çok yönlü bir kriz ve çöküş yaşamıştır. Siyasal alanda başlayan sorunlar kimlik ve değerler alanına doğru genişlemiştir. Kimliği, özü ve inancı koruma kaygıları radikal bir tutuculuk olarak sefiliği beslemiştir. Krizlerin artarak devam ettiği İslam dünyasında Seleflik bir düşünce, inanç, yaşam tarzı ve eylem türü olarak ilgi çekmektedir. Ancak yaşanabilir bir alternatif üretmek yerine tepkisel bir duruşu temsil etmekte, minimal ve sert bir dinî yaşantıyı savunmaktadır. Ayrıca kültüre ve sanata yönelik sert yaklaşımı, İslam medeniyeti açısından nihilist bir bakışı ifade etmektedir. Sünnî dünyada Seleflik ile ilgili bir kafa karışıklığı göze çarpmaktadır. Bu karışıklık tarihsel ve teolojik olarak sefiliğin Sünnilik tarafından benimsenmesi ile ilgilidir. Oysa güçlenen yeni Seleflik mevcut Sünnî kimliğini oluşturan unsurları reddetmektedir. Bu Sünnilik açısından kriz içeren bir durumdur. Kelam, fıkıh ve tasavvuf bilgisine dayalı kapsayıcı Sünnilik ile katı nassçı ve dışlayıcı Seleflik arasındaki teolojik gerilim hala devam etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültür, Özcülük, Kimlik, Seleflik, Sekülerleşme.

Introduction

The word Salaf is an Arabic word meaning those who come first. As a term, it refers to the period of the companions, tabiun and tebe-i tabiun, the first generations of Islam. The use of the concept as 'salaf-i sâlih' was conceptualized later. Ahmed b. Hanbal (855) is one of those who place the concept of predecessor at the center of his discourse and use it to distinguish himself from other interpretations of Islam. Important traditionalist names such as İshâk b. Râheveyh (d. 853), Ali b. al-Medinî (d. 873) and Yahyâ b. Ma'în (d. 847) also helped to spread this concept (Nâfî, 16).

It is known that Ahmed b. Hanbel (d. 855) became a hero after suffering the mihne process. In the course of history, while the Mutazila was in decline, the ahl al-hadîth came to the fore as a political power and gained a decisive position on the understanding of religion. This was not just a theological process. Rather, it was a multifaceted experience with a political and cultural background. In some studies, it has been revealed that Ahmed b. Hanbel was a figure who defended Arab sovereignty and supported the cult of Mu'âwiya (İscan, 2015: 156, 157).

From a theological point of view, Salafism coincides with the Ahl al-Ḥadîth movement. The ahl al-hadîth or ahl al-asar movement advocates religious essentialism and the literal meaning of the text, not reason, interpretation and different approaches in understanding religious texts. While doing this, it is based on the narrations from previous generations. When it comes to religion, transmission is essential, not reason. 'It is better to follow the old than to innovate' (al-ittibâ hayrun min al-ibtidâ). The opposition between reason and interpretation that characterizes the salafist method coincides with this method of the ahl al-hadîth. In fact, the references made by the Salafis to the Salaf are mostly baseless and forced. Here, there is a backward ideological and dogmatic reading, or rather a construction. In the understanding of religious texts, the narrator, literal tendency and rational and interpretive tendency show themselves in the early periods of Islam. However, with the influence of the Qur'an, the rational and interpretive vein became decisive. Basing the subject as ahl ad-dirâya- ahl ad-dirâya (advocates of reason) and ahl ar-rivâya- ahl ar-rivâya (proponents of narration), Atay gives a list of the prominent ones among the generations that qualify as predecessors and states that most of them do not fit the definition of

'salafist', on the contrary, they value reason, contemplation, theology and philosophy. The picture presented by Atay shows that the Islamic tradition progressed in a rational and exploratory direction in the early stages (Atay, 58-62, 86).

In the Islamic tradition, the rivalry between ahl al-hadīth and ahl al-ra'y has generally resulted in the favor of the former with the consensus of conservative sections and governments. The political and social crises in the Islamic world have also strengthened the hand of the sharp and marginalizing segments represented by the ahl al-hadith and Salafism. The impact of the crisis on the spread of Salafism to the environment by surpassing its own ecology and suppressing other religious understandings is undeniable. For this reason, we discussed Salafism as a 'crisis theology' in one of our studies (Evkuran, 2015).

There are studies that base the revival of Salafism on the Afghani-Abduh line in the modern world. These studies make a connection by looking specifically at the self-reflexive and tradition-critical tendencies. However, although the Afghani-Abduh movement emphasizes the Age of Bliss and the return to the predecessor generation, it has modernist features. and in this respect, it differs from classical Hanbali and modern Wahhabi Salafism (Lauziere, 2010: 373-375; Büyükkara, 2014: 485).

Salafism has become the most popular topic not only in modern Islamic thought, but also in international politics. Salafism is called 'neo-Salafism' in order to emphasize the difference between its meaning and equivalent in the medieval Islamic world and the form and content it takes today. In some studies, a distinction is made between traditional and radical Salafism (Farouq, 2021: 55). There is a remarkable situation arising from the theo-political divergence between these two. Today's radical Salafists accuse traditionalist Salafists of not being Salafists and state that they direct all their energies to the fight against certain types of polytheism and that they do not deal with important social problems (Çakmaktaş, 2022: 108). In general, the characterization of neo-salafism stems from the idea that there is a difference between Salafism in the classical period and Salafism that emerged in the modern-postmodern age. However, this approach does not prevent some founding thinkers or representatives, especially Ahmad bin Hanbal and Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), from coming to the fore when the subject of Salafism is discussed. While discussing the current problems and crises of the Islamic world, we suddenly find ourselves in the historical and structural problems of classical Islamic thought. Therefore, talking about the present requires examining the past, and today's Muslim mind is vividly experiencing the patterns of understanding constructed in the past. Survival, on the other hand, constantly repeats its own history as a result.

