Lessons Learned, Resilience Built, and Multipolarism Imagined: The Muslim Experience of the 2019-2022 Pandemic Crisis

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Article Info	Abstract
	This article examines Muslims' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic from 2019 to 2022, including their efforts to overcome the crisis and envision a post-pandemic global society. This study aims to outline three main categories of Muslim efforts: (1) rejection of biopolitical action, (2) resistance to ongoing crises, and (3) promotion of the common good and imagination of a multipolar world. The method used in this study is qualitative analysis through literature review and case studies describing various responses of Muslim communities to the pandemic. The results show that despite the challenges, the pandemic has provided a unique opportunity for Muslim individuals and communities to reflect and rethink a more just and equal world. Many Muslims recognize the need for greater international cooperation and equitable distribution of resources, leading to a movement towards multipolarity. The author argues that the concepts, ideas, and strategies offered by Muslims can be an alternative to the dominant Western concepts and categories. This allows individuals to interact, enrich each other's points of view, and commit to achieving the common good without getting caught up in ideological or nationalistic excitement.
Info Artikel	Abstrak
	Artikel ini mengkaji respons Muslim terhadap pandemi COVID-19 dari tahun 2019 hingga 2022, termasuk upaya mereka dalam mengatasi krisis dan membayangkan masyarakat global pasca-pandemi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguraikan tiga kategori utama upaya Muslim: (1) penolakan terhadap tindakan biopolitik, (2) perlawanan terhadap krisis yang berkelanjutan, dan (3) promosi kebaikan bersama serta imajinasi dunia multipolar. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah analisis kualitatif melalui tinjauan literatur dan studi kasus yang menggambarkan berbagai respons komunitas Muslim terhadap pandemi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun menghadapi berbagai tantangan, pandemi telah memberikan kesempatan unik bagi individu dan komunitas Muslim untuk merefleksikan dan memikirkan kembali dunia yang lebih adil dan setara. Banyak Muslim mengakui perlunya kerja sama internasional yang lebih besar dan distribusi sumber daya yang adil, yang mengarah pada gerakan menuju multipolaritas. Penulis berpendapat bahwa

konsep, gagasan, dan strategi yang ditawarkan oleh Muslim dapat menjadi alternatif terhadap konsep dan kategori dominan Barat. Hal ini memungkinkan individu untuk berinteraksi, memperkaya sudut pandang satu sama lain, dan berkomitmen untuk mencapai kebaikan bersama tanpa terjebak dalam kegembiraan ideologis atau nasionalistik.

INTRODUCTION

As the world adapts to the realities of a post-pandemic era, there is a pressing need to evaluate how the pandemic affected us and explore what lessons have we learned during the time of crisis between 2019 and 2022. In the wake of the pandemic, scholars from various fields, including economists, political scientists, environmentalists, and social historians proposed strategies and scenarios to address the societal issues exposed by the crisis, such as unequal access to technology, job opportunities, basic healthcare, education, and housing (Bufacchi, 2021; Bataille, 2021; Anna, 2021). These scholars shared the realization that the pandemic was not just a great reset, but also an opportunity to reactivate our collective responsibility to respond to current crises and reimagine the world. However, as Western scholars and leaders proposed ideas and concrete actions to recreate a livable world after the pandemic, their proposals may have perpetuated systemic racism and reinforced the hidden form of domination that stems from the triumphant Eurocentric worldview that has been prevalent since the Enlightenment. This is the same Eurocentric worldview that has led to experiences of colonialism, two world wars, recurring destabilization of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and subsequent refugee crises.

Consider the following statement of the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Boris Johnson, addressed at the United Nations assembly on September 22, 2021: "My friends, the adolescence of humanity is coming to an end," as quoted by the *Washington Post*. "It is time for humanity to grow up. It is time for us to listen to the warnings of the scientists — and look at Covid, if you want an example of gloomy scientists being proved right — and to understand who we are and what we are doing (Booth and Adam, 2021). This call was sincere and authentic. But it neglected the fact that indigenous communities have long expressed concern about "what we are doing," as they

