

AFTER THE BAN

Rebranding Islamic Utopian Thought through Felix Siauw's Digital Entrepreneurial Preaching¹

Wahyudi Akmaliah | National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) – Indonesia

Email: wahy027@brin.go.id

Abstract: The ban on Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) in 2017 prompted its actors to adapt to digital platforms. Combining a case study approach with netnography, this article examines Felix Siauw's da'wa strategies for propagating Islamic Caliphate ideology after 2017. It finds that Islamic utopian thinking persists through evolving communication strategies and the rebranding of Islamic preaching within the digital media ecosystem. By collaborating with influencers on podcasts and engaging contemporary political issues through short videos and visual content, Siauw has developed a more adaptive and commercially oriented approach to digital preaching. His growing popularity as an alternative religious authority is also shaped by broader socio-political developments, including perceptions of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama's (NU) limited response to mining concessions and the One-Piece movement in August 2025, which mobilised young Indonesians through mass protests. These dynamics have expanded the discursive space for his digital presence, enabling him to rebrand as a digital entrepreneurial preacher while retaining his ideological commitment to Islamic utopianism.

Keywords: Felix Siauw, Digital Islam, Islamic Utopian Thinking, Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), Social Media.

Introduction

The expansion of digital communication, coupled with the collapse of Suharto's authoritarian regime in May 1998, has significantly broadened opportunities for diverse Muslim groups to establish and

¹ The author gratefully acknowledges the financial support provided by the Asia Research Centre, Universitas Indonesia (ARC-UI), through its Postdoctoral Fellowship under the theme of *Alternative Knowledge (ALT)*. This fellowship is part of a collaborative initiative between the Asia Research Centre, Universitas Indonesia (ARC-UI), and Luminate US Services, LLC.

negotiate religious authority within the Indonesian public sphere. Islamic groups that had previously been marginalised, restricted, or compelled to operate clandestinely were able to take advantage of the newly opened political and communicative spaces to increase their visibility and influence.² Emerging forms of religious authority have also developed among diverse urban-based Islamic groups and locally rooted religious networks across Indonesia.³ Increasingly active on digital platforms, these groups have gained particular resonance among Indonesian youth with diverse religious orientations.⁴ The proliferation of digital media has consequently generated different organisational and communicative modes of Islamic propagation. Some groups promote their teachings through collective and institutionally organised channels, whereas others rely on highly individualised forms of religious communication centred on charismatic preachers. Salafi networks, for example, have developed both collective media infrastructures and individualised preaching practices. Platforms such as Rodja TV, YufidTV, and Ammar TV operate as collective channels through which Salafi teachings are disseminated under the guidance and influence of prominent religious authorities to many segments, including university students.⁵ At the same time, individual preachers associated with these networks, including Khalid Basalamah, Syafiq Riza Basalamah, and

² Vedi Hadiz and Richard Robison, *Reorganising Power in Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Inaya Rakhmani, "Mainstream Islam: Television Industry Practice and Trends in Indonesian Sinetron," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 3 & 4, no. 42 (2014): 435–466; Ariel Heryanto, *Identity and Pleasure: The Politic of Indonesian Screen Culture* (Singapore and Japan: NUS Press & Kyoto University Press, 2014); Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere," *Contemporary Islam* 3, no. 3 (2009): 229–250; Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militancy, and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia* (Cornell University Press, 2005).

³ Muhammad Rosyid and Syamsul Rijal, "Riding to Paradise: Pop-Islamism and Muslim Biker Movement in Central Java," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 63, no. 2 (2025): 205–230; Muhammad Kholili, Ahmad Izudin, and Muhammad Lutfi Hakim, "Islamic Proselytizing in Digital Religion in Indonesia: The Challenges of Broadcasting Regulation," *Cogent Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (2024): 1–15.

⁴ Muthohirin Nafik, "'Faith in the Digital Age: The Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism and the Plurality of Young Muslims' Piety on Social Media,'" *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 2, no. 1 (2025): 224–256; Moch. Khafidz Fuad Raya, "Digital Islam: New Space for Authority and Religious Commodification among Islamic Preachers in Contemporary Indonesia," *Contemporary Islam* 19 (2024): 161–194.

⁵ A. Aderus et.al, "How Salafism Forms Millennials' Religious Understanding: A Case Study from an Indonesian University," *Ulumuna* 27, no. 1 (2023): 291–314.

Oemar Mita, have cultivated substantial followings through their personal social media accounts.

Beyond formally organised networks, individual religious preachers have also established significant influence without relying on the institutional infrastructure of established Islamic organisations. Preachers such as Abdul Somad, Handy Bonnie, and Evie Effendi exemplify this more individualised mode of Islamic propagation, in which personal branding, social media visibility, and direct engagement with audiences become central to the production of religious authority. In this context, digital platforms do not merely function as neutral channels for transmitting religious messages; they increasingly constitute an arena in which religious authority is produced, negotiated, and commodified. A particularly revealing case is provided by preachers associated with Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). Unlike Salafi networks, HTI does not maintain an official organisational presence through social media accounts and channels following its proscription by the Indonesian government under Joko Widodo's administration. Nevertheless, the organisation's ideological legacy and religious actors remain highly visible within the digital sphere. Figures such as Fatih Karim and Felix Siau have developed substantial online presences across algorithmically driven social media platforms, enabling them to reach audiences despite the formal dissolution of their organisational infrastructure.

Undoubtedly, the intersection of religious authority and digital platforms, particularly the relationship between individualised and collective forms of authority, has been extensively examined from various perspectives. Some scholars who study it can broadly be divided into three strands. The first focuses on individual religious authorities and the ways in which preachers construct, negotiate, and expand their influence through digital media. For example, Hamdani examines the changing religious authority of Abdul Somad across both offline and online spaces,⁶ while Akmaliah analyses Hanan Attaki and the emergence of the "cool ustadz" within the Pemuda Hijrah movement.⁷

⁶ Hamdani Hamdani, "New Religious Preacher in the Changing Religious Authority: The Offline and Online Preacher of Ustadz Abdul Somad," Saat Noorshahril and Ahmad Najib Burhani (eds.), *The New Santri: Challenges to Traditional Religious Authority in Indonesia* (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusuf Ishak, 2020), 258–277.

⁷ Wahyudi Akmaliah, "The Rise of Cool Ustadz: Preaching, Subcultures, and the Pemuda Hijrah Movement," Noorshahril and Burhani (eds.), *The New Santri*, 239–257.

Similarly, Millah examines the preaching rhetoric of Handy Bonny,⁸ Cahyono investigates Adi Hidayat's use of YouTube for religious education,⁹ and Wai Weng Hew provides an extensive analysis of Felix Siauw's social media engagement, visual persuasion, and Islamist propagation.¹⁰ Collectively, these studies demonstrate how individual preachers have increasingly utilised digital platforms to cultivate personal religious authority, develop distinctive communicative styles, and reach audiences beyond the institutional structures of conventional Islamic organisations.

The second strand examines the collective dimension of religious authority and how established Islamic organisations and broader religious movements have adapted to digital environments. In scholarship on NU, Akmaliah has examined the organisation's efforts to reclaim and negotiate moderate Islamic authority through digital platforms, and Dawam Rohmatulloh, As'ad, and Malayati discuss the emergence of traditionalist preachers on social media.¹¹ Research on Muhammadiyah similarly demonstrates how new media have become an important arena for contesting, negotiating, and reclaiming religious authority.¹² Beyond these two major Islamic organisations, few scholars

⁸ Asep Saeful Millah, Dindin Solahudin, and Bahrudin Bahrudin, "Retorika Dakwah Ustadz Handy Bonny," *Tabligh: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam* 3, no. 2 (2020): 172–189.

