| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Navigating the Fundamentalism/ "Usulia" Nexus: Contextualization and Acceptance

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| **ABSTRACT**

This article undertakes an examination of the contentious issue surrounding the translation of "fundamentalism" to "Usulia," with a specific focus on the divergent perceptions of this concept among both Muslims and non-Muslims. Through historical exploration and conceptual analysis, the study aims to illuminate the various perspectives regarding the usage of "Fundamentalism/Usulia" within an Islamic context. Drawing from an analysis of pertinent literature and scholarly discourse, it becomes apparent that despite attempts to incorporate fundamentalist ideologies into the "Usulia" framework, most Islamists vehemently reject this translation, perceiving it as perpetuating a negative Western stereotype. The article delves into the theological, social, and political factors that underpin these differing stances, along with their implications for Islamic movements. By providing insights into this ongoing debate, the research contributes to a deeper comprehension of the internal diversity within Islamic thought and the intricate relationship between fundamentalism as a Western concept and "Usulia" in contemporary Islamic discourse.

1. Introduction

Fundamentalism, contrary to popular belief, is not exclusive to religious contexts, but rather manifests itself in various political discourses. An example can be found in a fundamentalist Marxist who would passionately exclaim to his comrades, "This is not what Karl Marx wrote in 'Capital!'" This reaction reflects a profound concern regarding the deviation from the foundational principles of communism by prominent figures like Stalin and Mao. If we were to ask this idealistic militant why Marxism lost its global influence despite its seemingly well-formulated theory, they would attribute it not to the ideology itself, but rather to the misinterpretation or misapplication of its mechanisms for social and political transformation. However, should we dismiss the contributions of these leaders or consider their communist policies as inherent "fundamentals" of the ideology?

The adherence to a text or a role model, coupled with the defence of their continued relevance over centuries, is perhaps the defining characteristic of a fundamentalist mindset. In the realm of religion, this devotion takes on an even more profound dimension, elevating sacred scriptures above all other forms of human literature. For believers, the words of God, messengers, and saints represent absolute truth, with only qualified religious authorities deemed worthy of interpreting them. Throughout history, religious agents have wielded their consecrated authority to hinder the spread of modern values. The Catholic Church, for instance, engaged in conflicts with scientists who challenged the geocentric system long upheld by scholastic teachings, even though this system was not explicitly derived from Christian scriptures but rather adopted by the theologian Thomas Aquinas (Barbour1966,52). Similarly, Muslim jurists displayed defensiveness and hostility when faced with Western advancements. Due to their literalist perspective, they went so far as to prohibit certain products that had become essential in people's daily lives, In various instances, such as in the utilization of media and the depiction of images. Certain religious authorities have maintained the belief that

photography (taswīr) is prohibited. This perspective was notably prevalent in Saudi Arabia when the state launched its television broadcast, which was met with scholars' resistance and violent demonstrations (Al-Atawneh2010,116).

As the essence of fundamentalism can exist in different religions, the shift from one context to another might produce several debates especially when it comes to translation. Approaching fundamentalism as a social and political phenomenon in Islamic countries from a Western perspective often carries a biased connotation. This perspective questions fundamentalism's ability to adapt to reality by departing from its religious premises, which may not always be applicable when approaching reality and governing the state. Consequently, the use of the term "Usulia" by Arab scholars, both Muslims and non-Muslims, reflects a similar stance, aligning their discourse with that of Western scholars. The employment of this concept also tends to generalize the Islamist experience as a single entity, which might not account for the diversity within Islamic discourses. This research aims to explore the issue at hand, starting with a contextualization of the concept of fundamentalism within the realms of Islamic history and contemporary reality. Subsequently, it will delve into an examination of the prevailing attitudes toward the utilization of the term "fundamentalism"/ "Usulia" in characterizing Islamist activism.

2. Conceptual and Historical Considerations:
"Fundamentalism" was a prevalent signifier during the early twentieth century for a religious movement within the United States. This movement brought together a coalition of Baptist evangelists and Bible teachers who stubbornly opposed the intrusion of modern values into their religious community, particularly concerning challenges to the authenticity of scripture. The growing tension between these two opposing currents became more conspicuous during a landmark trial in 1925, which sought to submit a verdict on the teaching of Darwinian evolution in public schools. Following the trial's unfavourable outcome, the institutional and public influence of the fundamentalist movement receded significantly (Ruthven2007,12-14). The specific historical and religious context within which religious fundamentalism emerged rendered the application of the term contentious beyond the realm of North American Protestantism. This is because the term has since been broadly extended to encompass various other religious groups and individuals, including those within the Islamic tradition.

The term "fundamentalism" is frequently represented in Arabic as "Usulia." The word "Asl" can be translated into "origin" or "fundamental" and the adjective "Usuli" is derived from the same root as a characteristic of someone or something. However, this translation can give rise to substantial misconceptions, as "Usuli" refers to a scholar versed in the Islamic jurisprudential method of deduction, known as "Usul al Fiqh". Ibrahim Al-Shatibi (1320 – 1388) confirmed that the principles of Islamic jurisprudence, known as "Usul al Fiqh," are not open to interpretation or uncertainty. These principles are either grounded in clear and logical reasoning, making them unmistakable, or they are derived from the broad evidence provided by Islamic law, which also leads to explicit conclusions (Nyazee2012,1-2).