Today, Salafism is considered institutionally as a lobbying activity supported by Saudi Arabia and some Gulf kingdoms. Neo-Salafism is a product of the political and theological alliance that took place in Saudi Arabia that adopted Wahhabi doctrine. The political aspect of the paradigm was undertaken by the Saud family, while the theological aspect was undertaken by the Muhammad b. Abdulwahhab family. This alliance established a closed regime with the help of wealth and started to work as a laboratory where predecessor theses were applied (Asad, 2015: 234).

Salafism does not consider itself a sect. When asked which path they followed, they answered that they followed the footsteps of their predecessors. The concept of 'Madhhap al-Salaf' means 'the way of the predecessor' and is used for historical and theological legitimation (Lauziere, 2010:

372). This concept reveals their views on the phenomenon of sectarianization and sects. Within this scope, among the main problem areas of the study; The increasing sectarian conflicts and the rapid polarization of the Islamic world reveal the importance of approaching the problem of Salafism with a more comprehensive view. It is necessary to reveal a general tendency of Salafism without distinguishing between traditional and new salafism. The questions addressed in this study are:

- ✓ How does Salafism explain itself and how does it look at other religious sects?
- ✓ What is the background of the Salafi return to self discourse?
- ✓ What is the relationship between Salafism and Sunnism?
- ✓ What are the characteristics of the political-theological ground that feeds Salafism today?

Dealing with the very basic issues and discussions in the subject area of the International Relations discipline today by ignoring sects or religious thoughts may cause some problems in examining the issues in depth and obtaining good results. At this point, evaluating the issue of Salafism (Bağcı, 2019), which is considered as an example in this study, only within the framework of the discipline of International Relations may lead to deficiencies in academic perspective. Likewise, dealing with the subject only in terms of Islamic sciences will bring some difficulties in understanding. In this respect, an inter-disciplinary approach to Islamic sects or the history of thought seems extremely essential, as is the case with Salafism (Ali, 2015). At the same time, Salafism, which is the subject of international relations and global-local politics, is basically discussed in terms of Islamic sciences in this study and it is based on the problematic of how it should be understood as a thinking systematic and practice.

1. The Political-Theological Framework of Salafism

It is not ontologically necessary that the paradigms formed in the past reappear in the later periods of history. It depends on cultural decisions. The phrase 'history repeats itself' should be a reflection of the cyclical understanding of time. Consciously or unconsciously followers of a thought and belief system mystify certain value judgments, behavior styles, identity characteristics in order to “own the truth”, and “protect oneself from corruption”. It also aestheticizes them with cultural tools such as art, literature, and thought. In addition, fictions realized in philosophical and theological fields, which is a more important and effective method than this, turn into spiritual power through constructions and articulations to belief.

All dogmatic and radical tendencies throughout history emerge as a result of this oblivion. However, the human mind tends to remember and to understand. The transformation of understanding into remembering and its reduction to remembering is a very serious problem for thought. Comprehension includes remembering but transcends it. Remembering demands a more passive and minimized intellectual effort. Every effort to remember requires an interpretation and production in itself. However, a reproduction is allowed to the extent that the dominant culture, beliefs, and cultural-political powers allow. Culture resists, excludes, and accuses any attempt to read and understand that tries to show its historical and interpretive features and thus

to unmask it as absolute and authoritative. It demands to be presented not as an “interpretation” but as an expression of the truth itself.

The more institutionalized the culture’s attempts to “sacralize”, “seem divine”, “appear eternal and eternal”, the more authority, continuity, and prevalence it attains. Religion, philosophy, history, art etc. which are the means of sanctification, are obliged to serve dogma. All these constructions take place under the direction of a certain form of power. They are made obligated to serve dogma. The areas where the power of dogma is felt most intensely are the areas that produce value and identity. Different or opposing readings that emerge in these areas are most severely reacted. Because cultural power never wants its historical and human face to be seen. It is the result of this resistance that he suffocates the humanizing comments to come out of him in the harshest way and yet in his own bed. In the Islamic tradition, the early seizure of religious thought by politics led to the emergence of the phenomenon of religious grouping at an early date. The reference of the Salafist discourse to the first period (it means the period of the first three Muslim generations) in the name of defending religious essentialism and purity should also be read from this perspective.

What societies experience, realizing the nature of the cultural and historical, is an *enlightenment* unique to them. Enlightenment is not an experience that all societies live in the same form and content. It is a particular discovery that takes place in the context of each society’s own values. This discovery is based on the fact that society first confronts its roots and realizes the historical and human intentions, aims, and aspirations underlying them.

There are two intellectual obstacles in front of Muslim societies to realize their own unique renewal. Firstly it is an extreme traditionalist and conservative approach that sees tradition as a structure that ‘should be’ and ‘cannot be otherwise’. This area is completely closed to free thinking in the Islamic tradition, as ‘unthinkable/unthought’ (Arkoun, 20002: 9). The fact that the knowledge produced based on religious references is seen as ‘unthought, holy, unquestionable’ has weakened the perception of reality of the Muslim mentality. This approach suppresses the ‘excitement of knowing, understanding, and discovering’, which is necessary for us to recognize the principles and values that make up the tradition and the processes experienced. This sanctifying approach, which substitutes commitment and loyalty for knowing and understanding, also makes it impossible for the ‘different traditionalisms’ to arise from the awareness of the diversity within the tradition, and most of all harms the *Tradition* that it claims to protect. A true Enlightenment cannot be without tradition; critical and creative readings are needed to transcend tradition. However, the understandings that have made it their existential duty to protect the tradition with a sense of blessing and protection, make intellectual communication and interaction with the tradition impossible and create a great obstacle in front of creative thinking.