⁹ Guntur Cahyono, "Pemanfaatan Media Youtube Dakwah Ustadz Adi Hidayat Dalam Pengembangan Materi Fikih Madrasah Ibtidaiyah," *At-Tarbiawi: Jurnal Kajian Kependidikan Islam* 4, no. 1 (2019), 78.

¹⁰ Wai Weng Hew, "The Art Of Dakwah: Social Media, Visual Persuasion and the Islamist Propagation of Felix Siauw," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (2018): 61–79; Wai Weng Hew, "Piety, Politics, and the Popularity of Felix Siauw," <https://www.newmandala.org/piety-politics-popularity-felix-siauw/> accessed April 27, 2021; Wai Weng Hew, "Packaging, Persuasion and Propaganda: Popular Preaching and Islamic Counter-Publics in Indonesia," *Asian Studies Review* (2022): 1–16.

¹¹ Dawam Multazamy Rohmatulloh, Muhammad As'ad, and Robi'ah Machtumah Malayati, "Gus Baha, Santri Gayeng and the Rise of Traditionalist Preachers on Social Media," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 16, no. 2 (2022): 303–325.

¹² Wahyudi Akmaliah, "The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10, no. 1 (2020): 1–24; Claire-Marie Hefner, "Morality, Religious Authority, and the Digital Edge," *American Ethnologist* 49, no. 3 (2022): 359–373; Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi, "Zulkarnain EL Madury and the Micro-Celebrity Ustaz Phenomenon," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 51, no. 151 (2023): 304–329.

have examined the digital activism of Salafi networks,¹³ and the broader emergence of Islamic revivalist movements such as Hijrah and One Day One Juz (ODOJ).¹⁴ This body of research demonstrates that digitalisation has not simply extended existing religious networks into online spaces; it has also transformed the organisational, communicative, and relational structures through which religious authority is produced and circulated.

A third strand focuses on the broader functions of digital and new media in contemporary Islamic practice. Studies by Baulch and

¹³ Sunarwoto, "Negotiating Salafi Islam and the State: The Madkhaliyya in Indonesia," *Die Welt des Islams* 60, no. 2–3 (2020): 205–234; Sunarwoto, "Salafi Dakwah Radio: A Contest for Religious Authority," *Archipel* 91 (2016): 203–230; Sunarwoto, "Online Salafi Rivalries in Indonesia: Between Sectarianism and 'Good' Citizenship," *Religion, State and Society* 49, no. 2 (2021): 157–173; Chris Chaplin, "Salafi Islamic Piety as Civic Activism: Wahdah Islamiyah and Differentiated Citizenship in Indonesia," *Citizenship Studies* 22, no. 2 (2018): 208–223; Chris Chaplin, "Salafi Activism and the Promotion of a Modern Muslim Identity: Evolving Mediums of Da'wa Amongst Yogyakarta University Students," *South East Asia Research* 26, no. 1 (2018): 3–20.

¹⁴ Eva F. Nisa, "Social Media and the Birth of an Islamic Social Movement: ODOJ (One Day One Juz) in Contemporary Indonesia," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (2018): 24–43; Acep Muslim, "Digital Religion and Religious Life in Southeast Asia," *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 4, no. 1–2 (2017): 33–51; Hamzah Fansuri, "On the Road of Hijrah: Contesting Identity through Urban Mobilities in Contemporary Indonesian Muslims," *Archipel* 105 (2023): 115–139; Hamzah Fansuri, "When Piety Is Framed as Threatening: The Hijrah Movement within the Politics of Religious Moderation in Indonesia," *Muslim Politics Review* 4, no. 2 (2025): 337–375.

Pramiyanti,¹⁵ Lim,¹⁶ Beta,¹⁷ Rakhmani,¹⁸ and Slama,¹⁹ have demonstrated how digital media facilitate religious education, the construction of Muslim identities, political activism, and new forms of digitally mediated piety. Within these references, the relationship between digital media and religious authority has received particular theoretical attention. Campbell's work on digital religion and the transformation of religious authority amid the dominance of algorithms that drive influence provides an important conceptual foundation for understanding how authority is reconfigured in digital environments,²⁰ including digital *da'wa*.²¹ Following on this scholarship, Akmaliah has

¹⁵ Emma Baulch and Alila Pramiyanti, "Hijabers on Instagram: Using Visual Social Media to Construct the Ideal Muslim Woman," *Social Media + Society* 4, no. 4 (2018): 1–15.

¹⁶ Merlyna Lim, *Radicalism and Anti Americanism in Indonesia: The Role of the Internet* (Washington DC/Honolulu: East West Center (Policy Studies Series), 2005); Merlyna Lim, "@Archipelago Online: The Internet and Political Activism" (University of Twente, 2005).

¹⁷ Annisa R. Beta, "Commerce, Piety and Politics: Indonesian Young Muslim Women's Groups as Religious Influencers," *New Media and Society* 21, no. 10 (2019): 2140–2159; Annisa R Beta, "Hijabers: How Young Urban Muslim Women Redefine Themselves in Indonesia," *International Communication Gazette* 76, no. 4–5 (2014): 377–389; Annisa R. Beta, "The Muslimah Intimate Public: Re-Considering Contemporary Da'wa Activists in Indonesia," *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 7, no. 1–2 (2020): 20–41.

¹⁸ Inaya Rakhmani, *Mainstreaming Islam in Indonesia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Inaya Rakhmani, "Understanding the Floating Ummah in Neoliberal Indonesia," *Contemporary Politics* (2023): 1–20; Inaya Rakhmani, "The Personal Is Political: Gendered Morality in Indonesia's Halal Consumerism," *TRaNS: Trans -Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 7, no. 2 (2019): 291–312.

¹⁹ Martin Slama, "Social Media and Islamic Practice: Indonesian Ways of Being Digitally Pious," Edwin Jurriens and Ross Tapsell (eds.), *Digital Indonesia: Connectivity and Divergence*, (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusuf Ishak, 2017), 146–162; Martin Slama, "Practising Islam through Social Media in Indonesia," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (2018): 1–4; Martin Slama and Bart Barendregt, "Online Publics in Muslim Southeast Asia: In Between Religious Politics and Popular Pious Practices" 5 (2018): 3–31; Martin Slama, "Social Media and the Question of Change in Indonesia's Field of Islam," *Indonesia* 119, no. 1 (2025): 173–192.

²⁰ Heidi A Campbell, "Introduction: The Rise of the Study of Digital Religion," in *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, ed. Heidi A Campbell (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 1–21; Heidi A. Campbell, *Digital Creatives and the Rethinking of Religious Authority* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2021).

²¹ Lalu Ahmad Zaenuri, "Reconceptualising Da'wa: A Study of Tuan Gurus' Perceptions and Motivations in Adopting Digital Da'wa," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 19, no. 1 (2025), 92–116.

applied the concept of algorithmic religious authority to the Indonesian Muslim context, highlighting how platform logics and algorithmic visibility increasingly shape the production and circulation of religious authority.²² Despite these important contributions, existing scholarship has paid comparatively less attention to how religious actors associated with proscribed Islamic organisations adapt their authority and ideological projects following organisational dissolution. In particular, the post-ban trajectories of individual HTI-associated preachers remain underexplored. Among the limited studies addressing this issue are those by Zulkifli²³ and Herdiansah,²⁴ which examine the post-ban activities and adaptation of HTI-associated religious actors.