The second noteworthy usage of "Usulia" in Arabic is its imitation of English words referring to ideologies such as Marxism/Marxia, Liberalism/Liberalia, and Feminism/Nisswia. When "Usulia" is used in Arabic as a noun, it typically refers to Islamism as an ideology or to Islamic movements. However, ambiguity arises when "Usulia" is used as an adjective. For instance, if we refer to the Taliban as "Haraka Usulia" or a "fundamentalist movement", it conveys the meaning of a group composed of students of Islamic laws, as well as a military and political movement. This interpretation makes more sense in the context of the Taliban, as they maintain the overlap of the religious with the political in their discourse. On the other hand, in the case of other Islamic movements that managed to come to power during the Arab Spring, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, they found themselves obliged to establish a political party separate from the religious movement or even remove the agenda of the "Islamic call" from their platform, as was the case with Nahda in Tunisia. Therefore, it raises the question: Why they should be considered as fundamentalists if they distance themselves from the religious paradigm of their movements and operate like any other secular party?

Both jurists and Islamists can rely on (Taasil Sharie) which signifies the Islamic legal foundation of an action. It is based on the statements of the Quran and Sunnah as the most definitive sources, with general inductive reasoning as the third source. For example, Jihad Islami movement in Palestine may assert that its decision to abstain from participating in an election conducted in accordance with the Oslo agreement is built on the jurisprudential premise what is built on falsehood is false itself (ma buniya 'ala batil fahuwa batil). In contrast, Hamas, guided by a similar ideological framework, reached a different conclusion. They ultimately governed the Gaza Strip, using another rule such as the necessities permit the prohibited (ad-darurat tubih al-mahzurat). This propensity towards religious justification is not confined solely to Islamic scholars or movements; even ordinary Muslims often seek legal opinions for matters of trivial significance. Considering this, the applicability of the label "fundamentalist" becomes questionable when it seemingly encompasses the entirety of the Muslim populace. Moreover, a noteworthy contribution of the "Usuli" jurists takes the form of Ijtihad, which, despite its foundation in scriptures, necessitates a certain level of reasoning. Can it then be argued that Islamic jurisprudence is a literalist or fundamentalist practice?

Islam extended beyond the confines of the Arabian Peninsula, permeating diverse regions and civilizations characterized by a myriad of beliefs and social norms. The companions of the Prophet Muhammad, while residing in Medina, were accustomed to recourse to the Quran and Hadith for resolutions to their daily concerns. However, as they encountered new realities beyond Medina's boundaries, they confronted the imperative of formulating their own opinions, guided by these two unquestionable sources.

The Quran, as the foremost source of legislation in Islam, occupies a unique status. Diverging from other sacred texts that blend divine and human utterances, Muslims hold that the Quran is the most precise and divinely safeguarded scripture, immune to any form of manipulation. The Prophet Muhammad, cognizant of the potential for confusion between his own statements and the holy verses, proscribed his companions from transcribing his words, thereby ensuring the preservation of the Quran's integrity. Beyond its spiritual significance, the Quran imparts commandments and regulations governing not only religious rituals such as prayers, pilgrimage, and Zakat but also certain societal norms. Verses elucidating these rules are denoted as (Ayat al-Ahkam) and they hold precedence over other forms of legal evidence (Abu Zahra1958,94). These verses are articulated as explicit commands, frequently necessitating no interpretation. Conversely, certain verses within the Quran engender debate and ambiguity, an aspect acknowledged by the Quran itself (Surah Aali 'Imran 3:7).

However, interpretative latitude is inapplicable to the verses that establish the foundational tenets of monotheistic faith, known as (Tawhid). Any interpretation that diverges from the prevailing consensus on matters related to God or the Islamic creed is perceived as indicative of unbelief. Therefore, interpretation must rest upon other Quranic verses, authenticated sayings of the Prophet, and exegeses offered by the companions of the Prophet. Interpretation is subject to specific conditions, chief among them a profound understanding of the sciences of the Quran, encompassing knowledge of the causes of revelation, distinctions among types of verses, and proficiency in the Arabic language. Deviation from this established framework, particularly by secular and Western readers, often elicits criticism and scepticism from "fundamentalists" who assert that non-Islamic approaches are ill-suited for interpreting Muslim scripture. They contend that such methods serve only to undermine the Quran's sacred aura.

