

**Translating Salafism into English:
Anglo–Salafi Print Culture in Britain**

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Abstract

Salafism is a contemporary Sunni Muslim reformist movement which is widely associated with Saudi Arabia although its non-Saudi adherents exist across the world. This thesis examines a previously understudied phenomenon related to the movement's widespread visibility in the Anglosphere: Anglo-Salafi print culture. More specifically, its aim is to account for the widespread availability of English-language Salafi print material in contemporary Britain. Following 9/11, a number of academics, journalists, politicians and security experts misinterpreted this type of material as proof of Saudi Arabia's petrodollar-fuelled "Wahhabi" agenda in Western countries. Given the heightened sensitivities surrounding Islamic extremism in the West, observers warned that Saudi state actors were funding religious intolerance in places like Britain partly through texts.

This thesis counters this narrative by retelling the history of Anglo-Salafi print culture in Britain before and after 9/11. It draws on a large body of Anglo-Salafi publications found in British Islamic bookstores, mosques, institutes and online spaces as well as over 50 interviews with Salafi leaders, publishers, booksellers and readers. It argues that the majority of Anglo-Salafi publications found in Britain, particularly in the commercial sphere, are the products of Salafis born or based in Britain working in tandem with like-minded, non-governmental and transnational networks of Salafis equally invested in translating Salafism into English. Collectively, these actors harness print at their own expense in order to assert their religious convictions and challenge rival Islamic trends (including Jihadis). The Saudi government, on the other hand, has funded numerous Salafi and non-Salafi British mosques, sponsored British Muslims studying in its Islamic universities and subsidised Islamic literature which is distributed through its affiliated networks in Britain. These instances, however, are largely limited in impact and often mediated by locals for their own communal benefit.

This thesis contributes to our understanding of Salafism in Britain by situating the emergence of Anglo-Islamic literature to the mid-nineteen century and demonstrating that Anglo-Salafi print culture is part of a wider trend of Muslims communicating Islam in the English language to audiences in the Anglosphere. It charts the story of Salafism in Britain throughout the decades, following World War II and leading up to

2020, underscoring the efforts of local actors in constructing Salafism in the English language and how the context of post-war Britain has impacted the way in which they engage with the *past* in the *present* through translation. Furthermore, it addresses a number of hitherto unanswered questions, unchecked claims, stereotypes and oversimplifications related to Salafism in Britain and its connection to Saudi Arabia which continue to influence or echo related discussions, academic studies, media and think-tank reports despite there being a lack of hard evidence.

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Translating Salafism into English

Introduction

An ideology of bigotry and intolerance is spreading through Britain, with its roots in Saudi Arabia... on women's rights... gay rights... living in a multicultural society... and holy war.

These were the opening words of a controversial Channel 4 documentary entitled 'Undercover Mosque' which aired on British television in January 2007.¹ It aired several snippets, secretly collected during a year-long investigation, of divisive passages found in Islamic texts which were "subsidized" by Saudi petrodollars and circulated in Salafi-affiliated British mosques. With the 2005-terrorist attacks in London still fresh in the minds of the British public, the programme offered viewers an "uncomfortable truth": Saudi Wahhabism is being imported into Britain partly through books, and their "hate-filled" messages threaten the security of the general public. In 2008, Channel 4 aired a sequel investigation entitled 'Undercover Mosque: The Return' further accusing the government of failing to tackle the spread of Wahhabi ideology in Britain.²

This thesis is not so much about these two documentaries but concerning an issue at the core of their investigations: Salafi print culture, in the English language, in Britain. Addressing this issue from an academic standpoint forms the first motive behind my present study. A number of hitherto unanswered questions, unchecked claims, stereotypes and oversimplifications related to Anglo-Salafi print culture in Britain and its connection to Saudi Arabia continue to influence or echo related discussions, studies and media and think-tank reports despite there being a lack of hard evidence. My second motive is more personal. Since 2008, I have worked as a graphic designer and Anglo-Islamic book publisher in Britain. My work has afforded me contact with a number of self-funded Salafis invested in print while my own publishing activities

¹ Consulted online at Ale Natiq, 'Terrorism in Mosques: Undercover in British Wahabi/Salafi Mosques', Vimeo, 6 August 2013, accessed 7 July, 2022, <https://vimeo.com/71817949>. Note the revision to the title by the uploader.

² Consulted online at Chaos Documentary, 'Dispatches – Undercover Mosque The Return', Daily Motion, 2018, accessed 20 February, 2022, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x5m0n45>.

have given me valuable insights into the Anglo–Islamic book trade. Personal experience informs me that the Saudi state’s relationship to Anglo–Salafi print culture in Britain is far more complicated than previously thought.

My central argument is that Salafis, born or based in Britain, have harnessed print since the mid–1970s as part of a wider trend among Muslims translating Islam into the English language; for their part, Salafis in Britain have largely constructed a local marketplace for Anglo–Salafi books in order to fill a religious information gap, assert adopted beliefs and challenge rival Islamic trends. Arab states, Arab ulema and transnational Salafi networks have also contributed to this project at different stages and in various degrees; however, these contributions have been largely limited and mediated by Salafis in Britain whose involvement continues to be widely overshadowed.

This thesis makes the abovementioned argument by focusing on the role of Anglo–Salafi “print culture” in Britain, though not necessarily always “made in Britain” in order to factor in transnational agencies. Murray states that studies pertaining to print culture, like this one, are primarily ‘interested in the medium of the book (or print media broadly...) and its impacts on society, economics, politics and culture.’³ Print culture, he continues, is thereby different to “book history”, an idea which was first developed by Jonathan Rose, which views books as a “social object”; print culture, particularly in ‘late twentieth century and early decades of the twenty–first century’ can more loosely be defined as the study of ‘the book’s role in the contemporary world, in all its variety.’⁴

Print culture pertaining to Muslims is still a relatively understudied field of knowledge. One of the reasons why is that its history is shorter than that of European print culture. A number of scholars have, however, examined the impact of print after it was adopted in Muslim–majority countries in the early nineteenth century when printing presses were introduced into colonised countries like Egypt and India.⁵ Prior to this time,

³ Simone Murray, *Introduction to Contemporary Print Culture: Books as Media* (London: Routledge, 2014), 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵ See for examples: Francis Robinson, ‘Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print’, *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no. 1 (February 1993); Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Ahmed El Shamsy, *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics: How Editors and Print Culture Transformed an Intellectual Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

manuscript culture and oral transmission formed the key mediums of knowledge exchange in the Muslim world.⁶ Robinson and Eickelman, for example, have both brought attention to the transformative effects of print on Muslim societies in the modern era.⁷ These effects, including the democratisation of Islamic scriptures, often feature in studies pertaining to contemporary Islamic movements in the Middle East, Turkey, North Africa, South Asia and South–East Asia.⁸ As such, the focus on print in these studies is often about languages other than English. This is particularly evident on studies about Salafism which has a particularly strong relationship to print.

Salafis and Print Culture

Since the September 11 attacks in the United States in 2001 (“9/11”), there has been a sharp rise in public and academic interest in Wahhabism (the alleged theology of the 9/11 attackers) and its broader counterpart Salafism, particularly in the field of security studies.⁹ Dozens of studies have since contributed to our understanding of Salafism as a contemporary movement with ancient roots, articulated in countries across the world, connected globally by transnational networks, and divided into sub–trends. It is a “reformist” movement in the loosest sense because it is invariably tied to human agencies at a given time, location and circumstance. A useful framework for understanding Salafism is Asad’s theory of discursive traditions in Islam; according to him, these are essentially made up of competing discourses which,

relate conceptually to a *past* (when the practise was instituted, and from which the knowledge of its point and proper performance has been transmitted) and a *future* (how the point of that practise can best be secured in the short or long

⁶ Gregor Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read*, trans. Shawkat Toorawa (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 120, and 122–125.

⁷ Robinson, ‘Technology and Religious Change’: 250; Dale F. Eickelman, ‘The Study of Islam in Local Contexts’, *Contributions to Asian Studies* 17, no. 1 (1982): 10. See also Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, ‘Redefining Muslim Publics’, in *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere*, ed. Eickelman and Anderson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003; second edition), Introduction.

⁸ See for examples: Ahmad Khan, ‘Islamic Age in an Age of Print: Editing, Printing and Publishing the Classical Heritage’, in *Reclaiming Islamic Tradition: Modern Interpretations of the Classical Heritage*, ed. Elisabeth Kendall and Ahmad Khan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 52–99; Wasim Shiliwala, ‘Constructing a Textual Tradition: Salafī Commentaries on al-‘Aqīda al-Ṭahāwiyya’, *Die Welt Des Islams* 58 (2018): 461–503.

⁹ Roel Meijer, ‘Introduction’ in *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), 1.

term, or why it should be modified or abandoned), through *a present* (how it is linked to other practises, institutions, and social conditions).¹⁰

Using this as a starting point, it is possible to understand Salafi print culture in relation to how Salafis view the *past*, *future* and *present*. With respect to the *past*, Salafis draw on the Salaf, which literally means “predecessors” or “ancestors” (hence, a Salafi is one who follows his/her predecessors).¹¹ Historically, Sunni ulema have used the term Salaf to denote the earliest generations of “pious” (*ṣāliḥ*) Muslims, namely: 1) Prophet Muḥammad and his companions; 2) the “followers” of the companions (*tābi ṭn*); 3) the “followers of the followers” of the companions (*atbāʿ al-tābi ṭn*).¹² This practise is based on a number of Islamic texts among which the most obvious is the ḥadīth of Prophet Muḥammad: “The best of people are my generation, then those who follow them, then those who follow them...”¹³

Given this tribute, it is unsurprising that Sunni ulema throughout the ages have sought to confirm their beliefs and practises by referring “back” to the era of the Salaf.¹⁴ Salafis, however, stake a particular claim to the *past* in that they seek to ‘emulate the first three generations of Muslims as closely and in as many spheres of life as possible.’¹⁵ Hence, De Koning defines Salafism as a “grounded utopian movement” focussed on the “utopia” of *Salaf’s* era, while simultaneously being grounded theoretically (by the *past*) in particular times and spaces.¹⁶

More properly, Salafis try to emulate the Ahl al-Ḥadīth, an intellectual school which gained prominence in Muslim lands during the eighth century.¹⁷ Its leaders were

¹⁰ Talal Asad, ‘The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam’, *Qui Parle* 17, no. 2 (2009): 20.

¹¹ Majd al-Dīn al-Fayrūzābādī, *Muʿjam al-qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*, ed., Khalīl Shayḥā (Beirut: Dār al-Marefah, 2007), 631; see also Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (New Delhi: Kitāb Bhavan, 2010; first published 1893), vol. 1, 1407–1409.

¹² See ‘Glossary’ in *Global Salafism*, ixix, where the end of the *atbāʿ al-tābi ṭn*’s era is marked at approximately 810.

¹³ Muḥammad Fuʿād ʿAbd al-Bāqī, *Al-luʿluʿ wa l-marjān fī mā ittafaqa ʿalaihi al-shaykhān*, ed., ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Ḥajūrī (Sanaʿa: Dār al-Āthār, 2007), vol. 3, no. 1646, 922. Salafis also often cite a maxim attributed to Medinan traditionist Mālik b. Anas (d. 795): ‘The latter part of this [Muslim] nation will not be rectified except by what rectified its earlier part.’

¹⁴ Asad, ‘The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam’: 20.

¹⁵ Joas Wagemakers, ‘The Citadel of Salafism’, in *Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements*, ed. Muhammad Afzal Upal and Carole M. Cusack (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 334–335.

¹⁶ Martin de Koning, “Moge Hij onze ogen openen”: De radicale utopie van het “Salafisme”, *Tijdschrift voor Religie, Recht en Beleid* 2, no. 2, (2011): 49–51, cited in Wagemakers, *Salafism in Jordan: Political Islam in a Quietist Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 28.

¹⁷ Fawzī al-Atharī, *Al-azhār al-manthūrah fī ṭibyān an ahl al-ḥadīth hum al-firqat al-nājiyyah wa l-tāʿifat al-manṣūrah* (Ajman: Maktabah al-Furqān, n.d.), and its English translation in Fawzee Al-

mostly traditionists (*muḥaddithūn*) who canonised ḥadīth and its sciences, such as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 855) and the authors of the Sunni “six books of ḥadīth” (*kutub al-sittah*).¹⁸ Collectively, these traditionists asserted the authority of the Quran, Sunnah and reports of the *Salaf* over and above that of personal reasoning (*raʿī*), intellect (*ʿaql*), philosophy (*falsafa*) and Greco–Roman inspired theology (*kalām*). During the Abbasid era, the same school was somewhat amalgamated into the more dominant quasi–rationalist theological schools of Abū ʿl–Ḥasan al–Ashʿarī (d. 936) and Abū Maṣūʿ al–Māturīdī (d. 944). The original “Salafī” approach first espoused by the Ahl al–Ḥadīth never completely died out however; it appears to have persisted in various degrees in later centuries under figures like Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328) in fourteenth century Mamluk Syria.¹⁹

According to Lauzière, ‘Salafī epithets (adjectives, nouns, and collective nouns)’ were employed by Muslim scholars in Islamic texts since at least the twelfth century but only in matters of ‘dogma and theology (*uṣūl al-dīn*)’.²⁰ He argues convincingly that Salafiyyah (Salafism), however, only emerged in or around the 1920s and gathered momentum after the 1960s as Muslim scholars began to construct Salafism as an all–encompassing world–view and *manhaj* (religious code) driven partially by the ‘expansion of [Islamic] print culture.’²¹ Salafism in the 1920s was not, however, disconnected from prior centuries wherein Muslim reformist movements were already drawing on the Quran, Sunnah and teachings of the Salaf; four in particular would impact Salafism even after the 1920s: i) Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al–Wahhāb’s (d. 1792) movement (the Muwaḥḥidūn, or “Wahhabism”) in Central Arabia (now Saudi

Atharee, *Clarification that the Ahlul–Hadeeth are the Saved Sect and Victorious Group* (Toronto: The Reign of Islaamic Da’wah Centre, 2003); Wagemakers, ‘The Citadel of Salafism’, 335–336; Azmi Bishara, *On Salafism: Concepts and Contexts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2022), 2–3.

¹⁸ Namely Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al–Bukhārī (d. 870), Muslim b. Ḥajjāj (d. 875), Abū Dāwūd (Sulaimān al–Ashʿath al–Sijistānī, d. 889), Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā al–Tirmidhī (d. 892), Aḥmad b. Shuʿaib al–Nasāʿī (d. 915) and Muḥammad b. Yazīd (Ibn Mājah, d. 887). For more about the “six”, consult Jonathan Brown, ‘The Canonization of Ibn Mājah: Authenticity vs. Utility in the Formation of the Sunni Ḥadīth Canon’, *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 129 (2011): 169–181.

¹⁹ For an introductory account to Ibn Taymiyyah’s theology and how various types of Salafis draw on his influence in the modern age, consult Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya* (London: Oneworld Books, 2019).

²⁰ Henri Lauzière, ‘The Construction of Salafiyya: Reconsidering Salafism from the Perspective of Conceptual History’, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42 (2010): 372; Bishara, *On Salafism*, 21–22.

²¹ Lauzière, ‘The Construction of Salafiyya’: 372; Raihan Ismail, *Rethinking Salafism: The Transnational Networks of Salafī ʿUlama in Egypt, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 19–20. Consult also Aaron Rock–Singer where he identifies the emergence of a Salafī library in *In the Shade of the Sunna: Salafī Piety in the Twentieth–Century Middle East* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2022), Chapter One.

Arabia)²²; ii) Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al–Shawkānī’s (d. 1834) school in Yemen²³; iii) the Ahl–e–Hadith movement in British India²⁴, and iv) Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā’s (d. 1935) intellectual school in colonial Egypt.²⁵

Salafism is therefore very much a *living discourse* and has been under construction for some time, and indeed, remains so today. A host of Salafi scholars are responsible for its contemporary development of which three are particularly influential in the modern era owing partly to the widespread distribution of their works: Albanian–Syrian Muḥammad Nāṣir al–Dīn al–Albānī (d. 1999), Saudi Arabia’s Grand Mufti ‘Abd al–‘Azīz b. Bāz (hereafter Ibn Bāz, d. 1999), and his student Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ al–‘Uthaymīn (d. 2001). Salafism however does not have a single home or official hierarchy; instead, it has expanded into countries as far and as wide as Jordan, Yemen, Egypt, India, Pakistan, and European and North American spaces owing to various factors.

One of the most obvious factors is Salafi print culture which underscores Salafi attitudes towards texts. Wagemakers states in no uncertain terms: ‘Salafis claim to know and understand the reality’ of the Salaf ‘through texts and texts alone.’²⁶ A number of scholars in the literature have thus described Salafis as an “imagined community.”²⁷ This term was first coined by Anderson in 1983 and refers to a particular *belonging* generated through language and discourse and ‘building in effect *particular solidarities*’ (which does not necessitate knowing one–another intimately).²⁸ Although Anderson was referring to how nationalism was shaped in Western countries in part through print–capitalism, there is good reason to believe Salafism in the modern era was equally transformed by the same technology for a

²² David Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006); Michael Crawford, *Ibn ‘Abd al–Wahhab* (London: Oneworld Books, 2014).

²³ Bernard Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad al–Shawkānī* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

²⁴ See Chapter Two in this thesis.

²⁵ Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

²⁶ Wagemakers, *Salafism in Jordan*, 19.

²⁷ See for examples, Quintan Wiktorowicz, ‘Anatomy of the Salafi Movement’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (2006): 210; Emin Poljarevic, ‘The Ambiguity of Citizenship in Contemporary Salafism’, in *The Crisis of Citizenship in the Arab World*, ed. Meijer and Nils Butenschøn (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 338–74; Simeon Evstatiev, ‘Salafism Is Coming’, in *Islam, Christianity, and Secularism in Bulgaria and Eastern Europe: The Last Half Century*, ed. Evstatiev and Eickelman (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 74–112; Ismail, *Rethinking Salafism*, 3.

²⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2016; revised edition), 133.

different motive (Islamic reform). For this reason Haykel states that: ‘Mass literacy and attitudes about personal agency and knowledge acquisition that have pervaded the modern Muslim world might fit better with a Salafī disposition about religious knowledge and practice.’²⁹

Salafis indeed tend to be hyper-textualists. Their usage of print has often led scholars in the literature to describe them as Muslim Protestants since they encourage ordinary Muslims to consult the Quran and Sunnah (via the corpuses of ḥadīth), sometimes without interpretive control, and to familiarise themselves with evidences/proofs for their day-to-day rituals; this is juxtaposed with their consistent dismissal of religious innovations (*bid‘ah*), or practises which lack any scriptural basis, and “blind” conformity (*taqlīd*) to *madhhabs*.

Much of what we do know about Salafī print culture however, is centred around the Middle East, and to a lesser extent, Asiatic countries.³⁰ Rock-Singer in particular has surveyed Arab-Salafī print culture in two important studies centred around Egypt and Saudi Arabia.³¹ The emphasis thereby has largely revolved around the Arab world and consequently what gets printed in the Arabic language. Anglo-Salafī print culture on the other hand, as with Anglo-Islamic print culture, remains a relatively new field of enquiry.

Furthermore, since the vast majority of studies about Salafism have been composed after 9/11, an event orchestrated partly by Saudis, it is commonplace to find references to Saudi Arabia’s involvement in the “global” spread of Wahhābism/Salafism. According to Commins, Saudi Arabia’s religious establishment began moving away from earlier self-designations (such as *Muwahhīdīn*, “monotheists”) and denigrations (including “Wahhābīs”) after the mid-twentieth century and adopted the “Salafī”

²⁹ Haykel, ‘Wahhabism and the Rise of the New Salafists. Theology, Power and Sunni Islam, Written by Nahouza, Namira, 2018’, *Die Welt Des Islams* 60, no. 4 (2020): 508.

³⁰ Consult Khan, ‘Islamic Age in an Age of Print’; Brown, ‘Is Islam Easy to Understand or Not?: Salafis, The Democratization of Interpretation and the Need for the Ulema’, *Journal of Islamic Studies* 26, no. 2 (2015): 117–114; Noorhaidi Hasan, ed., *Islamic Literatures of the Millennials: Transmission, Appropriation, and Contestation* (Jakarta: PPIM UIN Jakarta, 2018); Abdul Munip,

‘Translating Salafī-Wahhābī Books in Indonesia and Its Impacts on the Criticism of Traditional Islamic Rituals’, *Analisa Journal of Social Science and Religion* 3, no. 2 (December 2018): 189–205.

³¹ Rock-Singer, *Practising Islam in Egypt: Print Media and Islamic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019) and *In the Shade of the Sunna*.

label.³² This shift coincided with Saudi's "oil-boom" (a reference to its discovery of vast oil reserves) and newfound wealth which was partly directed towards religious causes. Al-Rasheed states that since that time, 'vast sums of money were invested in promoting the country's image and agenda... consolidating Saudi Arabia as a kingdom without borders.'³³ Mandaville makes a similar case in a recent volume:

Since the 1960s, the Saudi religious establishment as well as its Ministry of Islamic Affairs have spent billions of dollars to undertake a wide range of religious propagation (da'wa) activities, including mosque building; funding religious schools; distributing religious literature; providing preachers and religious educators scholarships for religious study in Saudi Arabia; and media campaigns focused on religion and religious identity.³⁴

Mandaville, departing from earlier scholars writing on this subject, admits that 'while bold, often categorical declarations regarding Wahhabism's impact in various countries are commonplace, systematic research on Saudi religious transnationalism and its effects remains scarce.'³⁵ Simultaneously, he resorts to making statements without hard evidence. For example:

Various Saudi publishing and media activities constitute a key component of the kingdom's global da'wa apparatus. The worldwide ubiquity of religious texts produced or funded by Saudi entities probably says more about the massive scale at which the kingdom's publishing operations are able to operate than it does about the actual appeal of Wahhabi ideas. **Massive Saudi governmental subsidies to support the production and dissemination of religious texts means that at almost any Islamic bookstore around the world, customers are likely to find a wide selection of texts whose contents reflect the religious worldview of the Saudi clerical establishment.**³⁶

³² Commins, "From Wahhabi to Salafi," in *Saudi Arabia in Transition: Insights on Social, Political, Economic and Religious Change*, ed. Haykel, Thomas Hegghammer, and Stéphane Lacroix (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 162. See also Ismail, *Rethinking Salafism*, 17–18.

³³ Madawi Al-Rasheed, 'Introduction: An Assessment of Saudi, Political, Religious and Media Expansion' in *Kingdom Without Borders: Saudi Arabia's Political, Religious and Media Frontiers*, ed. Madawi Al-Rasheed (London: Hurst Publishers Ltd, 2008), 3–15. See also Saeed Shehabi, 'The Role of Religious Ideology in the Expansionist Policies of Saudi Arabia' in *Kingdom Without Borders*, 183.

³⁴ Peter Mandaville, 'Wahhabism and the World: The Historical Evolution, Structure, and Future of Saudi Religious Transnationalism', in *Wahhabism and the World: Understanding Saudi Arabia's Global Influence on Islam*, ed. Peter Mandaville (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 3.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 9.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 16. Emphasise mine.

Statements like this appear to belie Mandaville's own warning that 'The error comes when analysts and observers start to view all manifestations of Salafism as evidence of Saudi Arabia's influence.'³⁷ This tendency permeates studies about Salafism outside of Saudi Arabia (including Britain, see below). Mandaville's volume does include a number of contributions by authors which problematise this prevalent idea, particularly those focused on how "Wahhabism" ties into the dynamics of localised Salafism outside of Saudi Arabia³⁸; unfortunately, these contributions simultaneously fall at times into the same generalisations. Hammond, for example, writes:

That which is today defined as Salafi acquired this predominant position through the sponsorship of the Saudi state, the increasing resources it could devote to disseminating religious discourse, and the intellectual exertions of figures such as al-Albani and those he inspired.³⁹

Here Saudi "sponsorship" is worded in absolute terms. Hammond does however acknowledge the import of non-Saudi Salafi activists; for example, he briefly describes Darussalam International, a prolific publishing house which produces Islamic texts in world languages, as founded by a 'private individual in Riyadh.'⁴⁰ This "individual" is in fact a Pakistani national belonging to the Ahl-e-Hadith movement who focuses on English-language publications (see Chapter Six). Clearly, more than just Saudis are involved in Salafi print culture, and these agencies are actively publishing in the English language; yet relatively little is known about them and to what extent, if any, are they being Saudi-funded or subsidised.