resisted the encroachment of European settlers on their lands and opposed the exploitation of natural resources. Any person who is aware of indigenous voices cannot help but question why Western scholars and leaders in the Global North were suddenly presenting these ideas as new solutions to save humanity. Doing so at platforms like the UN assembly and through mainstream media, while simultaneously disregarding indigenous voices as if they never existed, exacerbated global inequality and perpetuated systemic racism. Furthermore, emphasizing a single patronal solution to the world's problems from Western perspectives only serves to reinforce the idea that we live in a unipolar and imbalanced world. The Singaporean thinker *cum* diplomat, Kishore Mahbubani, wrote it over twenty years ago: "We live in an essentially unbalanced world. The flow of ideas, reflecting 500 years of Western domination of the globe, remains a one-way street – from the West to the East (Mahbubani, 1998). Hence, the promotion of one's ideas and the preservation of a patronal system of knowledge, without considering diverse perspectives and experiences, has only worsened the global inequality and systemic racism that I referred to earlier.

What I mean by racism is not referring to one's blood (this is how the Spaniards in the sixteenth century defined Christian identity as opposed to Jews and Muslims in Europe), or the colour of one's skin (the colour is still being used as a category, e.g., Black Muslims, white supremacy). Racism is much broader and often hidden beneath the production of knowledge, classification, and the use of terminologies. According to Walter Mignolo, the Argentine philosopher who teaches at Duke University, racism "consists in devaluing the humanity of certain people by dismissing it or playing it down (even when not intentional) at the same time as highlighting and playing up European philosophy, assuming it to be universal (Mignolo, 2018). This is what we call the hidden form of domination and is the same worldview that had led those who live in the Global South to experience colonialism, occupation, political exploitation, and subtraction of natural resources that created an economic imbalance.

For this reason, as we live out the post-pandemic era, it is crucial to reflect on what the pandemic has taught us about our shared commitment to humanity. What lessons have we learned from the pandemic era in order to live in the post-pandemic world anew? I contend that the problems exposed by the pandemic and our attempt to create a more just world cannot be solved solely from a Western perspective. We need to take into consideration not only Western ideas and practices that are currently dominating the

ongoing conversation about a post-pandemic world but also the non-Western voices, whose ideas, concepts, and categories might not always be similar to their Western counterparts. Non-Western concepts, ideas, and strategies can offer an alternative to the dominant Western concepts and categories while enabling the subjects to interact, enrich one's and another's perspectives, and commit to achieving the common good without becoming entrenched in ideological or nationalistic fervour.

The immediate question is: What lessons have Muslims learned during the pandemic? In a world that is inextricably linked by interdisciplinary biotechnology research and security, what steps have Muslims taken collectively to help reconfigure a post-pandemic reality? This article aims to examine the efforts of Muslims in creating or reimagining the world in a post-pandemic era. By highlighting the perspectives and experiences of Muslims, it seeks to provide a more inclusive and diverse perspective on the challenges and opportunities of a post-pandemic world. Moreover, it also aims to map out the lived realities of Muslims and their interaction with the wider world and how their interpretive traditions informed them in their decisions. Exploring the ways in which Muslim traditions are being transformed and reflected upon in response to the pandemic can provide valuable insights into the changing dynamics of Islam and Muslim communities in a post-pandemic world.

RESEARCH METHOD

The pandemic posed unprecedented challenges for individuals across the globe, including those who identify as Muslim. In order to learn from the pandemic and navigate an equitable post-pandemic world, it is instrumental to understand how Muslim communities adapted to changes in their communal lives, social norms, practices, and economic conditions. In doing so, this article employs critical discourse analysis based on a variety of sources, including news articles, academic journals, and books. By analyzing these sources, the paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Muslims navigated the pandemic and how their tradition influenced their actions.

It is important to note that the concept of "tradition" in this paper is not presented as a nostalgic return to the past or an expression of primordial culture or blind loyalty to authority. Instead, following Armando Salvatore's definition, tradition is a "bundled template of social practice transmitted, transformed and reflected upon by arguments and discourses across culture and generations (Salvatore, 2009). In the context of Muslims'

efforts to navigate their lives during the pandemic, their traditions were continuously interpreted and reflected upon, informed by the current conditions or necessitated by the need to adapt to new circumstances.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Common Issues During the Pandemic

In the face of the pandemic, Muslims, like everyone else, were confronted with the same problem of navigating through the uncertainties and challenges brought about by this global crisis. The virus did not discriminate based on religious beliefs, and Muslims, just like people of other faiths, were equally susceptible to its impact on health, livelihoods, and social interactions. Realizing how the pandemic transformed religious gatherings and rituals, many religious leaders advised members of their congregation to be flexible and embrace novel practices in different settings (Bhambra and Tiffany, 2021), at ease with the dramatic change of our traditional concept of 'sacred space, while striving to maintain the cohesion of community (Wakelin, 2020).

