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BALKAN JOURNALS

Religion and Its Presence in The Global Digital Space: Approaching Big Data Technology Through the Lens of International Studies

Abdullah Sumrahadi, Andika Priyandana Sunoko, Musa Maliki

Abstract

This article aims to explain the relationship and significance of religion in modern social sciences, especially the study of globalization, which is an essential marker in international relations. With a textual approach, this research has a background in explaining how the international sociological perspective is used to read the new social reality between world religions and their da'wah when absorbed into the world of data. How is the conceptual and theoretical response to it, and how are contemporary critical social theory reading tools alongside the sophistication of extensive data study analysis, which is suspected of being the maximization and expansion of modern capitalism? It is approached with a study of literature studies commonly used in qualitative research to read such a reality. Ultimately, it resulted in the conclusion that adaptation is the key to moderation in the mechanism of modern religious da'wah in the era of big data, which is so expansive while still maintaining the spirit of intellectual criticism of stakeholders.

Keywords: Data, information, globalization, technology, religion.

Introduction

Before continuing with a more in-depth discussion, it would be best for us to begin by reflecting on the following short sentence as an opener and the discourse that will be studied that in the sacred life, one lives by consuming the life of other people or the like to obtain the objects of life. Nothing, such as birth, death, art, and personal life, is unrelated. Everything interrelates (Attali, 1997, p. 23) and eventually intertwines global interaction in all human life formations.

The use of global terminology develops and commonly captures all levels of discourse in the modern age. Thus, it is finally regarded as the functioning movement called globalization. This article captures the understanding that global movements in all walks of life that have elements of interest and become globalization are seen as an understanding for all people under the auspices of the nation-state to be more open and creative without releasing their original cultural identity. This understanding has given rise to various influences; some consider it open, and some face it hesitantly.

Here, the leading personage with a mass base should determine globalization through positive reflections. However, with globalization, poor countries that still need to technologically develop enjoy the benefit since it does not burden them with research and development budgets up to new product development. In terms of social, economic, and political, globalization will create an atmosphere of openness because, through the moment, collective control is produced globally by the possibility of diminishing boundaries of the nation-state or the end of the nation-state (Ohmae, 1995). Such a diminishing can create community integration in one shadow ideology, namely globalization itself or the so-called "rapid developments in communications technology, transport and information which bring the remotest parts of the world within easy reach" (Akbar & Donnan, 1994, pp. 1-20). However, it can be compared with the impact of the Industrial Revolution on religion (Zainal Adnan et al., 2019).

However, developing countries, including Indonesia, deliberate the moment so that anti-globalization could emerge about specific social, political, economic, and religious considerations. Regarding the actual conditions, we perceive globalization differently, depending on how nation-state actors dispose of the moment. Therefore, it brings about history in world development as it is abruptly popular in society and seems to be a new symptom of history (Nugroho, 2001, p. 7). In the same way, the terminology is a keyword employed daily by politicians, bureaucrats, researchers, and ordinary people (Nugroho, 2001, p. 7).

After all, what some futurologists predicted would come true, among other things, is that there would be a *future shock* (Toffler, 1987a) because the future is not regarded as a historical process that will pass. However, a new alienated thing in this life, so when it comes later, new oddities will require tactics. However, it is, consciously or not, that human life is made in a new direction because of its construction. It is also (Rees, 2018) interpreted that the future construction of humanity is bound to the future of science and hinges on how successfully we harness technological advances to address our challenges. If we use science to solve our problems while avoiding its dystopian risks, we must reason globally, collectively, and optimistically about the long term. If pursued and applied wisely, advances in biotechnology, cyber technology, robotics, and artificial intelligence could empower us to boost the developing and developed world and overcome the threats humanity faces on Earth, from climate change to nuclear war. Further advances in space science will allow humans to explore the solar system and beyond with robots and AI. However, there is no "Plan B" for Earth's viable alternative within reach if we do not care for our home planet.