Salafis have a close attachment to texts, perhaps more so than any other Islamic trend given their attitudes to the *past*, *present* and *future* as furnished by Islamic source texts. This explains why the movement is highly invested in print culture. Since academic interest about Salafism is largely an after product of 9/11, Saudi Arabia's role in contemporary Salafi print culture is widely adduced in the literature but lacks hard evidence and often falls into generalisations. One reason for this is that the majority of

³⁷ Ibid, 11.

³⁸ For similar results, see Philipp Bruckmayr and Jan-Peter Hartung, ed., *Die Welt Des Islams* 60 (2020); Laurent Bonnefoy, *Salafism in Yemen: Transnationalism and Religious Identity* (London: Hurst & Company, 2011); Terje Østebø, *Localising Salafism: Religious Change Among Oromo Muslims in Bale, Ethiopia* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Michael Farquhar, *Circuits of Faith: Migration, Education, and the Wahhabi Mission* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017).

³⁹ Hammond, 'Salafi Publishing', in *Wahhabism and the World*, 76, and 88–89.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 88. For more about Darussalam International and its founder, see Chapter Five below.

studies about Salafism focus on the movement from a sociological standpoint. A more perceivable gap is in our understanding of Salafi print culture in the English language, despite it being the primary international language of information exchange.

This thesis therefore aims to help fill this gap by focusing on Salafi print culture in modern English as found in the “land of the English” without presuming that the widespread availability of Salafi books in Britain is evidence of Saudi government spending. In doing so, it contributes to literature pertaining to Salafism in Britain while differing from studies relating to Anglo–Salafi print activism in more general studies including those by Baz, Taylor and Pink respectively. Baz’s study is narrowly focused on London–based charity and Islamic propagation outfit the Islamic Education and Research Academy (iERA) while Taylor compares how Salafis and Christian Evangelicals in the United States appeal to their respective scriptures when proselytising to others.⁴¹ Pink, on the other hand, focuses on the mediatisation of Quranic interpretation in world languages, including Salafi exegeses in the English language.⁴²

Salafism in Britain: A Literature Review

A review of the literature pertaining to Salafism in Britain requires an overview of the movement. Before doing so, however, I should add that I have chosen not to typologize Salafis in Britain because I see one of the effects of doing so presupposes Saudi Arabia at Salafism’s epicentre. The most influential of these typologies was first introduced in the literature in 2006 by Quintan Wiktorowicz, an academic and former advisor to the National Security Council (USA); he neatly divided Salafis into “purists” (which form a majority and are largely apolitical), “politicos” (who embrace political activism) and “jihadis” (who believe in violent jihad as a means of ridding Islam of internal and external “enemies”).⁴³ Although several studies pertaining to Salafism in Britain have utilised this three–fold typology, broader studies have problematised its

⁴¹ Mira A. Baz, ‘Online Islamic *Da’wah* Narratives in the UK’ (PhD, University of Birmingham, 2016); Matthew D. Taylor, ‘Commonsense Scripturalism: The Textual Identities of Salafi Muslims and Evangelical Christians in America’, (Ph.D., Georgetown University, 2017).

⁴² Johanna Pink, *Muslim Qur’anic Interpretation Today: Media, Genealogies and Interpretive Communities* (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2019).

⁴³ Wiktorowicz, ‘Anatomy of the Salafi Movement.’

precision and/or overemphasis on Saudi Arabian religiopolitical events, and/or offered more nuanced and wider-reaching modifications.⁴⁴

Like Bruckmayr and Hartung, I prefer to take account of dynamics ‘formed and negotiated against the backdrop of the local context.’⁴⁵ To my mind, this is a more productive model and is further confirmed by existing “localised” studies of Salafism which underline the problem of emphasising Saudi Arabia’s influence outside of its borders.⁴⁶ My findings complicated my decision on how best to describe Salafis in Britain because they largely operate in groups which are not entirely homogenous and connect to particular transnational networks. Moreover, I found that many of them continue to undergo a process of discovering what Salafism means to them. When I attempted, for example, to employ existing typologies to specific actors mentioned in my findings, I found that these classifications neither fully captured the actor’s ideology at the time nor their evolution of thought. Wiedl states in her study on “mainstream” Salafism in Germany:

[W]e have to consider that Salafi movements, just like other social and political movements, often adjust their methods and strategies to new environments, without changing their underlying ideologies, which complicates unequivocal classifications.⁴⁷

Like Wiedl, I thus view my subjects as “mainstream” Salafis, because what struck me is how Salafism is easily identifiable in the British public domain, appears to be cohesive on a surface level, and is largely promulgated through publications. Although Salafis are divided in Britain, they largely express a united voice through print.

⁴⁴ See for example: Zoltan Pall, *Lebanese Salafis Between the Gulf and Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 22–28; Wagemakers, ‘Revisiting Wiktorowicz: Categorising and Defining Branches of Salafism’, in *Salafism After the Arab Awakening: Contending With People’s Power*, ed. Francesco Cavatorta and Fabio Merone (London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 2016), 7–8; Abdelghani Mimouni, ‘Debating Al-Ḥākimiyyah and Takfīr in Salafism: The Genesis of Intra-Salafī Schism in the 1990s’ (Exeter, University of Exeter, 2016), 7–10; Bruckmayr and Hartung, ‘Introduction: Challenges from “The Periphery”? – Salafī Islam Outside the Arab World. Spotlights on Wider Asia’, in *Die Welt Des Islams* 60 (2020): 155; Yasir Qadhi, ‘Rethinking Salafism: Shifting Trends & Changing Typologies Post Arab Spring – Dr. Yasir Qadhi’, YouTube, accessed 25 June, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yt95RTAnVLg>; Ismail, *Rethinking Salafism*, 21–22.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 167. See also Eickelman, ‘The Study of Islam in Local Contexts.’

⁴⁶ See in particular Østebø, *Localising Salafism*, and Bonnefoy, *Salafism in Yemen*.

⁴⁷ Nina Wiedl, ‘The Making of a German Salafiyya: The Emergence, Development and Missionary Work of Salafi Movements in Germany’ (Denmark: Aarhus University, October 2012), 13. A similar approach is taken up by Anabel Inge, *The Making of a Salafī Muslim Woman: Paths to Conversion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 10–11.

Exceptions also exist, and tend not to conform to widely accepted “truths” and these are highlighted in my findings.

“Mainstream” Salafis first appeared in Britain after World War II but only mobilised after the establishment of Markaz Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith (MJAHA) in 1975. As the name suggests, this organisation was set up by South Asian migrants belonging to the Ahl-e-Hadith movement.⁴⁸ During the 1980s, the Ahl-e-Hadith contributed to the emergence of several youth initiatives: the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM), Harakat Islah Shabab Al Muslim (HISAM) and Jam’iyyat Ihyaa Minhaaj As Sunnah (JIMAS); only the latter survived into the 90s. By the mid-1990s, JIMAS splintered and “cooperatives” of former members established new organisations, mosques and publishing houses including Brixton Mosque, Call to Islam (Luton) and Salafi Publications (Spubs, Birmingham). Unrelated to this chain-of-events, a number of Salafi-oriented mosques and jihadi groups, or non-conformists, also emerged in London and Birmingham during the late-1980s and 90s and competed with the “mainstream” movement. The 1990s also saw a rise in newer communities of Salafi migrants and refugees stemming from countries in North Africa, Somalia and elsewhere. The 2000s then gave way to further divisions between Salafi and ex-Salafi sub-trends which, alongside their “mainstream” predecessors, have spread into most major cities and towns.

The following accounts for almost all of the current literature dedicated to Salafism in Britain in chronological order:

- Birt’s 2005 book chapter on ‘Wahhabism in Britain’;
- Hamid’s 2008 article entitled ‘The Development of British Salafism’ and 2009 book chapter on the ‘Attraction of “Authentic Islam”’;
- Inge’s 2016 PhD thesis-cum-book on the “conversion” of Brixton-based Somali Muslim women into Salafism;
- Emmerich’s 2020 journal article on the pitfalls of terrorism studies in stereotyping Muslim minorities including Spubs;
- Dawood’s 2020 journal article on the politics of labelling oneself a “Salafi” in the United Kingdom and 2021 PhD thesis on London’s Salafis and their reworking of Muslim “common sense”;

⁴⁸ For more about the Ahl-e-Hadith, see Chapter Two in particular.

- Shavit and Fabian’s 2021 journal article surveying the commitments of Spubs’ mosque attendees and 2021 journal article on how convert members of Spubs find belonging in the “saved sect”;
- Anwar’s 2021 PhD thesis on the “conversion” of 30 Muslim women to Spubs in Birmingham from an “insider’s” perspective;
- Amin and my 2021 co-authored journal article on the Ahl-e-Hadith in Britain and Amin’s 2022 book chapter on the “shifting contours” of Saudi Salafism in Britain.⁴⁹

Salafism in Britain also features in the literature as part of wider studies on British Islam, including:

- Joly’s 1995 book on South Asian Muslims in Birmingham which contains material on MJAH;
- Gilliat-Ray’s 2010 book on Muslims in Britain which includes entries for South Asian and Arab-influenced Salafis;
- Baker’s 2011 PhD thesis-cum-book which provides an “insider’s” perspective on the factors behind the radicalisation of Muslim converts and Brixton Mosque’s counter-radicalisation strategy;
- Bowen’s 2014 book surveying contemporary Islamic groups in Britain which includes a chapter on Salafis;
- Hamid’s 2016 PhD thesis-cum-book on the rivalries of four Islamic trends in Britain including Salafis;

⁴⁹ Jonathan Birt, ‘Wahhabism in the United Kingdom: Manifestations and Reactions’, in *Transnational Connections and the Arab Gulf*, 168–84; Sadek Hamid, ‘The Development of British Salafism’, *Isim Review* 21, no. 1 (2008): 10–11, and ‘The Attraction of “Authentic Islam”: Salafism and British Muslim Youth’, in *Global Salafism*, 384–403; Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Muslim Woman*; Arndt Emmerich, ‘Salafi Youth Activism in Britain: A Social Movement Perspective’, *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 9 (2020): 273–303; Iman Dawood, ‘Who Is a “Salafi”? Salafism and the Politics of Labelling in the UK’, *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 9 (2020): 240–61 and ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims: Salafism, Culture, and Politics within London’s Muslim Community’ (PhD, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2021); Uriya Shavit and Fabian Spengler, ‘How Radical Is Birmingham’s Salafi Mosque’, *Democracy and Security*, 2021, 1–28, and ‘Converting to Salafiyya: Non-Muslims’ Path to the “Saved Sect”’, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 41, no. 2 (2021): 337–54; Naheed Anwar, ‘An Ethnography of Female Salafi Converts in Birmingham’ (PhD, London, University of Roehampton, 2022); Hira Amin and Azhar Majothi, ‘The Ahl-e-Hadith: From British India to Britain’, *Modern Asian Studies* 56, no. 1 (2022): 176–206; Amin, ‘The Shifting Contours of Saudi Influence in Britain’, in *Wahhabism and the World*, 290–314.

- Shavit’s 2017 journal article surveying 150 British and German Salafi counter-extremist publications;
- Amin’s 2018 PhD thesis on the construction of a “Western Muslim conscience” by Britain’s Ahl-e-Hadith and Jamaat-i Islami.⁵⁰

As can be observed in this exhaustive list of studies pertaining to Salafism, or including Salafism as part of a wider study, Anglo-Salafi print culture in Britain has never been subjected to a dedicated study despite the “mainstream” Salafis identified earlier all playing a part in its construction. The closest thing we do have is Shavit’s journal article but its focus is counter-terrorism.

A survey of the literature mentioned above further reveals a number of points. Only one of these studies was conducted prior to 9/11: Joly’s ethnographic study of Birmingham between 1983 and 1989 examines how South Asian Muslims, including members of MJAHA, constructed Islamic environments for first and second-generation community members.⁵¹ In doing so, Joly’s insights into 1980s-Salafism in Britain are unique in that they are not informed by a post-9/11 context like later studies. Surprisingly, her study is not picked up in later literature on British Salafism. This could be explained by noting that Joly does not refer to the Ahl-e-Hadith as a “Salafi” community although she does make reference to the MJAHA’s Ahl-e-Hadith and Saudi affiliations as well as its madrasah “Salfia” (*Salafiyyah*).

Another observation is that the vast majority of studies in the literature tend to focus on JIMAS and later articulations of Salafism in Britain. Anwar’s thesis for example, traces Birmingham’s Salafi community ‘as far back as the early 1990s’ but like Shavit and Fabian, almost exclusively focuses on Spubs.⁵² This can be explained partly because she is the wife of one of the co-founders of Spubs, and a devoted member of

⁵⁰ Danièle Joly, *Britannia’s Crescent: Making a Place for Muslims in British Society* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995); Sophie Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Abdul Haqq Baker, *Extremists in Our Midst: Confronting Terror*, New Security Challenges (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Innes Bowen, *Medina in Birmingham, Najaf in Brent: Inside British Islam* (London: Hurst & Company, 2014); Hamid, *Sufis, Salafis and Islamists: The Contested Ground of British Islamic Activism* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2016); Shavit, ‘Embattled Minority In-Between Minorities: An Analysis of British and German Salafi Anti-Jihadi Campaigns’, *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 17 (2017): 187–203; Amin, ‘Salafism and Islamism in Britain, 1965–2015’ (PhD, University of Cambridge, 2017).

⁵¹ See in particular: Joly, *Britannia’s Crescent*, 29, 43–44, 56–57, 69–71, 76 and 83–84.

⁵² Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 78.

the organisation which does not consider non-affiliated mosques and organisations as Salafi.⁵³ In Hamid's article, Britain's Ahl-e-Hadith are acknowledged, briefly, while JIMAS is presented as 'instrumental' in the spread of British Salafism.⁵⁴ In Gilliat-Ray's 2010 introduction to Muslim communities in Britain, in another example, the Ahl-e-Hadith take up less than a page while 'Wahhābī'-Islam and JIMAS span over five.⁵⁵ Similarly, Inge's *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, the only published book dedicated to Salafism in Britain, centres on the Salafi cooperative in Brixton Mosque. It was not until 2018 that Hira Amin's thesis filled this obvious gap.⁵⁶ Her study examines the distinct evolution of a "Western Muslim conscience" among mostly South Asian Salafis and Jamaat-i Islami. Her analysis on the Ahl-e-Hadith however gradually gives way to telling the story of JIMAS and later articulations.

Realising the lack of reference in the literature surrounding the Ahl-e-Hadith in 1990s-Britain and thereafter, Amin and I have since published a journal article which recentres the development of Salafism in Britain from the Arabian Gulf to South Asia.⁵⁷ Aside from studies by Inge, Dawood and Anwar which introduce us to convert Salafis and Somalis, there is also a gap in our understanding of Salafi communities belonging to other than the South Asian ethnic bloc. Furthermore, only Amin and I have written, albeit briefly, about Salafi communities outside of their main hubs of London and Birmingham.

A common theme in the literature is highlighting the import of texts in Salafi activism in Britain. Shavit, for example, suggests that Salafi influence in Germany and Britain is 'is broader due to the stronger presence their ideas have on Internet websites and on shelves of Islamic-interest bookstores.'⁵⁸ Meanwhile, Joly and Hamid have both hinted at the disproportionate number of Salafi texts in comparison to the relatively few numbers of Salafis in Britain.⁵⁹ According to Inge, Salafi 'back-to-basics' and 'strictly rooted in the Qur'an and sunna' texts provided Salafis in Britain with

⁵³ *Ibid*, 84.

⁵⁴ Hamid, 'The Development of British Salafism': 10.

⁵⁵ Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain*, 105 and 70-74.

⁵⁶ Amin, 'Salafism and Islamism in Britain', Introduction.

⁵⁷ Amin and Majothi, 'The Ahl-e-Hadith.'

⁵⁸ Shavit, 'Raising Salafi Children in the West', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 28, no. 3 (July 2017): 336.

⁵⁹ Joly, *Britannia's Crescent*, 70; Hamid, 'The Attraction of "Authentic Islam"', 400, and *Sufis, Salafis and Islamists*, 56.

credibility against rival Islamic trends.⁶⁰ Inge's study remains one of the more thorough representations of British Salafism due to the author's more-than-two-year immersion in the communities she observed, including attending regular study classes and examining 'staple Salafi texts, leaflets, pamphlets, popular websites, and audio recordings of lectures.'⁶¹ Similarly, Amin's thesis features a grammatical analysis of several dozen MJAH magazines.

Saudi Arabia's influence on Salafism in Britain is also commonplace in the literature, most typically under three pretexts: i) Saudi Arabia funds Salafi mosques; ii) It has trained Salafi preachers and imams; iii) It has sponsored the translation, publication and/or distribution of Salafi literature. On the first and second of these points, the literature provides scant data to qualify these claims although the emergence of Salafism does coincide with Saudi's "oil boom" and "expansionist" agenda (see above). With respect to the third pretext, Al-Rasheed bases her argument on having discovered boxes in Regent's Park Mosque clearly imported from Saudi Arabia, and by reviewing Al-Muntada publications which left her with the 'impression of a strong association with Saudi religious interpretations.'⁶² Birt's 2005 book chapter, plainly titled "Wahhabism in Britain" provides a 'survey of popular Islamic literature produced or distributed in Britain' between 2000 and 2002, and argues that Saudi Arabia found Britain strategically important because i) it was home to several Saudi dissidents whose attacks against the kingdom required a response, and ii) the Saudi government invested in spreading 'their vision of Islam', that is, "religious propaganda", via trained preachers and literature.⁶³ He further states:

Serious money was also spent on buying up Arab religious publishing houses that espouse non-Wahhabi views – especially in Saudi Arabia itself, but also many in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, as well as a few in Morocco and Syria... Equally important has been the sheer size of the Saudi book market, which has prompted commercial non-Wahhabi publishers to produce books for the international market that will not fall foul of Saudi censors... Of note also has been the flooding of the local Islamic book market with Wahhabi literature, whose print runs can be five to ten times that of any other British-based sectarian publications, aggressively targeted for a global English-speaking audience.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Muslim Woman*, 27.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 47. Inge also references 100 primary textual and audio sources in her bibliography, 284–288.

⁶² Al-Rasheed, 'Saudi Religious Transnationalism in London', 156–157.

⁶³ Birt, 'Wahhabism in the United Kingdom', 171.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 169 and 171.

These observations were based on Birt’s correspondences with ‘non–Wahhabi ‘*ulama*’ in Syria and Jordan’ and a ‘Birmingham–based Muslim printer who produces religious titles for several sectarian publishing houses in the city, including Saudi Wahhabi ones.’⁶⁵ The degree to which these observations were polemical or hyperbole is left unexamined. In a follow–up blog post, Birt does admit that Saudi funding in Britain has been ‘pretty benign’ but that Salafi preachers trained in Saudi Arabia continue to have an impact locally due to their ‘mass investment in the dissemination of Salafi teaching through publishing and the internet.’⁶⁶ Hamid presents a similar conclusion. While conceding some of the appeal of British Salafism was organic, he counts among the reasons behind the “attraction” of Salafism in Britain, ‘the globalisation of Saudi Salafi discourse through the public and private financing of certain British Muslim institutions, the distribution of Salafi literature, saturation of Salafi perspectives on the internet and free scholarships to study in the University of Medina.’⁶⁷

Inge, on the other hand, discovered that leaders of JIMAS and members of the Salafi cooperative (Spubs and Brixton Mosque) ‘categorically stated that they have never received Saudi or other foreign governmental or NGO funding.’⁶⁸ Little to no information in the literature informs us about other Salafi organisations invested in print culture and tends to focus on the divisive nature of Salafis in Britain, more so than their print exploits.

Stereotypes about Saudi Arabia’s financial import of “Wahhābism” in Britain appear to have subsided in the literature more recently (read for example Amin and Dawood); however, the idea that Saudi Arabia is “exporting” its particular brand of Salafism into Britain still persists in certain media, government and think–tank narratives.⁶⁹ These remain largely negative, which DeLong–Bas reminds us need not always be necessary

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 180–181, footnotes 8 and 21.

⁶⁶ Yahya (Jonathan) Birt, ‘Wahhabi Wrangles’, 2 November 2007, accessed 22 April 2019, <https://yahyabirt1.wordpress.com/2007/11/02/wahhabi-wrangles>; a similar conclusion is made by Bowen, 5 and Gilliat–Ray, *Muslims in Britain*, 71.

⁶⁷ Hamid, *Sufis, Salafis and Islamists*, 141.

⁶⁸ Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Muslim Woman*, 28.

⁶⁹ See for example: Adam Deen, ‘Are Saudi–Funded Mosques Really A Problem In The UK?’, *Huffington Post*, 4 June, 2017, accessed 19 September, 2022, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/adam-deen/saudi-funded-mosques_b_16825640.html; earlier examples of public “exposés” are highlighted below in Chapter Six.

since doing so overlooks positive outcomes such as ‘charitable giving, increased religious observance, and care for the less fortunate.’⁷⁰

Based on the above, it is clear to me that the literature pertaining to Salafism in Britain presents us with several gaps in our knowledge. Some of these are more general and relate to the movement’s history in Britain: more can be said about the Ahl-e-Hadith in particular since they have had a constant presence in British Muslim spaces since their mobilisation in 1975; little to nothing is known about Salafi youth initiatives during the 1980s like MYM and HISAM; similarly, there is scant information about Salafism outside of London and Birmingham. This thesis will therefore attempt to fill in these gaps by contributing a more comprehensive history of the Salafi movement in Britain.

There is also a perceivable gap in our understanding of Saudi Arabia’s relationship to “mainstream” Salafism in Britain: little has hitherto been uncovered about how much Saudi has spent on Salafi institutes, mosques and literature in Britain; how exactly has this “funding” been channelled; why it is seen as a problem in certain quarters of British society and how do we account for some Salafi institutions claiming that they have never received subsidies from the Saudi kingdom. This thesis will seek to address this lacuna by assessing the extent of Saudi Arabia’s relationship to Salafism in Britain.

Lastly, and most pertinently to the subject of this thesis, the literature confronts us with the import of texts to Salafis in Britain but tells us very little about local Salafi print culture; furthermore, the overwhelming idea which permeates the literature is that Saudi Arabia sponsors or subsidises Salafi print culture in Britain. This further raises a number of interesting questions: When did Salafis take to print and why? Who are the actors behind Salafi texts in the English language? How do they fund their print projects? What types of books do they print? What impact have these books had on the wider Anglosphere? How much of Anglo-Salafi print culture is the product of Salafis in Britain? How is Saudi Arabia involved in this project, if it is at all? It is hoped that by tackling these types of secondary questions, this thesis will contribute to our understanding of Anglo-Salafi print culture; furthermore, it may help towards

⁷⁰ Natana J. DeLong Bas, ‘Wahhabism and Salafism in Global Perspective’, in *Wahhabism and the World*, 42.

demystifying some of the mysteries surrounding Saudi spending in Britain and encourage dialogue with British Salafis by moving away from generalisations.