The other main problem is that an anti-cultural understanding that folds history with all its content with the most vulgar glances and eliminates the difference between today and the ‘golden age’, destroying not only the perception of time but also of space.¹ It is not easy to distinguish

¹ Thanks to M. Zeki İşcan for drawing attention to the issue of culturalism. Cultural enmity looks at the social life and the concept of culture, which is its inseparable part, with anger, which looks at the world and social life from within a certain belief or ideology and is the scene of developments that do not comply with the doctrine that it accepts as the ‘truth itself’. We use culturalism to problematize a monotype, stagnant mentality that hates change and differences,

between fighting against innovations that corrupt religion and opposing culture. In fact, the feeling of protecting religion against corruption and subsequent deviations is the biggest obstacle to cultural diversity and intellectual freedom (Evkuran, 2015).

Here we are faced with another version of dogmatism. The first spread the sacred through history. It saw our every relationship with time and space as an act or reflection of the sacred, the only cosmic-ontological actor. History is nothing but an expansion of its will or personality. Historical events are acts of God; not of man. In this respect, just as it is not possible to fully understand God and his acts, understanding history is likewise beyond human comprehension! Yet, the causes of historical events do not belong to this world, but to the divine realm.² The dominant view on the problem of causality in the tradition of Islamic thought emerges not in our daily lives, but rather when trying to understand major historical and social events.

This time, there is another alternative and opposite reading of the concept of the sacred. An understanding that does not spread the sacred, on the contrary concentrates it in the context of a certain time-space, humiliates history, harbors a theological anger against temporal mobility and spatial diversity, and wages a holy war to 'return them into their originals'. The understanding that we try to define through these features is Salafism. It is not yet easy to try to understand or criticize the Islamic thought with its own concepts Because there has not been a systematic theological criticism of Salafism in the Islamic tradition and today, a language and style that can be used or benefited from in this direction has not emerged. In fact, the struggle between sects and theological systems in the Islamic world reveals a picture in which almost all the negative and destructive games of political power struggles are exhibited. The competition between sects and sects mostly shifted to a political basis and could not gain and sustain the character of a philosophical, theological and intellectual debate.

For this reason, the fact that the discussions about religious problems turn into a matter of faith and unbelief in a short time and the parties easily direct the harshest accusations to each other makes it almost impossible for thought to enter the religious field and make it functional. However, the Holy Qur'an invites us to build faith on reasoning and thinking. It is really striking that the Holy Qur'an, the founding text of Islam, deals with the two basic abilities of man, reason and faith, not in opposition, but in a relationship of solidarity and support.

However, the thought and belief systems put forward in the name of Islam have bring forward a kind of fideism over time. The disempowerment of man in the face of the God and his/her removal from being an agent/subject has also disrupted the balance between reason and faith, which makes man human. This situation has given birth to a paradigm of thought-belief full of mythical narratives that prevent reaching the original message of the Qur'an (Arkoun, 1985: 13). Muslim theologians, who acted to reveal man's need for religion and prophets, limited man as much as possible and ignored his abilities in order to emphasize the perfection of the God's religion. In

which sees them as a deviation in the face of the truth. The concept of culturalism, besides the point of view that considers a particular culture superior and privileged over others; It also expresses a methodological understanding that tries to read all historical and social problems on cultural differences in social sciences.

² In the works written to explain the *Māturīdī* theological system, which is described as rational and libertarian, it is emphasized that the God is absolutely free in his actions and it is stated that the question "why did he do this?" cannot be asked. Because it is stated that this question will be asked about beings who act with a malady/reason, need or necessity, and that Allah the Almighty is higher than this. See more: *Māturīdī*, 2015:169.

particular, the Ashari kalam system, based on principles such as atomic theory, continuous creation, and the rejection of causality, argued that man is apparently an agent but actually an object (Evkuran, 2015: 54 et al.). The values of surrender, obedience, and feeling helpless have been substituted instead of knowing, understanding, and comprehending. It is noticed that these values are the most prominent features of the Muslim identity today. In this framework, the religious sphere has turned into an authoritarian and irrational world that is as dogmatic as possible, extremely rigid, closed to diversity, and different interpretation of religious texts. For this reason, the return or rise of religion in the Islamic world brings along the multifaceted revival of the problem of dogmatism and authoritarianism (İşcan, 2015: 333).

As a solution, it is seen that the Sufi and mystical discourse, which has been at odds with the Salafi understanding throughout history and has been its target, is tried to be highlighted. However, instead of solving the problem, this deepens the polarization and narrows the capacity of Islamic thought to produce more reasonable solutions. When we look at the result of the work done by two irreducible religious interpretations together, we do not see any gain, but a blockage, depersonalization, and intellectual corruption. If a solution to be established “within the house” and “with the language of the house” cannot be accomplished, it will be inevitable to head for non-Islamic solutions (secular and positivist ways) in the face of fast-flowing and pending problems -just like in the last periods of the Ottoman Empire. As a matter of fact, the tendencies of deism and agnosticism that have become popular in the Islamic world are a result of the blockage in attempts to find solutions within Islam.

2. The Problem of Understanding Salafism

Otherring the Salafism by labeling it as an enemy, a great danger, barbarism, etc., prevents understanding its historical and theological functions. This language can be used for political and criminal reasons, but academic and intellectual work requires an empathetic language based on understanding. First of all; it is necessary to try to understand an idea or social movement that is seen as a problem and threat. We must do this, despite the violence it displays, the pain it inflicts, and therefore the temptation into react instantly. Otherwise, it would not be possible for us to notice the ways of reading, believing, and thinking styles and the non-thought factors behind them, which take place in our history and thought and have the potential to produce problems.