Therefore, this article builds on and extends this body of scholarship by examining how actors associated with Islamic resurgence movements negotiate religious authority and ideological visibility within a complex and changing political environment, using Felix Siau as a case study. It extends Najib Kailani's concept of the entrepreneurial preacher, which highlights how Islamic preachers articulate and combine religious authority with economic practices within a motivational theological framework.²⁵ Building on this concept, the article examines how digital platforms reshape the entrepreneurial practices of preachers by enabling Felix Siau to mobilise his entrepreneurial skills and generate economic benefits that, in turn, support and sustain his Islamic preaching. This approach highlights the interconnectedness of religious authority, digital entrepreneurship, and ideological dissemination in the contemporary Islamic public sphere. It addresses three main questions: What sociopolitical conditions facilitated the emergence and development of HTI, and how did these conditions shape Siau's decision to join the

²² Wahyudi Akmaliah, "Algorithmic Religious Authority: Digital Islamic Preachers and Mainstreaming the Meaning of Jihad," *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 14, no. 3 (2025): 430–453.

²³ Zulkifli, "Struggling for Islamic Chaliphate in A Changing Malay Society," *Ulmuna* 28, no. 1 (2024): 224–256.

²⁴ Ari Ganjar Herdiansah, "Digital Islamist Activism and Popular Culture: Propagating Islamism among Indonesian Youth," *Studia Islamika* 33, no. 35–70 (2026).

²⁵ Najib Kailani, "Aspiring to Prosperity: The Economic Theology of Urban Muslims in Contemporary Indonesia" (UNSW Canberra, 2015); Najib Kailani, "Creating Entrepreneurial and Pious Muslim Subjectivity in Globalised Indonesia," Leonard C. Sebastian, Syafiq Hasyim, and Alexander R. Arifianto (eds.), *Rising Islamic Conservatism in Indonesia Islamic Groups and Identity Politics* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), 198–209.

organisation? In the absence of conventional forms of religious authority, how has he succeeded in attracting a large Indonesian Muslim audience through digital preaching platforms? To what extent has he transformed the field and modes of his *da'wa* in the digital environment while retaining core elements of the Islamic utopian thinking associated with his HTI ideological background? This article argues that shifts in Indonesia's political economy and media environments have compelled HTI and its associated actors to adapt their strategies of religious and political communication. Previously, under Suharto's authoritarian regime (1965-1998), restrictions on Islamist political activity compelled HTI to operate largely through clandestine networks. The political opening of the Reformasi era enabled them to publicly articulate and promote the establishment of an Islamic caliphate, thereby expanding its networks and reaching broader Muslim constituencies, particularly in urban areas.

The subsequent rise of digital platforms further amplified these opportunities by providing new infrastructures for religious communication, audience formation, and ideological dissemination. Siauw exemplifies this transformation. Rather than relying solely on conventional forms of religious authority or formal organisational structures, he has diversified his *da'wa* through popular cultural products, including comics, books, and films, as well as highly visual digital content. These strategies have enabled him to develop an entrepreneurial model of digital preaching and reach audiences beyond HTI's organisational boundaries. His post-ban rebranding, however, has not necessarily entailed abandoning his ideological orientation. Instead, elements of Islamic utopian thinking have been rearticulated through new platforms, communicative forms, and cultural registers. Siauw's trajectory demonstrates how the proscription of an Islamist organisation can transform, rather than eliminate, its ideological project by generating new forms of individualised and digitally mediated religious authority.

To understand his self-rebranding following the ban on HTI, this article employs netnography as its primary methodological approach. Kozinets conceptualised *netnography* as a qualitative research methodology that extends ethnographic inquiry into digital environments, focusing on cultures and communities constituted through networked forms of online interaction.²⁶ Within this approach,

²⁶ Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online* (England: Sage, 2010); Robert V. Kozinets, "The Field behind the Screen: Using Netnography for

data are collected directly from online environments and may include textual materials, images, videos, audio recordings, and avatars. In the case of Siau, I conducted digital observations of his social media activities between 2020 and 2026, focusing on his presence on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. I also examined his appearances on podcasts hosted by prominent Indonesian influencers and public figures.²⁷ These platforms are particularly relevant because they provide access to prominent influencers who attract substantial audiences among younger Indonesians.²⁸ In this sense, rather than transcribing each podcast episode verbatim, I recorded key points in reflective field notes, with particular focus on discussions of Islam, political events, and socio-political issues in everyday life. These notes served as an important component of the digital ethnographic process, enabling me to identify recurring themes, discursive patterns, and shifts in Siau's presentation of his religious identity and ideological positioning across different media environments.

To strengthen this analysis, I employ the concept of the intermodality of media networks, a framework developed by Merlyna Lim, to examine Siau's dissemination of Islamic teachings as he integrates new and traditional media and offline activities, including publishing popular books and delivering Islamic teachings in mosques and at other religious gatherings. In this context, the concept provides a valuable analytical tool as "a mechanism in which different media and communication modes and networks are utilized in conjunction to carry a message from one place to another without being altered or distorted."²⁹ In other words, Siau's seamless integration of digital and traditional media should not be understood as a distinction between media platforms; rather, it constitutes an integral part of a cohesive

Marketing Research in Online Communities.," *Journal of Marketing Research* 39 (2002): 61–72.

²⁷ They are, for instance, Deddy Corbuser, Helmy Yahya, Pandji Pragiwaksono, Denny Sumargo, Christina Lie, Raymond Chin, Nikita Willy, Gofar Hilman, and the Malaka Project.

²⁸ Muhammad Rosyid and Syamsul Rijal, "Riding to Paradise: Pop-Islamism and Muslim Biker Movement in Central Java," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 63, no. 2 (2006). 205–230.

²⁹ Merlyna Lim, "Sticks and Stones, Clicks and Phones: Contextualizing the Role of Digital Media in the Politics of Transformation," Richter Carola, Anna Antonakis, and Cilja Harders (eds.), *Digital Media and the Politics of Transformation in the Arab World and Asia* (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2018), 9–34.

strategy for disseminating Islamic teachings, including through a collaborative podcast with other Indonesian influencers. Meanwhile, regarding HTI's ideology, I employ the concept of Islamic revivalism, particularly the notion of Islamic utopian thinking developed by Shaharudin Ma'ruf. In this sense, he conceptualises this puritanical orientation as "utopian religious thinking, characterised by critical rejection of the existing social order and pursuit of an ideal alternative."³⁰

Felix Siau and the Digitalisation of HTI Preaching

In contrast to other Islamic religious authorities who effectively utilize social media, such as Abdul Shomad, Hanan Attaki, and Adi Hidayat,³¹ Felix Siau has faced questions concerning his religious credentials and authority. Whereas several prominent preachers received formal Islamic education in the Middle East, including at Al-Azhar University and the Islamic University of Madinah, Siau graduated from the Department of Agricultural Engineering at the Bogor Agricultural University (IPB). His Chinese-Indonesian background and status as a *mualaf* who converted from Catholicism have also shaped perceptions of his position within Indonesia's contemporary Islamic preaching landscape. These factors, together with the government's dissolution of HTI in 2017, posed additional challenges to his position as a religious figure associated with the organization. Nevertheless, his continued popularity raises important questions about how religious authority can be sustained and reconstructed despite institutional and biographical constraints. His substantial following across social media platforms provides an important indication of this process. On Instagram, he has attracted approximately 2.3 million followers; his YouTube channel has

³⁰ Specifically, Ma'ruf identifies eight characteristics of this orientation: 1) Islam as a comprehensive way of life; 2) the perceived threats posed by secularism; 3) stereotypical representations of the West; 4) recognition of human limitations; 5) hierarchical conceptions of knowledge; 6) the idealisation of the past; 7) the pursuit of a "new millennium"; 8) lastly the denial of social realities. However, these ideas do not operate independently of their social context. Rather, they are disseminated through structures of power, making prevailing social and political conditions crucial to their acceptance, reproduction, and endurance. See Maaruf Shaharuddin, *Religion and Utopian Thinking Among the Muslims of Southeast Asia* (Singapore, 2000); Maaruf Shaharuddin, "Religion and Utopian Thinking Among The Muslim of Southeast Asia," in *Local and Global: Social Transformation in Southeast Asia* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2005), 315–330.