Research Methodology

From the onset, my ambition while studying Anglo–Salafi print culture in Britain was to carry out an encyclopaedic survey of everything Salafis in Britain have published in the English language and to interview as many Salafis involved as possible. Towards this aim, by the end of year one, I managed to acquire inventory lists from the two largest Anglo–Salafi book warehouses in Britain (Darussalam Leyton and Dar Makkah International) and interview a number of Anglo–Salafi publishers, readers and leaders. I quickly adopted a “complementary research strategy” in order to analyse both emerging quantitative and qualitative data.⁷¹ According to Johnson and Turner, three rationale underscore this approach: ‘(a) to obtain convergence or corroboration of findings, (b) to eliminate or minimize key plausible alternative explanations for conclusions drawn from the research data, and (c) to elucidate the divergent aspects of a phenomenon.’⁷²

As my fieldwork progressed, I gradually came to realise that my ambitions were too high. There is simply no telling how much Salafis in Britain have published in the English language in terms of printed books, booklets and pamphlets, let alone online in terms of electronic books, essays, articles, and blog and social media posts. My options were therefore limited. I could, for example, concentrate on what Vaca describes as “commercial religion”, or the printed ‘forms of social organization commonly recognised as religion that take shape through the ideas, activities, and strategies that typify commercial capitalism.’⁷³ However, this provided its own challenges. The two abovementioned inventory lists contained 2,938 and 2,022 individual titles respectively. Aside from the mammoth task of wading through these

⁷¹ Martyn Hammersley, ‘The Relationship Between Qualitative and Quantitative Research: Paradigm Loyalty Versus Methodological Eclecticism’, in *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods for Psychology and the Social Sciences* (Oxford: BPS Blackwell, 1996), 159–74, cited in Flick Uwe, *Designing Qualitative Research* (London: SAGE Publications, 2007), 8.

⁷² See Burke Johnson and Lisa A. Turner, ‘Data Collection Strategies in Mixed Methods Research’, in *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research*, ed. Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2003), 299.

⁷³ Daniel Vaca, ‘Introduction’, in *Evangelicals Incorporated: Books and the Business of Religion in America*, ed. Daniel Vaca (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), 3.

titles, not all of them were produced in Britain. I also quickly realised there were many books not stocked by the abovementioned wholesalers (including print-on-demand titles available online). If I were to exclude everything beside what these inventories contained, I ran the risk of ignoring part of a bigger picture. Furthermore, both inventories (supplied to me in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets) were poorly documented containing, for example, entries which belonged to food, perfume or clothing categories.

I thus began collating my own spreadsheet in order to record a more accurate list and take note of important pieces of information including year of publication, location of publisher, types of genres, which centuries and countries authors were from, page counts, etc. My rationale was that this information would provide statistics and observable patterns. Starting with Darussalam Leyton's website (Darussalam.com), I began recording all the available Anglo-Salafi titles "made in Britain"; these amounted to 291 titles (as of February 2021). My initial analysis began revealing valuable insights. For example, 75% of these titles were English-language translations (particularly from Arabic-language works); 29% were works originally authored by scholars born or based in Saudi Arabia; the average size of an Anglo-Salafi book was 133 pages and costed an average of £5.87. But these insights did not account for titles which have gone out of circulation or were not accepted by Darussalam Leyton for resale; they also only account for one print of a particular title, which tells us nothing about reprints or revised texts; it is also problematic designating a time and location to a particular author: how does one account for changing borders and governments or authors who were born in one country, but potentially authored a book in another? Regrettably, I decided against continuing my spreadsheet until such issues can be resolved. Nevertheless, I do believe that such an undertaking has potential.

By my second year of study, my fieldwork was overwhelmingly qualitative, drawing on accessible Anglo-Salafi publications and interview data. I was thus drawn to "grounded theory", first introduced in the 1960s by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in response to the undermining of qualitative methods in the social sciences at the time.⁷⁴ "Grounded theory" provided me with a more 'general method of comparative analysis' whereby I could collect data, analyse it to form an "emerging"

⁷⁴ Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (New York: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967; tenth impression).

theory, and continue to collect data and develop it until I formed a “formal” theory by “coding” (categorising data and developing properties into groups) once “saturation” was reached (and no new categories/properties emerge).⁷⁵ Since my study involves people *and* texts, “grounded theory” provided me greater flexibility after realising that I would not be able to quantitatively account for *every* Salafi publication in English. It also allowed me to incorporate a “historical–biographical” lens, which views texts as ‘chiefly, if not exclusively, as a reflection of its author’s life and times.’⁷⁶ Moreover, it allowed me the flexibility to analyse commercial and not–for–profits formats in which Anglo–Salafi texts appear, including online material.

Towards the latter part of my studies, I was well aware that I had to take account of the wider Anglosphere as well as a broader history of Islamic texts in English. As a result, my fieldwork extended onto reading material that is not strictly Salafi or British. For the most part, however, this thesis focuses on Anglo–Salafi print culture in Britain. Furthermore, I have limited my focus to works which are primarily non–fictional and aimed at adults and young adults. As such, my thesis does not, for example, account for illustrated Anglo–Salafi texts aimed at young children.⁷⁷

My fieldwork consistently involved reading and collecting Salafi reading material located in local cities and towns. My primary bank of reading material comprised of a personal library of approximately 1,000 Anglo–Islamic books, the vast majority of which are products of the local Salafi movement. My analysis of specific titles throughout this thesis stem from this personal collection but also include titles shared with me by interviewees, friends, family members and contacts in the publishing industry. Furthermore, and fairly late in my studies, I also discovered a large collection of MJAH’s *The Straight Path* (English) and *Şirāṭ–e–Mustaqīm* (Urdu) magazines published between 1978 and 2006 at The Islamic Foundation Library in Markfield. In total, I carefully read every issue of the English magazine and took detailed notes. My findings differ from Amin’s examination of the same magazine in English in two ways: i) her study primarily involved scanning issues and using a specialised software to

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 40; this is summarised in the following formula: *join collection + coding + analysis = generation of theory*.

⁷⁶ Wilfred Guerin et al., *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005; fifth edition), 51.

⁷⁷ Thankfully, this gap has already been addressed in Shavit, ‘Raising Salafi Children in the West.’

observe grammatical patterns, and ii) her analysis is limited to 59 issues while I had access to 120 English issues in total and several hundred Urdu issues.⁷⁸

A further seven primary sources were also consulted during my fieldwork; two of these are only available in the Urdu language and have never featured in previous studies on British Salafism: i) *Tehrīk Ahl-e-Hadis Yūrūb mein* (*The Ahl-e-Hadith Movement in Europe*) containing articles, anecdotes and letters compiled by the founder of MJAHA, Fazal Karim Asim (d. 2003), and ii) *Englistān mein Islam* (*Islam in England*) authored by Suhaib Hasan, an early MJAHA leader and the first Saudi-trained and employed attaché in Britain.⁷⁹ A careful study of the first text reveals that this publication includes mostly articles published in *Širāṭ-e-Mustaqīm* leading up to 2003 by various authors including Asim who are rarely identified; a small section also contains excerpts from an English publication about the Ahl-e-Hadith movement in UK and which was originally a Master's Thesis submitted to the Muslim College, London.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, it provides useful insights about the inner-workings of MJAHA. Similarly, *Englistān mein Islam* charts the rise of Islamic activism in Britain and contains valuable information about Hasan's involvement in the distribution of Saudi funds towards mosque committees in 1980s-Britain.

The other five primary sources are mostly digital, easily accessible but equally absent in the literature: i) a valuable ongoing memoir by Hasan which is published on his official website and details his early life currently leading up to his arrival in Britain in 1976⁸¹; ii) a podcast series presented and published by Abdul Haqq Baker (former chairman of Brixton Mosque) charting his conversion to Islam and events surrounding the development of Salafism in Britain between 1990 and 2019⁸²; iii) a collection of podcasts published by Baker on his YouTube channel discussing aspects of British Salafi activism with guests possessing "insider" knowledge⁸³; iv) a collection of videos

⁷⁸ In comparison, Amin analysed approximately 59 issues of *The Straight Path* in her thesis.

⁷⁹ Fazal Karim Asim, *Tehrīk ahl-e-hadis yūrūp mein* (Birmingham: Markazi Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith UK, 1997); Suhaib Hasan, *Englistān mein islam* (Islamabad: Da'wat Academi, 2016).

⁸⁰ Rashad Ahmad Azami, *Ahl-e-Hadith in Britain: History, Establishment, Organisation, Activities and Objectives* (London: Ta-Ha Publishers, 2000).

⁸¹ Consult Hasan, 'My Memoirs', Dr. Suhaib Hasan's Official Website, accessed 11, February 2022, <http://drsuhaibhasan.co.uk>. Currently, Hasan has published 20 parts of his memoir covering the years between 1942 and 1976.

⁸² Baker, 'Podcasts', Abdul Haqq Baker PhD, accessed 11 February, 2022, <https://www.abdulhaqqbaker.com/podcasts>.

⁸³ Consult 'The Baker Broadcast', 'A Piece of Cake' and 'The Doctors' Lab' in the following playlist: Abdul Haqq Baker, 'A H Baker', YouTube, accessed 11 February, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/user/old1skool/playlists>.

by Bilal Philips, a popular North–American and Anglo–Salafi publisher, which reveal his reasons for publishing some of his popular Anglo–Salafi texts⁸⁴, and v) a number of rare Anglo–Salafi books, papers and magazines which are no longer in circulation and which I obtained through my abovementioned network.

I also visited various Anglo–Salafi websites and social media pages during my fieldwork in which I found texts, articles and downloadable e–books. These do not feature heavily in my analysis, however, because there are so many Anglo–Salafi websites and social pages that they would require a dedicated thesis. Some Salafi websites were also defunct and while I was able to access snapshots of them using Wayback Machine (provided by the Internet Archive), these screen captures did not always provide access to sub–pages or downloadable e–books.

In addition to primary Anglo–Salafi texts, I collected what cross–disciplinarians refer to as “oral history”, which refers both to the ‘process of conducting and recording interviews with people in order to elicit information from them about the past’ and arriving at a ‘narrative of past events.’⁸⁵ By engaging with the past, through texts and people’s recollections, this method was not simply to collect data using interviews. Instead, it complemented my “historical–biographical” lens and helped me rethink what I thought I knew about Anglo–Salafi print culture and compare ‘unexpected discrepancies between... written and oral sources’ and resolve the two through focused investigation.⁸⁶

I interviewed several Salafis in Britain involved in publishing and reading Salafi publications in the English language. As with texts, I extended my remit to include Salafis who do the same thing outside of Britain as well as non–Salafis (including ex–Salafis). Previous studies by Hamid, Bowen, Inge, Amin and Dawood have already demonstrated the added value that interviews add to the story of British Salafism, especially when interviewees go on record for the first time. In total, I conducted over 50 interviews with individuals including JIMAS’ founder Abu Muntasir, who has only previously gone on record about Salafism to Bowen and Inge, and Hasan and Abdul Karim Saqib (founder and editor of *The Straight Path*), who despite being incredibly

⁸⁴ Consult Bilal Philips, ‘My Writings’, YouTube, accessed: 20 December, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0siBcQqUbDdwMIDs6qclH898g5aUFB_v.

⁸⁵ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 2.

⁸⁶ Donald A. Ritchie, ‘Introduction’, *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. Donald A. Ritchie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) 11–13.

important to the story of Salafism in Britain and its print culture, have never been interviewed before.

I sought out relevant interviewees by mostly using my “insider” network of colleagues and former clients to locate leaders, publishers, translators and ordinary Salafis willing to discuss their reading habits.⁸⁷ Whenever my network failed to initiate contact with persons of interest, I attempted to contact them via their social media accounts or contact details on copyright pages of respective publications. Every interview was recorded using a smart-phone application and later transcribed and coded using NVivo, a qualitative research software. This allowed me to “code” data and identify recurring key words, themes and narratives. My interview questions were fairly loose and conversational, beginning with baseline questions which would lead to relevant follow-up questions and thereby creating an atmosphere of dialogue and providing openings for new avenues of enquiry.⁸⁸ Interview questions were tailored for each participant based on their relation to the Salafi movement in Britain and publishing or reading Anglo-Salafi books.

Unfortunately, I did not manage to interview a number of actors for various reasons. Salafis in Britain as elsewhere have experienced negative media coverage and connotations with violent extremists (see Chapter Six). I believe some of the actors I approached that refused or simply ignored my invitation to participate in this study did so because of these public “exposés.” For the same reason, I was careful never to describe interviewees as “informants” and thereby give the false impression that I was an “undercover” agent. Furthermore, I gained participants’ trust by following the University of Nottingham’s ethical clearance process outlined by the Faculty of Arts ethics board. Interviewees were each provided with a participant information sheet containing a short description of my subject of research, a full privacy notice containing relevant contact details and an informed consent form which allowed them to confirm or waive their anonymity and agree to being recorded. A number of participants agreed to being interviewed provided they were anonymised.⁸⁹ All

⁸⁷ For more about the potential of drawing on “insider” perspectives, consult Baker, *Extremists in Our Midst*, 11 and 91–93; Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 86–90.

⁸⁸ Refer to Appendix 1 for examples of these baseline questions. For a discussion on interviews as a conversational construct, see Svend Brinkmann, *Qualitative Interviewing: Understanding Qualitative Research* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2–5.

⁸⁹ In the following pages, these anonymised participants are referred to by pseudo-names clearly marked by speech marks in order to differentiate one interviewee from another (eg. “Nawaz”).

participants were required to agree in writing that in the event that they were to disclose any information which would be considered illegal or dangerous to public safety, the appropriate authorities would be informed.

A common reason why potential participants declined my invitation for an interview is that they were simply far too busy. Another reason is that at least some of them were not entirely sure of what “side of the fence” I stood in terms of intra–Salafi disputes (see Chapter Four). I never disclosed my own opinions but it is safe to assume that my familiarity with Salafis in Britain, terminology, transparency and types of questions comforted participants of my positionality.⁹⁰ My appearance was also obviously Muslim: I have a beard and occasionally wear thobes. In contrast, Inge, who is not a Muslim, would face a ‘barrage’ of questions including “What’s your religion?” and “What do you think of Islam?”⁹¹ Dawood, on the other hand, despite wearing a hijab, was “unknown” to the same interviewees I spoke to, and would frequently be asked “What do you believe?” and “Are you Salafi?”⁹² Seemingly, most of my interviewees knew I was Muslim and simply assumed that I was a Salafi or at least sympathetic to the movement because of my connections and/or past work.

I however struggled to convince Salafi women to participate in my study because they tend to avoid free–mixing with non–relatives on religious grounds.⁹³ Amin, Inge, Dawood and Anwar thereby accessed a considerable part of the Salafi community that I could not for the most part. In contrast, through personal correspondences with Amin, Inge and Dawood, I discovered that they experienced difficulty in interviewing Salafi men for the same reason outlined above.⁹⁴ Aside from the odd Salafi female who did agree to participate in this study, my research indicates that only a small minority are involved in the publishing sphere; nevertheless, female Anglo–Salafi publishers and reading publics would have enriched my findings.

Another challenge emerged during the spread of Covid–19 and the subsequent lockdown in Britain. Interviews prior to 2020 were conducted in person unless the

⁹⁰ For similar considerations from an “insider”, see Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 102–106.

⁹¹ Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 53 and 59.

⁹² See Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 65–66.

⁹³ Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 7.

⁹⁴ On the wider issues of accessing Muslim spaces, consult Sophie Gilliat–Ray, ‘Closed Worlds: (Not) Accessing Deobandi “dar ul–uloom” in Britain’, *Fieldwork in Religion* 1, no. 1 (2005): 7–33, and ‘From “Closed Worlds” to “Open Doors”’: (Now) Accessing Deobandi “darul uloom” in Britain, *Fieldwork in Religion* 13, no. 2 (2018): 127–150.

participant was no longer located in Britain in which case they took place online or as a last resort, through e-mail or through smart-phone messaging apps like WhatsApp. Following the lockdown, interviews were conducted strictly through the internet or by phone in order to avoid unnecessarily travelling and causing potential risk to both parties. I found that fewer people during the lockdown were as easily accessible as they would have been had I visited them in person. Nonetheless, I was particularly fortunate to interview some key figures on multiple occasions via telephone or through online Zoom meetings. I was also granted an open-channel of communication via WhatsApp for follow up questions/discussions with several interviewees. This was particularly useful when my emerging theory brought up new questions.

Despite the challenges outlined above in gathering quantifiable data and securing interviews with some people of interest, I still managed to amass a large dataset of Anglo-Salafi reading material and “oral histories” from a number of publishers, distributors, translators and readers. My findings are presented in the following seven chapters.

Outline of Chapters

The first chapter of this thesis provides a broad account of the emergence of Anglo-Islamic print culture. This sets the background for subsequent chapters by alerting us to my overall argument that Anglo-Salafi print culture is part of a wider trend. It argues that Anglo-Islamic texts first appeared in the mid-nineteenth century but it was not until the early half of the twentieth century that Muslims, particularly in South Asia, began seeing English as an essential medium of communicating Islam on their own terms; this trend transitioned into post-war Britain following the mass-migration of South Asian Muslims and thereby gave rise to an intellectually-driven Anglo-Islamic print culture “made in Britain.”

Having situated the wider Anglo-Islamic print culture of early post-war Britain, Chapter Two examines how Salafism first emerged in Britain and what led its members to insert themselves into this wider project. It argues that Salafism was introduced into Britain through members of the Ahl-e-Hadith and focuses in particular on 1980s-Britain during which time some Ahl-e-Hadith members published a number of largely not-for-profit Anglo-Salafi publications. It further highlights why not every

Ahl-e-Hadith member embraced the English language even after realising that the language of Islamic education in Britain could not remain in Urdu.

Chapter Three continues by examining events pertaining to the mobilisation of Salafi youth initiatives in 1980s-Britain. It suggests that the Ahl-e-Hadith empowered young adult Muslims to contribute to their revivalist message, particularly because the latter were articulate in the English language and in harnessing technology. By the end of the same decade, Salafi youth formed a new and independent organisation (JIMAS) and formed ties with a transnational network of Anglo-Salafi equally invested in print. This was partly due to some Ahl-e-Hadith members failing to harness the English language as a print medium of education.

Leading up to the late 1980s, there was barely a marketplace for commercial Anglo-Salafi texts in Britain. Chapter Four examines how and why this marketplace emerged during the 1990s leading up to 2001 as a result of young and old Salafis in Britain working in tandem with a transnational network of Salafis. It argues that collectively, these print-activists popularised the type of Salafi discourse which was already gaining currency in the Arab world through translation. As well as articulating a more Arab-like Salafism, members of JIMAS inherited Salafi debates from the Arab world which contributed to divisions and newer cooperatives asserting themselves through print in Britain and popularising Saudi-born or based Salafi ulema.

Chapter Five examines why following the terrorist attacks on 9/11 and more assertively after the London terrorist attacks on 7 July 2005 (“7/7”), Salafism was pushed into the British public spotlight and gained considerable notoriety for its relationship to Saudi Wahhabism. It argues that Salafis in Britain contributed to this narrative but for the most part, non-Salafis and non-Muslim critics and observers misconstrued Jihadism and the widespread availability of Anglo-Salafi-oriented texts as evidence of “Wahhabi” state-funded expansionism and intolerance. This chapter highlights why most Salafi activists in Britain did not distance themselves away from their Saudi links after 9/11. Anglo-Salafi print culture, it is revealed, was dominated by local actors supportive of Saudi-centric Salafism and Saudi ulema were an essential point of reference for Salafi publishers in Britain in wrestling Salafism’s name and reputation from contesting Jihadi outfits.

Having highlighted how Salafism in Britain was stigmatised in the public sphere after 9/11, Chapter Six takes stock of Saudi Arabia's influence in Britain leading up to 2001 in three key areas: i) sponsoring Anglo-Islamic literature; ii) offering free scholarships to British Muslim men to study in Saudi Islamic universities; iii) donating funds towards the construction or refurbishment of British mosques. It argues that while the Saudi government certainly invested Riyals into Britain towards these three key areas, these were limited instances and do not account for the commercial Anglo-Salafi book market which is driven by local and transnational entrepreneurs without recourse to external funds. This confirms that the role of Salafis born or based in Britain in constructing Salafism in English is largely overshadowed by a post-9/11 lens which over emphasises, often without hard evidence, the import of Saudi state actors.

Chapter Seven examines two more outcomes which affected Salafis and Anglo-Salafi print culture in Britain following 9/11: i) the emergence of newer Anglo-Salafi articulations which challenged the local dominance of Saudi-centric Salafism, and ii) the rise of social media which threatened to undermine the local Anglo-Salafi book market. It argues that despite these two outcomes, Salafis in Britain invested in print since the 1980s-90s have adapted to these challenges and thereby continue to dominate local Anglo-Salafi print discourse. Nevertheless, the same outcomes may impact Anglo-Salafi print culture in the future and contribute to a greater diversity of Salafisms in the English language.

Finally, Chapter Eight concludes this thesis by summarising my key findings, identifying its limitations and lastly, offering suggestions for future related studies.

Chapter One

Anglo–Islamic Print Culture: A Background

Today there are dozens of Islamic bookstores scattered across Britain. Upon entering one, one is likely to find various “Islamic” items like clothes, perfumes, health foods and of course, books. A *lot* of books. Alongside the typical array of printed Qurans, beautifully written in Arabic calligraphy and bound in hard–back leather covers, hundreds of appealing publications about various Islamic subjects in English are neatly placed in row after row of topically–arranged bookshelves. Everything tends to look fairly new for good reason. Indeed most of what we find today in such spaces only appeared over the last two or three decades. Before this time, books about Islam, in English, were relatively scarce. Now that things have changed, Ahmed suggests that we are currently witnessing a ‘new chapter of Islamic history’, one in which Muslims in the Anglosphere are increasingly constructing a space for Islam in other than its traditional languages.⁹⁵ Lewis and Hamid meanwhile, opine that ‘Muslims in Britain are giving expression to Islam in a new language’, and that English could be the ‘new Persian’ or, ‘as significant as Persian was in the past, as a vehicle for generating new thinking for emerging Muslim elites.’⁹⁶

This chapter argues that the abovementioned phenomenon should not be described as “new” in Britain, though it is certainly more pronounced than it ever has been. It traces the emergence of Anglo–Islamic print culture back to the mid–nineteenth century. It follows its developments into subsequent decades between Victorian England and British India. It continues by examining why by the mid–twentieth century, during which time the population of Muslims in Britain dramatically increased, Muslim authors began treating English more seriously as a “language” of Islam. Salafis in Britain first began publishing Anglo–Islamic texts in the late 1970s. This chapter will therefore provide much–needed context for subsequent chapters.

⁹⁵ Abdul–Azim Ahmed, ‘Anglophone Islam: A New Conceptual Category’, *Contemporary Islam* 16 (July 2022): 16.

⁹⁶ Philip Lewis and Sadek Hamid, *British Muslims: New Directions in Islamic Thought, Creativity and Activism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), x and 216.

Translating Islam into English: A New Frontier

Prior to the emergence of Anglo–Islamic print culture, texts *about* Islam and Muslims were introduced into the English language as early as the seventeenth century by non–Muslims. Under the backdrop of England’s increasing contact with and eventual colonisation of parts of the Muslim world, Christian scholars developed a curiosity about the religion of Islam, its peoples and cultures. Alexander Ross (d. 1654), a Scottish chaplain, for example, was apparently the first such scholar to “translate” the Quran into English in 1649⁹⁷; “his” rendition, while being based entirely on an earlier French translation, was subtitled ‘for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into the Turkish vanities.’⁹⁸ Almost a century later, Anglican society member and orientalist George Sale (d. 1736) produced a newer translation of the Quran, this time based on the original script in Arabic; published in 1734, Sale’s translation was to offer a better and more accurate translation than that of Ross, satisfy curiosities as well as enable the conversion of Mohammedans to Christianity without compulsion.⁹⁹

The translation of other Islamic texts into English increased in the eighteenth century in correspondence with the “carve–up” of Africa and Asia which ‘left few Muslim countries outside Europe’s sphere of influence.’¹⁰⁰ Aside from orientalist translations born out of curiosity, such texts also supported the development and implementation of Anglo–Muhammadan law introduced in British colonial India.¹⁰¹ For example, Charles Hamilton (d. 1792) published a translation of *Al–Hidāyah*, a classic compendium of Ḥanafī Islamic law under this pretext.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ The attribution to Ross has recently been questioned. See Samir Jeraj, ‘The mystery of the first English Qur’an’, *Hyphen*, accessed: 13 December, 2022, <https://hyphenonline.com/2022/12/13/the-mystery-of-the-first-english-quran>.