Muslims, like individuals from diverse backgrounds, had to adapt to the new normal of social distancing, wearing masks, and practicing good hygiene to protect themselves and others from the virus. They had to grapple with the emotional toll of isolation, the fear of contracting the virus, and the anxiety of losing loved ones to this deadly disease. Furthermore, Muslims faced unique challenges in practicing their faith during the pandemic. Mosques, which were central to communal worship and spiritual connection, had to limit or suspend congregational prayers to prevent the spread of the virus. This policy was particularly difficult during events such as Ramadan, where communal prayers, breaking fast together, and visiting family and friends are integral to the celebration. Muslims also had to adapt to virtual platforms for religious gatherings, sermons, and religious education, as physical gatherings have been restricted. Again, like other religious communities, this shift required innovative approaches and flexibility to maintain a sense of community and spiritual connection, despite the physical distance (Hankins, 2020).

Moreover, Muslims had to face economic hardships due to the pandemic. This reality reflects the current lived condition of Muslims, the majority of whom live in the Global South, who remain poor, highly indebted, and politically vulnerable. In war-torn places such as Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, and Yemen, Muslims remain unable to find a viable solution to their economic problems before the pandemic and continue to face the

same challenge, if not greater, during and after the pandemic. Countries that benefited from tourism, such as Turkey, Malaysia, and Indonesia suffered a massive drop in international arrivals in 2020 (Gateway, 2020). This situation has led individuals in the tourism industry to lose their jobs or face financial instability, making it challenging to meet basic needs and support their families.

In terms of individual relationships with political authorities, Muslims had to face the same intricate problem in dealing with the administration of power in our lives, commonly called 'biopolitics.' This concept reminds us of the French philosopher Michel Foucault, who reflected on the administration of power affecting public health that we were familiar with during the pandemic. In a series of lectures that he delivered at the Collège de France from 1974-1976, Foucault defined the administration of power that he characterized as the "explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of population (Foucault, 1990). For the administration of COVID-19, in particular, Foucault's analysis was relevant. We saw similar public measures where individuals affected by a disease are embraced, not excluded. But they are carefully observed, analyzed, and controlled with appropriate technology and knowledge (Salzani, 2021). This process is what we call quarantine. Medical technology, politicians, security apparatus, and even the military were involved in containing and regulating a disease. People in a mandatory quarantine still live with us, but their lives are disciplined and regulated, and their movement is restricted to protect the community's health. Breaking the mandatory quarantine rules may lead to legal consequences and punishment.

Whether or not we accept the use and applicability of 'biopolitics' as a category, the fact is that much of our lives during the pandemic were shaped by decisions informed by interdisciplinary biotechnology and politics, in addition to the traditional forms of authority rooted in organized religions such as Islam or Christianity. Even before the pandemic, much of our social lives were screened by the so-called Big Five or the Big Techs (i.e., Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, and Meta), with Tesla, X - formerly known as Twitter, and Netflix running behind them). The Big Five have the capacity to control, expose, and direct our lives in a particular direction. Only with an understanding of the operation power that dominates our lives can we better position ourselves and understand how others, in this case, Muslims, responded to the same crises.

Muslim Responses to the Pandemic

The pandemic has brought to light complex issues, including the massive government control over individuals. In response to these challenges, Muslims have reacted in diverse ways. This diversity of response can be attributed to the fact that not all Muslims have the same capacity to cope with a crisis of this magnitude. To fully appreciate the complexity of Muslim responses to the pandemic, I will describe them in three categories: resisting biopolitical measures, battling ongoing crises, and advancing the common good.