Sunnah fulfils the crucial role of serving as the second source of legislation in Islam. It encompasses a comprehensive compilation of the Prophet's actions, statements, and approvals (Abu Zahra1958, 105). Furthermore, it incorporates contributions from prominent companions of the Prophet, including figures like Abu Bakr Seddik and Omar Ibn Khattab. Although the terms "Sunnah" and "Hadith," which refer to the sayings of the Prophet, are at times employed interchangeably, they represent distinct entities within Islamic jurisprudence. "Sunnah," encompasses practical aspects of the Prophet's life and has been transmitted through generations of Muslims, particularly those residing in Medina, recognized as the cradle of Sunnah. Conversely, "Hadith," assumes a more theoretical nature, encompassing a vast array of both authentic and inauthentic statements attributed to the Prophet. It is noteworthy to clarify that the Prophet's actions, which were either reflective of the prevailing cultural norms of his era or represented his personal preferences, do not convey any inherent religious value. Consequently, Muslims are not religiously obligated to emulate them (Abu Zahra1958,115).

The approach to the Prophet's heritage among the followers, known as (at-Tabi'een), diverged into two distinct schools: the school of "Hadith" and the school of opinion. The former school predominantly relied on scriptural sources, namely the Quran and Sunnah, to extract explicit and direct prohibitions and permissions without recourse to analogy (Ijtihad). Prominent figures associated with this tradition include Anas Ibn Malek, Shafi'i, Ibn Hanbal, and their respective followers. On the contrary, the latter school embraced personal interpretation when the textual sources provided no explicit guidance on specific matters. This approach mirrored the practice of the Prophet's companions, exemplified by figures like Omar Ibn Khattab and Abdullah Ibn Masoud, with Abu Hanifa being one of the most prominent scholars within this category. Consequently, Abu Hanifa's Islamic jurisprudence doctrine exhibits a greater degree of flexibility compared to the other established schools (Hanbali, Maliki, and Shafi'i). Geographically, the school of Hadith held sway in the Hijaz region, while the school of opinion proliferated predominantly in Iraq. These two categories are collectively referred to as (Ahl Sunnah) or (Salaf) (Qatan2001,289-291).

The Prophet's statement that extolled the first three centuries of Islam provided impetus for Muslims to coin the term the righteous predecessors (al-salaf al-salih), as a descriptor for that historical era. This designation encompasses the Prophet, his companions, their immediate followers, and subsequent generations of followers. The successive generations of followers are highly esteemed for several reasons. Firstly, they were contemporaneous with the Prophet and his companions, often serving as disciples in their tutelage. Secondly, their fluency in Arabic enabled them to comprehend the scriptural texts without necessitating intermediaries or extensive exegesis (Al-Buti1998,12). In essence, the followers embodied the "authentic" representation of Muslims following the era of the Prophet's companions. These attributes rendered them paramount references in Islamic jurisprudence, with many jurists drawing upon their attitudes and practices in instances where the scriptures were bereft of clear guidance. Consequently, an individual who claims to be a "Salafi" essentially asserts a commitment to following the path of the Prophet and the subsequent generations that lived during the initial three centuries of Islam.

Accordingly, within the realm of Islamic jurisprudence, scholars made a critical distinction between revealed and non-revealed sources of Islamic law. They unanimously recognized the Quran and Sunnah as the primary revealed sources, while consensus (al-Ijma) and analogical deduction (al-Qiyas) were classified as non-revealed sources. Each of the four major Islamic legal doctrines, however, offered additional methods for legal reasoning, including recourse to local customs and considerations of public interests, which were interpreted differently by the various doctrinal schools (Abu Zahra1958,273-274). Some of these methods were characterized by a stringent approach, such as the doctrine of Blocking Means (sad al-Dhara'ih). Its purpose was to pre-emptively forestall any attempts to conceal malicious intentions beneath seemingly virtuous deeds (Abu Zahra1958,288). This approach found primary adherence within the Maliki and Hanbali legal doctrines. It is worth noting that Ahmed Ibn Hanbal (780-855) earned a reputation for prioritizing scriptural sources above all else, even elevating a weak Hadith above his opinion (al-Ijtihad). Consequently, this doctrine, the Hanbali school, emerged as the most literalist and arguably the most "fundamentalist" among the four major Islamic legal doctrines (Melchert2006,62). Hence, the emergence of Islamic jurisprudence constituted a significant development in the evolution of the fundamentalist mindset in its literalist dimension.

The other key area where the word "Usul" commonly used is in the matter of Islamic creed. The fundamentals of religion (Usul ad-Din) refer to Islamic theology (Ilm al-Kalam) which is a science that aimed at stablishing religious beliefs by presenting arguments in their favour and refuting doubts about them. The expansion of the Islamic state brought about significant social and cultural interactions with other sects. Concurrently, the translation movement, which initiated in Baghdad during the Abbasid era, presented both common Muslims and scholars with a multitude of challenges, including encounters with Eastern spirituality and Greek philosophy (Al-Nashar2008,104). In this context, the practical and monotheistic mindset prevalent among Muslims found itself grappling with theories and concepts that espoused fundamentally different perspectives on life and the nature of the universe's creator(s). Remarkably, some Muslim scholars, such as Ibn Sena Avicenna (980-1037) and Abu Nasr Al-Farabi (870 - 950), began to develop an Islamic philosophy influenced by Platonic doctrines (Al-Nashar2008,182). The domain of jurisprudence, as a distinct body of knowledge, had traditionally not ventured into matters of creed. Consequently, Muslims inaugurated theology (Ilm al-Kalam), which aimed to employ both scriptural sources and rational arguments to elucidate and resolve misconceptions or ambiguities concerning God's names and attributes (al-asma' wal-sifat) (Al-Nashar2008, 54-55).