⁹⁸ Alexander Ross, *The Alcoran of Mahomet* (London: 1649), front cover subtitle. Consulted online at Alexander Ross, ‘The Alcoran of Mahomet : translated out of Arabique into French’, Internet Archive, accessed: 26 November, 2022, <https://archive.org/details/alcoranofmahomet00dury/page/n3/mode/2up?ref=ol>.

⁹⁹ George Sale, *The Koran: Commonly called the Alcoran of Mohammed* (London: J. Wilcoy, 1734), iii–ix. Consulted online at ‘The Koran, Commonly Called the Alcoran of Mohammed by George Sale’, Quran Archive, accessed: 26 November, 2022, <https://quran-archive.org/explorer/george-sale>.

¹⁰⁰ Humayun Ansari, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain Since 1800* (London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 2004), 27–28; Rozina Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: The Story of Indians in Britain 1700–1947* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 11–12.

¹⁰¹ See Muhammad Khalid Masud, “Anglo–Muhammadan law”, in: *EI3ncyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Everett Rowson, accessed 9 December, 2022, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_22716.

¹⁰² Charles Hamilton, trans., *The Hedaya or Guide: A Commentary on the Mussulman Laws* (Lahore: Premier Book House, 1963 reprint of the 1791 original facsimile), i–iv. Consulted online at Charles

It was not until the latter–half of the following century that Muslims began engaging with their colonisers about Islam in English. A key motivation behind the abovementioned shift was that Muslim intellectuals needed to convince, even appease, British authorities of their loyalty. Following the Indian Mutiny of 1857, a number of works appeared under this pretext and many were translations. For example, Syed Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) authored an Urdu–language analysis of the Indian Mutiny which was later translated into English and published by a British colonel in 1873.¹⁰³ In another example of a translation, S. A. Khān critiqued a British civil servant’s thesis on the mutiny and the part that “fanatical” Muslims allegedly played in it.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān (d. 1890) and Muḥammad Ḥusain Batālwī (d. 1920), both leading members of the Ahl–e–Hadith movement which was directly implicated by colonial government officials for causing the Indian Mutiny (see following chapter), also commissioned English translations of their Urdu–language works condemning the mutineers.¹⁰⁵

Finding the Muslim Voice in English

During the same abovementioned period, and again connected to post–mutiny tensions, a number of Muslims born or trained in the English language took to print *for* Islam. Such compositions were clearly aimed at English–language reading publics and peppered with apologetic undertones. In 1873, for example, Syed Ameer Ali (d. 1928), an accomplished Indian lawyer–cum–judge trained in Britain, published several Anglo–Islamic works while studying in London.¹⁰⁶ Soon after, Muslim authors would compose Anglo–Islamic texts with an added motive: to convert readers to Islam. This development did not take place in British India but in Victorian England under

Hamilton, ‘The Hedaya Or Guide’, Internet Archive, accessed 26 November, 2022, <https://archive.org/details/hedayaorguide029357mbp/page/n5/mode/2up>.

¹⁰³ See Syed Ahmed Khan, *The Causes of the Indian Revolt* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹⁰⁴ S. A. Khan Bahadur, *Review on Dr. Hunter’s Indian Musalmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen?* (Lahore: Premier Book House, n. d.). Consulted online at Syed Ahmad Khan Bahadur, ‘Review on Dr. Hunter’s Indian Musalmans; are they bound in conscience to rebel against the Queen?’, Internet Archive, accessed 26 November, 2022, <https://archive.org/details/reviewondrhunter00ahmauoft>.

¹⁰⁵ Sayyad Muhammad Siddik Khan, *An Interpreter of Wahabiism*, trans. Sayyad Akbar Alam (Calcutta: Author, 1884); Abu Said Mohammed Husain, *A Treatise on Jihad (Iqtisad–Fi–Masail–Il–Jihad)* (Lahore: Author, 1887).

¹⁰⁶ See for example: Syed Ameer Ali, *A Critical Examination of the Life and Teachings of Mohammed* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1873) and *Islām* (London: Constable & Company Ltd, 1914).

Liverpudlian lawyer Abdullah (William Henry) Quilliam (d. 1932); after converting to Islam in 1889, Quilliam published a pamphlet about Islam, complaining of the ‘gross ignorance of the masses’ in his native land for his newfound religion, despite the ‘many millions of Moslem fellow subjects who live under the same rule.’¹⁰⁷ Quilliam quickly amassed a small community of native English converts to Islam and established a printing press and the Liverpool Moslem Institute (1887–1908) which, as well as providing converts a place to pray and congregate, also included a reading room, library and available ‘Explanatory works on Islam.’¹⁰⁸

The Victorian “mission” went on to publish various Anglo–Islamic translations, original compositions and two English–language magazines, *The Islamic World* and *The Crescent*.¹⁰⁹ This suggests that Quilliam was aware of the sudden need for Anglo–Islamic texts for new Muslims since the latter might not necessarily understand “Islamic languages” like Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Turkic. Like S. A. Ali’s publications, Quilliam’s project was aimed at English audiences and not so much the minority of Muslim migrant working, student and professional classes located in mostly British port cities at the time. It is reasonable to believe Anglo–Islamic texts were never aimed at such “outsiders” already familiar with “Islamic languages”, relatively unfamiliar with Victorian English, or viewed by Victorian converts as temporary residents. This is further highlighted by subsequent events.

The Victorian Muslim “mission” was superseded by the Woking “Shah Jahan” Mosque (est. 1889) which, after falling into disuse, was relaunched in 1912 by Khawaja Kamal al–Din (d. 1932), a Lahori–Ahmadi lawyer–cum–proselytiser.¹¹⁰ Kamal al–Din established the Woking Muslim Mission and Literary Trust (WMMLT) under which he published over 20 original Anglo–Islamic essays as well as an English–language magazine entitled *The Islamic Review*.¹¹¹ Alongside Quilliam,

¹⁰⁷ William. H. Quilliam, *The Faith of Islam, an Explanatory Sketch of the Principle Fundamental Tenets of the Moslem Religion* (Liverpool: 1889), 3.

¹⁰⁸ Quilliam, ed., *The Crescent*, January 1893, 10. Consulted online at ‘The Crescent’, Abdullah Quilliam Society, accessed 7 December, 2022, <http://www.abdullahquilliam.org/crescent-results/>.

¹⁰⁹ A selection of issues from both *The Islamic World* and *The Crescent* are available online. Physical reprints can also be located at The Islamic Foundation Library, Markfield. ‘Literature’, Abdullah Quilliam Society, accessed 23 February, 2019, <http://www.abdullahquilliam.org>.

¹¹⁰ ‘Explore’, Shah Jahan Mosque, accessed 10 December, 2022, <https://shahjahanmosque.org.uk/the-mosque/history/explore>.

¹¹¹ A number of Kamāl al–Dīn’s works are available online in PDF format. Consult ‘Books’, The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, accessed 23 February, 2020, <http://www.aaiil.org/text/books/bookmain.shtml>.

Kamal al-Din and prominent Muslim converts including Lord Rowland Headley (d. 1935) addressed the growing community of Victorian Muslim converts through various publications.¹¹² Simultaneously, they invited to Islam the ‘aristocracy and the middle class, many of whom had colonial experiences in India or other colonised British territories.’¹¹³

The abovementioned survey, albeit a snapshot, suggests that Anglo-Islamic print culture emerged as early as the late nineteenth century and is therefore not “new.” It was primarily aimed at non-Muslim reading publics and extended onto Anglo-Muslim reading publics soon after. As such, it began with apologetic undertones in wake of the Indian Mutiny but soon transitioned into a confident “missionary” tool in Victorian England. This growing confidence would also underscore a simultaneous project in British India.

Print as an Anglo-Indian Muslim Intellectual Project

Prior to the twentieth century, the English language was not yet widely adopted by Indian Muslim laities. Urdu had replaced Persian as the *lingua franca* of Indian Muslims during the mid-nineteenth century and was popularised partly through print; Zaman states that Urdu-Islamic print culture even ‘created an “imagined community” of scholars outside India, to whom Indian scholars sought to address themselves.’¹¹⁴ Muslim elites began learning English sometime after the English Education Act was first introduced by the British East India Company (BEIC) in 1835; the act encouraged the study of the English language and its literature in colonial Indian colleges. S. A. Khan, for example, studied in one such institute. Earlier, I mentioned how several examples of Anglo-Islamic texts did appear in British India following the 1857 mutiny. These, however, were few and far between and aimed at Englishmen and not Muslim “visitors” for good reason. Prior to the mutiny, when India was under the

¹¹² See for example, Lord Headley, *A Western Awakening to Islam* (London: 1914).

¹¹³ Mohammad Siddique Seddon, ‘Abdullah Quilliam: A Muslim Revolutionary Socialist?’, in *Victorian Muslim: Abdullah Quilliam and Islam in the West*, ed. Jamie Gilham and Ron Geaves (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 16; Birt, ‘Preachers, Patriots and Islamists: Contemporary British Muslims and the Afterlives of Abdullah Quilliam’, in *Victorian Muslim*, 135; Ali Köse, *Conversion to Islam: A Study of Native British Converts* (London: Routledge, 2010), 16.

¹¹⁴ Zaman, ‘Commentaries, Print and Patronage: “Hadīth” and the Madrasas in Modern South Asia’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 62, no. 1 (1999): 62 and 76.

administration of the BEIC, the *lingua franca* of Muslim elites and scholars remained Persian, Arabic and increasingly, Urdu.

By the turn of the twentieth century, however, the English language was quickly emerging as an “intellectual” medium of Indian Muslim religious exchange. “Indian” because it appears to have taken place in the Indian subcontinent more so than anywhere else. In contrast, ‘Egyptian scholars and intellectuals during the 1920s and 1930s’ resisted the idea of translating even the Quran into other languages.¹¹⁵ I describe this as an “intellectual project” because it was driven by Muslim elites who embraced existing orientalist and academic studies *about* Islam while contributing new studies and translations of Islamic texts on their own terms; in doing so, they positioned Islam as a rival if not a more superior alternative to other religions and ideologies. Although I refer to it here as “Anglo–Indian”, this does not necessarily mean every actor in this project was native to South Asia; however, those that were not were tied to the Indian subcontinent in other ways. Lawrence, observing the same project at its earliest highlights how:

From the dawn of the twentieth century to the outbreak of World War II, in the entire realm of the British Raj, there appeared the following translations of the *Koran* into English: Muhammad Abdul Hakim Khan 1905, Mirza Abul Fazl 1910, Hairat Dihlawi 1916, Maulana Muhammad Ali 1917, Ghulam Sarwar 1920, Marmaduke Pickthall 1930, Yusuf Ali 1934–37. In other words, in less than forty years seven Muslims, including a British convert who lived in India (Pickthall), produced more *Koran* translations than all of the British Orientalists from the preceding three centuries (Ross–seventeenth, Sale–eighteenth, Palmer and Rodwel –nineteenth).¹¹⁶

According to Lawrence, a key incentive behind this shift was the colonial government’s mandating of English as ‘the dominant language of public exchange.’¹¹⁷ This could arguably, however, have taken place much sooner, after the English Education Act was first introduced. I suggest that it may have been the result of Muslims, located in India, now adopting English more seriously as an “Islamic

¹¹⁵ Pink, *Muslim Qur’ānic Interpretation Today*, 26.

¹¹⁶ Bruce Lawrence, *The Koran in English: A Biography*, Lives of Great Religious Books (Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2007), 51.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, xxiv.

language” for wider educational and missionary purposes just as their near-predecessors did so with the Urdu language.

Two of the abovementioned translators highlight my contention: London-born and trained orientalist Marmaduke Pickthall (d. 1936) who converted to Islam in 1917, and Indian-born and Cambridge-educated barrister Abdullah Yusuf Ali (d. 1953). While both Pickthall and A. Y. Ali were connected to Victorian England and its Muslim “mission” centred around Woking, their respective translations of the Quran were composed in British India. Kidwai reasons that since ‘English Muslim’ converts were few in the 1930s, Pickthall’s primary audience was English-speaking Muslims ‘that had been swelling by the day on account of their constant contact with English language and the West in major parts of the Muslim world, the then colonies of the West.’¹¹⁸ There is good reason to believe Pickthall’s translation was equally aimed at non-Muslim audiences, perhaps, to incite them to convert to Islam just as he once did. The earliest four editions of his translation were printed by traditional English publishers in London and New York respectively.¹¹⁹ A. Y. Ali, on the other hand, explicitly stated that he wanted to make ‘English itself an Islamic language.’¹²⁰ His translation was aimed again, at both Muslims and non-Muslims.

This aspiration was clearly shared by other Muslim intellectuals in British India who harnessed print to further an Anglo-Islamic project in print. A number of Islamic publishers in British India appeared during the first-half of the twentieth century including Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore (est. 1930s?). As well as being the first publisher to print A. Y. Ali’s translation of the Quran, Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf also published dozens of scholarly works in English *for* and *about* Islam by Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals alike, including Muhammad Asad (d. 1992) and Montgomery Watt (d. 2006).¹²¹ “Anglophone Islam”, Ahmed reminds us, need not be construed as a Western phenomenon anyway since countries like India have more

¹¹⁸ Abdur Raheem Kidwai, ‘Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall’s English Translation of the Quran (1930): An Assessment’, in *Marmaduke Pickthall: Islam and the Modern World*, ed. Geoffrey P. Nash (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 237.

¹¹⁹ Kidwai, *Bibliography of the Translations of the Meanings of the Glorious Qur’an into English: 1649–2002*, trans. Waleed Al-Amri (Medina: King Fahd Qur’an Printing Complex, 2008), 86–87.

¹²⁰ Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur’an: Text, Translation & Commentary* (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1938; third edition; first edition 1934), iv.

¹²¹ ‘About Us’, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers & Distributors, accessed 7 November, 2022, <https://ashrafislamicbooks.com/about-us>.

‘English–language speakers than England.’¹²² This might not have been the case during the British Raj however since literacy rates were low, unlike in Britain, where both the Anglo–Indian Muslim intellectual project and Victorian “mission” of the early twentieth–century could appeal to elites *and* to a lesser extent, the ordinary working class too.

Soon after, newer Indian reformers recognised the utility of the English language as a medium of education and *da‘wah* (proselytization). The intellectual project mentioned above was thus partly assumed by movements like Jamaat–i Islaami. Established in 1941 by religiopolitical activist and Islamic thinker Syed Abul Ala Maududi (d. 1972), this “Islamist” organisation was anti–colonialism, imperialism, secularism and democracy. Following the Partition of India in 1947, it splintered into subsidiary branches in India, East and West Pakistan. Since education was central to Maududi’s vision of re–establishing Islamic political hegemony, his organisation formed institutions and publishing wings addressing Urdu and English reading publics, particularly Muslim elites, about the superiority of Islam over and above that of other “systems.” The Islamic Research Academy, to cite one example, was established in Karachi, 1963 by members of Jamaat–i Islaami; it issued an academic journal entitled *The Criterion* and other English–language publications under *The Criterion Publications*.¹²³ The same academy would go on to publish the first known Anglo–Islamic bibliography. It reveals, among other things, the centrality of the Indian subcontinent in global Anglo–Islamic print culture by the mid–twentieth century.

Jameelah’s Bibliography

In 1972, The Islamic Research Academy produced the first survey of Anglo–Islamic texts based on a series of articles published in earlier editions of *The Criterion*.¹²⁴ According to its editor, the academy would receive ‘frequent requests, from various Islamic organizations abroad for Islamic literature in English.’¹²⁵ The idea of compiling a bibliography was passingly suggested to Maryam Jameelah (formerly

¹²² Ahmed, ‘Anglophone Islam’: 8.

¹²³ Roy Jackson, *Mawlana Mawdudi & Political Islam: Authority and the Islamic State* (London: Routledge, 2011), 73–74.

¹²⁴ Maryam Jameelah, *A Select Bibliography of Islamic Books in English* (Karachi: The Criterion Publications, 1971).

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, Preface.

Margaret Marcus, d. 2012), an American Muslim convert and journalist who joined Pakistan's Jamaat-i Islami during the early 1960s. She set out to identify 'only those pamphlets and booklets which are of outstanding merit'; the result was an annotated list of 133 titles, plus another six recommended by the editor.¹²⁶

A similar bibliography published in 1976 in North America confirms the abovementioned "demand" was not exclusively Muslim. This unconnected bibliography, authored by Charles Geddes, an American academic specialising in Islamic Studies, was 'exclusively devoted to primary and secondary books upon... subjects in the English language' which have a 'practical value for the non-Muslim reading public' based on 'twenty years of teaching Islamic Studies both in the Near East as well as in the United States.'¹²⁷ The obvious difference between Jameelah and Geddes' respective bibliographies was the audiences they were written for, Muslim or non-Muslim. Jameelah's bibliography is furthermore only a selected and, by her own admission, subjective list: she admitted to having omitted books by "ultra-modernists" which were either 'polemical', 'mediocre' and/or 'apologetic'; she did however include a number of translations by members of the Ahmadiyyah movement but only so that 'the reader can be forewarned', and by non-Muslims but only when they were 'exceptionally informative with a minimum of prejudice.'¹²⁸

Despite the abovementioned subjectivity, Jameelah was a convert Muslim, her first language was English, she was located in Pakistan and she belonged to an intellectual movement; as such, her bibliography provides some valuable insights about Anglo-Islamic print and reading cultures in the early post-war era.

The first insight suggests that there was a sharp rise in the production of Anglo-Islamic literature from the 1950s-onwards. This suggests that the end of World War II and collapse of the Ottoman Empire contributed to the acceleration of Anglo-Islamic print culture driven primarily by intellectual classes, including Islamists who sought the return and reform of Muslim hegemony (see figure 1).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Charles Geddes, *Books in English on Islām, Muhammad, and the Qur'ān: A Selected and Annotated Bibliography* (Littleton: The American Institute of Islamic Studies, 1976), preface. For a similar and more recent bibliography, see Paula Youngman Skreslet and Rebecca Skreslet, *The Literature of Islam: A Guide to the Primary Sources in English Translation* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2006).

¹²⁸ Jameelah, *A Select Bibliography*, preface.

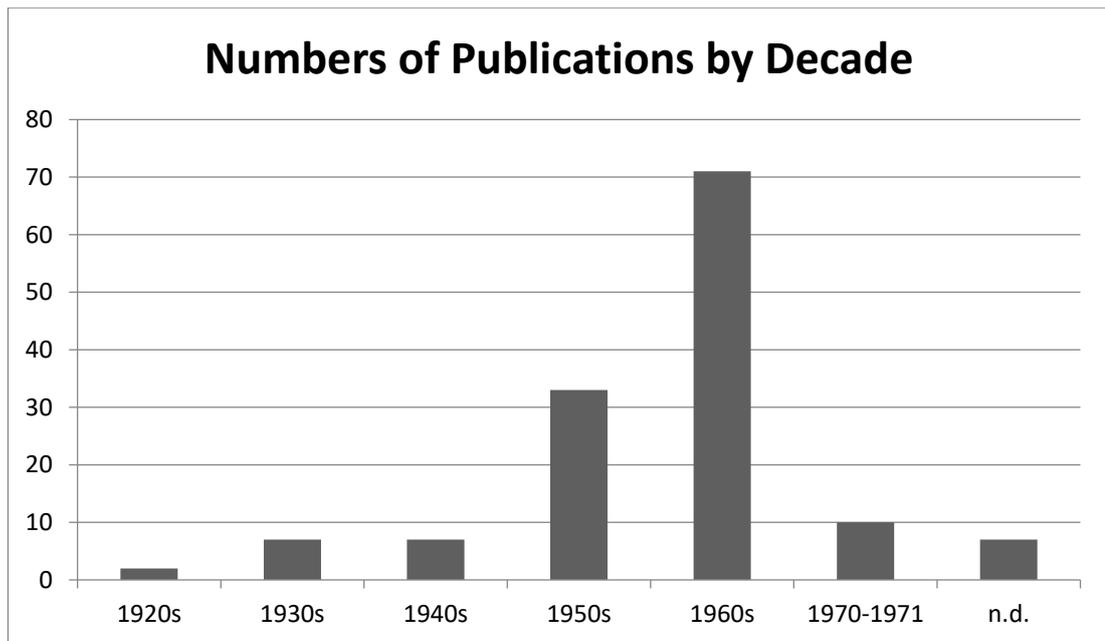


Figure 1

These figures do not present a complete picture of the Anglo–Islamic book market given that Jameelah’s selection is limited and subjective. It does, however, suggest that while Anglo–Islamic texts at the beginning of the twentieth century were in the tens, half a decade later, following Indian Independence (1947), they were considerably more, perhaps in the hundreds. This is confirmed by Jameelah herself: ‘The last fifteen years have witnessed a very welcome change and now increasingly the best Islamic literature is being competently translated by Muslims strong in faith for the English–speaking public.’¹²⁹

The second insight is that Anglo–Islamic literature was being produced in various parts of the world, especially in the Indian subcontinent (see Figure 2). Of the 104 titles published during the 1950s and 60s, 67% were produced in South Asia, 82% of which were produced in Pakistan alone. This does not necessarily mean that the Indian subcontinent was the only significant producer of Anglo–Islamic texts. Jameelah authored her bibliography while living in Pakistan and her selection could well have been based more on accessibility than on widespread availability. Nevertheless, these figures suggest that Anglo–Islamic print culture was a growing phenomenon in South Asia.

¹²⁹ Jameelah, *A Select Bibliography*, preface.

Region	Number of Publications by Country and/or City										Total
South Asia	Bombay	Calcutta	Dacca	Delhi	Hyderabad	Karachi	Lahore	Lucknow	Lyllpur	Pathankot	(10)
	3	1	2	1	3	16	59	5	2	1	93
Middle East	Beirut	Cairo	Kuwait	Mecca							(4)
	3	1	1	1							6
Europe	Leiden	London	Woking	Geneva							(4)
	1	13	1	3							18
North America	Berkeley	Illinois	New York	Palo Alto	Washington						(5)
	1	2	8	1	3						15
Africa	Durban										(1)
	3										3
Grand Total											137

Figure 2.

The third insight pertains to Anglo–Islamic reading culture. Jameelah offered a confident critique of Anglo–Islamic books, suggesting that she and like–minded readers were no longer willing to accept apologetic texts first written in earlier colonial decades, or modernist voices seemingly affected by Western hegemony. For example, Jameelah lauded A. Y. Ali’s translation of the Quran but warned of its commentary because it was ‘modernistic, apologetic and misleading’; in contrast, her first entry in the bibliography is a translation of Maududi’s commentary of the Quran which, despite being ‘weak and faulty... avoids futile sectarian controversies and relates the Quranic teachings to the solution of the problems facing modern man.’¹³⁰ Similarly, she applauded Asad’s incomplete translation of *Ṣaḥīḥ al–Bukhārī* in 1937–38 because its commentary was ‘simple, clear, easy to understand, and free from all modernistic apologetics’, and the first complete translation of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* by Muhammad Abdul Hamid Siddiqui in 1971 because it was ‘excellent, scholarly and every care... taken not to resort to apologetics to pander to the modern mentality.’¹³¹ In contrast, none of the works by the Victorian Muslim “mission” are listed except for one published in 1961 by WMLT but even then, only because it contained biographies ‘of eminent European converts to Islam.’¹³²

¹³⁰ Jameelah, *A Select Bibliography*, 1–2.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 3. It should be noted that M. Asad translated *Ṣaḥīḥ al–Bukhārī* in its entirety but lost most of his unpublished manuscript during the turmoil following the India–Pakistan partition. M. Asad, *Ṣaḥīḥ al–Bukhārī: The Early Years of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 1938; Malaysian edition 2002), preface to the second edition.

¹³² *Ibid*, 8.