Resisting Biopolitical Measures

Like other segments of society in the Western world, some Muslims have been resistant to the changes brought about by the pandemic. From the beginning of the outbreak, some Muslims did not accept the health measures or biopolitical decisions implemented by the local government. In March 2020, al-Jazeera released a news coverage that captured the hesitancy of many Muslims from Morocco to Indonesia as they remained defiant toward their government. In Karachi, Pakistan's biggest city, mosques were crowded as a religious scholar told his congregation via loudspeaker that they were not too weak to let the virus empty their mosques. In Mogadishu, a certain Sheikh Abdi Hayi acknowledged the need for preventive measures but argued that there was too much exaggeration of the virus. Meanwhile, 85-year-old Mustafa Emin Ozbakan stood outside the Fatih Mosque in Istanbul, bereft that he was unable to pray inside. He has been praying at the mosque since 1941 and stated, "I'm not running away from Corona. Even if I ran, if death is in your destiny, you can have a traffic accident or die some other way.

Even with the introduction of inoculation, many Muslims remained skeptical of vaccination due to concerns about the presence of pork gelatine and other non-permissible ingredients in the vaccine. For this segment of Muslims, the pandemic did not change their attitude and life situation. If anything, the outbreak only exposed their resistance to the government's biopolitical measures. They saw restrictions as an infringement of their tradition and rights to perform their duty as an individual believer. This position reminds us of the celebrated Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, who was among a few scholars who exposed current "biopolitics" adopted by governments that he viewed as potentially

infringing the rights and privacy of citizens. The difference between ordinary Muslims and Agamben is that the former did not use the same concepts and terminologies that Agamben utilized in his publication.

Agamben noticed how policymakers gained authority over the public in the name of expertise well beyond the realm of mundane politics, reaching a zenith equal to the religious authority claimed by theologians in the name of the divine. In the article "The Invention of an Epidemic," he published in February 2020, Agamben called coronavirus a hoax or a mere seasonal flu "not much different from those that affect us every year," which proved to be wrong (Berg, 2021). What Agamben fears is that the public acceptance of the governments' measures that he called "techno-medical despotism," may become a permanent government paradigm and a regular part of our life, even if the coronavirus is well contained. This reality is characterized as a permanent state of exception, where our lives are reduced to mere data, statistics, or biological units. The vaccine passport and constant regulation of individual's movement based on the validity of *polymerase chain reaction* (PCR) test are a form of government intervention that categorically infringe on the sovereignty of our body. In this state of exception, politics isn't just an ability to rule; it has been transformed to become "a power that conserves one life and ends another (Silva and Higuera, 2021). Hence, the management of the pandemic might help us to survive biologically, but the biosecurity imposed by the government, such as quarantine and lockdown, gave us no choice but to sacrifice our work, families and friends, public rituals, and political life. Following this argument, we might be alive biologically, but we abandon many aspects of our lives that make each day worth living.

The implication of the biosecurity measure on our spiritual life is detrimental: When politics have been vindicated by medical knowledge and scientific arguments, all aspects of our lives, including the ways in which we practice our faith, have to submit to the government's control. In this situation, individuals might experience a spiritual crisis, grief, and the need to manage the self traditionally provided by priests or imams. But when priests or imams could no longer respond to the spiritual needs of believers, to which only science can, organized religions become irrelevant and doomed to rapid ruin. In that context, as Silva and Higuera aptly put it, "science has become the new religion and takes from religion its forms and strategies of governing life, all the while using scientific arguments (Silva and Higuera, 2021).

During the pandemic, the segment of Muslims mentioned earlier was not included in biopower decision-making, partly due to a lack of procedural democracy or inadequate representation of their voices. This led many of them to believe that the government's biopolitical measures undermined their tradition and spiritual needs. However, the resistance of these Muslims towards the government's biopolitical measures should not be interpreted as complete apathy or detachment from reality, or skepticism towards modern science. Many Muslims were aware of the danger of the virus. But at the same time, they did not want the government's measures to restrict their ability to practice their religion. They opposed the government's imposition of control that potentially limits their rights to perform their religious obligations as Muslims. Therefore, the issue has more to do with the biosecurity measures imposed by the government that they rejected, rather than a lack of concern for the well-being of everyone.

Furthermore, the rejection of biopolitical measures by Muslims did not result in an open rejection of the current government. Rather, it demonstrated that many Muslims had the ability to disagree with their government and were free to express their dissent. This is an important observation that needs to be made. Muslims actively negotiated their life experiences and religious expectations amidst the strong governmental biopolitical measures during the pandemic.