“Problem solving” is often mentioned when these and related topics are discussed. However, it is necessary to reveal what exactly is understood by problem solving. What is really what we see as the “problem”? And what do we do to solve the problem? One of the main difficulties faced by researchers working in the field of social sciences is that the personal beliefs and thoughts of the researcher affect his/her research and harm the objectivity of the research. Investigating the historical and ideological roots of a living and active identity still alive today is a process full of obstacles.

Identities or movements founded on a particular belief and ideology resist attempts to objectify and historicize. They want historical and social processes to be considered and interpreted in a way that justifies them. This compulsion is felt at one level or another on those who work in the field of social sciences. Even the fact that the work is carried out under a free and autonomous

institutional roof does not provide the objective and independent work that is targeted from time to time. Although environmental and institutional freedom is ensured, the researcher's individual or group's worldview and personal ideologies can be influential.

When the issue of Salafism and sects is discussed, the above-mentioned problems are experienced intensely. Not only Salafism, but also all religious understandings such as Sunni, Shiite, Sufi etc. attack from the very beginning approaches that describe themselves as "an interpretation of faith". Moreover, they present themselves as "*the very faith*", "*the only true representative of Islam*". Our speakers/scholars on the subject have not only a scientific opinion as an academic, but also a personal opinion and belief as a Muslim on these claims. Therefore, what we are really talking about is our own belief, our understanding of truth, and our identity, deep down. The reason why many of us are interested in this subject cannot be explained by scientific and academic concerns alone. Rather, more succinctly; we are dealing with an existential issue for each of us, and it is for this reason that our speeches and assessments are to a certain extent autobiographical.

How to establish the relationship between the problem and the solution in a political-psychology, where sectarian identities are used effectively in the political arena and Salafism is discussed extensively and with the perception of "imminent threat" on this axis, is a comprehensive and deep problem that concerns not only the origins of Islamic thought, but also its functioning and today. Two of the possible approaches are more suitable for discussion because they are typical. Others are intermediate versions that oscillate between the two.

The first approach: The problem is the existence of the sects themselves. The existence of sects is the biggest obstacle to understanding religion and living it properly. The solution is to abolish sects.

The second approach: The right denomination is one, and it is clear. The Prophet and the Companions directly or indirectly informed which sect was the right one. *Solution:* The right sect is to defend against superstitious sects and to fight against superstitious sects at all levels.

The first approach is a model that has a clear path and experimented with the effect of modernity. However, this model was seen as a part of secular and materialist practices and was perceived as a purge of Muslim identity and values. The fact, that such intellectual readings and the search for solutions, that push the historical-social boundaries come to the fore when the "traditional religious identity" is bracketed or withdrawn, is an indicator of the resistance of the traditional structure to the search for solutions. The fact that it begins to express itself in a totalitarian manner when the obstacles in front of it are removed is due to its predominant substantialist character that dominates the establishment.

The other approach is an expression of the belief that is widespread and powerful in the Islamic world. It is the result of the vulgarization and rationalization of the sectarian view of sectarian identities, which is effective in the civil sphere, politics, culture, and academia. Identities express themselves strongly among the public, in politics and at the intellectual level. When we look at the Islamic world in general, there is this mentality that sees itself as the only defender of the truth and establishes a strong centrality and authoritarianism wherever it dominates. This situation lies behind the failure of healthy relations, institutionalization, and the failure to fulfill

the requirements of a free and open society. While the Shiite and Sunni world were dealing with structural problems in their particularity, they suddenly came face to face with each other as bloc. Ordinary historical and social processes have built reconciliation and flexibility in Shiite-Sunni identities. However, the movements of remembering dogma and returning to the faith on all sides have strengthened radicalism in total. Now a space is opened for the most fanatical of both sides. In an environment where there are so many “righteous” groups, it will be exceedingly difficult to achieve healthy dialogue and the freedom necessary for reason.

Structural analysis of the approaches reveals that the paradigm offers little room for renewal and therefore a rational and flexible solution is required. First of all; it is necessary to realize that the sect is not only a historical and sociological but also a theological fact and necessity. This affirmation paves the way for intellectual readings and makes it possible to reinterpret religious thought in the light of historical and social data. In this context, different religious understandings and interpretations should be seen as a richness, provided that the basic belief principles of religion are preserved.

This approach will also mean that the cultural and intellectual strength of the Muslim community is acknowledged and respected. As a respected member of the human family and the caravan of civilization, the Muslim tradition must be understood correctly, away from any reductionist, simplistic or sanctifying approach. In particular, the Muslim intellectual, who is a child of this tradition, tries to define his own history, culture, and the age when s/he lives in, free from complexes, should be considered as one of the most important steps to be taken for the future of Islamic thought.

The problem of Salafism is not a subject that can be dealt with “on its own” in a sterile and independent manner from Islamic thought and tradition. In addition to its own ideology and values, it is necessary to examine the effect it has on other Islamic identities and the reaction developed against it in a broad context with multiple readings.

It is important to try to understand the Salafi ideology and the ‘Salafi anxiety’ behind this ideology. Understanding this anxiety and emotion before it turns into a social movement will inevitably mean trying to understand the Muslim faith itself. This theological and philosophical task is the common task of thinkers and intellectuals who work and bear responsibility on Islamic thought.

Salafism first emerged as a method, not as an idea. This method was subsequently developed and formulated as a systematic theory. This understanding, which spread to the base with discourses based on religious references, turned into a religious and political movement over time. Finally, it reproduced itself in modern times as a radical and warlike structure (Koca, 2016: 11-21).