Jameelah’s bibliography offers even more insights but so as to not prolong this discussion, I end with one final observation: under the heading “Where to obtain the books”, the bibliography’s editor mentioned only eight locations: Pakistan (4), India (1), the United States (1), South Africa (1) and the United Kingdom (1).¹³³ The British-based seller, The Islamic Book Centre, was located on 148 Liverpool Road in Islington, London (it is no longer functioning). It formed part of the Muslim Educational Trust (MET, est. 1966) which was funded by Saudi King Faisal (d. 1975) and published elementary Anglo-Islamic books for children while pursuing other educational activities.¹³⁴ The editor’s exclusion of WMMLT was perhaps sectarian given that Woking mosque was administered by Lahori–Ahmadis between the 1910s and 1970s.¹³⁵ Another reason may be that Pakistan’s intellectual Muslim activists were largely unaware by this time of the Victorian Muslim “mission.” Birt suggests that Quilliam, in particular, was ‘almost forgotten after the Second World War’ and that his legacy was only rediscovered by Muslims during the 1970s under the Association of British Muslims (ABM), a convert-led organisation.¹³⁶ Another more subtle reason why Jameelah’s editor only cited one location in Britain was that few Islamic bookstores or centres existed there prior to the mid-1970s after which things significantly changed.¹³⁷ By the end of the millennium, Muslims in Britain would become among the most prominent producers of Anglo-Islamic texts.

Back to Islam, in English, in Britain

Muslims have been visiting, working or studying in English towns, cities and villages since at least the seventeenth century.¹³⁸ Their numbers increased dramatically during the post-war period but not so much in diversity. This shift began with the British

¹³³ *Ibid*, Note by the Editor.

¹³⁴ The MET was later consolidated with Seerah Foundation and continues to publish books on- and offline. Seerah Foundation, accessed 10 December 2022, <http://www.seerah.org/about.html>.

¹³⁵ ‘Explore’, Shah Jahan Mosque, accessed 10 December 2022.

¹³⁶ Birt, ‘Preachers, Patriots and Islamists’, 135–137.

¹³⁷ Consult the *Da‘wah Directory* (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1986) which lists 150 mosques and Islamic institutes involved in *da‘wah* in mid-1980s–Britain.

¹³⁸ Consult Ansari, *The Infidel Within*; Gerard MacLean and Nabil Matar, *Britain & the Islamic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Michael Nazir-Ali, ‘Anglican Relations with Islam’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Anglican Studies*, ed. Mark D. Chapman, Sathianathan Clarke, and Martyn Percy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Rana P. Behal and Marcel van der Linden, eds, *Coolies, Capital and Colonialism: Studies in Indian Labour History* (Cambridge: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 2006); Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes*.

Nationality Act 1948 introduced by parliament in order to encourage former British subjects, now Commonwealth citizens, to join the local labour market.¹³⁹

According to Peach, there were approximately 21,000 Muslims in Britain in 1951 and their numbers increased to 673,000–717,000 by 1987; the labour shortage in post-war Britain led to an influx of Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Indians moving into industrial cities including ‘London, the Midlands and the former textile towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire.’¹⁴⁰ Joly observed a Pakistani majority in these aforementioned locations during her ethnographic studies in 1980s–Britain: in London and its suburbs there were 52,819 Pakistanis compared to 8,248 Bangladeshis; in Birmingham and the Midlands, 54,819 Pakistanis compared to 3,187 Bangladeshis; in West Yorkshire 80,540 Pakistanis and only 5,978 Bangladeshis.¹⁴¹ Ansari notes several ‘push factors’ which encouraged Pakistani migrants in particular: i) earnings were 30 times higher in Britain than in Pakistan for similar jobs; ii) a large number of Mirpuris were displaced following the construction of the Mangla dam which submerged 250 local villages, and iii) The partition of India and subsequent displacement of affected communities.¹⁴²

Given these numbers, and the disproportionate numbers of South Asian migrants, it is not surprising that Islamic activism in post-war Britain was largely influenced by movements active in the Indian subcontinent. Jamaat-i Islami is a case in point. The Islamic Foundation (TIF) was established in Leicester in 1973 by its migrant members and their Anglo-Islamic intellectual project thus neatly transitioned into Britain after first developing in the Indian subcontinent. As well as opening a bookstore, TIF began publishing intellectual works “made in Britain.” In 1979, for example, it published a bibliography of all available literature on ḥadīth and its sciences in the English language combining Anglo-Islamic translations of classic ḥadīth collections and academic studies.¹⁴³ A year later, it also initiated *The Muslim World Book Review*, an

¹³⁹ Ceri Peach, ‘Britain’s Muslim Population: An Overview’, in *Muslim Britain: Communities Under Pressure*, ed. Tahir Abbas (London: Zed Books, 2005), 19. See also Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain*, 45.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 18–19. Peach further states that estimates of Muslim populations in Britain vary before 2001, after which the National Census included a question on religion. *Ibid.*, 18. The majority of South Asian migrants stemmed from Pakistan, followed by Bangladesh.

¹⁴¹ Joly, *Britannia’s Crescent*, 6.

¹⁴² Ansari, *The Infidel Within*, 152–153.

¹⁴³ Ahmad von Denffer, *Literature on Hadith in European Languages: A Bibliography* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1981). Von Denffer, then a research fellow at TIF, further issued an expanded bibliography covering ḥadīth literature in European languages in *Hadith: A Select and Annotated Guide to Materials in the English Language* (Leicester: TIF, 1979; reprinted 1985).

academic journal with the aim of presenting ‘the Muslim viewpoint on books and issues which concern Islam and Muslims... at a time of near explosion in the growth of interest in these areas.’¹⁴⁴ This “interest” was further underlined by the ‘First International Exhibition of Books on Islam and the Muslim World’ held at the SOAS, London, and organised by the “Islamic Council of Europe” (ICE) in 1980; the same council also began issuing *New Books Quarterly on Islam and the Muslim World*, published in English with the aim of listing ‘recent and forthcoming publications on various aspects of Islam as well as Muslim countries and communities throughout the world.’¹⁴⁵

TIF’s Islamist connections with the Muslim Brotherhood (MB, est. 1928) and other Islamic intellectual movements also neatly transitioned into British religious and academic spaces. Rich notes how Islamic organisations and institutions between the 1960s and 70s, including the UK Islamic Mission (est. 1962), and groups such as the Muslim Student Society (est. 1961) and the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS, est. 1962), became converging platforms for members of the Jamaat-i Islami, MB and like-minded activists.¹⁴⁶ According to Birt, ABM’s vision of contextualising *da‘wah* in Britain as Quilliam and others once did was consequently obstructed by newer migrant communities who ‘lacked the acculturation to present Islam sensitively enough to the British’ and as a result, local efforts at proselytization ‘were overly dominated by the political concerns of Islamic revivalist movements like the Jama‘at-i-Islami and the Muslim Brotherhood.’¹⁴⁷

The abovementioned organisations, not forgetting MET, were primarily aimed at serving the educational needs of Britain’s new migrant Muslim communities. While MET and UKIM primarily focused on creating Islamic provisions for younger Muslim audiences by creating madrasahs and English-language curriculums, TIF and FOSIS focused more on university student and professional classes. Collectively, they aspired to continue the Anglo-Indian Muslim intellectual project and partly through print, curb influences which they deemed misleading, apologetic or modernist; as such, they were largely critical of non-Muslims writing *about* Islam in English.

¹⁴⁴ *The Muslim World Book Review* 3, no 1: inside front cover.

¹⁴⁵ “Miscellany”, *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)* 7, no. 2 (1980): 147–148.

¹⁴⁶ David Rich, ‘The Very Model of a British Muslim Brotherhood’, in *The Muslim Brotherhood*, ed. Barry Rubin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 117–119.

¹⁴⁷ Birt, ‘Preachers, Patriots and Islamists’, 137.

Peters alludes to this resentment being widespread at the time by even declaring ‘Moslems have become suspicious of Western publications on Islam.’¹⁴⁸ While this might sound like an overstatement, it corresponds to the attitudes of some Muslim authors writing in the 1970s and 80s. Khurram Murad (d. 1996), former Director General and co-founder of TIF, when explaining the inspiration behind the *Muslim World Book Review*, stated:

The Muslim world extends to about one-fifth of the human race... Yet the unsatisfactory level and quality of information about Islam and Muslims can only be described as very disappointing... although not proportional, there is a significant corresponding increase in the number of books that have started to appear as one way of satisfying the increasing demand to know more about Islam and Muslims. However, many of them escape notice and the critics and reviewers usually ignore them or continue to measure them with the same old attitudes and standards as have been revealed to be out of date, inadequate and inimical. This may be part of the general apathy of reviewers and review journals to religious literature in general, or it may be due to particular historically rooted attitudes towards Islam for its “sins” of having been a rival to Christianity, “predecessor” to the West, not “exotic” and “mysterious” enough, too much involved in mundane affairs, and even now posing a challenge to Western hegemony and economic interests.¹⁴⁹

In the foreword to yet another bibliography, this time listing ḥadīth literature in European languages, Murad states:

Bukhari and Muslim have been rendered into English only in the last decade, that too by Muslim scholars. The rest of *siḥah sitta* [the “Authentic Six”]¹⁵⁰ and later collections as well as most of the original sources and classical works on *asma’ al-rijal* [the biographies of ḥadīth narrators] and other branches of the science of *hadith*, including invaluable critical and apologetic works, are still beyond the reach of one who wants to study only through European languages... The importance of European languages in our times hardly needs any emphasis. Not only the continuing and ever-intensifying encounter between Islam and West, but also the growing number of Muslims who now read and write in European languages, makes it imperative that the literature on *hadith* is developed to make it commensurate with the importance of *hadith* in Islam.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Rudolph Peters, *Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), 5.

¹⁴⁹ *The Muslim World Book Review* 1–2, no. 1–2: Introduction.

¹⁵⁰ This is a reference to the “six” collections of ḥadīth widely read in Islamic seminaries (see my Introduction above).

¹⁵¹ Murad, ‘Foreword’, in von Denffer, *Literature on Hadith in European Languages*, 6–7.

The project of translating Islam into the English language was a task Murad saw that only Muslims could, and should address. His sentiments were shared by fellow Muslim leaders like Egyptian and former member of the Muslim Brotherhood Zaki Badawi (d. 2006); in a foreword to MET's 1982 *Encyclopaedic Biography of Prophet Muhammad*, Badawi wrote the following:

The English language is fast becoming one of the major Muslim languages. It is the language of education in many Muslim lands and it is also the native tongue of a great number of Muslims from Europe and America who have chosen the faith of Muhammad. Regrettably the literature on Islam in English has, for the large part, been written by non-Muslims whose commitment to the faith is obviously lacking and whose appreciation of its deeper meaning is often totally absent. For this reason such books misinform, rather than inform, the reader and the Muslim reader in particular would find them even objectionable.¹⁵²

Consequently, education *for* Muslims and *by* Muslims was a key motive in the production of Anglo-Islamic texts “made in Britain.” Another key motive was *da‘wah* which not only addressed non-Muslim reading publics in the hope of converting them but also Muslims who required “nurturing” (*tarbiyyah*). As such, Anglo-Islamic print culture developed in Britain on two fronts, one which was not-for-profit and the other, commercial.

An example of the former can be seen in the counterpart to South Africa's Islamic Presentation Centre International (IPCI, est. 1957) which was established in Birmingham in 1984. IPCI Birmingham was instrumental in organising debates for popular Muslim missionary Ahmed Deedat (d. 2005), IPCI's founder, against Christian evangelists in Britain.¹⁵³ Alongside this, it also became a key component in the international distribution of Deedat's free Anglo-Islamic literature and video cassettes, as well as producing its own English-language *da‘wah* publications which continue to be distributed today on a non-profit basis.¹⁵⁴ IPCI literature routinely reminds readers:

¹⁵² M. A. Zaki Badawi, ‘Foreword’, in Afzalur Rahman, *Muhammad: Encyclopedia of Seerah* (London: The Muslims Schools Trust, 1982), vii. Badawi was a prominent al-Azhar University trained scholar who moved to Britain in 1951 and later established the Muslim College in London in 1986.

¹⁵³ Consult Goolam Vahed, *Ahmed Deedat: The Man and his Mission* (Durban: IPCI, 2013; second edition 2014), 65–80.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Shamshad Khan, founder of IPCI Birmingham, 8 February 2022.

It is with the greatest pleasure that we give you our permission to reproduce or translate this booklet or any of our other publications in any language whether for sale or free distribution. *Wallah* [By Allāh]! If we had the means we would flood the world with our free literature.¹⁵⁵

Complementary Anglo–Islamic publications were also distributed by Islamic organisations in Britain with links to existing organisations with global remits. For example, the International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations (IIFSO, est. 1969) began as a student initiative in Nigeria and formalised soon after in Germany; its publications in English were channelled into Britain through organisations like TIF and FOSIS. Other organisations included the Saudi–led and London–based Muslim Welfare House (est. 1970) and London branch of the Muslim World League (MWL, est. Mecca, 1982), both of which became key channels for the distribution of free publications by the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY, est. Riyadh, 1972). MacLean suggests that international Islamic organisations like those mentioned above viewed the Muslim World as ‘a place in need of reform’ and that by the mid–1970s, there was a shared interest among Muslim activists in dissolving “the curse of Nationalism”, thus giving rise to the ‘practise among Islamic writers of using the English language to address an international audience of Muslims.’¹⁵⁶ This explains why WAMY, for example, published an English translation of parts of *In the Shade of the Qur’ān*, Sayyid Qutb’s (d. 1966) popular commentary on the Quran containing Islamist undertones.¹⁵⁷

An example of the latter more commercial projects can be seen in the establishment of Ta–Ha Publishers in London, 1980; it began publishing Anglo–Islamic books in or around 1980 written or translated by Muslim scholars and intellectuals.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, another publisher, Dar al Taqwa, began publishing and selling Anglo–Islamic books

¹⁵⁵ See Ahmed Deedat, *Combat Kit Against Bible Thumpers* (Durban: IPCI, 1992).

¹⁵⁶ Gerald MacLean, *Britain and the Muslim World: Historical Perspectives* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 4.

¹⁵⁷ See for example Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur’ān: Vol. 30*, trans. M. A. Salahi and A. A. Shamis (Riyadh: World Assembly of Muslim Youth, 1979).

¹⁵⁸ See for example, S. M. Darsh, *Muslims in Europe* (London: Ta–Ha Publishers, 1980). Its author, Sayed Mutawalli Darsh (d. 1997) was an Egyptian graduate of al–Azhar University, and moved to Britain in 1971 where he was posted by the same university as imam of London Central Mosque (est. 1977). He would later become a widely read mufti after regularly contributing to the questions and answers section in *Q–News*, a British Muslim weekly. Lena Larsen, *How Muftis Think* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 83–84.

from its base in London in 1985.¹⁵⁹ According to one current online Islamic bookseller who migrated to Britain from Mozambique in 1979, despite these stores opening up, it was still very difficult to find Anglo–Islamic books at the time, particularly for those living outside of London and Birmingham.¹⁶⁰ The same bookseller observed that by the 1990s, Britain was seemingly inundated by Anglo–Salafi publications (see Chapter Four).¹⁶¹

It is reasonable to conclude Anglo–Islamic print culture in post–war Britain was not immediate. However by the end of the 1980s, it was significant enough so as to now warrant local bookstores, bibliographies and the publication and distribution of books, both not–for–profit and commercial. Reflecting the mounting information marketplace for Anglo–Islamic texts in the Anglosphere, Palestinian–American author Ismail Raji al–Faruqi (d. 1986) even composed a short essay entitled *Toward Islamic English*.¹⁶² In it, he called on Muslims to ‘create a new language – Islamic English – by adding to modern English the terms of religion, spirituality and culture of Islam’, or in other words leaving Arabo–Islamic terms untranslated so as to insert their usage into everyday English vocabulary.¹⁶³ It is difficult to ascertain whether fellow Muslims in the Anglosphere responded to Al Faruqi’s call specifically; however, the emergence of an “Islamic English” became an eventuality given the historical process under which Anglo–Islamic print culture emerged.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an introductory account about the emergence and development of Anglo–Islamic print culture between the late nineteenth century and the 1980s. This is a useful place to stop because, as I will demonstrate in Chapter Four, the commercial Anglo–Islamic book market grew exponentially thereafter in line with several factors including the widescale introduction of affordable desktop computers and corresponding publishing software. While this account is by no means definitive,

¹⁵⁹ See for example, Hamzah Muhammad Salih Ajjaf, *Jewels of Guidance: Selected Commandments of the Prophet* (London: Dar al Taqwa, 1987) and Muḥammad Ibn Qayyim al–Jawzīyah, *The Soul’s Journey After Death*, trans. Layla Mabrouk (London: Dar al Taqwa, 1987).

¹⁶⁰ Interview with “Shuaib” (anonymised), 17 March 2020.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Ismā‘īl Rājī Al Fārūqī, *Toward Islamic English* (Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House and The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1995; fourth edition).

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 8–14.

it makes for an early attempt at charting a previously understudied phenomenon. It has revealed that non-Muslims began authoring texts *about* Islam in English as early as the seventeenth century. Anglo-Islamic print culture on the other hand, authored by Muslims *for* Islam, began in the second-half of the nineteenth century and was initially aimed at non-Muslim reading publics but soon catered to a growing number of native English converts.

Beginning in the first half of the following century, Muslim authors, activists and publishers born or based in British India harnessed print as a means of projecting Islam as an intellectual rival to Christianity; they adopted English as a medium of communicating Islam and thus addressed elite reading publics, Indian or otherwise. This chapter has revealed that only after the English language was mandated in British India did this shift gradually take place. The increasing numbers of Indian Muslim intellectuals who understood the English language created the demand under which Anglo-Islamic print culture intensified.

This project transitioned into post-war Britain as migrant activists from mostly South Asia arrived in large numbers. Leading up to the 1990s, Anglo-Islamic texts, both commercial and complementary, were now available in their hundreds and warranted book review journals, book exhibitions, dedicated bibliographies and bookstores. Lewis and Hamid suggest that English could be the ‘new Persian’ for Muslims in Britain.¹⁶⁴ This chapter has demonstrated that the process of constructing Islam in English today is actually part of a longer and wider historical process. With this background in mind, it is now possible to examine the emergence of Anglo-Salafi print culture in Britain.

¹⁶⁴ Lewis and Hamid, *British Muslims*, x.

Chapter Two

The Ahl–e–Hadith in “Englistān”

“Khalid”, one of my interviewees, is a young British–Pakistani Salafi who does not speak Arabic and is more confident conversing in his native language of English than his mother–tongue of Urdu. He recalls visiting an Ahl–e–Hadith mosque during the 2000s and looking for the imam who was born and trained in India and later in Medina. Thankfully the imam could converse in English. “Khalid” asked the imam a question to which the latter gave him four different opinions along with the “evidence” for each position. The imam then stated ‘This, is the stronger opinion’ and he proceeded to explain why. “Khalid” was content having received the answer but was stalled by the imam who asked in return, ‘How do you know what I’m telling you is the truth? Have you written [down] anything I’ve told you?’ This changed “Khalid’s” perspective entirely and made him realise that ‘I am responsible for my own learning... everything is based on proof and evidence... go check it, do your research, do you due diligence about your Shaykh, is he telling you the truth?’ Since the imam had drawn on evidence from *Ṣaḥīḥ al–Bukhārī*, a collection of “authentic” ḥadīths authored in Arabic and available in English translation, “Khalid” located a translated copy in the same mosque and confirmed what the imam told him for himself. “Khalid” states in retrospect: ‘This is probably the thing that attracted me to Ahl–e–Hadith/Salafi Islam the most.’¹⁶⁵

This experience of one individual who attended an Ahl–e–Hadith mosque in Britain is by no means exceptional. Hamid notes how Salafism is for most Muslims ‘a seductively simple message’ and that South Asian young people in Britain, like “Khalid”, ‘found in the Salafi perspective a “de–culturalised” Islam’ and ‘an approach to religious commitment that seemed to be intellectually rigorous, evidence–based and free of perceived corruptions.’¹⁶⁶ The abovementioned anecdote highlights the roles in which language and print contribute to Salafism’s appeal in Britain today; it further alerts us to a particular type of Salafism in Britain which ties into the Anglo–Indian Muslim intellectual print project identified in the previous chapter.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with “Khalid” (anonymised), 27 July 2019.

¹⁶⁶ Hamid, ‘The Attraction of “Authentic Islam”’, 389–390.

Since the Ahl-e-Hadith is largely neglected in the literature, this chapter begins by introducing its movement which first emerged in colonial India before tracing its transition into post-war Britain. It follows by examining the attitudes it's members had towards the role of the English language in religious education and *da'wah*. It continues by examining the earliest Anglo-Salafi literature "made in Britain." It argues that members of the Ahl-e-Hadith movement were not only the first Salafis in post-war Britain but also the first to shape early Anglo-Salafi print culture. In doing so, they inserted themselves into the wider Anglo-Islamic intellectual project at the time and created the necessary foundations for later Anglo-Salafi print culture.

The Ahl-e-Hadith in South Asia

The Ahl-e-Hadith movement first emerged in colonial India during the mid-nineteenth century and is today, one of three major Islamic trends in the region.¹⁶⁷ The other two trends being the Barelwis and Deobandis.¹⁶⁸ According to Brown, the Ahl-e-Hadith movement may be described as a 'direct outgrowth and quietist manifestation' of the Ṭarīqat-e-Muḥamadiyyah, a momentary reformist-cum-militant movement in colonial India which, after initiating a jihad against the British colonial government in India, was entirely suppressed by the latter's forces in 1883.¹⁶⁹

The Ahl-e-Hadith movement was established in Delhi under Sayyid Nadhīr Ḥusain Dehlawī (d. 1902), once a leading Ḥanafī scholar, after being 'overcome by love for studying the Quran and ḥadīth.'¹⁷⁰ Another important leader was Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān who, after marrying the Queen of Bhopal, used his position and newfound wealth to

¹⁶⁷ Zaman, 'Commentaries, Print and Patronage': 61.

¹⁶⁸ Consult Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011; fourth impression); Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Raza Khan Barelwi and His Movement, 1870–1920* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 1996); Dietrich Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere: Religious Groups in India 1900–1947* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁶⁹ Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 27. See also Mu'īnuddīn Aḥmad Khan, 'Ṭarīqah-i-Muḥammadiyyah Movement: An Analytical Study', *Islamic Studies* 6, no. 4 (1967); Qeyamuddin Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement in India* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1966); Harlan O. Pearson, *Islamic Reform and Revival in Nineteenth-Century India: The Tariqah-i Muhammadiyah* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2008).

¹⁷⁰ Abu 'l-Ashbāl Shāghif, *Qurrat al-'ayn fī tarjamah al-sayyid nadhīr ḥusain* (Lahore: Al-Maktabah al-Salafiyyah, 2002), 30–31; Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, 272.

forward the Ahl-e-Hadith's message through print.¹⁷¹ As indicated by the movement's name, Dehlawī and Ṣ. Ḥ. Khān sought to revive the Ahl al-Ḥadīth tradition of early Islamic history whose influence in India waned in the eleventh century.¹⁷² Both Dehlawī, Ṣ. Ḥ. Khān and like-minded scholars mostly drew their teachings directly from the Quran and Sunnah and from the intellectual legacies of India's Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1762) and Yemen's al-Shawkānī (d. 1834).¹⁷³

Soon after the deaths of Dehlawī and Khān, the Ahl-e-Hadith officiated under the All India Ahl-e-Hadith Conference in 1906 and went onto establish new centres and masjids across South Asia.¹⁷⁴ A number of Dehlawī's students went on to become prominent Muslim leaders, authors, journalists or political activists.¹⁷⁵ A number of Ahl-e-Hadith ulema were also directly involved in the independence movement in India and the subsequent establishment of Pakistan. Thanā Allāh Amritsārī (d. 1948), for example, was a founding member of Nadwat al-Ulama and the Muslim League; he also authored approximately 187 books in different sciences pertaining to Islam and edited three magazines, including the popular weekly *Akhbār Ahl-e-Hadith* which ran for 44 years.¹⁷⁶

Following the partition, the Ahl-e-Hadith established a wide network of institutions in India and Pakistan including the university Al Jamia Tus Salafia in Varanasi (est. 1963); a number of its members also joined existing universities and organisations including Jamaat-i Islaami. 'Abd al-Ghaffār Ḥasan (d. 2007), for example, trained in a respected Ahl-e-Hadith institute in British India before relocating to Pakistan after

¹⁷¹ Khān is said to have personally authored 222 books 'on different topics in Arabic, Persian and Urdu.' 'Foreword by Shaykh al-Ḥadīth Muhammad Ali Janbaz', in AbdurRasheed Iraquee, *40 Ahl-e-Hadith Scholars from the Indian Subcontinent*, trans. Ali Hassan Khan (Gujranwala: Umm-ul-Qura Publications, 2019), 48. For more about Khān, consult Saeedullah, *The Life and Works of Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan: Nawab of Bhopal* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1973); Claudia Preckel, 'Screening Siddiq Hasan Khan's (1832–1890) Library: the Use of Hanbali Literature in 19th-Century Bhopal', in *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, ed. Birgit Krawietz and George Tamer (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2013), 162–219.