³¹ Akmaliah, "The Rise of Cool Ustadz; Hamdani, "New Religious Preacher in the Changing Religious Authority.

more than 2.02 million subscribers; his X (formerly Twitter) account has approximately 3 million followers; and his TikTok account has 480 thousand followers. Across these platforms, Siauw adapts his religious content to the affordances and communicative characteristics of each medium, enabling him to maintain a broad and diversified digital presence.

Undoubtedly, his prominence on digital platforms cannot be adequately explained by his affiliation with HTI's elite circles alone. I argue that two factors have been particularly important in his emergence as a contemporary religious authority. First, his prior experience as a marketing manager at a Jakarta-based company honed his skills in visual communication, branding, and marketing. Second, his prolific writing on Islam, youth, and self-development has enabled him to cultivate a distinctive mode of religious communication. These experiences and practices have contributed to what Najib Kailani terms the emergence of the "entrepreneurial preacher".³² Nevertheless, unlike other entrepreneurial preachers, such as Yusuf Mansur, Agus Pramono, Abdullah Gymnastiar (Aa Gym), and Saptuari Sugiharto, who combine da'wa with business and motivational practices, presenting themselves as role models for cultivating piety and prosperity, Felix Siauw employs commercial and business-oriented activities primarily as resources for his da'wa. His preaching rarely focuses explicitly on business or economic issues from an Islamic perspective. Rather, he incorporates products associated with popular culture, including clothing, books, and other merchandise, into his broader da'wa repertoire. These products function not merely as commercial commodities but also as media through which he communicates and popularises an Islamic utopian vision, particularly among young Muslim audiences.

This entrepreneurial approach to preaching has enabled Siauw to package Islamic teachings in accessible and commercially appealing forms. His book *Udah Putusin Aja* (2013), which was later adapted into a feature film and distributed through commercial cinemas across Indonesia in 2018, exemplifies this strategy. Similarly, his ownership of Al-Fatih Studio, an animation studio that produces short animated content depicting and reflecting on everyday Muslim life, demonstrates his ability to translate religious messages into popular-cultural products. Overall, these practices suggest that Siauw can be understood as an

³² Kailani, "Aspiring to Prosperity"; Kailani, "Creating Entrepreneurial and Pious Muslim Subjectivity in Globalised Indonesia."

Islamic entrepreneurial preacher who strategically repackages Islamic teachings through popular-cultural and digital media formats accessible to a broad Muslim audience. His appeal, therefore, cannot be understood solely in terms of his former position within HTI's elite circles; it is also rooted in his ability to combine religious messaging with marketing techniques, visual communication, popular culture, and digital media.³³ At the same time, Siauw's entrepreneurial approach to religious communication should not be interpreted as a departure from HTI's ideological influence. Rather, elements of HTI's ideological framework remain embedded in his various knowledge products, enabling ideological messages to circulate through seemingly accessible and popular forms of religious content. This combination of commercialised religious communication and ideological continuity is central to understanding how Siauw has maintained his religious visibility and influence in the post-ban period.

In this context, Hew conceptualises Felix Siauw as a successful Islamic preacher who adeptly blurs the boundary between mainstream Islamic discourse and HTI's ideological orientation.³⁴ This blending can be understood through three interrelated political communication strategies. First, Siauw employs the concept of *Islam Rahmatan lil-'Alamin* (Islam as a blessing for all), a formulation widely used by both Muhammadiyah and NU. While presenting himself as a preacher committed to *da'wa* and Islamic values, he also incorporates religious teachings closely aligned with HTI's ideological orientation. This discursive strategy enables him to continue circulating ideas associated with HTI without explicitly invoking the name of the banned organisation. It also allows him to disseminate religious messages through both digital platforms and offline activities while maintaining a degree of distance from HTI as a formally prohibited organisation. Second, he produces knowledge products that address the interests and aspirations of Indonesian Muslim youth. This orientation is evident in books such as *Beyond the Inspiration* (2010), *Udah Putusin Aja* (2013), *Yuk Berhijab* (2013), and *Antara Dia, Aku & Mereka* (2019). At the same time, he incorporates elements of HTI's religious and political imagination into popular-cultural products that evoke the historical ideal of the Islamic Caliphate. Examples include *Muhammad Al-Fatih 1453* (2013), *The Chronicles of Ghazî: Rise of the Ottomans* (2014), *Khilafah* (2014), *Khilafah*

³³ Hew, "Packaging, Persuasion and Propaganda.

³⁴ Hew, "The Art of Dakwah.

Remake (2015), and *Syar'i Traveler: The Heritage of Ottoman* (2019). Through this dual strategy, Siauwa appeals to a broad audience of young Muslims while embedding elements of HTI's ideological framework within accessible forms of popular culture and religious knowledge.³⁵

Picture 1: Selected Books By Felix Siauwa



Compiled by the author from various sources

Third, he has cultivated himself as a role model for young Muslims. Although he has limited formal religious education, Felix Siauwa has emerged as an influential figure among younger Muslim audiences, particularly those drawn to the concept of *hijrah*, understood as a process of distancing oneself from sinful practices and pursuing a more pious way of life. As a convert to Islam, he is also perceived by some young Muslims as an accessible model of religious transformation and personal piety. Among broader Indonesian Muslim audiences, however, he is often associated with a more conservative Islamic orientation. Furthermore, despite his continued adherence to ideas associated with HTI, he has cultivated connections with non-HTI Islamic organisations and other prominent preachers. He has participated in religious events and preaching activities organised by groups such as the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) and the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), as well as by other Islamic organisations. His relationships with preachers such as Abdul Somad, Salim A. Fillah, Adi Hidayat, and Hanan Attaki, particularly through the fluid, cross-organisational Islamic network known as Islam United, further illustrate his ability to build religious and

³⁵ Ibid.

social bridges beyond HTI's organisational boundaries. These cross-organisational networks have enabled him to maintain his visibility and relevance within Indonesia's broader Islamic public sphere, even after HTI's dissolution.³⁶

Rebranding the Digital Entrepreneurial Preacher: Voicelessness of Ummah, Collaborative Podcasts, and Hybrid Religious-Political Communicator

The preceding discussion primarily concerns Felix Siau's activities and public persona before the banning of HTI, when he could explicitly articulate in public sermons and discussions his view that the *khilafah* system represented the best solution to various problems facing Indonesian Muslim society. This raises an important question: what happened to Siau's Islamic preaching following the ban? At first glance, one might expect his influence to have declined as a consequence of the dissolution of HTI and the restrictions imposed on the organisation and its ideological agenda. However, his post-ban activities on YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram suggest a different trajectory. Rather than experiencing a significant decline, he has largely maintained his popularity, although he has not achieved substantial audience growth. His relatively stable digital following suggests that the banning of HTI did not eliminate his public appeal, but it also did not necessarily enable him to reach significantly larger audiences. Instead, he appears to have retained his existing audience while gradually diversifying the forms and platforms through which he communicates Islamic messages, without shifting his primary focus away from Muslim audiences, particularly specific segments such as Muslim activists, members of the *hijrah* movement, and adherents of Islamic revivalist groups.³⁷

³⁶ Hew, "Piety, Politics, and the Popularity of Felix Siau."