Battling ongoing crises

Besides rejecting or negotiating government biopolitical measures, we found cases where many Muslims were unable to find solutions to their ongoing problems, which were exacerbated by the pandemic. Many political leaders in countries where Muslims were the majority struggled to find a solution to the issues of land, declining economy, and power distribution. On one hand, these leaders pointed fingers at each other for the spread of COVID-19. A report from the United States Institute of Peace in 2020 , revealed that the pandemic exacerbated the divide among the six sheikhdoms of the Gulf Cooperation Council, all ruled by Sunni monarchs, over whether to improve relations with predominantly Shiite Iran. Iran has been accused by Bahrain and Saudi Arabia of concealing the COVID-19 outbreak and allowing the virus to spread throughout the Middle East, but Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates have expressed sympathy for Iran and extended significant humanitarian support. On March 11, Bahrain accused Iran of deliberately exporting the virus to the Gulf by allowing Bahrainis to visit without

stamping their passports. Similarly, in March 2020, the Saudi Foreign Ministry denounced Tehran for allowing Saudi citizens entry to its territories without stamping their passports (Hanna, 2020).

On the other hand, the political crisis in some Muslim states caused state failure and exacerbated the lives of their citizens. The same report informs us that the Islamist-dominated government of Libya faced a viral outbreak amid civil war and political instability that has fractured the country since 2011. The ongoing civil war in Libya complicated the government's efforts to combat the coronavirus, making it even more difficult to create a livable post-pandemic world. Similarly, in Yemen, an armed conflict with Saudi Arabia has been ongoing since 2015. In Iraq, the constant tensions between the Iraqi government and the Islamic State (formerly the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) have made it difficult to achieve a political reconciliation among parties. The Islamic State blamed Iraqi Shiites for the first cases of coronavirus in Iraq and called the outbreak a "sign" that Shia should "abandon polytheism." The Islamic State also stepped up its attacks against the Iraqi government, despite the country's unprecedented outbreak. Interestingly, during the outbreak's peak, the Islamic State issued a "travel ban" to its followers not to travel to Europe during the pandemic to avoid contracting the virus. This is interesting because, until the COVID-19 pandemic outbreaks, militants were encouraged to travel to European countries to recruit new combat-ready troops. The other side of the story is that strict rules of personal hygiene bound members of a terrorist organization. The instruction required them to cover their mouth when sneezing and yawning and to wash their hands frequently. However, the relationship between the militant group and the Iraqi government remained strenuous. With increased attacks against the Iraqi state, the pandemic has exacerbated economic and political challenges for Iraqis (Hanna, 2020).

The cases above cannot be understood without taking into account the wider geopolitical effects of neoliberal economic policies and the dominance of a unipolar liberal ideology, which have destabilized many Muslim countries since the collapse of the Soviet Union until ultimatelly culminated in the War on Terror. Despite the challenges posed by these geopolitical contexts, many Muslims worked very hard to rebuild their lives and communities. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit them hard, making it extremely difficult to build political participation and economic systems that can support a normal life.

The accumulative effects of various social, political, and economic crises have engendered fresh conflicts in Islamic nations, resulting in a state of perpetual crisis for these societies. Muslims in these regions have a Herculean task to harmonize conflicting geopolitical interests, economic downturn, and political instability before envisioning an ideal post-pandemic world characterized by equality and planetary justice. The Western world cannot assume a patronizing stance toward Muslims in creating a new post-pandemic world, as their distinct issues and urgencies require a different approach.

Advancing the Common Good, Imagining a Multipolar World

Muslims' responses to the pandemic were far from simple, as many of them went beyond merely resisting biopolitical measures and battling ongoing crises. Rather than being passive and reactive, many Muslims viewed the pandemic as an opportunity to promote the common good. They showed remarkable creativity and innovation in seizing opportunities that arose amidst the crisis, reminding us of the many historical facts that since the premodern period Muslims were no less creative and rigorous than others when faced with a pandemic, contrary to the views of some historians who argued that Muslim attitudes towards plague were characterized by fatalism (Stearns, 2018). These steps can be seen in countries that developed effective vaccines and immunization programs, generating revenue and stimulating the economy. Iran is among a few countries that developed several homegrown vaccines, some of which have been approved for use (Ghanei et al, 2023). The Iranians could not rely on help from the international community during the pandemic as they are living under sanctions imposed by the United States. At the same time, Iranian biotechnologists do not want to draw too much media attention to avoid the risk of losing access to the raw materials and partnerships they need for their vaccines. Besides Iran, the Indonesian government approved the use of its homegrown COVID-19 vaccine, followed by a green light to produce 20 million doses this year which may increase to 120 million doses annually by 2024 (Reuters, 2022). These two developments have the potential to improve and boost the healthcare sector in the two countries, without necessarily relying too heavily on big pharma from Western nations. During the pandemic, Muslims were not simply passive consumers of Western ideas or products, lacking initiative to find common solutions. On the contrary, they were actively seeking breakthroughs in medical technology to solve their immediate problems. Their efforts reflect a commitment to self-reliance and a desire to promote innovation and progress within their own communities.