¹⁷² 'Abd al-Rahman Al-Firwā'ī, *Juhūd muklaṣah fī khidmat al-sunnat al-muṭahharah* (Banaras: Idārah al-Buhūth al-Islamiyyah wa 'l-Da'wah wa 'l-Iftā, Al-Jamia-tus-Salafiah, 1980), 3–8.

¹⁷³ Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India, 277–278*; Martin Riexinger, 'Ibn Taymiyyah's Worldview and the Challenges of Modernity: A Conflict Among the Ahl-i Ḥadīth in British India', in *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law*, 156.

¹⁷⁴ Christophe Jaffrelot, 'South Asian Muslims' Interactions with Arabian Islam Until the 1990s: What Pan-Islamism Before and After Pakistan?', in *Pan-Islamic Connections: Transnational Networks Between South Asia and the Gulf*, ed. Christophe Jaffrelot and Laurence Louër (London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 2017), 26–27.

¹⁷⁵ Consult Iraquee, *40 Ahl-e-Hadith Scholars*.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 184–196.

the partition; he worked for Jamaat-i Islami in Pakistan between 1941 and 1957 and was briefly its emir during Maududi's incarceration, and then as a lecturer in Ḥadīth Studies at the Islamic University of Medina (IUM, est. 1961) between 1964 and 1980.¹⁷⁷

Indian Wahhabism?

Despite the Ahl-e-Ḥadīth movement and its precursor, the Ṭarīqat, having no formal connections to the Arabian Muwahḥidūn movement prior to the mid-nineteenth century, all were routinely branded by their religious opponents as “Wahhabis.” Indeed the three movements shared similar theological beliefs which were, among other things, critical of Sufi practises.¹⁷⁸ A key difference, albeit theoretical, between the Ahl-e-Ḥadīth and its Arabian counterpart in particular was the issue of *taqlīd*, or conforming to one particular *madhhab* (school of Islamic jurisprudence); while the *Muwahḥidūn* were adherents of the Ḥanbalī school of law, the Ahl-e-Ḥadīth insisted on following scripture without restricting interpretations to the views of one single jurist or school.¹⁷⁹

The term “Wahhabi” was also politicised by the British government in India and it became synonymous with fanatic, rebel, mutineer and conspirator following the Indian Mutiny (1857). Suspected Wahhabis, members of the Ṭarīqat and Ahl-e-Ḥadīth alike, were consequently pursued by British colonial officers; some were sent to prison camps on the Andaman Islands while others were prosecuted during the infamous “Wahhābi Trials” of 1864–1871.¹⁸⁰ It was under this pretext that Khān and Batālwī (a

¹⁷⁷ Mariam Abou Zahab, ‘Salafism in Pakistan’, in *Global Salafism*, 130; Usama Hasan (hereafter Usama), ‘In Memoriam – Shaykh ‘Abdul Ghaffar Hasan (1330–1427 / 1913–2007)’, Unity1, 2009, accessed 28 February, 2022, <https://unity1.files.wordpress.com/2009/06/biography-of-shaykh-abdul-ghaffar-hasan.pdf>. Usama is one of two of Hasan’s children who became Salafī activists; the other being his daughter Khola Hasan. Both Usama and Khola also contributed to *The Straight Path* magazine (see below).

¹⁷⁸ Compare, for example, Metcalf, ‘The *Taqwīyyat al-Iman* (Support of the Faith) by Shah Isma‘il Shahid’ in *Islam in South Asia in Practise*, ed. Metcalf (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009), 201–211 with DeLongBas, *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2005), 51–53; Muhammad Abdul Bari, ‘A Comparative Study of the Early Wahhābi Doctrines and Contemporary Reform Movements in Indian Islām’ (Oxford, University of Oxford, 1953); Majothi, ‘Indian Wahhābism: The Case of the Ahl-i Ḥadīth in Colonial India’ (MA thesis, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2017).

¹⁷⁹ Jaffrelot and Louër, ‘Introduction: The Gulf–South Asia Religious Connections. Indo–Islamic Civilization Vs Pan–Islamism?’, in *Pan–Islamic Connections*, 13.

¹⁸⁰ M. A. Khan, *Selections from Bengal Government Records on Wahhabi Trials (1863–1870)* (Dacca: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1961); Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, 280–281. Both Dehlawī

student of Dehlawī) issued their Anglo–Islamic tracts appealing to British Indian authorities of their loyalty to the Crown and condemnation of religious fanaticism (see previous chapter).

Despite the hostile environment towards “Wahhābīs” leading up to the twentieth century in colonial India and the Hejaz, both the Ahl–e–Hadith and “Wahhābī” movement developed a reciprocal relationship. A number of Wahhābī scholars travelled to North India to study ḥadīth under Ahl–e–Hadith scholars. For example, Ishāq b. ‘Abd al–Raḥmān (d. 1901), one of the most prominent Wahhābī scholars at the time and the great–grandson of Ibn ‘Abd al–Wahhāb, travelled to India in 1884 and obtained *ijāzāt* from both Dehlawī and Ṣ. Ḥ. Khān. Another scholar who studied under Dehlawī and Ṣ. Ḥ. Khān was Sa‘d b. Ḥamd al–‘Atīq (d. 1930); he was sent by his father, Ḥamd b. ‘Atīq (d. 1884), a prominent Wahhābī scholar that had learned of the Ahl–e–Hadith in India after receiving several works of Ṣ. Ḥ. Khān in Najd.¹⁸¹ Two Ahl–e–Hadith scholars and brothers, ‘Abd al–Raḥīm Ghaznawī (d. 1924) and ‘Abd al–Wāḥid Ghaznawī (d. 1930) also met Āl Saud leaders during their exile in Kuwait in 1890–91; following this meeting, the Ghaznawīs began publishing Wahhābī and other Arabic texts in India and also taught in Riyadh for five years following its reconquest by ‘Abd al–‘Azīz Āl Saud (d. 1953) in 1902.¹⁸²

The two movements only revealed the true extent of their ties following the cessation of the “Wahhābī Trials” and suppression of the Ṭarīqat in the North West Frontier. A number of Ahl–e–Hadith scholars, for example, authored tracts in defence of Ibn ‘Abd al–Wahhāb’s reformist mission, which they considered as one–and–the–same in principle, and celebrated ‘Abd al–‘Azīz’s conquests; in reciprocation, ‘Abd al–‘Azīz made members of the Ghaznawīs official representatives of India’s Muslim pilgrims and often corresponded with other Ahl–e–Hadith scholars.¹⁸³ A number of Ahl–e–

and Khān were prosecuted by the British for alleged “Wahhābī” links. On the latter’s downfall, consult Caroline Keen, ‘The Rise and Fall of Siddiq Hasan, Male Consort of Shah Jahan of Bhopal’, in *The Man Behind the Queen: Male Consorts in History*, ed. Charles Beem and Miles Taylor (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2014), 185–204.

¹⁸¹ Consult Ibrāhīm Al–Mudīhish, *Al–najdiyyūn fī ‘l–hind: ‘ulema najd allathīna raḥalū ilā ‘l–hind li ‘l–istizād min al–ḥadīth al–nabawī* (Riyadh: Dār al–Thulūthiyyah, 2019).

¹⁸² See ‘Abd Allāh al–‘Askar, *Al–risalah al–ghaznawīyyah fī asmā’ ba‘d al–kutub al–‘arabiyyah wa ‘l–rasā’ il al–najdiyyah allatī tubi‘at fī ‘l–bilād al–hindīyyah ilā ‘ām 1314 hijrī* (Riyadh: King Abdul Aziz Public Library, 2009).

¹⁸³ See Abu ‘l–Mukarram ‘Abd al–Jalīl, *Da‘wah al–imām muḥammad bin ‘abd al–wahhāb bayna mu‘ayyidhā wa mu‘aridhā fī shibh al–qārrat al–hindīyyah* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2000); Ṣalāh al–Dīn Maqbūl and ‘Arif Jāwaid Al–Muḥammadī, *Ahl al–ḥadīth fī shibh al–qārrat al–hindīyyah wa ‘alāqatum bi ‘l–mamlakah al–‘arabiyyah al–su‘ūdiyyah wa ghairuhā min al–duwal al–‘arabiyyah*

Hadith scholars relocated to Saudi Arabia after the Partition of India while others joined the founding committees, teaching pools and student rolls of IUM, Mecca's Umm al-Qurā (est. 1950) and Riyadh's Jāmi'at al-Imām Muḥammad bin Sa'ūd al-Islamiyyah (JIMSI, est. 1974).¹⁸⁴ This, suggests Jaffrelot, indicates the Ahl-e-Hadith also 'played some role in the development of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia.'¹⁸⁵

Sikkand demarcates the 1970s as the period in which Arab states, most prominently Saudi Arabia, had a 'growing involvement' in the affairs of South Asian Muslims following their 'boom in oil revenues.'¹⁸⁶ However, it is clear from the above that the Ahl-e-Hadith were already firmly bonded to Saudi's Wahhābī establishment on the basis of shared Islamic values. It was only after the 1970s that a number of South Asian Ahl-e-Hadith institutes would receive substantial financial support from Saudi Arabia.¹⁸⁷ The historical connections between the Ahl-e-Hadith and Saudi Arabia are important to further reciprocal relations in post-war Britain and elsewhere (see below and Chapter Six).

Ahl-e-Hadith Print Culture

In the previous chapter, I noted how Lewis and Hamid foresee English being the "new Persian." The Urdu language was already the "new Persian" in the Indian subcontinent by the turn of the twentieth century and it was this language which became 'the medium of instruction in most madrasas, and it is was principally in this language that Muslim scholars debated, wrote and published.'¹⁸⁸ Ṭarīqat and Ahl-e-Hadith scholars were particularly industrious in this regional language.¹⁸⁹ The Ahl-e-Hadith were,

(Beirut: Dar al-Bashaer, 2014); Ayesha Siddiqā, 'Pakistani Madrasas: Ideological Stronghold for Saudi Arabia and Gulf States', in *Pan-Islamic Connections*, 49–71.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 93–98.

¹⁸⁵ Jaffrelot, 'South Asian Muslims' Interactions with Arabian Islam Until the 1990s', 27.

¹⁸⁶ Yōgīndar Sikkand, 'Stoking the Flames: Intra-Muslim Rivalries in India and the Saudi Connection', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no.1 (2007): 95–108.

¹⁸⁷ Abou Zahab, 'Salafism in Pakistan', 133; Farquhar, *Circuits of Faith*, 99; Mubasher Hussain and Jamil Akhtar, 'Social Liberation Within the Islamic-political Movements: The Reform Project of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Its Impact on the Ahl-i-Hadith Movement in Pakistan', *Middle Eastern Studies* 58, no. 4 (2022). Saudi Arabia continues to accept a selection of Ahl-e-Hadith graduates on a yearly basis. Correspondence with Mubasher Hussain, 6 December 2018.

¹⁸⁸ Zaman, 'Commentaries, Print and Patronage': 62.

¹⁸⁹ Marc Gaborieau, 'Late Persian, Early Urdu: The Case of "Wahhabi" Literature (1818– 1857)' in *Confluence of Cultures: French Contributions*, ed. Francoise Delvoye (New Delhi: Centre for Human Sciences, 1994), 175. Over 1,000 Urdu titles by 50 Ahl-e-Hadith scholars are identified in Iraquee, *40 Ahl-e-Hadith Scholars*.

from their very onset, ‘conscious of the need to demonstrate their own competence and authority’ and its scholars were at the forefront of publishing, particularly around the subject of ḥadīth.¹⁹⁰

Its members would often write in Urdu when addressing local audiences and in Arabic when addressing elites in and outside of the Indian subcontinent. Ṣ. Ḥ. Khān, for example, utilised his royal stipend to employ scholars and agents to distribute his books and popularise his name in the wider Muslim world. His Urdu and Persian works were distributed locally while those written in Arabic spread as far as Egypt, Ottoman Turkey and the Hejaz through such networks.¹⁹¹ In another example, Wahīd al-Zamān Laknawī (d. 1920), a student of Dehlawī, was the first to translate the entire “six” books of ḥadīth from Arabic into Urdu.¹⁹² Aside from Ṣ. Ḥ. Khān and Batālwī’s Anglo-Islamic tracts, pre-partition Ahl-e-Hadith scholars appear to have busied themselves in writing Urdu-Islamic works; it is quite reasonable to assume that this movement appealed to laities (and hence, Urdu-reading publics), and scholarly communities (and hence, Arabic and Urdu-reading publics) more so than it did elite classes who studied English.¹⁹³

Post-partition, during which the Anglo-Indian intellectual print project was well underway (see previous chapter), a few Anglo-Islamic books appeared with an obvious Salafi leaning suggesting that Ahl-e-Hadith members began taking interest in joining others in communicating Islam in the English language. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (d. 2021), for example, a Pakistani medical doctor of Afghan heritage, completed the first translation of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* while working at IUM Hospital. His motive to translate such a momentous collection derived from seeing himself serving the Prophet Muḥammad in a dream. Another more subtle reason was that the same text was being translated by Ahmad Aftabuddin, a member of the Lahori-Ahmadiyyah; the latter was published in parts, between 1956 and 1973 while M. M. Khan’s rendition

¹⁹⁰ Zaman, ‘Commentaries, Print and Patronage’: 63.

¹⁹¹ Consult Seema Alavi, ‘Siddiq Hasan Khan (1832–90) and the Creation of a Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the 19th Century’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 54, no.1 (2011): 15–23.

¹⁹² Iraquee, *40 Ahl-e-Hadith Scholars*, 121–126.

¹⁹³ Similar can be said about the Deobandi movement. Consult the introduction to Metcalf, *Perfecting Women*.

was published in full by IUM in 1971.¹⁹⁴ In 1974, M. M. Khan also published a translation of the Quran while working at IUM. This particular translation was to rely on classical exegeses, and was peer-reviewed by Salafi Moroccan scholar Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī (d. 1987).¹⁹⁵ While M. M. Khan's affiliation to the Ahl-e-Hadith is unclear to me, it is reasonable to assume he was affiliated to the movement in Pakistan and its members at IUM. M. M. Khan's translations were further endorsed by Saudi Salafi imam Ibn Bāz, then rector of IUM, who had close affiliations to Ahl-e-Hadith lecturers and students in Medina; al-Hilālī, on the other hand, studied under several of Dehlawī's students during two visits to India and was overtly Salafi.

Another example of an Anglo-Salafi publisher is Ehsan Elahi Zaheer (d. 1987), who trained in Ahl-e-Hadith institutes in Pakistan before graduating from IUM during the 1970s. After returning to Pakistan, Zaheer engaged in political activities and publishing, the latter under his Idara Tarjuman Al-Sunnah (*circa* 1972). No less than four of his polemical essays, originally authored in Arabic, were summarised and translated into the English language and distributed in South Asia and the wider Anglosphere.¹⁹⁶ Similarly, in 1986, Abdul Malik Mujahid, a member of a prominent Ahl-e-Hadith family (the Kaylanis), established Darussalam International, an international publishing house in Riyadh, 1986.¹⁹⁷ As I will explain in Chapter Six, Darussalam Int. would become a prominent contributor to Anglo-Salafi print culture; hundreds of its titles would find their way into Britain during the 1990s alone.

The Ahl-e-Hadith in Britain

As highlighted above, the Ahl-e-Hadith movement was already a significant movement in South Asia by the mid-twentieth century. The overwhelming majority of its members are today found in India and Pakistan with smaller communities also

¹⁹⁴ Munawar Ahmad Anees and Alia N. Athar, *Guide to Sira and Hadith Literature in Western Languages* (London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1986), 231–232. Khan's translation is revisited in Chapter Five.

¹⁹⁵ *World Bibliography of Translations of the Meanings of the Holy Qur'an: Printed Translations 1515–1980*, ed. Ismet Binark, Halit Eren and Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu (Istanbul: The Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, 1986), 91.

¹⁹⁶ See for example, Ehsan Elahi Zaheer, *Qadiyaniat: An Analytical Survey* (Lahore: Idara Tarjuman Al-Sunnah, 1984; first published 1972).

¹⁹⁷ A. H. Khan, *The Efforts of the Ahl-e-Hadith Scholars in Service of the Quran* (Gujranwala: Umm-ul-Qura Publications, 2020), 46–47, 74 and 83.

present in Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. Outside of the movement's region-of-birth, small communities of Ahl-e-Hadith migrants have also migrated to Europe and North America and since established mosques and institutions. It is unknown how many of the large numbers of South Asian Muslims who migrated to post-war Britain belonged to this movement; however, it is likely that they were few in number corresponding to their minority status in Pakistan.¹⁹⁸

The earliest Ahl-e-Hadith members in Britain, according to my findings, first arrived in the 1950s and were made up predominantly of Pakistani economic migrant workers followed by their families.¹⁹⁹ Among them was one Fazl Karim Asim (d. 2003), who settled in Birmingham in 1962 and began working in an industrial factory; prior to his migration, Asim studied in a reputable Ahl-e-Hadith institute in Amritsar, before graduating from Punjab University and teaching in government high schools for two decades.²⁰⁰ Given his religious and pedagogical skillset, Asim quickly ventured into Islamic activism: he joined a local UK Islamic Mission (UKIM) centre as a Quran teacher and occasionally offered Friday sermons.²⁰¹ Beginning in 1973, he began encouraging fellow Ahl-e-Hadith migrants to establish an organisation through which 'khālīṣ (pure) Quran and Sunnah' could be preached.²⁰²

Asim and his supporters thus established Markaz Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith (MJAH) in 1975.²⁰³ The formation of MJAH marked the first Salafi organisation in Britain. It first began its operations from a house in Small Heath, Birmingham (an area populated by South Asians). Prior to this, Asim had established the Muslim Oriental School where newly-settled South Asian migrant children were taught religious studies and the English language. The same institute appears to have given way to a Quran and Urdu

¹⁹⁸ Abou Zahab, 'Salafism in Pakistan', 126 and 132; Amin, 'Salafism and Islamism in Britain', 68.

¹⁹⁹ Correspondence with Amjad Mubarak, 17 September 2022; interview with Alyas Karmani, 5 May 2020; interview with "Anwar" (anonymised), 18 January 2020. Karmani's mother, for example, was born in Pakistan and graduated from a Salafi institute there before migrating to Britain in the 1950s.

²⁰⁰ Asim, *Tehrik ahl-e-hadis*, 31–34.

²⁰¹ Asim, *Tehrik Ahl-e-Hadis*, 43; 'Our History', Markazi Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith UK, accessed 4 April 2020, <https://mjah.org.uk/our-history>. According to its own website, UKIM was set up to address the 'immediate religious needs of the new migrant Muslim community in the UK' and establishes mosques/religious schools, raises relief funds and publishes literature on Islam in English. There are currently 39 UKIM branches in the United Kingdom which cater for over 5000 Muslim children. See 'About Us' and 'Branches', UK Islamic Mission, accessed 14 May, 2022, <https://www.ukim.org>.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 45.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 46.

school called “Madrasah Salfia” which Asim subsumed under MJAHA.²⁰⁴ Given the relatively few Ahl-e-Hadith members in Britain at the time, Asim was acutely aware of the fledgling organisation’s shortage of intellectual prowess, without which the organisation would lack religious authority.

In 1975, Asim was approached by a delegation sent by IUM to Britain in order to survey the religious landscape and potential for *da‘wah*. The delegation was sent by Ibn Bāz who was newly appointed the Head of *Dār al-‘Ifā’* (DAI), Saudi Arabia’s Office for Islamic Verdicts. Part of Ibn Bāz’s remit was appointing *mab‘ūth* (religious attachés) in various countries to spread Islam. His delegation to Britain consisted of two scholars, al-Albānī and Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Banna (d. 2009), and three South Asian Ahl-e-Hadith and IUM students: Mahmood Mirpuri (d. 1988), Shareef Ahmad Hafiz and Major Mohammad Aslam.²⁰⁵ After graduating, Mirpuri and Hafiz returned the following year with Ibn Bāz’s blessing and provided Asim with the intellectual support he was so in need of. Both graduates, particularly Mirpuri, extended MJAHA’s network with fellow Ahl-e-Hadith families in Britain and encouraged the latter to open dedicated MJAHA branches, or at the very least, their own Madaris²⁰⁶ By the end of the 1990s, MJAHA oversaw 24 such branches across Britain spread across Birmingham, Slough, Maidenhead, Burton-on-Trent, Derby, Nottingham, Halifax, Bradford, Nelson, Oldham and London.²⁰⁷

Asim’s organisation was further bolstered by the arrival of two more Ahl-e-Hadith scholars and graduates of IUM. Unbeknownst to Asim, Pakistani-born and Ahl-e-Hadith-trained Abdul Karim Saqib moved to Leicester after graduating from IUM in 1975. According to Saqib, Ibn Bāz personally invited him to work in Britain as a *mab‘ūth* but before his paperwork was finalised, Saqib received an invitation by members of The Islamic Foundation (TIF) to join their organisation as an Arabic language instructor.²⁰⁸ Saqib soon came into contact with Mubarak Ali Waraich (hereafter Mubarak, d. 1999), the head of an Ahl-e-Hadith family who settled in

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 58–63; ‘Our History’, Markazi Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith UK, accessed 4 April, 2020. This is the first record of a Salafī epithet used in Britain further indicating that Ahl-e-Hadith members understood and used both Ahl-e-Hadith and *Salafīyyah* on synonymous terms.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 20–21.

²⁰⁶ *Madāris*: pl. of *madrasah*. ‘Our History’, Markazi Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith UK, accessed 4 April 2020.

²⁰⁷ *The Straight Path*, February/March 1983, 22–24; July, *Britannia’s Crescent*, 70.

²⁰⁸ Interview with Saqib, 1 February 2022.

Leicester during the 1960s, and he began delivering lessons in the Mubarak home.²⁰⁹ Both Saqib and Waraich came to know about MJAH through an advertisement in the Pakistani newspaper Daily Jang and subsequently visited Asim in Birmingham to offer their support; Saqib relocated to Birmingham in or around 1977.²¹⁰

In 1976, Indian-born and Pakistani national Suhaib Hasan also arrived in Britain. Hasan's father 'Abd al-Ghaffār Ḥasan, as mentioned earlier, was a respected Ahl-e-Hadith scholar in both Pakistani and Saudi intellectual circles. Hasan studied under his father and in Lyallpur's Jamia Salafiyah before enrolling at IUM in 1962 whereafter he graduated in 1966;²¹¹ he then spent 10 years in Kenya as a *mab'ūth* sent by IUM for the purpose of teaching Islamic classes to locals.²¹² Hasan was transferred to Britain by Ibn Bāz so that the former could pursue a doctorate; he was also prompted to move after receiving a letter from an acquaintance in Britain including an English newspaper cutting about a nudist camp and subsequent plea: 'Maulana! Here Da'wa is needed more than Africa.'²¹³ Hasan settled in East London and quickly formed ties with MJAH leaders, some of whom were his peers at IUM; it is reasonable to assume that Hasan did not settle in Birmingham because as a *mab'ūth*, he was expected to report to the DAI's British wing, the "Da'wah Office", located in the same building as MWL's office in London.