Over time, the focus of theological debates shifted from dealing with issues stemming from Greek and Eastern philosophy to entrenched dogmatic conflicts within the Islamic milieu. One of the most prominent debates revolved around the question of whether the Quran was eternal or created. Mu'tazilah doctrine, a major theological school, contended that the Quran was created, while the majority of the "Salaf," or early Muslim community, believed it to be the uncreated word of God. This dispute escalated into a political matter when the Abbasid rulers, including Al-Maʾmūn (786-833) and his successor, endorsed the Mu'tazilah doctrine and enforced its tenets upon judges and scholars. In the face of this political pressure, Ibn Hanbal emerged as a prominent jurist who consistently opposed the Mu'tazilah claim, maintaining his stance even in the face of imprisonment and punishment (Melchert2006,8-9). Ibn Hanbal's resolute position exemplified the broader conflict between the "fundamentalist" mindset, rooted in adherence to tradition, and Mu'tazilah scholars who leaned more heavily on rationalism and theological innovation.

Jurisprudence and theology predominantly revolve around matters pertaining to legal rules, evidentiary frameworks, and Islamic creed. However, certain segments of the Muslim community have accentuated the spiritual dimension of Islam, leading to the emergence of Sufism as a discipline aimed at addressing this spiritual aspect. Initially rooted in ascetic practices grounded in the Quran and Sunnah, embodied by several figures such as Al-Fudayl ibn 'Iyad (d.802) and Shaqiq al-Balkhi (d.810). However, Sufism gradually absorbed influences from philosophy and Eastern mysticism, incorporating gnostic philosophies. Mansur Al-Hallaj (858-922), for instance, faced execution after proclaiming his belief in incarnation (hulul), while Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) encountered accusations of glorifying unification (waḥdat al-wujūd) in his verses (Ansari1985,2-3). Many "Salafi" scholars castigate Sufism, irrespective of its origins, and critique its perceived innovations. Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328), a pivotal figure in Salafist ideology, approved of the mysticism of Ibn 'Iyad, Al-Balkhi, and others, but he insisted that the thoughts of both Al-Hallaj and Ibn Arabi contradicted Islamic principles. In other words, he did not refute Sufism as a whole, yet he emphasized that its practices should adhere solely to the model of the Prophet and prioritize formal religious practices while avoiding innovations (bid'ah) (Ansari1985,8).

Ibn Taymiyyah's rejection of Sufi practices would later be more rigorously enforced by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), a Hanbali scholar who lived several centuries later. He initiated a campaign alongside his followers aimed at eradicating perceived elements of disbelief and Sufism that had proliferated in the Hijaz region during the rule of the Ottoman Empire. These elements included practices such as praying at the shrines of saints and praising the Prophet's birthday (Al-Atawneh2010,88). Abd al-Wahhab's book, Kitab al-Tawhid, serves as a key guideline for the Salafi trends and provides a comprehensive clarification of the correct understanding of Islamic creed. It emphasizes the importance of the three fundamentals (Al-Usul al-Thalathah): Knowing God, knowing Islam, and knowing the prophet. Despite its simplicity, the book remains a fundamental piece of literature that guides the religious ideology of many Saudi Islamic scholars. Apparently, Wahhabism's ideological framework can be viewed

as an amalgamation of the Hanbali doctrinal tradition, the legal opinions of Ibn Taymiyyah, and the actions championed by Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab. If fundamentalism is characterized by a strict adherence to scriptural texts or literalism and a reluctance to engage in reinterpretation or reform, even when it could bring potential benefits, then Wahhabism can be seen as an especially extreme manifestation of fundamentalism.

The impact of this ideology on one of the world's wealthiest nations has been undeniable. Saudi Arabia was characterized as having a rigid political and social system. Women were barred from driving or traveling alone, and although some of these restrictions have recently been eased, women still encounter significant gender discrimination in various spheres of life. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia maintains an absolute monarchy political system, concentrated in the hands of the "Al Saud" family. This system is underpinned by conservative scholars, primarily the "Al Cheikh" family, who wield considerable authority in both religious and legal domains (Al-Atawneh2010,2). Political opposition is severely constrained in Saudi Arabia, with political parties prohibited and dissent often met with severe punishments including religious scholars. Moreover, Saudi Arabia has actively sought to impede the spread of other forms of Islamism, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, as was evident during the Arab Spring. Why does Wahhabism, rather than Salafism, present a more compelling alignment with fundamentalism?