In combating the virus during the pandemic, the Muhammadiyah Society, a major Islamic nongovernmental organization in Indonesia with over 50 million members, 400 hundred hospitals, and 170 universities, was active in supporting the government vaccine program. Similarly, the Nahdlatul Ulama, an equally sizeable nongovernmental organization with 26,000 schools across the country, played an essential role in educating Muslims about protocols to cut virus transmission and the lack of trust in the vaccine program (Wijaya, 2020). Some non-state actors in the Middle East, such as Hezbollah, were also active in promoting humanitarian aid to combat and limit the spread of the virus. Hezbollah deployed nearly 25,000 healthcare professionals and more than 100 emergency vehicles to handle COVID-19 patients. The organization reserved beds for coronavirus patients at its Beirut hospital, where it once treated wounded fighters. Members of the group's civil defence forces sanitized streets in the country's Shiite-populated south and delivered food to the poor. These actions were crucial, given the Lebanese state had limited resources to combat the virus. Hezbollah members also travelled to Iran to distribute food supplies and disinfect streets in the city of Qom, given that Iran was sanctioned and is still sanctioned by the United States (Perry and Bassam, 2020). Hamas, the Islamist party that rules Gaza, shifted **its primary focus from tensions with Israel to the survival of its people. Hamas** deployed its armed wing, the al Quds Brigade, to sanitize the streets to avert an outbreak in one of the world's most densely populated areas. It also banned all public gatherings and Friday prayers (Hanna, 2020).

A recent study by a group of scholars from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy, and George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government, indicated that the pandemic sparked a religious revival in the Muslim world (Yildirim, et al, 2021). Many Muslims were turning to religion, becoming more committed to religious practices and more critical of their government. This finding may sound positive to general readers but may also alarm an impending threat of Muslim religiosity to liberal and secular values and political order that are thought to be universal values of the global community. It reinforced the primordial assumption that Muslims maintained values and practices contradictory to secular society's achievements, such as freedom, democracy, and a tolerant way of life. However, Muslim religiosity is not necessarily at odds with modern values of freedom and individual rights. This misconception often arises from a lack of understanding of the diverse and nuanced ways in which Muslims interpret and practice their faith, and ignores the many examples of

Muslim individuals and communities advocating for human rights and social justice. A study of Muslims' interaction with non-Muslim polities and culture in the Canadian context indicates that Muslim religiosity does not pose a threat to secular values. Instead, the perceived threat is a projection that is constantly redeployed to strengthen collective identity and the self-constitution of Euro-Atlantic society as inherently Christian and simultaneously secular (Halim, 2021). The strengthening process was inevitable because it was through interactions with Muslims that the neoliberal political projects were validated, even if their ideals were stretched out to the limit. But Muslims' reflections on the limit of neoliberal projects weren't necessarily an act of deviance or revenge against neoliberal philosophers and their rhetoric of democracy and equality but a way to articulate ideas in a different dynamic. Many Muslims were able to easily identify and bring attention to the negative impacts of policies that have contributed to global inequality, as they have been among the groups most affected by unipolar neoliberal policies. Furthermore, the same impacts can also be felt at home as the same neoliberal practices were not always committed to their promise to bring about equality and justice for all segments of society. As the American political philosopher Wendy Brown mentioned in a recent Zoom interview, we live and witness neoliberalism's impact on our generations. "Above all, you didn't need to be taught that markets will not save a planet. You were born into neoliberalism's manifest crisis of human and planetary survival (Panovka and Barrow, 2021).