The constructions designed by human beings as the primary instrument to change the world cause new unpredictable uncertainties that require strategy, openness, and dialogue (Madjid, 1998) to deal with the uncertainties constructively. In this respect, an analysis pointed out that today's world is chaotic and completely unpredictable. The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the end of the Cold War, the Gulf War, the gradual decline of the influence of the United States, and the emergence of Europe, Japan, and the New Industrial countries (NICs) have produced uncertainty in this world (Nugroho, 2000, pp. 84-85).

Religious Society and World View

One can conclude that the changes and shifts cover some essential elements pointed out in the writings above. Because of globalization, the world is small and easily accessible or interpreted as a single place (Robertson, 1992, as cited in Nugroho, 2001, p. 8).

Globalization has influenced the pattern of thought structures among religious communities. It has incredible implications for the structure of traditional religious values, including the local identity of everyone's life that is further away from the founders of the nation-state struggling. Therefore, critical responses and reflections should exist to get a dialogic form, not in a political trend but in a broad

sense. The constructive dialogue should bring together interfaith activists, including local and global actors. This constructive dialogue is increasingly important, especially in the internet era and the emergence of media such as Facebook and YouTube. However, Theobald (2009) states that the success of Web 2.0 is not in line with the quality of interfaith relations online. The destructive atmosphere is more pronounced than the constructive one. Efforts to find similarities between religions are less pronounced. Content containing degrading arguments, causing polemics, including with the aim of religious conversion, is easy to find. Despite the frenzy of chatter in Web 2.0, fortunately, in the Indonesian context, religious organizations are still aware of the importance of building interfaith harmony in inter-religious dialogue. Kim, Banawiratma, and Sofjan (2020) examine this in the context of religious pluralism discourse in Indonesia's post-reformation era. Although there are differences in perspectives between the pros and cons of religious pluralism at the practical level, this effort is still commendable, considering that religion still has the potential power to influence the thoughts and behavior of Indonesian people.

With the advent of globalization and the resulting increase in data flow, the role of religion has become more significant. This global phenomenon has redefined the essence of religion and sparked religious discussions since the 1980s. The resulting revitalization has already reshaped the perception of social-political life, particularly in the United States. This shift has underscored the growing collective recognition of the role of religion in a nation's social, cultural, economic, and political spheres. While not explicitly focusing on Catholicism or Protestantism, Bellah viewed this from the perspective of *Civil Religion* (Bellah, 2000, pp. 237-270).

Thus, the current religion ideally should be able to take a strategic position in the globalization influx; in addition, it must strengthen the bargaining position of religion in the recent context, like social, cultural, political, scientific, and technological. Religion should not always be closed-selfish with its traditional "simplicity" because of the social changes ahead. In thinking about the relationship between religion and change, Franz Magnis-Suseno assumed that social change is an ongoing fact brought about by forces largely beyond our control, and there is no possibility of breaking it (Magnis-Suseno, 1999, p. 80). Social change during the COVID-19 pandemic can be an excellent example of change arguably beyond our control. Social distancing, staying at home, implementing strict health protocols, a significant increase in the number of deaths, and negative news have significantly increased stress, including depression, in the general and specific population (Necho et al.,

2020; Restauri & Sheridan, 2020; Brown et al., 2020; Varma et al., 2021). Here, although it requires further study on specific cases related to the COVID-19 pandemic, religion may serve as one of the ideal solutions to relieve stress, depression, and anxiety and provide comfort regarding suffering as well as death (Kelley & Chan, 2012; Sabry & Vohra, 2013; Meier et al., 2016; Pramesona & Taneepanichskul, 2018; Aftab et al., 2018).

More on the specified ideals, religion theologically or sociologically can be regarded as an element for understanding the world (Bellah, 2000, p. 203). There is hardly a complex problem for any religion to get the premise here. From the theological point of view, like Islam, it is caused by the omnipresent nature of religion, namely both through its symbols and values; the religion contains (appears) everywhere, influences even shape the social, cultural, political, and economic structures in public policy. Because of these characteristics, it is presumed that religion is expected to provide a guide for values of a discourse of human action everywhere, be it in socio-cultural, economic, or political spheres (Effendi, 2001, p. 7). Meanwhile, sociologically, religion is more or less a critical factor in the process of transformation and modernization (Ahmed & Hart, as cited in Effendi, 2001, p. 7).