Salafism is a multifaceted concept containing various trends and schools of thought. Historically, it has encompassed an innovative inclination that gained prominence in the Middle East following the cultural upheaval sparked by the French campaign in Egypt and Syria. Figures such as Abduh (1849-1905), Al Afghani (1838-1897), and Al-Kawakibi (1854 - 1902) sought to break away from centuries of imitation to revitalize the Muslim world. For instance, Abduh aligned with the Mu'tazilah school of thought, he emphasized that there should be no contradiction between divine revelation and human reason. Reason should not endorse statements that involve logical impossibilities. Rather, reason's pursuit is the quest for truth, taking into consideration the guidance provided by God and his Prophet (Demichelis2010,413). Additionally, Salafism served as a vehicle of resistance against colonialism and contributed to the establishment of national states, particularly evident in North Africa with figures like Allal Al-Fassi (1910-1974) in Morocco and Abdel-Hamid Ibn Badis (1889-1940) in Algeria.

Moreover, Salafi movements in specific Gulf countries, such as Kuwait and Bahrain, have established political parties and participated in elections, signifying their willingness to embrace democratic processes. This shift comes after decades of rejecting concepts rooted in Western secular ideals. Despite arguments that political engagement does not inherently foster democratic values and that religious ideology alone does not consistently shape their stance on democracy (Monroe2012,410), it can be contended that the Salafists' willingness to engage with political parties sets them apart from Wahhabism. Conversely, radical Islamists like al-Zawahiri and Ben Laden, the leaders of al-Qaeda, who contested the legitimacy of modern states in Muslim countries and targeted their interests, are often referred to as "Jihadists." They are frequently associated with Salafism (al-Salafiyya al-Jihadiyya) to distinguish them from scientific Salafism (al-Salafiyya al-Ilmiyya). However, despite the common religious background that converges in the teachings of Ibn Taymiyyah and other Saudi scholars, Wahhabism prevents any attempts at revolt against the Muslim rulers, while the armed Salafists consider them disbelievers and advocate their removal, even by violent means.

Reframing the term "fundamentalism/Usulia" within the historical Islamic context reveals that several concepts may be employed. First, there are religious disciplines such as jurisprudence and theology, which refer to the inclination to ground any Islamic position in scriptural sources. Wahhabism, as a religious paradigm, and to a lesser extent, Salafism appear to be a more suitable equivalent to "fundamentalism". However, since the Western perspective often includes Islamic movements within the same category, many Islamic actors disapprove of promoting fundamentalism or 'Usulia' to emphasize their activism. They aim to articulate their understanding of the political and social reality, transcending the limitations imposed by scriptural interpretations.

3. Fundamentalism/Usulia: Non-Islamic and Islamist Perspectives

An essential aspect of the Islamic mission or activism is epitomized in a historical account where a companion of the Prophet conveyed during negotiations with a Persian leader the following message: "Our objective is to liberate people from the worship of created entities and guide them toward the worship of the Creator. We aim to free them from the constraints of this temporal world, leading them towards the vastness of the present life and the hereafter, and to liberate them from the injustices perpetrated by various religions in favour of the justice inherent in Islam" (Ibn Kathir1992,32). This episode underscores that, from its inception, the confrontation has been fundamentally cultural rather than purely political in nature. Islamism, or political Islam, can be defined as a set of principles and groups striving to establish an Islamic system that influences the state, legal system, and ethical standards within the Muslim world. This sets its agenda apart from purely religious groups engaged in Islamic call (da'wa) (Bayat2013,4). Islamism is often used interchangeably with the terms fundamentalism (Usulia). Regardless of the user's ideological, linguistic, and religious background, it can generally be assumed that the use of 'Fundamentalism/Usulia' reflects a biased or hostile perception of Islamism, political Islam, or any other concept related to the embodiment of Islam as an ideology.

The cultural conflict between the Western values and the resisting Islamic agents entails the existence of disparity of attitudes among Muslims. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Islam emerged as a significant impediment, often described as the "green peril," to the establishment of the new world order. Given its tumultuous borders, it posed an obstacle to the prevailing Judeo-Christian heritage and the prevailing secular paradigm (Huntington1993,22). In this context, Islamism assumed the role of contesting the liberal democratic values that underpin the global order. It is evident that the label "fundamentalism" is employed to differentiate between militants, both those who resort to violence and those who advocate nonviolence, and ordinary Muslims who, for the most part, aspire to improved living conditions, irrespective of the ideological underpinnings of the state.

Another reason that can explain the accentuation on the concept and the urge of categorizing Islamic thoughts, particularly to non-Muslims countries, is the emergence of novel forms of religiosity that are characterized as moderate or liberal. These tendencies embrace an "open-minded" and pluralist interpretation of faith, counteracting the rigidity and orthodoxy inherent in traditional mindsets. They introduce an Islam that permits certain contentious or even disapproved practices, such as reconsidering women' share in inheritance (Safi2003,121) and accepting homosexuality as a personal freedom (Safi2003,195). It is noteworthy that schools of jurisprudence would not apply Ijtihad to change the inheritance system because it is based on the Quran. Additionally, they clearly condemn homosexuality and approve its corporal punishment. This "non-conformist" rendition of Islam finds conspicuous expression in Western countries through the establishment of mosques by Muslims who assert their right to innovate their faith independently of external religious authority. These mosques facilitate practices that fundamentalists regard as heretical and a significant deviation from authentic Islam. For example, the Ibn Rushd-Goethe Mosque in Germany allows men and women to pray together, rejects the burqa and niqab, despite the "fatwa" from Egypt denouncing such practices (Oltermann2017).