Realizing the limit of liberal democracy during the pandemic, we learn that Muslims saw the pandemic as a new opportunity to improve the well-being of their society. Inspired by their tradition, Muslims took the initiative to create a sustainable economy, political participation, and independent geopolitical policies while actively promoting the common good, similar to what Pope Francis called earlier a "culture of care (Mares, 2020). Furthermore, facing the self-assumed superiority of modern scientific knowledge that describes, conceptualizes, and imagines the world from Euro-Atlantic perspectives and interests, Muslims continue to contribute their perspective on the many common issues that humanity was facing. If many people in the West were aware of the ecological crisis and thought that they lead the world in fighting climate change, Muslims too were not far behind in promoting similar initiatives. Long before the pandemic, Muslim environmentalists also voiced a similar message to address the gravity of climate change. In 2015, under the banner of the "Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change," they called

political leaders from oil-producing states to end the carbon emissions "as early as possible and no later than the middle of the century" and "(i)nvest in the creation of a green economy (International Islamic Climate Change Symposium, 2015).

Furthermore, with countries such as Russia and China taking the lead in resisting the neoliberal world order, many countries where Muslims were the majority showed a collective desire to strengthen their ties and become less dependent on the economic orders dictated by G7 countries. This shift in priorities was not only motivated by a desire for greater economic independence but also by a growing sense of disillusionment with the West's political and cultural values. Muslims around the world have long felt marginalized by Western powers, and the pandemic only served to underscore this reality. As the virus spread, many Muslims became acutely aware of the systemic racism practiced by Western nations in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. A 2021 report revealed that in 67 low-income countries, including many with large Muslim populations, at least 90% of people are unlikely to receive COVID-19 vaccinations due to the hoarding of vaccines by wealthy nations and the reluctance of pharmaceutical companies to share their intellectual property (Dyer, 2020). This highlights the ongoing challenges of global health equity and the urgent need for a more equitable and sustainable approach to vaccine distribution. For Muslims, this realization only strengthened their resolve to chart a new course and assert their independence from the West. By forging stronger ties with countries like Russia and China, Muslim-majority nations are signalling a new era of global cooperation and a rejection of Western hegemony.

The cases discussed above demonstrate that the pandemic has had profound and far-reaching effects on global society, but inadvertently created space for critical thinking and creative ideas to flourish. This space has allowed for a reexamination of existing continental and Euro-Atlantic liberal traditions, with many individuals and communities, including Muslims, exploring alternative approaches to governance and social organization. At the same time, the pandemic has accelerated the shift towards a new multipolar world order, one that is expected to be more just and equal than the current global system. Many Muslim individuals and communities around the world are recognizing the need for greater international cooperation and a more equitable distribution of resources. This recognition is fueling a growing movement towards multipolarity, in which power is distributed more evenly across a range of actors and institutions. While the path towards a more just and equal world order is fraught with challenges, the pandemic has provided a unique

opportunity for Muslim individuals and communities to come together and reimagine the future of global society. Scholars and leaders of the Western world need to listen to and engage with Muslim voices in this process, in order to build a more inclusive and sustainable future for all. By recognizing the important contributions of Muslims in shaping the post-pandemic world, we can move towards a more just and equitable global society.

CONCLUSION

This article has highlighted the efforts of Muslims in facing the pandemic and reimagining the world in a post-pandemic era. While some Muslims have been resistant to the changes brought about by the pandemic, it is important to note that the rejection of biopolitical measures did not result in an open rejection of the current government. Rather, it demonstrated that many Muslims had the ability to disagree with their government and were free to express their dissent. This observation is significant, as it underscores the importance of individual agency and the ability to negotiate one's life experiences and religious expectations amidst strong governmental measures.

In addition to rejecting or negotiating government biopolitical measures, Muslims have responded to the pandemic in a variety of ways. While some have struggled to find solutions to ongoing problems exacerbated by the pandemic, others have taken a proactive and constructive approach, viewing the pandemic as an opportunity to promote the common good. This has involved creating a sustainable economy, promoting political participation, and advocating for independent geopolitical policies.

At the macro level, the pandemic between 2019-2022 has brought about significant changes to global society, including a reexamination of existing political and economic systems and accelerating a shift towards a new multipolar world order. While the path towards a more just and equal world order is not without its challenges, the pandemic has created a unique opportunity for individuals and communities, including Muslims, to come together and reimagine the future of global society. By learning from the experiences of Muslims and other communities, we can work towards a more just and equitable world that prioritizes all individuals and promotes social justice and human rights.

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