Anxiety/desire, which expresses itself as Salafism, can be characterized as ‘going back to the roots’. The desire to return to the essence of Islam, to understand and live it in its original and original form, is clearly expressed as a goal in Salafi texts. First of all; the desire to return to the essence, to go to the moment when religion first touched history and human life is the most innocent and natural feeling and is not unique to religious radical groups such as Salafism. It is an emotion that is present to a certain extent in almost every believer. However, when this feeling

turns into a rigid and closed ideology and destroys the dynamism of religious thought by rejecting contributions from human knowledge such as philosophy, art, and theology, it leads to the mutilation of religious thought.

Calls for a return to roots and essence emerge and institutionalize as a reaction against the drifts and failures experienced in the historical process. The fact that religious differences gradually turn into divisions and conflicts, and harm the Muslim society calls this essentialist thought as a solution. Therefore, the most basic factor that appears in the appearance of Salafism is the structural blockage of the Muslim society in producing knowledge, values, and vision.

One of the important points to be emphasized in studies of Salafism is the so-called 'neoliberal dispositive'. The 'work ideology', which envelops daily life in modern societies and imposes itself as an actual situation, has destroyed living spaces other than production-consumption (Han, 2017: 99). In Muslim societies, where the need for the sacred could not be completely eliminated, conversion to religion began to be experienced in its harshest forms. In the predecessor ascension, it is possible to see the effects of uncertainty, volatility, indifference and resistance to atomization in modern life.

Salafism offers the promise of rediscovering itself by returning to the essence of the Muslim society, which is worn out and tired of religious-based divisions, or it becomes the object and carrier of such a desire. The inefficiency in other social and cultural fields outside of religious thought, the rapid flow of life and the helplessness felt in the face of external challenges have spurred the idea of retreating and retreating to the originals. In this medium of Salafist discourse shines as a hope that coincides with the movement and emotional tendencies of the self.

When religion manages to take a visible place in the social life of a society in the historical process, it begins to function as a "world view". It works more as a social institution than as a metaphysical and moral principle. However, the social and cultural rivalries seen in every society and the tensions caused by these have also emerged in the Muslim society. It has been inevitable to benefit from the 'world protection' function of religion in coping with these and building a healthy social order. Not only the governments but also the opposition are based on an interpretation of Islam that seems right to it.

The political-legal and religious solutions developed to cope with unprecedented situations, to adapt to the historical movement, to protect the social order, and to meet the needs of change required not only relying on the wording of the tenets, but also making interpretations by considering the main purpose of religion. In fact, literal views have often formed an obstacle and a theological barrier in solving problems. It is known that Islamic jurists have developed some methods '*istihsān*' (method based on reason and custom), '*qiyās*' (comparison, analogy), '*ijtihād*' (pass judgment on custom) etc. in order to overcome this problem. All these methods are based on the methodological interpretation of tenets within a particular discipline.

The limits and legitimacy of interpretation were a very important issue. Because, although it is done in good faith, the definition of an appropriate interpretation process is also seen as a matter of interpretation, which is a subject that many Muslim thinkers, especially Ghazalī and Ibn Rushd (*Avorroshe*), are concerned about. On the other hand, the main concern for Muslim thinkers is that

the efforts of *Tawil* and *Rai*, which are legitimate in themselves, by *Batinis* (radical Gnostics), *Gulat Shiites* (extreme Shiites), some *Sufis* etc. Over-interpretation of *nass* was seen as a falsification of religion. What is done in extreme interpretation is to make unacceptable meanings and judgments by attributing esoteric meanings to it, along with the preservation of the wording.

The use of *Tawil* as an epistemological weapon³ must have constituted a sensitivity in traditional Islamic thought. The fact that the Qur'an is also used for secret and dangerous purposes is now a reality rather than a possibility. Since it was understood that this situation, which was perceived as a danger would continue to exist as a potential in the Muslim society, it was necessary to develop a permanent solution. It is possible to list the measures taken as follows:

- to reveal the legitimacy and inevitability of interpretation,
- limiting interpretation and determining its laws against excessive interpretations,
- to warn the public against the dangers of philosophy in terms of sharia and religion,
- allocating dealing with the science of *Kalām* to a limited group.

For the classical period of Islamic thought, sects, Islamic theology, and Fiqh schools are not only a social but also a theological reality. Accordingly, it is seen that the proposed solutions are based on the idea of acceptance of this reality. It can be said that the plurality of sects is adopted as a reality in the face of the uniqueness of religion, and it is considered from a perspective that does not see it as a problem.

Ghazali's assessment of the situation as a thinker trying to interpret his age and values is based on a correct determination. Almost all of the conflicts between the sects that emerged in the name of Islam and all of which claim to represent the truth of Islam arise from the difference in interpretation. What a thinker needs to do is not just to emphasize the founding values of culture; additionally, in the face of the modifier and transformative effects of history and society, it should also fulfill its duty to understand and explain ideology on a principled basis. Reinterpreting faith and values in the face of the weariness of time and space is the real area where the thinker will display his power and talent. Because conservative tendencies that literally emphasize roots and basis are always found in a belief tradition! The problem is not that it's found, or that it comes to the fore in a dominant way at times. The main problem is that other forms of reading are insufficient and clogged at the level that it will be needed. When religious intelligence and intellectual taste cannot manage the crises experienced in the face of historical crises and social problems, they take the initiative to compensate for the gap and drift experienced as a reaction of religious conservatism. In short, the problem is that thought cannot renew itself in general and is insufficient to cope with reality.