In contrast, within the Arab world, mosques are subject to state control and are administered in accordance with the foundational tenets of Islam. Intellectually, several voices, exemplified by figures like Muhammad Shahrur (1938 - 2019) and Ali Kyali, advocate for a counter-vision and propose a new interpretation of the Quran beyond the confines of fundamentalism or literalism, which have historically dominated the field of exegesis. However, their discourse predominantly operates within the spheres of social media. It is important to note that establishing parallel mosques in regions densely populated by "fundamentalists" entails substantial risk. Therefore, Islamic fundamentalism primarily attracts negative connotations, largely stemming from "anti-Islamist" discourses, which emanate from both Arab and Western sources.

The attempt to subdivide Islam into various forms of religiosity, emphasizing binaries such as moderate/radical or liberal/fundamentalist, poses a significant challenge. In contrast to Christian fundamentalism, Islamic "fundamentalism" presents a more intricate picture. Muslims do not solely perceive the Prophet Muhammad as a religious figure who imparted guidance pertaining exclusively to matters of faith and worship. Instead, they also regard him as a social reformer and a political leader. Consequently, for adherents of Islam, both the general populace and those inclined toward militancy, Islam represents not only a religious belief system but also a comprehensive way of life, a moral code, and, perhaps, a catalyst for mobilization in pursuit of socio-political change.

A fundamentalist, in the political, juristic, and extremist sense, may be characterized as an Islamist. In this regard, it is pertinent to note that figures such as Erdogan, the President of Turkey, the head of Azhar, and al-Zawahiri, share a common ideological framework from a western perspective. The nuances of their commitment to reintegrating Islamic norms into society and their stances concerning violence and Western institutions and values are relatively negligeable. Evidently, these "fundamentalist" actors may vehemently reject or even actively oppose one another's agendas. This divergence underscores the contentious nature of the unified concept of Islamic fundamentalism, necessitating further specification. To illustrate, consider the case of Hamas and ISIS; both are Islamist militant groups. Hamas directs its efforts primarily against the Israeli military, perceived as an occupying force by Palestinians and Arabs. In contrast, ISIS adheres to a distinct strategy, displaying a willingness to engage in mass killings of both Muslims and minority groups. Nevertheless, in 2018, a peculiar development occurred when ISIS executed members of Hamas and branded Palestinian Islamists as disbelievers. Determining which of these movements garners greater support and acceptance among Muslims remains uncertain. However, Hamas's selective use of violence against Israel holds significant appeal, particularly in the light of the waning influence of other Palestinian armed factions, even amid challenges in governing the blockaded Gaza Strip. On the other hand, despite early rapid successes and the ostensible implementation of Islamic laws, Baghdadi's organization faces accusations of ambiguity regarding whether it serves Islam or Western interests in the region. From the perspective of a Western observer, influenced by orientalist assumptions and the clash of civilization theory, these two movements may appear not only ideologically fundamentalist but also as anti-humanist entities that pose a threat to civilian populations.

However, other observers of the Islamic phenomenon avoid such generalization by promoting the concept of "post-Islamism" to distinguish among the various Islamist agendas. As the legitimacy of Islamism declined after a period of experimentation, the Islamists realize the limitations and complications in their ideology when attempting to establish or foresee their rule. These

limitations lead to questions and criticisms, pushing Islamism to adapt to changing global and national circumstances. Yet, "post-Islamism" is not opposed to Islam, secularism, or un-Islamic; rather, it seeks to harmonize religiosity and individual rights. It leans towards a civil and non-religious state but allows religion a role in the public sphere (Bayat2013,8). Yet, what enhances the tendency to contradict the fundamentalist phenomenon in Arab countries is the failed political experiences of most Islamists following the Arab Spring. In Western academia, the notion of collapse or failure was introduced before the Arab uprisings by several scholars, such as Olivier Roy (1994), Bernard Lewis (2002), and Gilles Kepel (2008), emphasizing that Islamism's hostility towards democracy and the secular state poses a challenge to their seamless integration into the formal political realm.