³⁷ In this sense, two aspects of Felix Siau's post-ban digital preaching are particularly significant, both of which focus on the history of Islam and its past triumphs. First, he connects historical sites embedded in Muslim collective memory with digital visual aesthetics through photographs, videos, and captions posted on Instagram and YouTube in 2018. This strategy links the present to an idealised Islamic past, fostering a collective memory of Muslim achievements while subtly rearticulating elements of HTI's ideological framework through narratives of Islamic political glory and the Caliphate. Historical sites, such as the Kauman Grand Mosque in Yogyakarta and Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, are aesthetically curated as religious content, familiarising audiences with particular interpretations of Islamic history and political authority. Second, his 2019 *Tour Heritage of the Ottoman Empire*, organised by Royal Indonesia Travel and involving members of his religious community, demonstrates the integration of religious tourism,

Therefore, this part examines three significant factors that explain how Siauww subsequently gained broader popularity, extending beyond his segmented Muslim audience to reach a wider Indonesian audience.

Firstly, the voicelessness of the ummah and the emergence of alternative Islamic knowledge references after the HTI ban. In 2017, the Indonesian government dissolved Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), while Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) remained the principal institutional representatives of Indonesian Muslims. However, their representational authority increasingly came under scrutiny following their closer engagement with the state, particularly after accepting mining concessions in 2024 and the involvement of several senior and elite figures in the Prabowo administration.³⁸ This raised questions about their political independence and capacity to articulate Muslim interests.

Against this backdrop, social media has emerged as an important arena for articulating alternative Islamic and political positions amid the ideological vacuum created by the suppression of the political left following the events of 1965–1966.³⁹ This historical condition, in turn, contributed to the emergence of an Islamic political landscape that Vedi Hadiz conceptualises as the “floating ummah”.⁴⁰ Felix Siauww, a former HTI-associated preacher, maintained an oppositional presence through Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Since 2022, through Yuk Ngaji TV (YNTV), he has shifted from predominantly didactic Islamic instruction to more conversational discussions with public figures from diverse

historical knowledge, and digital preaching. Through explanations of Ottoman historical sites and subsequent YouTube and Instagram content, Siauww extended these narratives across multiple media platforms and audiences.

³⁸ Alexander R. Arifianto, *From 'High' to 'Normal' Politics: Muhammadiyah and the Prabowo Presidency* (Singapore, 2025), <https://rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/IP25-002.pdf>; Alexander R. Arifianto, “Clerics to Coal Miners: The Decline of Indonesia’s Islamic Civil Society,” <https://www.newmandala.org/clerics-to-coal-miners-the-decline-of-indonesias-islamic-civil-society/> accessed October 24, 2025; Ahmad Rizky Mardhatillah Umar, “Religious Coal Rush: Why Do Indonesian Muslim Leaders Accept Coal Mining Concessions?,” <https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/religious-coal-rush-why-do-indonesian-muslim-leaders-accept-coal-mining-concessions/> accessed October 24, 2025.

³⁹ Vedi Hadiz, “Imagine All the People? Mobilising Islamic Populism for Right-Wing Politics in Indonesia,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 48, no. 4 (2018): 566–583; Vedi Hadiz, *Islamic Populism in Indonesia and the Middle East* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

⁴⁰ Vedi Hadiz, “The ‘Floating’ Ummah in the Fall of ‘Ahok’ in Indonesia,” *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 7, no. 2 (2019): 271–290.

backgrounds. As a result of this transformation, Felix Siauw was invited to appear on Daniel Mananta's podcast *Tetanggamu* in 2023.⁴¹ As a former MTV VJ in the 2000s and a devout Catholic, Daniel Mananta gave Siauw an opportunity to engage with a different segment of the audience. Siauw's appearance on the podcast therefore created an important moment for expanding his reach beyond his established Muslim audience while also challenging perceptions of him as a radical figure. His participation appears to have influenced some viewers' perceptions and encouraged them to reconsider their previous assumptions about his alleged radicalism. This can be illustrated by the following two viewer responses within Daniel's podcast comment.

"I used to think that Ustadz Felix was an extremist, but it turns out that he is such a bright mind. *Masya Allah*, everything about Islam seems to make sense now. It makes me want to deepen my faith even further" (@Shafira7710).

"Had he not been invited to the podcast, I would have continued to regard Ustadz Felix as a radical. Thank you, Daniel, for opening our eyes" (@almeydaadam491).

Secondly, collaborative podcasts enabled Felix Siauw to gain visibility beyond his established Muslim audience. As discussed earlier, his collaboration with Daniel Mananta, which began in 2022 and later led to an appearance on Daniel's podcast in 2023, expanded his public visibility, although its impact remained limited by his established reputation as "a radical Muslim figure" and former HTI elite. Nevertheless, this cross-platform trajectory created opportunities to reach audiences beyond his previously segmented Muslim following. In this sense, a significant development occurred with the emergence of the *One Piece* Jolly Roger flag as a symbol of political criticism and mobilisation, while he was creatively involved in the trend, steeply increasing his popularity. Previously, between 27 and 30 July 2025, the flag circulated widely on social media ahead of mass mobilisation at the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR) on 24–25 August to oppose the proposed revision of the Regional Election Law (*UU Pilkada*), which would have enabled Joko Widodo's son, Kaesang

⁴¹ Daniel Mananta Network, "Dibalik Kehidupan Ustadz Felix Siauw-Daniel Tetanggamu," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qiytS-TTEMI> accessed January 12, 2026.

Pangarep, to run for governor of Central Java.⁴² In addition, for young protesters, the flag symbolised frustration with the Prabowo presidency, perceived as failing to represent their voices and address socioeconomic concerns, including rising living costs and taxes such as land and building tax (*Pajak Bumi dan Bangunan*, PBB). Political grievances were thus articulated through a popular-cultural reference drawn from anime.⁴³

Prior to the demonstration, Siauww had begun to position himself within the emerging discourse surrounding the flag. Between 1 and 10 August 2025, he published four posts that progressively framed *One Piece* as a vehicle for justice, truth, and resistance to injustice. He subsequently produced an experimental street video in Bogor in which he and his team carried the flag and were stopped by police. These activities demonstrate a progression from symbolic identification and political contextualisation to discursive legitimisation and offline enactment. By combining online communication with offline performance, Siauww transformed a popular-cultural symbol into a vehicle for articulating political grievances, generating public attention and facilitating subsequent podcast invitations from other Indonesian influencers. Importantly, his engagement with *One Piece* did not necessarily represent a departure from his earlier political-religious discourse. His emphasis on justice, truth, and resistance echoed themes associated with his previous engagement with HTI and the Islamic caliphate. Rather, popular culture provided a more accessible communicative repertoire through which these familiar political and moral themes could acquire broader relevance, particularly among young Indonesians beyond his established Muslim audience. Thus, his engagement with *One Piece* illustrates how Siauww could recontextualise elements of his earlier discourse without explicitly invoking HTI's institutional or ideological language.

By framing *One Piece* as a representation of Indonesia's broader sociopolitical concerns, Siauww subsequently received invitations to

⁴² Inaya Rakhmani and Diatyka Widya Permata Yasih, "Articulation and Re-Articulation of Grassroots Grievances in Indonesia," <https://positionspolitics.org/diatyka-widya-permata-yasih-and-inaya-rakhmani-articulation-and-re-articulation-of-grassroots-grievances-in-indonesia-2025/> accessed January 29, 2026.

⁴³ Firdaus Yuni Dharta et al., "The Jolly Roger Flag Welcomes August 17th, 2025: Indonesia's New Independence Nationalism in the Era of Social Media," *Media Asia* 53, no. 1 (2025): 161–170.

appear on podcasts hosted by Indonesian influencers. These collaborations significantly expanded his public visibility, enabling him to position himself not only as a sociopolitical commentator but also as a religious preacher capable of adapting his Islamic communication to broader audiences. Through these engagements, Siauw addressed issues and experiences that resonated beyond his established Muslim audience, thereby constructing, as he said, a sense of “shared reality.” This strategy allowed him to maintain his Islamic utopian thinking while participating in broader sociopolitical conversations, as reflected in his following statement.