Despite the religious features, we should note that religion always has "two faces"; on one hand, it inherently has an exclusive, particularistic, and primordial identity, and on the other hand, it has such a rich identity as inclusive and transcending one. Having understood the religion's locus and putting it in a more tangible context based on both illustrations and explanations, it relates directly to social conditions and therefore frequently creates tension between the interests of social and religious issues. Islamophobia can be an example of the tension that occurs in society. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has made observations on Islamophobia for thirteen years and produced 13 reports. Actions associated with certain Muslim actors or groups can sometimes influence public perceptions and societal attitudes regarding Islam (OIC Islamophobia Observatory, 2020).

Societies and Religion in the Data Order

Some thinkers and socio-political activists attempted to construct an applicable discourse to make the relationship between society and religion more tangible. However, the construction of thought issues must be able to adopt theological and sociological origins of religious social reality. Because the excesses of religious values on social problems could not be realized in mechanical-holistic and institutional design, it is complicated to find obvious facts on what makes both unrelated.

Therefore, the relationship between the two domains will always bring about different forms and intensities that will permanently alter not according to a particular doctrine but under the real problem in a flexible shape.

Based on the arguments, we can take an experience from the United States as a comparison, as written by Benton Johnson:

> In the early 1960s, there was a widespread belief among social scientists that religion had become irrelevant to the major social processes of modern societies. The prevailing opinion was that religion no longer exerted an independent influence on public affairs. Twenty years later, this widespread belief in the retreating influence of religion in American life is seriously distorted. There have been too many surprising developments and too much empirical research providing contradictory data for any responsible social scientist to claim that religion has no influence on public affairs in the United States or that it has retired quietly to the sidelines of social life (Johnson, as cited in Hammond, 1999, p. 301).

In its simplest form, the classification suffices to illustrate the realities concerned. Although they recognize the existence of two different structures or bipolar in more comprehensive public affairs, whether the relationship between the problems of society and religion is mechanically inseparable—non-secular/theocratic—or both must indeed be separated secularly (Cox, as cited in Effendi, 2001, p. 10).

Apart from the reality that this wide-ranging dual view developed, society has inadvertently been trapped into reductionism, as if the social problems deal only with secular and religious issues. The problems the religious community must resolve are still more to come, for example, improving social welfare and overcoming people's misery. The authorities of classical interpretations, such as Muslim scholars *(ulama)*, priests, monks, and others, are only preoccupied with vertical matters with the Creator. They should be able to combine spiritual and physical (worldly), demanding real humanity's touches.

We cannot separate social life from religion. Bellah argues that a phrase contains several intended ambiguities in the relationship between social science and religion. It implies that social science has implications for religion and religious aspects (Bellah, 2000, pp. 339-340).

Following Bellah's argument, if religious people get and achieve education proportionately, they will be wise in understanding social realities and changes and

preventing them from being disagreeable only. Because of adequate knowledge and education, religious texts can be read critically and carefully so that anything is constantly regarded as secular. Here, as religion is defended fanatically or by "blind imitation," it tends to be repressive and anarchist, so the religious people commonly spend energy fighting against "pseudo-enemies." Consequently, they are trapped in a narrow primordialism, leading to anarchism (Sofyan, 1999, p. 23). The true enemy of religious communities is not people who embrace other religions but contemporary challenges in blurring the future orientation of civilization, the vanishing of values, and all other destructive developments.

Research Methods

Literature research using qualitative methods is a research approach that focuses on collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data originating from literary sources that are relevant to the research topic. Literature research in the context of qualitative methods is usually used to understand, describe, or interpret certain phenomena, concepts, or issues that have been expressed or debated in various written works, articles, books, or other literary sources. Literature research using qualitative methods can be an essential first step in the research process, helping researchers understand the existing theoretical foundation before continuing with field research or more in-depth research. It can also help identify knowledge gaps in the literature that can be the focus of further research.