Some liberal Arab scholars identified with that stance, employing the term "Usulia" as a translation of fundamentalism and they even defend their terminological choice. They argue that the negative connotations associated with 'Fundamentalism' in the Western Christian context are not fundamentally different from those displayed by Islamists. Sadik Al-Azm, a Syrian scholar known for his secular and atheist inclinations, addressed the issue of translation and emphasized that several scholars who have studied Islamic movements claim that it is either impossible or challenging to apply the concept of 'fundamentalism' to a comparable religious phenomenon within the Islamic context. Even if it is used, it is often because there is no better alternative (Al-Azm2014,34-35). It is asserted that despite the common usage of the term "Usulia" alongside "fundamentalism," it can be misleading, as the phenomenon it represents is notably intricate and resists straightforward conceptual categorization. In response to this claim, he contended that the utilization of 'Usulia' is not an unusual practice. He provided examples of certain pro-Islamism scholars and Islamists who employ it to underscore their call for a return to the core principles and fundamentals of Islam. Al-Azm maintained that Islamists deliberately choose concepts that emphasize the idea of returning to the foundations and promoting revivalism. They do so with the intention of distinguishing themselves from their secular counterparts, such as 'Baath,' which also conveys a similar notion (Al-Azm2014,43).

Mourad Wahba, an Egyptian Qubt philosopher, argues that Islamic fundamentalism finds its roots in the works of figures like Maududi, Qutb, and Khomeini, who sought to establish the Islamic state as an apparatus grounded in absolute truth. The concept of "Hakkimiyah," coined by Maududi and further developed by Qutb, asserts that only God can legislate, and that the ruler, or the Faqih as in Khomeini's paradigm, serves as the executor of divine will (Wahba2022,31). Wahba observes that a central aspect of Islamic fundamentalism is its perception of reality through absolute premises, which contradicts the relativistic nature of human thinking. He contends that fundamentalism emerged within Muslim society as a response to the collapse of other ideologies. The emphasis by Islamists on identity and their rejection of modernism align 'Usulia' with terrorism and fanaticism (Wahba2022,59).

Apparently, the ideological disparity between Islamists and secularists in Arab countries influences the perspectives of scholars when addressing the discourse of the "other" or opponents. While most Western studies on Islamism do not perceive a risk in using the term "fundamentalism," Arab figures explicitly express their opposition to the Islamist project through the usage of "Usulia." Such intellectuals are often described as the "enemies of Islam" by Islamic agents even if they are Muslims. The Salafists disapprove their employment of "Usulia" since they imitate the term fundamentalism as it is coined in the west. Despite the connection of the term with other Islamic disciplines, as mentioned above, Bakr Abu Zayd (1946 – 2008), a prominent Saudi scholar, argued that "Usulia" is a less provoking term unlike regression (raj'ia), or pastism (madawia) that reveal explicit hostility towards Islamists (Abu Zayd1996,105).

The rejection of the term Fundamentalism/"Usulia" by most Islamists is not only due to its condemnatory Western connotations, but also because some of them aim to present their discourse as moderate and less literalist, particularly in the context of formal political participation and rejection of violence. Some Islamic movements engage in disputes with other ideological trends that hold contrasting views on certain religious beliefs and practices. To distinguish their "progressive" and "reformist" agenda while maintaining their Islamist identity, they avoid being grouped together with other "fundamentalist" actors. One of the cases that exemplifies this tendency is the "Justice and Spirituality" movement in Morocco. Most of its leaders, including its founder Abdessalam Yassin (1928-2012), avoid or reject the use of the term "Usulia". Bensalem Bahacham, a member of the scientific commission of the movement, argues that Westerners promote fundamentalism for two reasons: "The first reason encourages us to immerse ourselves in the past while limiting our vision of the future. Secondly, they depict it as violent and advocating for the exclusion of others, thus avoiding any inclination toward openness or acceptance of dialogue" (Bahacham2020).

However, despite this disapproving attitude towards the label "fundamentalist," Bahacham confirms that the movement provides its members with sufficient religious knowledge including jurisprudence. The primary objective is to combat religious illiteracy among the movement's members. Also, it aims to provide a foundational understanding of Islam and engage in discussions on emerging issues, such as the participative banks among other topics. Several educational books have been published encompassing its comprehensive perspective on jurisprudence and legal reasoning, as opposed to the fragmented views seen in the case of Wahhabi and Salafist interpretations. Furthermore, the movement has produced literature that offers legal justifications for certain (internal) activities, such as group nighttime prayers (Qiyam Layl). Additionally, the movement has established a

dedicated body for this educational initiative known as the scientific commission which comprises members with disciplines, including Quranic interpretation, jurisprudence, contemporary Islamic thought, and other related fields (Bahacham2020).

The literature sympathetic to Islamism often employs terms such as "Islamic movement/group" or Islamic awakening (Sahwa Islamia) when characterizing the various manifestations of the emergence of. However, it is worth acknowledging that Yusuf Al-Qaradawi (1926 - 2022) disclosed that certain Muslim intellectuals had reproached him for employing the term "Usulia" in a manner aligned with Western perspectives. Al-Qaradawi, nevertheless, remained persistent in his preference for the term "Sahwa" or awakening and used it interchangeably with "Usulia" to emphasize the significance of returning to the foundational principles of Islam. He emphasized this approach as a means of portraying Islam as a religion characterized by moderation and tolerance, rather than the adversarial perception of it (Al-Qaradawi1998,6).