“What I came to realise from 2021 and 2022 was that we actually do not *share a common reality*. This helped me understand why people can hate me, or why I can genuinely fail to understand them: we do not *share a common reality*. And I think this is largely because of TikTok. There is something interesting about social media. In the past, social media allowed us to choose the people we wanted to *follow* and then provided us with updates from them. For example, I might think, ‘I want to follow Daniel because I want to know what his everyday life is like.’ But since the emergence of TikTok and the changes brought about by its algorithms and AI, the logic has become different. The platform essentially says, ‘You do not know what you want, but I know what you want. So even if you follow someone, I do not necessarily want to show you their content. Instead, I will show you what I think you want to see.’ And it turns out that this works. TikTok and social media platforms today seem capable of reading our inner preferences. They show us things that we might even have thought we would not like. And that is why we eventually become addicted, right? From this point, we realise that people can inhabit different *common realities*. For example, when I support a particular opinion, I might ask, ‘How can someone not support this opinion? How can someone hold an opposing view?’ At the same time, others think exactly the same way because we do not share a common reality. At that point, I feel stuck. I begin to ask myself, ‘Is what I am communicating actually what they need? Or perhaps what they are discussing is something that they do not know about at all?’⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Daniel Mananta Network, “Aku Tidak Pernah Meninggalkan Kristen” | Ust.Felix Siauw – Daniel Tetangga Kamu,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1XzBzniCpo-&t=2803s> accessed January 13, 2026.

Thirdly, Siauw repositions himself as a hybrid religious-political communicator. As discussed earlier, this hybridity is not merely the result of Siauw's deliberate strategy but is also shaped by changing algorithmic dynamics amid the growing dominance of TikTok, which has contributed to what Paolo Gerbaudo terms "Tiktofication", mainly the transformation of the broader social media landscape under the influence of TikTok's platform logic.⁴⁵ Collaborative podcasts can therefore be understood as part of this broader platform-driven transformation. Through collaborations with Indonesian influencers, Siauw can navigate and address two interconnected domains, everyday politics and religious discourse. This thereby expands the scope of his communication beyond conventional forms of Islamic preaching. In political discussions, he comments on controversial policies, public statements, and the Prabowo administration's governance, including concerns over military involvement in civilian institutions and state expenditure.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, religious-oriented podcasts address lay audiences' questions about Islam and basic religious knowledge. Beyond NYTV, Siauw has participated extensively in collaborative podcasts with Indonesian public figures.

One notable example is his appearance on Pandji Pragiwaksono's *PUTBAL (Putar Balik/U-Turn)*, which addresses fundamental questions concerning Islamic beliefs and practices, including fasting, hadith, pilgrimage, prayer, mental health, and the distinctions between *kaafir* and *munafiq*.⁴⁷ By addressing these questions in an accessible conversational format, Siauw translates Islamic concepts into everyday language and extends his religious communication beyond established segmented Muslim audiences. This became evident in a conversation I had with a colleague who also works at the BRIN. He is an upper-middle-class man living in urban Jakarta and is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in

⁴⁵ Paolo Gerbaudo, "TikTok and the Algorithmic Transformation of Social Media Publics: From Social Networks to Social Interest Clusters," *New Media & Society* (2024): 1–18.

⁴⁶ This can be observed in his appearances on a diverse range of YouTube podcasts hosted under either individual or collective names, including Tretan Universe, Noice, HAS Creative which hosted by Gofar Hilman, as well as channels associated with Leon Hartono, Nikita Willy Official, Gianluca, Ferry Irwandi, and Meja Bundar Podcast. The diversity of these platforms and hosts illustrates Felix's expanding engagement with media spaces that extend beyond conventional religious preaching and into broader domains of popular culture and public discourse.

⁴⁷ Pragiwaksono, "Kembali Belajar Islam Feat Ust Felix Siauw.

overseas. Although he is familiar with Islam, his engagement appears to be largely limited to observing its principles and rituals. He also has extensive access to literature on the social sciences and politics, as well as information concerning contemporary Indonesian political affairs. During our phone conversation, he recommended me in listening Siau's podcasts on the themes of Islam. In his view, Siau's discussions of Islam, especially his collaborations with Panji, are more relevant and engaging than the podcasts of other Islamic preachers. His recommendation illustrates how Felix Siau's podcast has come to circulate beyond explicitly religious audiences and into the everyday media consumption of educated, urban Muslims.

"In my opinion, Felix Siau differs from other *ustadz* who discuss Islam in ways that are often more dogmatic and normative. Even when some preachers adopt more progressive or tolerant positions, their approaches do not necessarily resonate with my own way of thinking, partly because such positions can appear somewhat imposed. When their discussions are more natural, they tend to appeal primarily to audiences who already possess a relatively deep understanding of Islam, particularly those from *pesantren* backgrounds or associated with moderate Islamic circles. By contrast, Felix Siau's discussions of Islam appear to resonate more strongly with urban Muslim audiences, particularly those associated with the Tarbiyah movement and KAMMI. What distinguishes him, however, is his ability to speak fluently about youth culture and the anxieties young people experience in ways that seem spontaneous rather than contrived. His engagement with *One Piece*, for example, illustrates this point. He demonstrates that he has genuinely read the manga and possesses a relatively detailed understanding of it, rather than simply following a popular cultural trend. Admittedly, when discussing Islam, Felix can appear particularly explicit and often draws firm boundaries around what he considers religiously acceptable. Yet this assertiveness is also part of what audiences seem to accept as integral to his persona when they watch his podcasts". (Anonymous, 13 May 2026).

A second example is his collaboration with Raymond Chin on *Escape*, which brings together younger participants from diverse social and religious backgrounds. The programme featured figures such as stand-up comedian Akhmad Steivano (Koiyocabe) and Verren Ornela, a Christian and business influencer. Their participation enabled Siau to engage with questions about Islam from perspectives beyond

established Muslim circles. Across its two Ramadan seasons in 2025 and 2026, *Escape* produced approximately 60 long-form video discussions addressing various aspects of Islam, including sensitive issues and questions commonly raised by non-specialist audiences.⁴⁸ Verren's position as a religious minority and her candid questions about Islam were particularly significant, allowing Siauww to address issues that might otherwise fall outside conventional spaces for Islamic preaching. The programme also featured prominent public figures, including Anies Baswedan, further extending its religious discourse into broader public and political conversations. Beyond its online presence, *Escape* organised offline events in several Indonesian cities, attracting young urban audiences from diverse backgrounds.

Therefore, the significance of these collaborations lies not merely in their contribution to Siauww's visibility but in their capacity to expand the social boundaries of his religious communication. The podcast's conversational, oral format resonates with Indonesia's strong oral communicative tradition, enabling religious discourse to circulate through everyday conversations rather than in conventional preaching settings. By moving between religious instruction, socio-political commentary, and popular culture, Siauww demonstrates Islamic expertise, engages politically and socially attentive urban audiences, and challenges his public association with radicalism. His hybrid communicative position distinguishes him from digital preachers who tend to avoid politically sensitive issues. By strategically leveraging podcast infrastructure and adapting his communication strategies across platforms and audiences, Siauww successfully repositions himself as a digital entrepreneurial preacher. In this process, the HTI ban, the affordances of podcast communication, and changing political dynamics under the Prabowo administration have collectively opened new spaces for Siauww to reach audiences beyond his previous organisational constituency. Rather than diminishing his religious authority, these transformations have enabled him to reconfigure and extend it through personalised, platform-based communication.