Medieval Muslim common sense, expressed in the above measures, describes a prevalent and average approach. There are also approaches that follow a path other than this approach, and they are mostly involved in the *ahl al-hadīth* movement (İşcan, 2014: 229-234). The word *ra'y*, which means reasoning and expressing personal opinion, is used synonymously with the concepts

³ Ghazalī describes the interpretations of Batinids as a kind of magic. See. Gazzalī. *Bâtınlığın İcyüzü* (çev. Avni İlhan). Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 1993.

of perversion, desire and superstition. So much so that in Salafi discourse, ahl ar- ra'y and ahl al-bid'a are synonymous (Apak, 2014: 40). An anatomy of the ideology of *ahl al-hadith* actually gives an approximate portrait of all conservative and religious-radicalistic movements that emerged and would emerge in Islamic thought. However, in the Sunni world. There is a timidity and reluctance to do such a study in the Sunni world. Even in our country, which is a reflection of the *ra'y* and *kalām* tradition and where a more pluralistic and tolerant religious culture is dominant, this reluctance can be found. The reason for this is that the concepts of *ahl al-hadith* and *Hanbalism* have a respectable equivalent in the Anatolian Sunnism. This is the result of the comprehensive and flexible definitions made in a geography where the management culture and the perception of pluralism are strong.

Ahmet b. Hanbal and Ibn Taymiyya, who are the historical references of modern salafist discourse, are thinkers of the crisis period. It is a fact that the Muslim self reacts differently in the face of the crisis. For example, the social and intellectual change experienced during the Abbasid period led to new and advanced interpretations in theology. Mutazila was the defining figure of this period. On the other hand, in the Mihna process, the Ahl al-Ḥadīth, which defended the theory of eternal kalam, was the target of pressure. The effects of social and mental development were perceived by the ahl al-hadith as a corruption and crisis. After a short period of Mihna, the golden age of Hanbalism began (İğde, 2016: 34-35). On the other hand, Ibn Taymiyya witnessed a clear process of crisis and collapse in which the Muslim geography fell to the ground. Declaring that "Muslims turning away from Islam" were responsible for this collapse, Ibn Taymiyya suggested a radical cleaning in the house as a solution. According to him, problems could not be solved unless 'bid'a' such as sufism, philosophy and kalam were cleared from the minds and lives of Muslims (Arpa, 2016: 55). Problems such as oppression, occupation and injustice experienced in Islamic countries in the modern period are the 'new mihna' that feed the Salafist fundamentalist readings.

3. Longing for Self-Return or Obsessed with Essentialism?

Returning to the origins, attaining purity or longing for home is a need that adds meaning to life for societies as well as individuals. In a world that is constantly moving and producing different problems, holding on to something stable and solid is a fundamental orientation for identity. In that case, the tendency to go back to the roots should be a feeling arising from existential anxiety before being a thought and an ideology. This powerful emotion that lies behind going back to the roots establishes an appropriate thought. The desire to learn what is in the past and what belongs to the essence re-establishes the identity, keeps the self-intact against disappearances, and ensures historical continuity.

But returning to the core is inevitably an interpretive and speculative effort. As the phrase is, one cannot really go to the past, one cannot really reach the roots; a construction is carried out in the light of today's concerns, needs, longings and thoughts. Practices that are thought to be not explicitly involved in reasoning, such as transferring an idea from the past to the present or reading a text exactly, are actually very modern, contemporary, and hodiernal actions. Its products and influences are also modern and contemporary. Secondly, it should be underlined that these actions are interpretation and reconstruction. Although the Salafist and conservative understandings strongly oppose the introduction of reasoning into religion and the reality, what

they do in the name of religion is no different from being an activity of interpretation and understanding.

The most problematic aspect of this situation is that it hides the fact that the work done is the worst, inefficient, and rude interpretation. The fact that Salafi individuals experience identity-related experiences such as anger, hatred, desire, attachment, and conflict at extreme points is due to their theological identity rather than their individuality. In short, this anger is not a natural emotion that is directly obtained as a result of life experiences. As seen in other identities; it is an artificial situation that occurs in the person or group only when they adopt the predecessor thought.

The more intense and fiercer the desire to return to the origins and the essence of religion, the stronger the reaction against the structures and institutions that are thought to prevent reaching it. Therefore, the first and greatest enemy of modern Salafi thought is Shiism (Shiism). Shiism, which defends the belief in imamate against the Sunni theory of caliphate, conflicts with the Arab-Umayyad support in Salafism. On the other hand, Shiis theology, based on gnostic-esoteric elements, represents a different and opposite interpretation of history and religion (Koçak, 2020: 654, 655). However, the anti-Shia opposition of Salafism does not stem from an inclusive Sunni sensibility. On the contrary, Salafism does not hide its opposition to the schools that make up the Sunni paradigm *Māturīdism*, Asharite, Hanafism and Muslim mystic ecoles (*Sufism*), etc..⁴

One of the main theses of the classical period Salafism is the struggle against innovations. When looked closely, it is seen that the concept of bid'ah in Salafi discourse is used for groups that are in favor of kalam and rai/reason. The Salafist discourse, which defends the claim of defending the sunnah against bid'ah, opposed the interpretation of God's attributes. This attitude has led them to be accused of being similes/anthropomorphists (Koca, 2016: 25).

When the desire to return to the origins suppresses everything else that establishes the religious consciousness and dominates the whole mentality, dogmatism becomes inevitable. Returning to the roots has caused many valuable and meaningful products produced by the Muslim mind to be seen as harmful, bad, and perverted in the historical process. It is seen that Muslim societies produced almost nothing in geographies and periods dominated by the Salafist mentality. On the contrary, there was a complete chaos and internal unrest, as the existing institutions and values were tried to be eliminated in the name of attaining religious purity. The Salafist mentality strongly opposes the concepts of culture, civilization, and art and their juxtaposition with Islam. At the root of its hatred of the present and the place is his belief that the truth lies elsewhere. According to the viewpoint of all radicals, religious or secular, who believe that the truth is always elsewhere, although corruption is inevitable, it still needs to be fought against. Ontological disharmony arises not from history and the flow of time, but from the ontology of being itself (Shayegan, 2020: 43 et al.).