Accordingly, Using the term "Political Islam" (al-Islam al-Siyasi) raises rejection by the Islamists. Muhammad Sa'id al-Ashmawi (1932 - 2013), an Egyptian judge and scholar, delineated two distinct categories of Islamic fundamentalism (al-Usuliyah al-Islamiyah): a rational trend and an activist one. The former aspires to return to the core values of Islam as they were originally articulated by the early generations of Islam, with the aim of contributing to human civilization while respecting established religious and political institutions. Conversely, the latter lacks a reformist agenda and primarily seeks to gain a foothold in the political sphere through the utilization of religion (Al-Ashmawi1996,170). He argued that rational or spiritual fundamentalism maintains a literalist understanding of the Quranic verses within their specific context, while activist fundamentalism decontextualizes the Quranic verses, leading to misconceptions and misinterpretations. Al-Ashmawi emphasized that the Islamists' assertion that a ruler who does not abide by Islamic laws is a disbeliever is not supported by the Quranic verse they cite, as it refers to providing a verdict in a case of adultery rather than governance (Al-Ashmawi1996,172-173). Al-Ashmawi (1991) faced criticism from several Islamic scholars, such as Muhammad Imara (2002), who disapproved of his project, contending that he was inadvertently serving Western and Zionist agendas that aimed at curtailing the proliferation of the Islamic awakening (Imara2002,8-10). Imara observed that Al-Ashmawi's literature on Islamism had been republished by Marxist publishing houses and promoted by political and intellectual adversaries of the Islamic awakening. These adversaries aimed to shift away from Islam as the cornerstone of revival, advocating for a reinterpretation of the Quran's historicity and the secularization of Islam (Imara2002,13).

Nevertheless, even within the spectrum of political parties annexed to Islamic movements, there exists a distinctive ideological commitment that constrains its adherents from transgressing certain red lines. As an illustrative example, consider the Ennahda Party, which is arguably one of the most moderate Islamic movements in the Arab world. This political entity openly repudiated the President's decision to implement inheritance equity laws that clashed with Islamic jurisprudence. It is important to note that Tunisia's political landscape had long been characterized by a secular orientation, and Ennahda chose to align itself with the remnants of this secular legacy by forming a new party, the leadership of which is held by the President Beji Caid Essebsi (1926-2019). According to Abdelfattah Mourou, one of the founders of Ennahda, while the movement did endorse a woman's right to marry a non-Muslim as an exercise of personal choice this decision had limited reverberations (Mourou2017). In contrast, the issue of inheritance is intricately tied to explicit Quranic verses and has the potential to perturb the entire societal fabric as the Ennahda's Shura Council stated (Grewal2018). Therefore, Nahda found itself in a position where it had to prioritize its religious foundations over its political alliances. Similarly, the Justice and Development party in Morocco faced a remarkable failure in the 2022 parliamentary elections after almost a decade at the helm of the government. Besides its economic policies that negatively impacted Moroccans, accepting normalization with Israel was the final blow that ended the political career of the Islamist party. The party could not even secure the votes of its grassroots supporters. In other words, despite their deep involvement in politics, it is evident that Islamists cannot turn their backs on Islamic values based on scriptures or contradict the Muslims causes, such as supporting Palestine, because, ultimately, these elements are the foundations of their ideology, and they rely on it to maintain their supporters.

4. Conclusion

This study delves into the difficulties of translating the concept of fundamentalism, particularly into "Usulia" in Arabic, within the context of social and religious studies. It aims to illuminate the complexities that arise during the translation and interpretation of fundamentalism, particularly within an Islamic framework. The investigation underscores how the term "fundamentalism" is often laden with preconceived notions and biases, largely shaped by Western encounters with Christian fundamentalism. Furthermore, this research explores the implications of Arab scholars and media adopting this terminology, which can perpetuate misrepresentations, stereotypes, and the rejection of this label by certain Islamist agents. The translation of fundamentalism into "Usulia" is profoundly influenced by historical, cultural, and ideological factors. This influence suggests that there may be other terms or equivalents used in addition to "Usulia," such as Wahhabism and Salafism. This research stresses the necessity of adopting a more nuanced and context-specific approach when engaging in discussions about fundamentalism. An approach that should consider the distinctive nature of Islamic disciplines and activism, as well as their perceptions of modernism. These insights have broader implications, particularly within the realms of religious studies, political analysis, and the understanding of societal

dynamics. Nonetheless, it is essential to note that this study does not provide an exhaustive analysis of numerous specific case studies related to the translation of fundamentalism into "Usulia". Future research endeavours could consider a comparative approach, perhaps investigating translations from French and German, to gain insights into the insights held by intellectuals from diverse academic backgrounds. Furthermore, exploring the experiences of specialists, media professionals, and policymakers engaged in the translation process and its impact on their work and decisions could provide valuable perspectives. Additionally, including the viewpoints of other Islamic representatives would further enrich our comprehension of the diversity inherent in religious discourse and ideologies. In conclusion, a comprehensive understanding of the translation of fundamentalism serves as a vital foundation for well-informed dialogues and policies pertaining to religious and sociopolitical movements.

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