Conclusion

This article demonstrates how the Islamic revivalist movement associated with Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), particularly its utopian

⁴⁸ Raymond Chin, "#escape-raymond chin x Ustadz Felix," https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLSNt1tjjz_ArTDv1jVMjhHlaHM51euDq0 accessed May 12, 2026.

vision of an Islamic order, has persisted despite the state's 2017 proscription of HTI under the Jokowi administration. The case of Felix Siauw illustrates how this ideological continuity can be sustained through new forms of digital religious communication. Two broader socio-political developments have created important opportunities for Siauw to reassert his presence in the digital public sphere. The first is the perceived sense of *voicelessness* among segments of the *ummah* following the acceptance of mining concessions by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which generated considerable debate among Indonesian Muslims. The second is the *One Piece* flag movement in August 2025, which mobilised young Indonesians through protests and provided Siauw with an opportunity to engage with a broader set of socio-political concerns beyond explicitly religious issues. These developments coincided with changes in the platform environment, particularly the growing dominance of TikTok and shifts in algorithmic visibility, which have altered the dynamics through which religious content circulates and reaches audiences.

Yet these structural and contextual conditions alone do not fully explain Siauw's continued prominence. Equally important is his capacity to position himself as an entrepreneurial preacher who can translate ideological commitments into accessible forms of digital communication. This capacity is a significant resource not necessarily shared equally by other digital Islamic preachers. By combining religious discourse with popular culture, youth-oriented communication, and socio-political commentary, Siauw has reached audience segments beyond the relatively bounded constituency of revivalist Muslims and HTI activists. His prominence, therefore, cannot be understood solely as the product of algorithmic change or favourable socio-political conditions; it also reflects his ability to continuously reconfigure his religious persona in response to changing digital and cultural environments.

Under these conditions, Siauw's post-ban trajectory demonstrates a shift from organisationally based Islamist mobilisation toward individualised and entrepreneurial forms of digital religious authority. Rather than abandoning ideological continuity, he has modified its communicative forms, language, media practices, and target audiences. The HTI ban therefore transformed, rather than eliminated, revivalist discourse by encouraging its adaptation into personalised and platform-based forms of religious authority. Siauw's case illustrates how

ideological projects can survive organisational proscription by becoming increasingly mediated through individual religious entrepreneurs and digital platforms. []

Bibliography

- Ahnaf, Mohammad Iqbal. "Between Revolution and Reform: The Future of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia." *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* 2, no. 2 (2009).
- . "Hizb Al-Tahrir: Its Ideology and Theory for Collective Radicalization." Kristian Steiner and Andreas Onnerfors (eds.). *Expressions of Radicalization*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. "Algorithmic Religious Authority: Digital Islamic Preachers and Mainstreaming the Meaning of Jihad." *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 14, no. 3 (2025).
- . "The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities." *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10, no. 1 (2020).
- . "The Rise of Cool Ustadz: Preaching, Subcultures, and the Pemuda Hijrah Movement." Saat Norshahril and Ahmad Najib Burhani (eds.) *The New Santri*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2020.
- Alatas, Syed Farid. "The Function of Myths in the Justification of Muslim Extremism." Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman (eds.), *Pathways to Contemporary Islam: New Trends in Critical Engagement*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020.
- Arifianto, Alexander R. "Clerics to Coal Miners: The Decline of Indonesia's Islamic Civil Society." [https:// www.newmandala.org/clerics-to-coal-miners-the-decline-of-indonesias-islamic-civil-society/](https://www.newmandala.org/clerics-to-coal-miners-the-decline-of-indonesias-islamic-civil-society/) Accessed October 24, 2025..
- . *From 'High' to 'Normal' Politics: Muhammadiyah and the Prabowo Presidency*. Singapore, 2025.
- Baulch, Emma, and Alila Pramiyanti. "Hijabers on Instagram: Using Visual Social Media to Construct the Ideal Muslim Woman." *Social Media + Society* 4, no. 4 (2018).

- Beta, Annisa R. "Commerce, Piety and Politics: Indonesian Young Muslim Women's Groups as Religious Influencers." *New Media and Society* 21, no. 10 (2019).
- . "The Muslimah Intimate Public: Re-Considering Contemporary Da'wa Activists in Indonesia." *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 7, no. 1–2 (2020).
- Beta, Annisa R. "Hijabers: How Young Urban Muslim Women Redefine Themselves in Indonesia." *International Communication Gazette* 76, no. 4–5 (2014).
- Bruinessen, Martin Van. "Overview of Muslim Organisations, Associations, and Movements in Indonesia." Martin Van Bruinessen (ed). *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the 'Conservative Turn'*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusuf Ishak, 2013.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. *The Banning of Hizbut Tahrir and Consolidation of Democracy in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS, 2017.
- Cahyono, Guntur. "Pemanfaatan Media Youtube Dakwah Ustadz Adi Hidayat Dalam Pengembangan Materi Fikih Madrasah Ibtidaiyah." *At-Tarbawi: Jurnal Kajian Kependidikan Islam* 4, no. 1 (2019).
- Campbell, Heidi A. *Digital Creatives and the Rethinking of Religious Authority*. London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2021.
- Campbell, Heidi A. "Introduction: The Rise of the Study of Digital Religion." Heidi A Campbell (ed). *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*. London and New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Chaplin, Chris. "Salafi Activism and the Promotion of a Modern Muslim Identity: Evolving Mediums of Da'wa Amongst Yogyakarta University Students." *South East Asia Research* 26, no. 1 (2018).
- . "Salafi Islamic Piety as Civic Activism: Wahdah Islamiyah and Differentiated Citizenship in Indonesia." *Citizenship Studies* 22, no. 2 (2018).

- Chin, Raymond. “#escape-raymond chin x Ustadz Felix.” https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLSNt1tjjz_ArTDv1jVMjhHlaHM51euDq0 accessed May 12, 2026.
- Daniel Mananta Network. “Aku Tidak Pernah Meninggalkan Kristen” | Ust.Felix Siauw – Daniel Tetangga Kamu.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1XzBzniCpo&t=2803s> accessed January 13, 2026.
- . “Dibalik Kehidupan Ustadz Felix Siauw-Daniel Tetanggamu.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qiyTS-TTEMI> accessed January 12, 2026.
- Dharta, Firdaus Yuni, Tri Susanto, Khairul Arief Rahman, and Anggy Wira Pambudi. “The Jolly Roger Flag Welcomes August 17th, 2025: Indonesia’s New Independence Nationalism in the Era of Social Media.” *Media Asia* 53, no. 1 (2025).
- Fansuri, Hamzah. “On the Road of Hijrah: Contesting Identity through Urban Mobilities in Contemporary Indonesian Muslims.” *Archipel* 105 (2023).
- . “When Piety Is Framed as Threatening: The Hijrah Movement within the Politics of Religious Moderation in Indonesia.” *Muslim Politics Review* 4, no. 2 (2025).
- Fealy, Greg. “Hizbut Tahrir in Indonesia: Seeking a ‘total’ Islamic Identity.” Shahram Akbarzadeh and Fethi Mansouri (eds.). *Islam and Political Violence: Muslim Diaspora and Radicalism in the West*. London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007.
- Febriana Fauzi, Niki Alma. “Zulkarnain EL Madury and the Micro-Celebrity Ustaz Phenomenon.” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 51, no. 151 (2023).
- Gerbaudo, Paolo. “TikTok and the Algorithmic Transformation of Social Media Publics: From Social Networks to Social Interest Clusters.” *New Media & Society* (2024).
- Hadiz, Vedi. “Imagine All the People? Mobilising Islamic Populism for Right-Wing Politics in Indonesia.” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 48, no. 4 (2018).
- . *Islamic Populism in Indonesia and the Middle East*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