In 1976, Hasan escorted Abdul Aziz al-Mutawa, a Kuwaiti religious philanthropist and 'staunch' member of the Muslim Brotherhood, to Birmingham to meet Asim. Al-Mutawa handed Asim a cheque for £20,000 towards the purchase of a mosque.²¹⁴ A further £4,000 was collected by the local community in Birmingham and in 1979, a council building and former public library and swimming pool was purchased with the intention of opening a large mosque and community centre.²¹⁵ The property, first

²⁰⁹ Correspondence with Amjad Waraich (son of Mubarak), 11 January 2022.

²¹⁰ Interview with Saqib. Saqib, when describing this initial meeting, found Asim was completely alone with only a handful of children which indicates MJAH's relatively inconspicuous size at the time.

²¹¹ Hasan, 'My Memoirs Part 1 to 4', accessed 1 March, 2022,

<https://drsuhaihasan.co.uk/2017/01/09/my-memoirs-part-4-year-1962-1963>.

²¹² Interview with Hasan, 1 May 2019; Hasan, 'My Memoirs Part 16', accessed 27 December, 2021, <https://drsuhaihasan.co.uk/2020/03/24/my-memoirs-part16>. Hasan later completed a Master's degree (1982) and a doctorate (1991) from the University of Birmingham in ḥadīth studies.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ Interview with Hasan, 6 June 2020. Al-Mutawa was also a trustee of the Muslim Education Trust. Rahman, *Muhammad*, ix.

²¹⁵ Azami, *Ahl-e-Hadith in Britain*, 22; 'History of Green Lane Masjid', Green Lane Masjid & Community Centre, accessed 28 February, 2022, <https://www.greenlanemasjid.org/about/history-of-green-lane-masjid>.

referred to as Jame Masjid and later Green Lane Masjid (GLM), officially opened in 1980 as the Muslim Community Centre and subsumed Madrasah Salafia.²¹⁶ An opening ceremony was held and attended by a number of local Muslim leaders as well as Arab dignitaries, including Ismā‘īl b. ‘Atīq, the Deputy Director of the ‘Department of Islamic Da‘wah in Foreign Countries,’ Riyadh.²¹⁷ GLM not only provided MJAH a headquarters, but also the first permanent asset for Salafis in the heart of Birmingham’s Muslim community, as well as a platform for publishing.

The Language of Education

Given the fact that the majority of Muslims migrants in post-war Britain hailed from Pakistan (see previous chapter), the chief mode of communication for a large number of its learned men and laities was Urdu, and to a far lesser extent, English, Arabic and/or Persian. As late as 1996, Metcalf observed about Muslim discourse in Britain,

Urdu has spread to people who did not know it previously; it is the lingua franca of religious teachings, of the many daily newspapers, of teachers in the state schools, of signs in public places, such as libraries.²¹⁸

The exact number of migrant Muslim children in Britain leading up to the 1990s however is difficult to ascertain. It was not until the 2001 national census that it was revealed that the British Muslim population had ‘the youngest age structure of all the religious groups in England and Wales’ with one-third falling under the age bracket of 0–15; the national average was 20%.²¹⁹ Although Asim was familiar with English, his early years in Britain were spent teaching South Asian migrant children their mother-tongue of Urdu in order to help preserve their ethnoreligious roots. This is evident by his efforts in establishing the Muslim Oriental School and later, Madrasah Salfia.

²¹⁶ To avoid any confusion, future references to the Muslim Community Centre and Jame Masjid are recorded under GLM.

²¹⁷ *Sirat-e-Mustaqeem*, September 1980, 15.

²¹⁸ *Making Muslim Spaces in North America and Europe*, ed. Barbara Metcalf (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), xviii.

²¹⁹ Peach, ‘Britain’s Muslim Population’, 18–30.

Regarding the latter, during Madrasah Salfia’s 1982 annual award ceremony, a student revealed the curriculum was entirely in Urdu and boasted the following about GLM: ‘this is the only mosque where we do all written examinations in urdu *{sic}*.’²²⁰ At the time, all of Madrasah Salfia’s teachers were made up of a cohort of South Asian Ahl–e–Hadith members. The emphasis on Urdu was, however, not entirely their making. According to Mohammed Abdul Hadi al–Oomeri, an Indian–born Ahl–e–Hadith scholar who also graduated from IUM and taught in Madrasah Salfia during the 1980s and 90s, Urdu was an integral part of the curriculum because parents were more keen on their children learning their “home” language than Islam.²²¹ Asim would remind parents in *Şirāt–e–Mustaqīm* that their children would inevitably learn English in public schools and that it was upon the elders to ensure outside of school hours, children would not lose their South Asian languages, morals and religious values; if necessary, the same parents were encouraged to purchase children’s books about Islam in English and build a home library, provided the contents were correct.²²²

Young Muslim children were an integral part of MJA’s makeup and the fees paid by parents undoubtedly provided a valuable source of income to the organisation. By December 1980, Madrasah Salfia boasted 500 students across their five MJA branches²²³ and approximately 600 students by 1981 between two MJA branches in Birmingham alone.²²⁴ By 1986, Mirpuri boasted that GLM’s Madrasah Salfia was one of the ‘largest Muslim evening schools in the country’ and singly enrolled 350 new students in that year alone.²²⁵

Increasingly, members of Ahl–e–Hadith realised that while MJA was relatively successful in providing educational provisions to young children, older children and young adults were distancing themselves from mosques because English was now their first–language, and at times, their only language. Mirpuri, for example, bemoaned in 1986 that Muslims in Britain had failed their youth by bringing over so many teachers from South Asia who could not communicate in English with the next generation and

²²⁰ *The Straight Path*, September 1982, 14.

²²¹ Interview with Mohammed Abdul Hadi al–Oomeri, 17 March 2020. In later years (1990s–present), the curriculum of Madrasah Salfia began being delivered in English but children were/are still offered the option of supplementary classes in Urdu.

²²² Asim, *Tehrik ahl–e–hadis*, 73–77.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 13–14; *Sirat–e–Mustaqeem*, September 1980, 22.

²²⁴ *Sirat–e–Mustaqeem*, August/September 1981, 22.

²²⁵ M. Mirpuri, *The Straight Path*, October/November 1986, 17.

that the ‘vast majority of the people who attend Mosques and pray regularly are middle-aged or old.’²²⁶ According to Joly, who visited Muslim communities in Birmingham between 1983 and 1989, one Ahl-e-Hadith leader admitted to having already ‘lost one generation.’²²⁷ This would appear to be a reference to the few young adults then attending prayers or religious events.²²⁸ As such, Joly states that at the time,

[The] medium of communication stands high on the agenda. As most children are more conversant and certainly better at ease in English than many other languages... the more forward-looking associations hold classes either solely in English or combine the use of English and Urdu.²²⁹

Joly counted MJAHA as one of the more forward-looking organisations, it appears, because by the mid-1980s when she visited GLM, the Ahl-e-Hadith were already adopting English as a medium of education and *da‘wah*. In 1986 for instance, MJAHA held its 10th International Islamic Dawah Conference in Urdu and for the first time, included an ‘English language session’ which was presided over by several ulema including ‘Abd Allāh al-Turkī, Rector of Imam University, Muḥammad Nāṣir al-‘Abūdī, Assistant General Secretary of MWL and Yūnus Aṣrī, President of Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith, Kashmir.²³⁰ Despite this initiative, the Urdu conference was, according to Mirpuri,

[B]y far the more important of the two parts of the Conference, most of the Muslim community in this country are Urdu speaking and thus the speakers, many of whom are from India and Pakistan were able to address themselves to the Muslims of the U.K. directly.²³¹

Evidently, while MJAHA was making progress in providing young Muslim children with *madrasah* education, they struggled to attract the “lost generation” and found more success in reaching Urdu-speakers; their inclusion of an English section to their yearly conference was relatively late and as most attendees were South Asian elders, less significant. The responsibility of guiding young adults fell onto individuals like

²²⁶ M. Mirpuri, *The Straight Path*, July 1986, 27.

²²⁷ Joly, *Britannia’s Crescent*, 56.

²²⁸ For a similar observation, see Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 163–177.

²²⁹ Joly, *Britannia’s Crescent*, 56–57.

²³⁰ For a summary of the conference, see *The Straight Path*, October/November 1986, 14–16 and 23.

²³¹ *Ibid*, 16.

Saqib and Hasan who were willing to engage in English–language *da‘wah* and address the “lost generation”; print was quickly harnessed to meet this responsibility.

Inking the Straight Path

Amin states that the Ahl–e–Hadith was ‘by and large, more concerned than the Islamist groups with ritual and theological purity... their chief concern was to “correct” Islamic belief, and propagate an Islamic identity that trumped ethnicity.’²³² However, since their leaders and the vast majority of members were Pakistani and their first language was not English, MJAHA was ethnocentric in various ways, including education and *da‘wah*, both of which were mainly conducted in the Urdu language. Saqib is a case in point. In 1977, he published the first Salafi texts in Britain in the form of an Urdu–language magazine entitled the *Şirāt–e–Mustaqīm* (see fig. 3).²³³ The title of the magazine is a reference to a verse in the opening chapter of the Quran repeated in every prayer in which Muslims ask Allāh to ‘Guide us to the straight path (Ar. *şirāt al–mustaqīm*).’²³⁴

No less than five issues were self–published by Saqib between 1977–78 in Leicester, after which the same magazine was transferred to MJAHA when Saqib moved to Birmingham to join MJAHA as chief–editor and teacher at Madrasah Salfia. The first five issues were entirely hand–written and photocopied by Saqib and contained Quranic passages and ḥadīths emphasising unity and compliance to scripture above all else; after 1978, other MJAHA members including Asim and Mirpuri began contributing articles expanding the magazine’s themes onto issues pertaining to subsidiary Islamic points–of–view, politics, news and education. The magazine was now printed by a local press and its text composed by a local Urdu calligrapher for a more professional finish.²³⁵

²³² Amin, ‘Salafism and Islamism in Britain’, 75 and 79.

²³³ Saqib, *Şirāt–e–Mustaqīm*, 1977.

²³⁴ Al–Quran, 1: 6.

²³⁵ Interview with Saqib, 1 February 2022.

مجھے ہے حکم اذان لا اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللهُ	بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ	گرچہ بت ہیں جماعت کی آستینوں میں
وَ اِنَّ هٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِیْمًا فَاتَّبِعُوْهُ . سورة اعراف . اور بے شک یہ ہے میرا راستہ سیدھا ، پس اسی پر چلو .	پندرہ روزہ لیسٹر صراط مستقیم	اِھْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِیْمَ اے اللہ ہدایت دے ہم کو طرف سیدھے راستے کی
"THE STRAIGHT PATH"		
۲۸ صفر ۱۳۹۷ھ	378 HUMBERSTONE ROAD, LEICESTER	۱۸ فروری ۱۹۷۷
<p>جائے اپنی مصلحتوں کی خاطر اس میں قصے کہا نیوں کی آمیزش کے ساتھ پیش کرتے ہیں . جس سے بیمار سادہ لوح عوام کے لئے مزید الجھاؤ پیدا ہو جاتا ہے . یہ ملت حنیفی جس کا صرف ایک قائد و رہنما تھا ، جس کا صرف ایک دستور و آئین تھا ، جس کا صرف ایک مرکز و محور تھا ، آج خرافات و نظریات کا شکار ہو کر رہ گئی ہے . کوئی گروہ کسی کا جھنڈا اٹھائے ہوئے ہے اور کوئی کسی کے پیچھے بھاگ رہا ہے . کوئی کسی کو اپنا قبلہ و کعبہ سمجھتا ہے تو کوئی کسی اور کے تقدس کا دم بھرتا نظر آتا ہے . وہ عظیم امت وسط جس کو اللہ نے اپنے محبوب اعظم ، ختم رسل ، دانائے کل ، رحمت عالم سید ولد آدم صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم کے ذریعے پوری کائنات کی ضیا پاشی اور نابانی کے لئے برپا کیا تھا ، وہ آج نگر و بہوں اور فرقوں تقسیم ہو چکی ہے . اور اس کا شیرازہ بکھر رہا ہے . وہ باکمال امت جس نے کبھی دوسروں کو اصول جہان نابی سکھائے تھے ، آج کشکول لئے دوسروں کی دست نگر اور محتاج ہے .</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">الحبر فکرم</p> <p>مسلمان اس وقت دنیا بھر میں ۸۰ کروڑ کے ٹک ہنگ ہیں . لیکن اس کے باوجود وہ اقوام عالم کی نظر میں انتہائی حقیر اور قوموں کی ترقی کی دوڑ میں سب سے پیچھے ہیں . اس حقیقت سے انکار نہیں کیا جا سکتا کہ اس پس ماندگی و زبوں حالی کے بعض اسباب ہمارے دشمنوں کے پیدا کردہ ہیں . لیکن بنظر غائر دیکھنے سے پتہ چلتا ہے کہ اس ذلت و رسوائی کے اکثر و بیشتر ہم مسلمان خود ذمہ دار ہیں . ان ساری قومی و ملی بیماریوں ، اور سماجی و سیاسی اور معاشی و اخلاقی امراض کا ناسور ہمارے اندر ہی موجود ہے .</p> <p>آج کل ہم ہر جگہ اور سر ملک میں طرح طرح کے مسائل سے دوچار ہیں . ہمارے قومی و ملی رہنما ، علما و اور تحقیقی و کاوشی کے شیدائی ان مسائل کے حل کی تلاش میں مشرقِ احرار اور مغربِ ابيض کے نادہ پرست اور بے دین نظاموں کے مطالعہ اور تحقیق میں اپنی زندگیاں صرف کر رہے ہیں .</p>	
<p>ہم میں سے ہر ایک کو بحیثیت کلمہ گو مسلمان کے غور کرنا چاہیے کہ یہ تغیرات کیوں اور کس طرح رونما ہوئے ؟ کیا اللہ « نعوذ باللہ » ہمارے ساتھ ہے انصافی کر رہا ہے ؟ کیا وہ اپنے وعدوں سے پھر گیا ہے ؟ یا پھر کہیں ہم ہی اپنے خالق و مالک سے بے وفائی تو نہیں کر رہے ؟ کہیں ہم اس کے محبوب اعظم اور سرور کائنات کے بتائے ہوئے صراط مستقیم سے ہٹک کر نہیں گئے ؟ آئیے ہم اپنے</p>	<p>ہمیں حال ہمارے مذہبی و دینی طبقوں کا ہے . کہ مذہبی اجارہ داریاں قائم کرنے اور باقی رکھنے کے لئے فرقہ پرستی اور گروہ بندی کو ہوا دی جاتی ہے . مذہبی رہنما علم شریعت کو امانت سمجھ کر جوں کاتوں عوام تک پہنچانے کی</p>	

Figure 3

Hasan, who frequently visited Birmingham from London to network with Ahl-e-Hadith members, firmly believed that the language of *da'wah* was primarily determined by one's locality. He states:

You must address the people in that language which is understood by the people of that country. And this was the *sunnah* of the Prophets of Allāh: “*Wa mā arsalā min Rasūlin illā bi lisāni qawmihi li yubayyina lahum* [‘We have never sent a messenger who did not use his own people’s language to make things clear to them.’ Al-Quran, 14:4].” So I was of this idea right from the beginning that, as long as you are in England, you must focus upon English language... not your own local language of Urdu.²³⁶

Hasan found some opposition to his views on the language of education, even while operating as an imam in cosmopolitan London which had a more ethnically-diverse community of Muslims. He recalls how when he first started addressing his community in the English language during Friday sermons,

There was some objection by some older generation people... one of them was so bitter about that, that he said that “I am going to ask you on the Day of Judgement that you have deprived us of your sermons by not doing it in Urdu language which we understand!”²³⁷

Nevertheless, Hasan encouraged Saqib to include English reading material in *Şirāt-e-Mustaqīm* and target audiences in both languages. Thus, a number of early issues published in Birmingham included an English section typewritten and edited by Hasan²³⁸; one article in English, for example, was a translation of a fatwa by Ibn Bāz on the prohibition of celebrating *Milād al-Nabī* (The Birthday of Prophet Muḥammad).²³⁹ Such additions only took up a few pages since *Şirāt-e-Mustaqīm* was primarily dedicated to Urdu reading-publics.

However, the desire to preserve an Islamic identity for future generations and concern over already “losing” a generation trumped MJAH’s attachment to one single

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ Interview with Hasan, 1 May 2019. The reference to Judgement Day implies Hasan will have to answer the said person before God.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Şirāt-e-Mustaqīm*, tr. Hasan, February 1978. For a counter-response by Leicester’s Bareilwi community which explicitly counters *Şirāt-e-Mustaqīm* on this issue, consult Mohammad Azizur Rahman, ‘*Shirk*’ of Those who cry ‘*Shirk*’ (Leicester: Darus-Salam Mosque, n.d.).

language. With the help of his new wife Ijaz Begum, a Pakistani-born British graduate, Saqib began publishing an English counterpart-magazine also called *Sirat-e-Mustaqeem* in 1980, and which was later renamed *The Straight Path* in 1982 (see fig. 4).²⁴⁰



Figure 4.

²⁴⁰ Saqib, *Sirat-e-Mustaqeem*, February 1980, 3, and *The Straight Path*, February 1982, 3. The reason for the change of name was to avoid confusion in administrating requests for copies. Saqib was the English magazine's chief editor between 1980 and 1986 and between 1989 and 1992. Between 1987 and 1988, Mirpuri assumed the role of editor and this reverted back to Saqib after Mirpuri passed away in tragic car accident.

Saqib confesses that he was no journalist, and that his wife was instrumental in editing his own English compositions, alerting us to the first instance of a Salafi female involved in Anglo–Salafi publishing.²⁴¹ According to Saqib, the need for an English language magazine was because ‘this [younger] generation knows very little or no Urdu’²⁴²; consequently, the scholars of MJA^H felt it was imperative,

to introduce Islamic teachings to our younger generation living in a purely non–Islamic society lest it goes astray... at the Altar of the apparently attractive–looking but morally and spiritually most destructive western civilization based on materialism.²⁴³

This suggests that English was not simply a language of communication, but also a medium by which the Ahl–e–Hadith hoped to “save” future generations from losing touch with their religion and elders; it was, in effect, *da ‘wah*–education. Accordingly, the English magazine was issued with the following objectives:

- To introduce Islam in its real and original form to the English speaking generation and to help eliminate sectarian–based controversies and narrow–minded thoughts.
- To assist the Muslim youth in upholding Islamic values and to be proud of being a Muslim.
- To provide the Muslim generation with resources to obtain knowledge with a view to living a practical mode of Islamic life.
- To create and support the ways and means which can unite the Muslims.
- To give due importance to problems faced by the new generation and to try our best to solve them at all stages.²⁴⁴

Evidently, Saqib and other contributors were foremostly concerned with “rescuing” Muslim children from adopting western values in contradistinction to Islamic ones. There also appears to have been a concerted effort to avoid sectarianism by focusing on common socioreligious concerns felt by Muslim migrants in Britain. Consequently, reoccurring themes in early editions of *The Straight Path* either addressed parents about the problems facing Muslim youth in Britain or addressed young people about

²⁴¹ Interview with Saqib, 1 February 2022.

²⁴² Saqib, *Sirat–e–Mustaqeem*, February 1980, 3.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

the importance of Islamic education. In order to do away with sectarianism, Saqib also routinely welcomed readers to contribute to the English magazine. As a result, a number of issues during the 1980s include contributions by local Muslim scholars, activists, academics and parents who were not necessarily members of the Ahl-e-Hadith;²⁴⁵ in certain cases, contributors included non-Muslims.²⁴⁶ Articles, it would appear, were simply published on the merit of their messages, provided they agreed with an inclusive Islamic cause envisaged by MJAHL and other Islamic movements at the time. In order to appeal to a younger audiences, *The Straight Path* also included regular poems, quizzes, puzzles, crosswords, essay competitions and contributions from Muslim children.

Reading through these magazines gave me the impression that they were somehow meant for anyone and everyone. For example, a reoccurring theme in both the Urdu and English magazines was outlining the Ahl-e-Hadith's *da'wah* manifesto which appealed to all Muslims:

Our Call (*Hamāre Da'wat*):

- Our Judge and Lord, is only one, Allāh the Most High, no one else;
- Our imam and leader, is only one, Muḥammad the Messenger of Allāh, not anyone else from the *ummat* [nation];
- Our religion and *madhhab*, is only one, Islam, it is not any sect or group;
- Our work, is only one, obedience [to Allāh], it is not following lowly desires;
- Our love is built, only on one thing, to please Allāh, not for any worldly pursuit;
- Our cause of pride, is only one, faith, not any homeland or language.

If you agree and resonate with this call then come forward in the name of Allāh and support us in spreading it.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ This includes, for example, an article on *hijrah* (migration) by Murad, then director of TIF. Murad, *Sirat-e-Mustaqeem*, December 1980, 5–7.

²⁴⁶ See for example, an article dispelling myths about Islam reprinted with permission from 'The Plain Truth', a Christian magazine in *The Straight Path*, November/December 1983, 4–8; a letter from a certain John Thorn, a Christian school teacher encouraging Muslim children to become bilingual in order to improve relations with parents and urging readers not to view all British education or culture as bad. See John Thorn, *The Straight Path*, October/November 1986, 24.

²⁴⁷ Saqib, *Şirāt-e-Mustaqīm*, September 1978, 1.

In similar terms, Saqib wrote in an early English issue:

WE CALL YOU

1. Towards the unity of Allah who is pure & holy and towards His true love which leads man to His obedience and to fear him alone.
2. Towards creating a bond of true & pure love and respect for Allah's Prophet (saw) which makes us follow his examples and his teachings only.
3. To return to the true 'pure' authentic sources of Islam, Quran and Sahih Sunnah, in order to obtain the knowledge of Deen [religion].
4. To shed all innovations, fictitious stories, superstitions & wrong beliefs.
5. To encourage freedom of thought and cultivate an open mind within the limits of Shariah.
6. Not to follow or imitate anyone blindly except our Prophet Mohammad (saw).
7. To strive against all ideas and isms that stand against Islam or create doubts in its teachings.
8. To believe and practise only according to Quran, Sunnah and the righteous traditions and abstain from self-made unauthentic and weak narrations and stories.
9. Towards establishing a unique Islamic society which lives according to Allah's commands, His laws and His regulations.
10. To work towards unity, love and create an Islamic brotherhood and condemn sectarianism.

These are the basic aims and principles of our call. We urge all Muslims to pay heed to this message and help us to succeed.²⁴⁸

As these manifestos evidence, the aim of Britain's Ahl-e-Hadith was to encourage *all* Muslims, whether they read Urdu or English, to stay loyal to the texts of the Quran and Sunnah. The language employed was delocalised and universal while simultaneously distinguishing itself as a scripturalist and hence superior trend, albeit subtly, to that of its rivals. Indeed *The Straight Path* was, in Saqib's estimation, by itself a movement.²⁴⁹ The Ahl-e-Hadith's message was nevertheless antithetical to Britain's Hanafi-majority and pre-migration rivals from South Asia. When Saqib

²⁴⁸ Saqib, *Sirat-e-Mustaqeem*, October 1980, back cover.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 9.

wrote to various Muslim leaders in Britain requesting them to contribute to the English magazine's celebration edition of the fifteenth century after hijrah, only two replied: Rashid Siddiqi (president of UKIM), and Murad (director of TIF).²⁵⁰ This alerts us to the Ahl-e-Hadith's limited pool of allies leading up to the 1990s which consisted of Saudi and Kuwaiti elites, alongside local and international members of Jamaat-i Islaami and its affiliates.