They are used to start and guide discussion from the beginning to the end of this article. A narrative style and descriptive discussion that applies a sequence of ideas is an essential guide when reading the reviews, starting from the following continuing statement.

Results and Discussions

The Impact of Global Capitalism on Religion

Because of skepticism in religious thought and development, we can analyze the arguments about global inequality in religion during the past few centuries using the theory of imperialism and the Wallerstein (1974) theory of modern world systems, where international systems theory is a framework for understanding how states and non-state actors interact globally. On the other hand, the internet and data have changed how the world communicates and makes decisions, influencing

international relations' political, economic, and social aspects. International systems theory focuses on interactions between states that include political, financial, and military elements. Some fundamental notes in this theory include state sovereignty, international anarchy, and power distribution. The international system is a structure where states interact based on specific rules and norms. Then states, international organizations (such as the UN), multinational corporations, and other non-state actors can relate to power in the international system, which is often determined by military and economic capabilities and the influence of diplomatic sophistication. It is understood that the internet and data technology have increased, affecting almost all aspects of human life, including international relations. Big data has revolutionized understanding and analyzing political, economic, and security strategies. Therefore, the internet and big data are essential in international systems theory, influencing state strategies and international interactions.

First, it will discuss how imperialism engenders a global inequality that eventually affects religions. This theory was first put forward by the British historian J. A. Hobson (Therik, 2000, p. 40). From Hobson's perspective, colonialism stems from efforts to find new commercial areas (new markets). The rapid progress of the industry resulted in overproduction. The local market can no longer accept the supply of products. People can only buy a small amount of the many goods produced. This overproduction forced the big producers to expand the market to get a new area for their profits. During this expansion, they used the concepts of conquest or subjugation accompanied by violence. Hobson refers to this condition as imperialism. Thus, the West and other large countries have indirectly started development and tend to impoverish small countries.

The *second* approach examines how world system theory can uncover religious inequality globally. This theory is like the theory of dependency; in this category, the theorem unites the two. Immanuel Wallerstein promotes this theory in interpreting the reality of global inequality. He thought a capitalist economic system governed the world, dividing it into core states and external fields. As written by Peter Beyer (1994, p. 16), a particular region and the nation-states within it are part of the core, semi-periphery, or periphery, depending on what position their economies have in the world system division of labor. Core areas dominate the system. Here is where capital is concentrated. According to Wallerstein (1974), the capitalist world system is divided into the core, the semi-periphery, and the periphery—the world- and then developed into the modern world system. The essence of this theoretical approach is:

1. Economic superiority and class struggle in the political field;

2. Group conflict as a determinant of human behavior;

3. The world economic system has been created with a hierarchy of countries that are class-dominated based on economic power and cause underdevelopment in all peripheral countries;

4. Inherent contradictions mark the world economy and then experience an unavoidable crisis and gradual decline.

The core of world development has relied on the capital-based development model. Consequently, the religious community must be critical in interpreting the core. The interpretation is vital to understanding the positive aspects of capitalism, which, honestly, if you want to be recognized, has helped a lot in developing religion. We may give an anti-capitalist opinion here, but we must not be anti-discourse against the system they have been building. How can we have a strategy to compete with capitalists while we do not know the ins and outs of the forest of capitalism? As a critical and modern religious society, the central theme that must be addressed is how to view religion on its substance ethically and with universal values rather than looking at it dogmatically and too formally. Thus, religion will develop well. In the following points, the discussion of this article will try to present an analysis of the growth of technology designed by capitalists and super-capitalists, which can contribute to and have a positive role in religion. This exploration of technology's role in religion is a fascinating area we will explore.