⁴ There is a discrepancy between the religious identity prominent in modern Salafi texts and Sunnism. It is known that Salafism, whether Shiite or Sunni, defines Sufism as shirk. On the other hand, it is seen that a similar exclusionary opinion is fed about the Sunni kalam schools, although it is not so clear and clear. See more: Şemsuddin es-Salafî al-Afgânî. *A'dā'u'l-Māturīdiyye li Akā'idî's-Salafīyya*. Peshawar, 1998, 204; Sefer bin Abdurrahman al-Hawali. *The Faith of Murjia and Its Effects on the Islamic Ummah*, 2012.

The new Salafism movement, which thinks that the establishment of a single Islamic society in the world is the goal of Islam, insists on the homogeneity of this society. While the “exemplary Islamic society” is different from the world outside itself with all its features, a homogeneous society is proposed in which all individual and public behavior characteristics are one and unique. As seen throughout history, this approach requires a fascist and oppressive authoritarian management approach that struggles with differences, kills constructivism, tries to realize a uniform human design, and mobilizes the state’s means for this. This struggle in the name of Islam is unrealistic and leads to new and deep divisions in the Muslim geography where so much pluralism and different theological and cultural diversity dominate. Trying to destroy cultural diversity would actually mean fighting the very concept of culture.

On the other hand, the establishment of a single and universal Islamic society requires the existence of a universal Islamic state and ruler who has undertaken this task. The establishment of an Islamic society and its subsequent domination in the world results in the consumption of the Muslim geography by an aggressive, imperialist, and war-sanctifying policy. From the point of view of Salafism, Muslims are the only responsible and guilty of the corruption of the religion of Islam (Biçer, 2015: 9). The clean and pure Islamic creed has been contaminated by *bid‘a*, superstition and rational thought systems. In that case, the direct and eternal addressees of the Salafi jihad practice are Muslims. It is obvious against whom the jihad, which will last forever, will be waged. The universal Islamic society and the absolutist understanding of government that represents it renders the efforts to establish a social theory meaningless. Efforts to build a political order and form a cultural model to support it suddenly fall into a void. Once the overwhelming and tiring atmosphere of the desert dominates the culture, all social and intellectual endeavors become meaningless.

Paradoxically, Salafism is the soft underbelly of Islamic thought. While seeing it only as a politico-theology based on a certain interpretation of Islam (literary and misunderstanding of Islam), it would not be correct to ignore the modern causes that brought the movement to the fore. Salafist thought has been intensely represented in certain centers of the Islamic world throughout history and today. This situation has been respectfully accepted by Muslim societies with an unspecified courtesy and respect. However, the representation and dissemination of Salafist thought outside its own geography is a problem that needs to be carefully examined.

4. The Relationship Between Sunnism and Salafism

The approach, which prefers to see Salafism as a modern and new movement that emerged as a result of contemporary social and political problems, finds popularity in Sunni intellectual circles. While this approach does not explicitly attribute a dogmatic essence to Sunnism, it sees Sunnism as the most appropriate social and historical expression and representation of Islam. More refined, Salafism tries to absolve it and attributes the evils exhibited by the Salafist movement to the political-ontology of this structure, which it envisions as an essence completely independent of Sunnism. It tries to read this movement, which it sees as a result of the reactive and harsh radical movements that emerged in the Muslim geography dominated by the oppressive governments of the colonial period, entirely on the axis of modern developments. This approach is problematic from a theological as well as a historical point of view. Apart from its political point

of view, it also sets a barrier to self-criticism and lessons to be learned on behalf of Sunnism, as it is based on a one-sided reading of Sunnism.

Salafi thought is a structure addressed within Sunnism and embodied as Hanbalism. However, it is a mentality structure that can be seen in other structures that make up Sunnism in terms of perspective on religion and history. It would be more accurate to talk about interactions and transitions rather than a clear and sharp distinction between the theological elements that make up Sunnism. Considering that the maturation process of the Sunni paradigm is realized by an alliance of schools, this situation can be more clearly noticed. It is seen that the Shafii-Hanafi, Ashari-Maturidi schools, which have experienced harsh conflicts in some periods of history, had to get closer with the force of the powerful governments, and this rapprochement shaped the late Sunni imagination. In this context, it can be said that the Hanbali school, which is a persistent defender of the Ahl al-Hadith movement, finds its place under the theological umbrella of the Sunni paradigm. It should not be considered a coincidence that the theological portrait of the movement that emerged as Salafism derives from Hanbalism. Therefore, Salafism is a structural problem in terms of Sunnism and has to be dealt with as such.

However, the current causes that led Salafism to shine at this level should also be carefully examined. The fact that the problem has historical and theological roots should not allow approaches to the subject to be mystified and lead to "escape from the present". The reasons in question are related to the political-cultural operations of the Western global powers against the Islamic world, as well as the blockage of the Islamic world and the inability to resolve the sectarian problem. Radicalism has been revived as a result of Western countries' interventions targeting the important and sensitive centers of the Muslim geography and disrupting the long-established social balances. The fragile sectarian structure in the Islamic world was shaken and suddenly the dormant sectarian tensions were activated. This idea has turned into a power that also affects Islamic education as a result of the work of the active groups that represent it in the regional sense and the work of the countries that support them within the framework of a state policy.