- . “The ‘Floating’ Ummah in the Fall of ‘Ahok’ in Indonesia.” *TRaNS: Trans -Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 7, no. 2 (2019).
- Hadiz, Vedi, and Richard Robison. *Reorganising Power in Indonesia*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Hamdani, Hamdani. “New Religious Preacher in the Changing Religious Authority: The Offline and Online Preacher of Ustadz Abdul Somad.” Saat Noorshahril and Ahmad Najib Burhani (eds.). *The New Santri: Challenges to Traditional Religious Authority in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusuf Ishak, 2020.
- Hasan, Noorhaidi. *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militancy, and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia*. Cornell University Press, 2005.
- . “The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere.” *Contemporary Islam* 3, no. 3 (2009).
- HEFNER, CLAIRE-MARIE. “Morality, Religious Authority, and the Digital Edge.” *American Ethnologist* 49, no. 3 (2022).
- Herdiansah, Ari Ganjar. “Digital Islamist Activism and Popular Culture: Propagating Islamism among Indonesian Youth.” *Studia Islamika* 33, no. 35–70 (2026).
- Heryanto, Ariel. *Identity and Pleasure: The Politic of Indonesian Screen Culture*. Singapore and Japan: NUS Press & Kyoto University Press, 2014.
- Hew, Wai Weng. “Packaging, Persuasion and Propaganda: Popular Preaching and Islamic Counter-Publics in Indonesia.” *Asian Studies Review* (March 28, 2022).
- . “Piety, Politics, and the Popularity of Felix Siauw.” <https://www.newmandala.org/piety-politics-popularity-felix-siauw/> accessed April 27, 2021..
- . “The Art Of Dakwah: Social Media, Visual Persuasion and the Islamist Propagation of Felix Siauw.” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (2018).
- Kailani, Najib. “Aspiring to Prosperity: The Economic Theology of Urban Muslims in Contemporary Indonesia.” UNSW Canberra, 2015.

- . “Creating Entrepreneurial and Pious Muslim Subjectivity in Globalised Indonesia.” Leonard C. Sebastian, Syafiq Hasyim, and Alexander R. Arifianto (eds.). *Rising Islamic Conservatism in Indonesia Islamic Groups and Identity Politics*. London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2020.
- Kholili, Muhammad, Ahmad Izudin, and Muhammad Lutfi Hakim. “Islamic Proselytizing in Digital Religion in Indonesia: The Challenges of Broadcasting Regulation.” *Cogent Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (2024).
- Kozinets, Robert V. *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*. England: Sage, 2010.
- . “The Field behind the Screen: Using Netnography for Marketing Research in Online Communities.” *Journal of Market ing Research* 39 (2002).
- Lim, Merlyna. “@Archipelago Online: The Internet and Political Activism.” University of Twente, 2005.
- . *Radicalism and Anti Americanism in Indonesia: The Role of the Internet*. Washington DC/Honolulu: East West Center (Policy Studies Series), 2005.
- . “Sticks and Stones, Clicks and Phones: Contextualizing the Role of Digital Media in the Politics of Transformation.” Richter Carola, Anna Antonakis, and Cilja Harders (eds.). *Digital Media and the Politics of Transformation in the Arab World and Asia*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2018.
- Millah, Asep Saeful, Dindin Solahudin, and Bahrudin Bahrudin. “Retorika Dakwah Ustadz Handy Bonny.” *Tabligh: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam* 3, no. 2 (2020).
- Mohamed Osman, Mohamed Nawab. *Hizbut Tabrir Indonesia and Political Islam: Identity, Ideology and Religio-Political Mobilization*. London and New York: Routledge, 2020.
- . “Reviving the Caliphate in the Nusantara: Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia’s Mobilization Strategy and Its Impact in Indonesia.” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, no. 4 (2010).

- . “The Transnational Network of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia.” *South East Asia Research* 18, no. 4 (2010).
- Muhtadi, Burhanuddin. “The Quest for Hizbut Tahrir in Indonesia.” *Asian Journal of Social Science* 37, no. 4 (2009).
- Muslim, Acep. “Digital Religion and Religious Life in Southeast Asia.” *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 4, no. 1–2 (2017).
- Nafik, Muthohirin. ““Faith in the Digital Age: The Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism and the Plurality of Young Muslims’ Piety on Social Media”.” *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 2, no. 1 (2025).
- Nisa, Eva F. “Social Media and the Birth of an Islamic Social Movement: ODOJ (One Day One Juz) in Contemporary Indonesia.” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (2018).
- Njoto-Feillard, Gwenaél. *Hizbut Tabrir Indonesia in 2014: The Political Economy of Discontent*. Singapore, 2015.
- Rakhmani, Inaya. “Mainstream Islam: Television Industry Practice and Trends in Indonesian Sinetron.” *Asian Journal of Social Science* 3 & 4, no. 42 (2014).
- . *Mainstreaming Islam in Indonesia*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- . “The Personal Is Political: Gendered Morality in Indonesia’s Halal Consumerism.” *TRaNS: Trans -Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 7, no. 2 (2019).
- . “Understanding the Floating Ummah in Neoliberal Indonesia.” *Contemporary Politics* (2023).
- Rakhmani, Inaya, and Diatyka Widya Permata Yasih. “Articulation and Re-Articulation of Grassroots Grievances in Indonesia.” <https://positionspolitics.org/diatyka-widya-permata-yasih-and-inaya-rakhmani-articulation-and-re-articulation-of-grassroots-grievances-in-indonesia-2025/> accessed January 29, 2026..
- Raya, Moch. Khafidz Fuad. “Digital Islam: New Space for Authority and Religious Commodification among Islamic Preachers in Contemporary Indonesia.” *Contemporary Islam* 19 (2024).

- Rohmatulloh, Dawam Multazamy, Muhammad As'ad, and Robi'ah Machtumah Malayati. "Gus Baha, Santri Gayeng and the Rise of Traditionalist Preachers on Social Media." *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 16, no. 2 (2022).
- Rosyid, Muhammad, and Syamsul Rijal. "Riding to Paradise: Pop-Islamism and Muslim Biker Movement in Central Java." *Al-Jami'ab: Journal of Islamic Studies* 63, no. 2 (2025).
- Shaharuddin, Maaruf. "Religion and Utopian Thinking Among The Muslim of Southeast Asia." *Local and Global: Social Transformation in Southeast Asia*. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2005.
- . *Religion and Utopian Thinking Among the Muslims of Southeast Asia*. Singapore, 2000.
- Slama, Martin. "Practising Islam through Social Media in Indonesia." *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (2018).
- . "Social Media and Islamic Practice: Indonesian Ways of Being Digitally Pious." Edwin Jurriens and Ross Tapsell (eds). *Digital Indonesia: Connectivity and Divergence*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusuf Ishak, 2017.
- . "Social Media and the Question of Change in Indonesia's Field of Islam." *Indonesia* 119, no. 1 (2025).
- Slama, Martin, and Bart Barendregt. "Online Publics in Muslim Southeast Asia: In Between Religious Politics and Popular Pious Practices" 5 (2018).
- Sunarwoto. "Negotiating Salafi Islam and the State: The Madkhaliyya in Indonesia." *Die Welt des Islams* 60, no. 2–3 (2020).
- . "Online Salafi Rivalries in Indonesia: Between Sectarianism and 'Good' Citizenship." *Religion, State and Society* 49, no. 2 (2021).
- . "Salafi Dakwah Radio : A Contest for Religious Authority." *Archipel* 91 (2016).
- Umar, Ahmad Rizky Mardhatillah. "Religious Coal Rush: Why Do Indonesian Muslim Leaders Accept Coal Mining Concessions?" <https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/religious-coal-rush-why-do-indonesian-muslim-leaders-accept-coal-mining-concessions/> accessed October 24, 2025..

Zaenuri, Lalu Ahmad. "Reconceptualising Da'aa: A Study of Tuan Gurus' Perceptions and Motivations in Adopting Digital Da'wa". *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 19, no. 1 (2025).

Zulkifli. "Struggling for Islamic Chaliphate in A Changing Malay Society." *Ulumuna* 28, no. 1 (2024).