Theoretical Approaches in International Relations

As we delve into this section, it is essential to note that it is not a conclusion or a result of a hypothesis. Instead, it serves as a bridge, connecting the ideas presented in this writing. This connection will help us construct a narrative that links the review points discussed earlier to this section. The influence and connection between religion and the global social space in the context of big data technology can be explained through several relevant theories in the study of international relations. Meanwhile, other theoretical approaches, such as liberalism in international relations, emphasize international cooperation and free trade. In big data technology, data collected from various sources can be used to understand the preferences and interests of non-state actors, such as large technology companies. This data can also support diplomacy and interfaith dialogue efforts promoted by international

organizations. Moreover, constructivism theory can also be used when emphasizing the importance of identity, norms, and ideas in international relations. In this case, big data technology can be used to understand how religions worldwide influence identity and social norms. Big data can help identify trends in religious thinking and shifts in social norms that may affect foreign policy and international relations.

The theory of human security is no less critical and the fulcrum of the main study, which strongly emphasizes individual protection and the fulfillment of basic human needs (Tsai, 2009). In big data technology, data can be used to monitor the impact of religious-based conflicts on civilian populations and efforts to meet their basic needs. This data can be used to design more effective humanitarian aid programs and peace efforts. It is important to remember that using big data technologies in international relations can also raise questions of ethics, privacy, and data security. Therefore, apart from using these theories, it is also necessary to consider these aspects in analyzing the influence and connection between religion in the global social space in big data technology.

The core of human security theory is an approach that prioritizes individuals and human communities in understanding and protecting security. This theory shifts attention from conventional approaches that primarily focus on state or military security toward a broader understanding of the daily threats and challenges individuals, groups, and communities face. Human Security recognizes that a person's security relates to physical threats such as war, armed conflict, crime, and other aspects that affect human well-being.

Physical security includes protecting individuals from direct threats to their lives and bodily integrity, including armed conflict, crime, terrorism, and natural disasters. More than that, there are also security principles that ensure that individuals and communities have sufficient access to healthy and nutritious food, as well as the sustainability of food resources. After being food-safe, individuals are also safe and must be healthy, including access to adequate health care, vaccinations, and disease prevention to live healthily. Health involves overcoming poverty, unemployment, and economic inequality and increasing individual and community access to financial resources.

Environmental security is also vital because it involves protecting natural resources and the environment to prevent the negative impacts of climate change, ecosystem damage, and drought. Apart from the social security environment, it is

also fundamental because of human rights, social inclusion, justice, and efforts to overcome social inequality and discrimination. In human security theory, security is not only measured by the absence of physical threats but also by the extent to which individuals and societies can overcome these challenges and achieve higher levels of well-being. This approach has important implications for policymaking, emphasizing the need to consider broader humanitarian dimensions to maintain and improve global security. The rise of the power of big data driven by the power of global capitalism, which is diluting ethical principles whose sources come from religion and belief, makes it essential to study their position and influence as well as what the solutions will be in the future apart from just reflecting on them.

Religion and Internet: A Current Reality

Some new technologies seem threatening, but others are the contrary—they support the ability of individuals to face the state (Toffler, 1987b, p. 147). The speediness in the fields of science and technology of the late 20th century gave birth to instant modern civilization. Lifestyle performance reaches all corners of the globe at the speed of light. Thus, information has become an essential element of the development of contemporary society.

The community is now definitely moving toward the information society; the community is indirectly designed to be highly dependent on information flow. Likewise, in our societies, people who, on average, do not care about technology are today the active consumers of all technological outputs. The so-called "global village" is now underway. In his book Guttenberg Galaxy (1962), McLuhan explains that electronic interdependence, which has never happened before, has recreated the world in the imagination of a global village. This view is based on one of his views that the development of technology in electronic mass media widely in the 1950s, such as radio and television, has made it easier for information to flow to all corners of the world across national borders and international relations schemes. One of the impacts of media development, especially in Western countries at that time, was the emergence of an oral society, a society in which the interdependence between the elements that form it is the result of the debate between the causes and effects of the dynamics within the structure of society that interact with each other. These characteristics are considered the essential nature of a village society, which is also the fundamental nature of a global village society (McLuhan, 1962, p. 26).