As an important point; It is worth noting that the problem faced by Salafism in terms of Sunnism is basically structural. Salafism, whether at the level of definition or at the level of relationship or struggle, is not an identity that can be easily marginalized and placed across by Sunnism (Korkmaz, 2005: 372)⁵. Sunnism has difficulty in removing this way of reading and believing, which it has internalized to a certain extent, and problematizing it as a separate identity. Therefore, Salafism is a serious barrier to the contemporary Sunni paradigm. If he confronts it intellectually and theologically and renews himself, a great gain can be achieved in terms of Islamic thought. Alternatively, if Salafism cannot cope with its intense political and theological pressure and remains under it, a Sunnism that comes under the domination of Salafism will exhaust all its possibilities among sectarian conflicts. For this reason, it will not be realistic to evaluate Salafism as a structure independent from Sunnism for political reasons, in order to absolve the Sunni identity from the evils of new Salafism and will prevent the needed self-criticism. Eventually, this will leave Sunnism defenseless against the internalized Salafist vein.

⁵ I respectfully present our respects to Prof. Korkmaz, who is our close friend and one of the most important sages of the field. In the memory of Prof. Korkmaz.

Another point; One of the problems noticed through the problem of Salafism is “Muslim optimism”. The theological boundaries and scope of Sunni identity have been constantly updated by theologians in the light of the problems and conflicts experienced in the historical process. The *Ahl as-Sunnah School*, which is basically described as the Sunnah of the Prophet, the way of the Companions, the Tabiun and the leading names of the next generation, has been clarified as not to rebel against the power and to oppose the innovation sects. It has been emphasized as an attitude to hold on to the Sunni view against the views of Muslim schools such as *Mutazila*, *Shiism*, *Kharijite*, and *Murjia*. In this framework, while redefining the Sunni scope, ahl al-hadith and Hanbalism were also included in the list.

It can be said that the opposition of Mutezila and Shiism was effective in this rapprochement. However, Hanbalism, which was included in the Sunni list, created a problem in Sunni conception over time. Hanbalism defined itself on the predecessor axis and developed a narrowing and marginalizing discourse. and started to apply it within the sect. In this discourse, Sunni theological schools, Ashari and Maturidism, and Hanafism, the Fiqh system, have been the subject of criticism. On the other hand, these schools showed a softer and more accepting attitude about Hanbalism. No clear defense or assessment has been put forward against the attacks of Salafist conservatism. The counter criticism against the ‘Kadizadeli’ movement during the Ottoman period remained weak and did not lead to an intellectual opening (Akpınar, 2020: 15). In the current situation, the limits of optimism have been exceeded and the reality of fulfilling the requirements of the delayed confrontation makes itself felt.

Another problem is the return to essence and the preservation of the original religion. The identification of the concept of “return to self” with Salafism is fed by a misunderstanding and one-sided propaganda that should be well discussed. It seems that the concerns of returning to essence and preserving the original religion were left to the initiative of Salafi circles. However, it is known that this discourse is also the basic concept of Islamic modernists. The fight against Salafism is not possible by abandoning the concept of the essence of Islam, but by establishing a constructive communication with the sources of this concept. In the face of Salafi criticism, the contemporary Muslim mind sees self-defense as a more durable attitude by reacting based on sectarian identity. The soothing influence of sects is perceived as a solution in the face of Salafi bigotry and Vandalism. Although this is a feasible method to some extent, it is far from providing the final solution. Because this attitude involves the danger of reviving sectarian fetishism. Losing the concepts of essence and origin in the name of combating Salafism can pose great problems for intellectual as well as theological thought.

Conclusion

Defining an identity in the social sciences and politics is a frequent problem. The liberal approach envisages accepting the information given by each individual and social group about their own identity as correct. However, there are some problems here. First of all, the arbitrariness of choosing one’s own identity and making any definition of one’s identity is intermingled. When an individual chooses an identity, it is a scientific problem, if not political freedom, to give it the meaning s/he wishes. Interpretations and definitions that are incompatible with the historical and intellectual realities of identity are the subject of critical analysis.

In this respect, identification of any kind is a scientific and intellectual task. Independent of the information given by the actors carrying the identity, working on identity is a scientific and academic activity. For this reason, the problem of “identification” in Türkiye regarding other identities is valid for those who adopt Salafism.

Salafism is a political-theology that refers to the first three generations of Muslims, called Salaf. Historically, it emerged after the rational movement in Islam. He represented religious essentialism and minimalism in the face of the diversity and competition of theological, philosophical, and Sufi interpretations. He undertook the role of defending the return to essence and purity against social change, and while emphasizing adherence to the literal meanings of religious texts, he rejected interpretation attempts. He saw the values produced by Muslim societies in the name of enriching religious life as innovations that corrupt Islam and insisted on an anti-cultural line.

The crises experienced in history fed the desire to return to the roots and essence and led to the strengthening of Salafism. The inability to resolve the political and social crises in the Islamic world in modern times has strengthened the interest in Salafism. In particular, problems such as occupations, inequality, inadequate education, and political instability caused Salafism to evolve from an intellectual movement to jihadism. Today, Salafism stands out with its takfiri feature and a completely different appearance from the modernist line led by Afghani-Abduh.

It is a fact that Salafism also affects the relations between sects. Throughout history, Salafism has seen it as the only legitimate force representing Islam against Shiism. It is seen that when Salafism strengthens, the balance between sects deteriorates and tensions rise in the Islamic world. On the other hand, Salafism is represented by Hanbalism in Sunnism and a certain respect is given to it. However, Salafism also negatively affects the balance within Sunnism. Because the view of theological schools that characterize Sunnism, especially Māturīdism, on the relationship between faith and action is rejected definitively. Salafism is also extremely radical about Sufism and considers it un-Islamic.

Although the historical and social conditions highlight Salafism today, the problems faced by Muslim societies in the global world clearly reveal the inadequacy of self-reflexive approaches. Problems such as climate change, artificial intelligence, women's rights, freedoms, pluralism, political and economic imbalances increase the need for an intellectual and libertarian interpretation of Islam.

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