The community of inter-societal relations is one of the elements of society that is most aware of the dimensions of this global dependency. These dimensions include the speed and reach of information dissemination, homogenization of cultural norms, and blurring of national boundaries in the digital age. In another part, McLuhan (1962, p. 36) explains another impact of the development of media technology: that today, human society lives and lives under the scope of the global village. The following is a metaphor McLuhan (1962, p. 36) used to explain the global village concept: "We live in a single constructed space resonance with tribal drums." The metaphor is based on the discoveries of electromagnetic technology and now the internet with data, which has created new sectors or fields in the overall problems faced by humans, which are related. Consequently, we all live in a single room where the spaces of social life overlap. McLuhan wants to convey that technological developments have affected the entire society where they live in the imagination of a shared space, which is likened to a global village. It is a global village in the new order of a new society through computer network technology between countries, known as the Internet, and various applications that support it.

Critical reactions to technology, as characteristic of modern society, are not a recent phenomenon. Throughout its history, human beings have been constantly warned that they have created forces they cannot control, that the machines they created would take over the planet and demand total human subjugation, and that giving trust to natural science and technology is tantamount to agreeing with Satan (Nasikun, 1997). The latest technology, like the internet, offers virtual concepts that in religion can also be called supernatural. With the hope of fair distribution of science and technology, because of the ease of obtaining information in the internet community, people will no longer know the geographical distance, race, religion, ethnicity, and gender. All have the same right to get information. We can carry out activities without leaving home, for example, looking for schools, negotiating in business, political mediation of a country, and preaching a possible religion.

Thus, the internet also seems to be the mind or the outer brain of all humans on Earth. Several pioneers of the internet thought that the means of communication and information created would bring sped-up processes of celebration of the Earth. As a result, humanity will be pushed into a significant organic unity, which is expected to be the ultimate terminal of spirituality as predicted in the 1930s by a paleontologist, who is also a pastor of the French Jesuit Order, named Teilhard de Chardin, the Omega point, the endpoint of the evolutionary process of the universe (Teilhard de Chardin, 1965).

Based on this theory, Chardin tried to show that we could maintain the eternal values of religion after being united with a modern scientific view of cosmic evolution. Cosmic evolution, in principle, is the tendency of objects to come together to form more complex and unified systems, starting from atoms, molecules, cells, organ systems, and finally, the human body, which has a complex nerve system. The human brain, as the center of the nervous system, is quite complex and enables thinking abilities, self-awareness, and moral responsibility. Ultimately, all human consciousness will unite with the Omega point, which is none other than God itself (Zaleski, 1999, p. 12). Of course, Chardin's idea was so extraordinary that the Catholic Church banned it. However, the supremely confident idea of evolutionism is well known in the generation of flowers in the 1960s who tried to find a shortcut between mystical unification by fleeing technology, returning to nature, and then using psychotropic mushrooms to get a psychedelic experience, which they called similar to a mystical experience. History has documented the failure of these flower generations, but a small fraction became the internet's founders. De Chardin's insight into evolutionism is secularized. Valentin Turchin improved de Chardin's evolutionary ideas with cybernetic theory (Turchin, 1977). According to Turchin, several Meta-System Shifts marked the process of evolution. In the Meta-System Shift, a system that was initially an independent entity suddenly became part of a greater universalization.

We can also see human society as supernatural beings—*Übermensch,* according to Nietzsche—superhuman, in a meta-system comprising systems named humans as cells. The organ of this new type of creature is none other than the entire physical organ of man as the member, with all the technological systems. The physiology of this new creature is nothing but culture and civilization that binds community members into a dynamic unity. According to Turchin, the birth of human society is the most advanced Meta-system transition in the evolutionary process of life on Earth. Turchin also believes that many more meta-system transitions will confront the future historical development of human civilization. The concrete form is when communication and information technology, as a community organ, become faster, wiser, easier, and more comprehensive. With various applications and new media, the internet is a sign of a new meta-system transition.

If the new meta-system is realized, humans are already in a new grip, which inevitably has to be involved. The question is whether all people living in actual entities as nation-states are ready for the new meta-system. Several new paradoxes emerge when responding to and expecting the future of technology, among which

Nicholas Negroponte (1998) revealed three reasons for the paradox. *First*, digital media is not available to executives, politicians, parents, and those interested in understanding this radical and millennial new culture; even when computers—the internet—have appeared everywhere, interpersonal relationships are still considered primitive.

Second, the representation of the new technology era has received an extraordinary response and is consumed not only by the device or theory but also by alternative lifestyles and fashion. Therefore, it takes its style to study its origins. *Third*, it is more personal and ascetic. Internet media only gives a narrow space of imagination. Like the work of Hollywood films, the narrative character of the internet media provides a less imaginative picture. At the same time, writing can create images and evoke metaphors that contain many meanings for the imagination and experience of the reader. We could use some of these reasons as a reference in carrying out people's daily lives in the internet era (digital multimedia) so that not just someone or a particular community becomes a technological waste. The development of religious and social life today has advanced with the times. 20-21 century technology is very sophisticated and creates its image.

Along with the sophistication of technology, religion also needs to catch up in its role and at least use sophistication to maintain its religion. Almost all religions use the sophistication of internet technology in *da'wah* (preaching), the dissemination of religious "influence," and the promotion of its importance, namely tolerance. Even new religions, besides Abrahamic religions, have sprung up on internet media, which is called a sect. The emergence of these new religions is very easy because to be called a religion only requires the condition of a community and followers who believe in something sacred; as Ian Robertson argues, "Religion is a system of communally held beliefs and practices that are oriented toward some sacred, and supernatural realm" (Robertson, 1983, pp. 402-403). It cannot be called a religion if an individual believes in the supernatural without the members. We could base it on the opinion that internet fanatical users see it as a religion.

Conclusions and Recommendations

To understand the intersection of technology and religion, we must first look at techno-capitalism—the evolution of market capitalism driven by rapid, unprecedented technological innovation (Suarez-Villa, 2000). This shift birthed the information society, creating new organizational models to handle globalization and the rapid flow of knowledge.

Today, data is the new gold. The internet has infiltrated our private and religious spaces, turning information into easily monetized capital. As we traded heavy computers for lightweight smartphones and tablets, being connected to data became essential for everything from daily tasks to macro-level policymaking. This article explores how society perceives these technological shifts, particularly through the lens of religion and *da'wah* (preaching).

Online spaces inherently thrive on human interaction. As Rocamora (2013, p. 113) notes, blogs and social media are primarily driven by a desire for creative, personal expression and staying in touch, rather than purely political or institutional motives. We share our lives to get feedback. However, tech giants quickly capitalize on this fundamental need for connection, harvesting our interactions to build highly profitable big data empires.

Consequently, users unwittingly become targets of a risky new capitalization model. Big data enables unprecedented surveillance, rendering traditional privacy and anonymity obsolete. As Cukier and Mayer-Schönberger (2017, p. 170) warn, using predictive data to punish individuals for their *propensities* rather than their *actions* fundamentally "denies free will and erodes human dignity." Driven by profit, these online spaces are increasingly exploited to spread slander, fake news, and political incitement (Luckett & Casey, 2016).

The digital veil also makes deception effortless. People routinely hide their true identities and lie online (Stephen-Davidowitz, 2018). In Indonesia, for example, fabricated viral content has shown how digital manipulation can subvert and ultimately destroy democracy. We cannot rely solely on digital algorithms to guard our freedom and human values; human intervention must remain dominant (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). Left unchecked, digital data operates like a dictatorship (Mayer-Schönberger & Ramge, 2018), capable of causing profound social and economic ruin.

Ultimately, we must revitalize techno-capitalism. By infusing the digital sphere with "digital piety"—grounded in religious and ethical values—we can transform technology from a dictatorial predator into a meaningful, human-centered tool.

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