The earliest issues of both Saqib's Urdu and English magazines were printed locally, paid for by locals and distributed for free. Both magazines were printed on glossy paper, with colourful covers containing photographs and Islamic motifs. The contents of the English magazine appear to have been composed using early home computers. At least temporarily, the leaders of MJAH also intended to purchase a printing press 'to make Islamic literature cheaply.'²⁵¹ Almost every issue of *The Straight Path* leading up to the mid-2000s contained an appeal for donations. In 1982, both English and Urdu magazines began operating a subscription model in order to help cover printing costs although free copies continued to be distributed to mosques, organisations, study circles, students and people unable to afford the rates.²⁵²

Despite suffering financial woes, Saqib boasted that both the Urdu and English magazines were read widely, 'not only in the United Kingdom but also in Europe, North America, the Middle East, African and in India and Pakistan.'²⁵³ I have been unable to ascertain how many copies of *The Straight Path* or its Urdu counterpart have been published to date or identify their distribution channels. However, Saqib's above-mentioned claim can be corroborated from the magazine's "Letters to the editor" section, which between 1980 and 1991, contain correspondences from readers in various cities in Britain, the United States, Jamaica, Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Mauritius and South Africa.²⁵⁴ These letters suggest that *The Straight Path* was almost always dispatched to Islamic centres, mosques and institutes. As such, it complemented the wider Anglo-Islamic intellectual print project.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, December 1980, 13.

²⁵¹ *Ibid*, February 1980, 19.

²⁵² *Ibid*, February 1982, 5.

²⁵³ Saqib, *Sirat-e-Mustaqeem*, September 1980, 3.

²⁵⁴ From these letters, it would appear that both magazines were submitted to some public libraries in Britain; TIF's Islamic library in Leicester (now in Markfield) was also a recipient. Copies were also sent to Islamic centres and individuals who wrote in to request issues for further distribution.

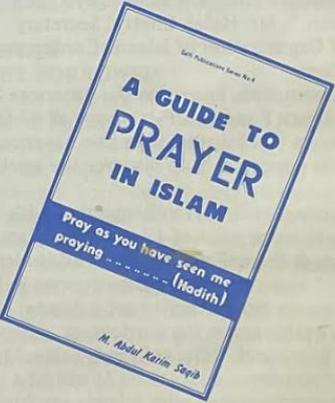
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Figure 5

The Straight Path was also one of the only “purely” Islamic magazines in the English language during the 1980s. It routinely advertised Anglo–Islamic publications distributed by MJAH as well as new publications and religious materials printed in Britain by organisations like TIF and booksellers like Ta–Ha Publishers. The magazine’s abovementioned position also allowed Saqib the opportunity to meet a

growing demand for Anglo–Islamic texts. In 1983, he published a booklet entitled *A Guide to Prayer* for ‘new converts and English speaking Muslim Brothers and for young Muslims brought up in this country’²⁵⁵; sections of it were first published in *The Straight Path* as articles after which they were compiled into a book and published as part of a series entitled ‘Salafi Publications.’²⁵⁶ Evidently, Saqib was aware of the potential of print as a commercial medium of both religious education and *da‘wah* (see fig. 5).

Al–Quran Society

Hasan was a regular contributor to both the *Şirāṭ–e–Mustaqīm* and *The Straight Path* keeping in line with his vision that *da‘wah* should be addressed to both Urdu and English–speaking audiences. Under a similar context to what was taking place in Birmingham, Hasan established in 1979 the Al Quran Society (AQS) in London in order to provide Quran classes to young children and publish Anglo–Islamic reading material.²⁵⁷ Soon after, Hasan co–established The Islamic Shari’a Council (TISC) in 1982 alongside ‘various scholars representing ten mosques in the UK’ in order to provide religious services to the local community. Two years later, he also established London’s first Salafi mosque, Masjid Tawheed.²⁵⁸

Hasan went on to publish two types of non–profit Anglo–Salafi reading materials: correspondence courses and stand–alone texts. The correspondence courses, amounting to over two dozen individual pamphlets on various topics including the science of ḥadīth, according to Hasan, reached as far as the United States as well as

²⁵⁵ *The Straight Path*, September 1983, back cover.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.* These and other books and magazines were primarily made available through a small bookshop located inside of GLM.

²⁵⁷ Interview with Hasan, 6 June 2020. AQS was registered as a registered charity in 1981; according to its ‘charitable objects’, the aim of AQS is to ‘advance the education of the public by the teaching of the Holy Quran and Sunnah through all available means such as lectures, correspondence courses, publication of books and cassettes, conducting classes etc on the holy Quran and Arabic language.’ ‘Al Quran Society’, Charity Commission for England and Wales, accessed 14 May, 2022, <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/282162/governing-document>.

²⁵⁸ Interview with Hasan, 1 May 2019; ‘About Us’, The Islamic Shari’a Council, accessed 16 May, 2022, <https://www.islamic-sharia.org/aboutus>. According to the same website, TISC is the oldest such council in Europe and its main function is to ‘guide the Muslims in the UK in matters related to religious issues as well as solving their matrimonial problems.’ One of the 10 mosques represented by TISC was GLM and Mirpuri was among its founding members.

other English-speaking countries in Africa like Ghana and Nigeria.²⁵⁹ These were relatively simple in form, containing no Arabic letters aside from the occasional Arabic calligraphy motif. Hasan's son Usama recalls posting 'hundreds, or thousands' of copies of the correspondence courses to addresses across the world; he and his sister Khola would help their father by editing the texts, printing address labels on their ZX Spectrum computer and typing out their father's manuscripts.²⁶⁰ As well as involving his children, Hasan, like fellow Ahl-e-Hadith members, sought to counter un-Islamic influences on Muslims in the West by producing largely inclusive religious educational material. Hasan states in one of his recent publications, a reprint of 10 of his early lessons from the correspondence course:

Although many Muslims realize that Islam is the cure for modern ills and problems, they remain unsure of the exact nature of this cure. What is needed is thorough familiarization with the Quran and Hadith as well as an un-blinkered evaluation of modern life. It is only then that Muslims will begin to appreciate the genius of Islam and the fallacy of modern, atheist philosophy.²⁶¹

This highlights Hasan's target audience was general, but exclusively Muslim; he was also particularly keen to appeal to young Muslim audiences. This was also made clear at a 1987 Quran conference held by AQS to commemorate the completion of *The Study of Al-Quran* series (part of the correspondence course); Sa'd al-Barazī, then Director of the Da'wah Office, stated in a guest speech:

One of the main objectives of this society [AQS] is to foster a rapport in the hearts of young Muslims with their faith, and to protect them from being misled by this non-Islamic society and environment, and to acquaint them with the Quran and Sunna.²⁶²

This alerts us to the fact that early Anglo-Salafi texts merged education with *da'wah*. Although Hasan limited his writings and translations to the Quran, ḥadīth corpus, statements of ulema and his own educated interpretation, something which caused little to no controversy, he was nevertheless constructing a subtle Anglo-Salafi discourse. His most obvious attempt at doing so was during the early 1980s when he composed

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ Interview with Usama, 12 September 2019.

²⁶¹ Hasan, *A Course Book in Islam: Volume 1* (London: Al Quran Society, 2014), 6.

²⁶² *The Straight Path*, September/October 1987, 30.

a correspondence series entitled ‘Understanding Islam’ in five parts, beginning with *The Muslim Creed*, a translation of a “classic” credo with supplementary notes by Ibn Bāz.²⁶³ The same text was also published as a gratuitous stand-alone pocket-size booklet employing a hand-crafted cover design (see fig. 6).²⁶⁴

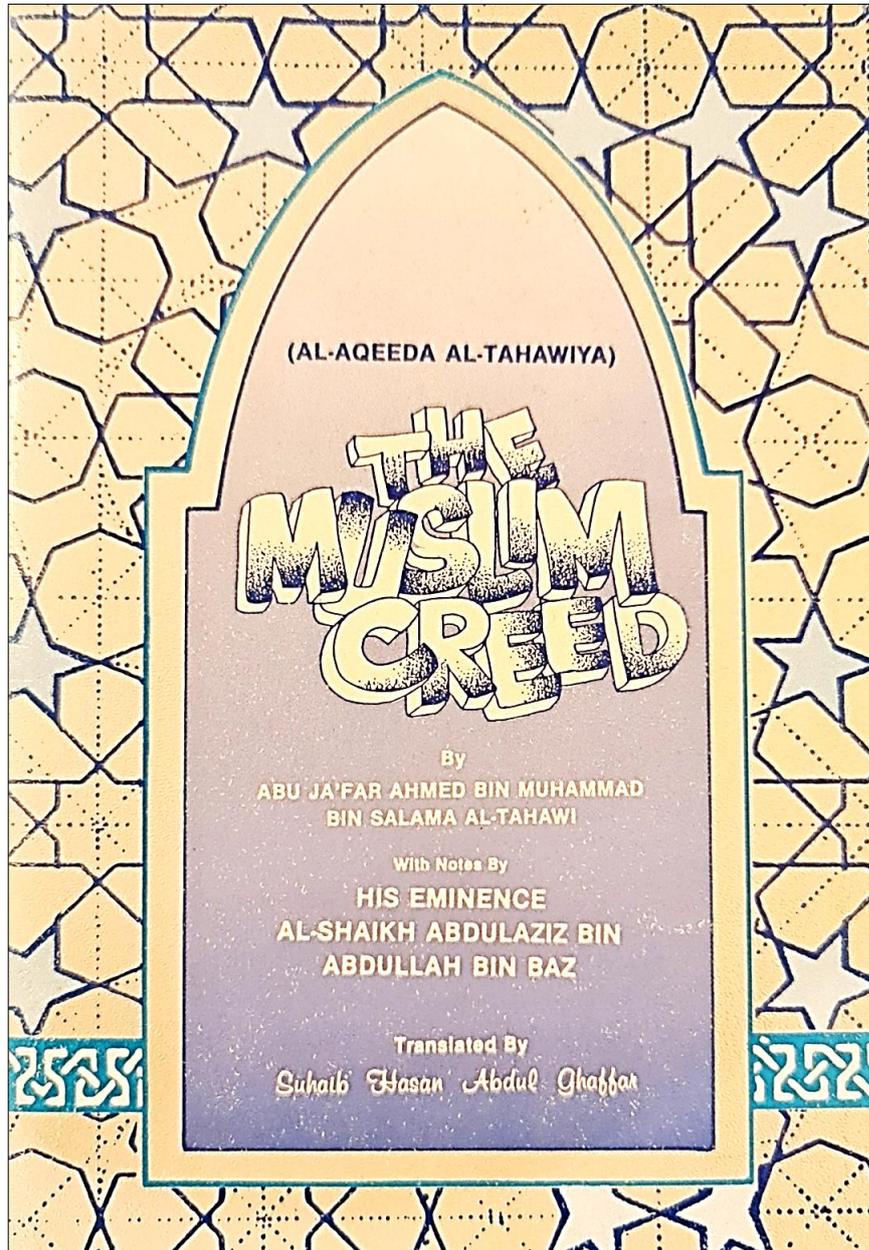


Figure 6

²⁶³ Interview with Hasan, 1 May 2019. For more about this particular credo, see Shiliwala, ‘Constructing a Textual Tradition’: 461–503.

²⁶⁴ Ahmed Al-Tahawi, *The Muslim Creed With Notes By His Eminence Al-Shaikh Abdulaziz Bin Abdullah Bin Baz*, trans. Suhaib Hasan Abdul Ghaffar (London: n.d.) and Hasan, trans. *The Muslim Creed* (London: AQS, 1987).

Hasan’s choice of translating this particular credo was three–fold: i) it was published in Saudi Arabia and taught in its Islamic universities and so Hasan was especially familiar with it;²⁶⁵ ii) it embodied the theological beliefs of a cohort of ulema from the *Salaf’s* era, and iii) the author, Aḥmad al–Ṭaḥāwī (d. 933), was a Ḥanafī authority to the majority Ḥanafī migrant Muslim community in Britain as elsewhere (including the Indian subcontinent). Hasan hoped to reconnect Ḥanafī Muslims to the *Salaf’s* creed, which al–Ṭaḥāwī seemingly shared; the odd occasion where the latter departed from Salafi doctrine was offset by Ibn Bāz’s “Salafi” disclaimers; thus, even though the text might appeal to Britain’s Ḥanafīs, the aim of Hasan’s translation steered local Anglo–Muslim reading publics to a more Salafi purview of theology. It represents one of the few early Anglo–Salafi texts “made in Britain” which was sectarian in nature and appealed to wider Anglo–Muslim reading publics.

Conclusion

This chapter has elaborated on what Amin and I set out to achieve in our 2021 co–authored journal article, namely, to highlight the significant role played by the Ahl–e–Hadith in laying the foundations of Salafism in Britain.²⁶⁶ Herein I provide greater detail as to how the Ahl–e–Hadith achieved this and why they ought to be considered Britain’s *first* Salafis. This is especially important as a number of previous scholars in the literature largely overlook the Ahl–e–Hadith and concentrate on British Salafism in later decades.²⁶⁷ Salafis were present in Britain as early as the 1950s and its members, attached to the Ahl–e–Hadith movement, was already a significant Islamic trend in South Asia consisting of numerous Islamic institutes with strong intellectual links with Saudi Islamic universities and scholars as well as organisations such as Jamaat–i Islami; this network would later provide a conduit for later Salafi outfits (see following chapters). If we are to consider exactly when Salafism first took shape in Britain, what has preceded provides a strong case that 1975 was a defining year; during it, the Ahl–e–Hadith established MJAH, the first Salafi organisation and Madrasah

²⁶⁵ The text and its commentary are taught as part of a undergraduate course at IUM and other Islamic institutes in Saudi Arabia. Farquhar, *Circuits of Faith*, 139–140.

²⁶⁶ Amin and Majothi, ‘The Ahl–e–Hadith’.

²⁶⁷ See for example, Hamid, ‘The Development of British Salafism’: 10; Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Muslim Woman*, 26–27 and 62; Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 77; Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 123–124.

Salfia, the first Islamic school where Salafi ideas were taught; the organisation also connected with al-Albānī and Ibn Bāz, two prominent figures in the Salafī sphere; thereafter, four IUM graduates and members of the Ahl-e-Hadith joined MJAHA and began building a national Salafī network and addressing immediate concerns related to *da‘wah* and education.

In relation to the previous chapter, the present findings suggest that while the Ahl-e-Hadith rose to prominence during the same period as Anglo-Islamic print culture first emerged, aside from two publications (by Khān and Batālwī), its members concentrated more on constructing Urdu and Arabic language texts. This is not to say that the Ahl-e-Hadith did not embrace the Anglo-Indian intellectual project during the early twentieth-century; instead, it would appear that this was less important to Ahl-e-Hadith authors who were more invested in making Urdu the “new Persian.” By the late twentieth century, members of the Ahl-e-Hadith began publishing Anglo-Islamic texts, thus inserting themselves into the wider Anglo-Islamic intellectual project. This was made all the easier since it was dominated by South Asians with similar aspirations of making English a language *for* Islam. In Britain, Anglo-Ahl-e-Hadith print culture only took shape following the mid-1970s when individual members realised the need for addressing younger Muslim audiences who preferred English to Urdu. Their limited efforts at publishing Anglo-Islamic texts thus often blended education with *da‘wah*. Given that the Anglo-Islamic commercial book market was still in its infancy, early Anglo-Salafī print culture in Britain was largely distributed freely and was a product of local circumstance more so than international concerns.

Chapter Three

For the Youth, By the Youth

A story clearly aimed at a young adult audience was published in a 1981 article in the Ahl-e-Hadith's English language magazine *The Straight Path*.²⁶⁸ In it, a group of young Muslim boys gather on a street in Britain during Ramadan. However, not all of them started their month of fasting on the same day. They begin talking about this discrepancy and attribute it to their parents having a difference of opinion, each parent following their respective mosque imam. At this point, a "teacher" approaches them and intervenes. He encourages the young boys to remain united, follow the Sunnah which teaches that the beginning and end of the months in the Islamic calendar are observed by sight, and that they should guide their parents not to "blindly" follow their imams.

As well as this story highlighting the Ahl-e-Hadith's attitude to scripture and *taqlid*, it also alerts us to an important development which would impact Anglo-Salafi print culture in 1980s-Britain and thereafter: the "teacher" was shouldering the responsibility of education and *da'wah* onto the youth by telling them to educate even their own parents. This chapter examines how three Salafi youth initiatives in Britain emerged during the 1980s underscoring this shift: the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM), Harakat Islah Shabab Al-Muslim (HISAM) and Jam'iyat Ihyaa Minhaaj As Sunnah (JIMAS). It argues that the Ahl-e-Hadith empowered the next generation of Salafi activists to take part in leading Anglo-Salafi *da'wah* in Britain through print and other mediums; by the end of the same decade, Salafis in Britain separated into two visible trends partly through print, dividing generations, languages and transnational networks. Nevertheless, both would have a lasting impact on the Anglo-Salafi book market which would emerge in the following decade.

²⁶⁸ Saqib, *Sirat-e-Mustaqeem*, February 1980, 11.

The Muslim Youth Movement

In the previous chapter, I highlighted how Abdul Karim Saqib and Suhaib Hasan adapted their *da'wah* projects so as to cater for English–language reading publics, particularly young Muslims. While Hasan also pursued other cross–generational projects including a mosque and Sharia council, Saqib turned his attention towards Muslim teenagers, the “lost” generation. The latter, Saqib observed, were attending mixed public schools and although they further attended evening or weekend madrasahs, ‘it is obvious that two hours per day is not sufficient to drive away the western ideas and values from their minds let alone two hours per week.’²⁶⁹ He further complained of the Muslim leaders engaging in “conferencism”: holding lavish gatherings which produced little to no results and were preoccupied with setting up a local Islamic university ‘while there is not even an established Islamic Junior school.’²⁷⁰ To remedy this, Saqib used his English magazine to call on Muslim elders to set up independent Islamic schools and for the youth to join a new movement.

The Muslim Youth Movement (MYM) was established in 1980, the same year Saqib issued the first Salafi English–language magazine. In the previous chapter, I noted how Saqib described his magazine *The Straight Path* itself as a “movement”; it is reasonable to believe that Saqib partly meant by this that it was the backbone of MYM. This is indicated by various articles published in the magazine during the first–half of the 1980s. For example, the objectives of MYM were published by Saqib following the story I began this chapter with:

1. We should above all give importance to Muslim Unity.
2. We should keep cool and calm and have positive attitude when criticising ideas of others and try to convince the people to the correct ideas.
3. We should criticise the wrong ideas but not the personalities.
4. Always support bravely and openly those who are working towards unity.
5. There should be a group of Muslim youth who possess a solid basic knowledge of Islamic principles and have missionary spirit to change the situation. They should spread the true message of Islam, the simplicity of Islamic principles, and the importance of unity among the community.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ Saqib, *Sirat–e–Mustaqeem*, September 1980, 3.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid*, November/December 1981, 3.

²⁷¹ *Ibid*, 11.

Saqib also published an article by Major Aslam, one of the three IUM students who visited Birmingham in 1975, entitled ‘How to help (Educate) our youth for the service of the Ummah [Muslim nation]’ in which he called on Muslims in non–Muslim societies to “train” the next generation.²⁷² Saqib meanwhile, in an article entitled ‘The Problems Facing Muslim Youth in British Society’, warned that state schools are corrupting Muslim youth; he concluded that since the elders don’t care too much, ‘it is up to the muslim {sic} youth themselves, to discover or rediscover their true way of life, (Islam).’²⁷³ Uncoincidentally, while Aslam encouraged Muslim elders to set up a ‘high level Islamic News Agency, Press and Publication System’, Saqib appealed for donations for MJAH to acquire its own printing press.²⁷⁴

These selections demonstrate that Saqib and like–minded Ahl–e–Hadith members wanted to empower young Muslims through print and other means. With respect to the latter, in 1980, Saqib organised MYM’s first “training camp” during which he and a group of Muslim boys stayed overnight in the Green Lane Masjid (GLM), described by Saqib as “home” to MYM’s office; the group took part in Islamic quizzes, lessons, discussions and physical exercises.²⁷⁵ Saqib’s wife Begum also led a separate study group for girls.²⁷⁶ Based on my reading of *The Straight Path*, it appears that this camp was a one–off and aside from weekly study groups led by Saqib and his wife, MYM was primarily a movement whose ideas were expressed in print.

I highlighted Saqib’s inclusive approach towards publishing Anglo–Salafi magazines in the previous chapter; he encouraged Muslim intellectuals to contribute to his magazine, even when they were *not* Ahl–e–Hadith members. One reason why is that the theological boundaries between Salafis and others had not yet been drawn (see following chapter); another is that the Ahl–e–Hadith in Britain, like their South Asian and Saudi counterparts, cooperated with Islamist organisations including the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat–i Islaami. This explains why Saqib, an Ahl–e–Hadith scholar and IUM graduate, spoke in revolutionary terms. For example, he once declared that

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 9–12.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 11 and 19. Emphasis mine. For articles in *The Straight Path* by other authors also shouldering the responsibility of *da`wah* onto young Muslims, consult *The Straight Path*, August/September 1984, 20–21 and June 1985, 14.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, February 1980, 18 and 19.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

his “task” was to ‘bring about an Islamic Revolution in England.’²⁷⁷ Correspondingly, this declaration followed not long after the Iranian Shiite Revolution in 1979 and therefore it would appear that it was no coincidence that revolutionary ideas underscored Saqib’s reformist vision.

Saqib was equally impressed with the MB’s rise to prominence in the Arab world; he even suggested once that the Islamic movement in Britain should follow the blueprint of Hasan al-Banna (d. 1949); namely, through *ḥalaqāt*, or Islamic “circles” of knowledge where young people could develop ‘a comprehensive understanding of Islam by studying Qur’an, Hadith and Islamic literature regularly.’²⁷⁸ Saqib states further:

Effectively the Halqah {sic} is the base from which a change in the individual should lead to a change in society and the reconstruction of the entire social order in accordance with the Islamic system of life. The Halqah {sic} therefore is the vehicle for change.²⁷⁹

This “change” was already taking place in Birmingham under MYM. To Saqib’s delight, a similar yet completely disconnected “circle” was also underway in London.

The “Circle Brothers”

Yet another reason why 1975 was a significant year for Salafism in Britain is because it marked the arrival of one Abu Muntasir (Munwar Ali). Born in East Pakistan (approx.. 1950), Abu Muntasir was raised in a religious, pro-Islamist family which sided with West Pakistan during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971. He personally witnessed the murder of his brother and other family members during the resulting violence.²⁸⁰ His family arrived in Britain as political refugees where his father, Mohar Ali (d. 2007), had earlier qualified as a lawyer. During the late-1970s, Abu Muntasir studied computer science at Kingston Polytech (now Kingston University, London), and having already been religious, ‘politically-charged’ and ‘*da‘wah* orientated’, he

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*, July 1980, 10.

²⁷⁸ Saqib, *The Straight Path*, February/March 1984, 12.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 13. Note that the root letters *hā-lām-qāf* in the Arabic language signify a circle, link or chain. Hence, a *ḥalaqah* (pl. *ḥalaqāt*) refers to a group of students which sit before a teacher, often in a semi-ring.

²⁸⁰ Interview with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019.

assumed the role of president of its Islamic Society (ISOC) for a period of two years.²⁸¹ There he built a relationship with MB and Jamaat-i Islami members as well as Idris Waraich, a member of the Ahl-e-Hadith Mubarak family; Waraich introduced Abu Muntasir to the wider Ahl-e-Hadith network in Britain which the latter confesses,

consolidated my becoming Ahl-e-Hadith, and discovering the sweetness and the pleasure of following the Quran and Sunnah, and not Hanafi-popular, Bangladeshi-cultural Islam.²⁸²

Abu Muntasir was an avid reader of Islamic books; having not yet learned Arabic, his desire to follow the Quran and Sunnah was met by relying on available translations of Anglo-Islamic translations distributed by International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations (IIFSO), the Muslim World League (MWL) and TIF.²⁸³ He was particularly fond of A. Y. Ali's translation of the Quran which he would carry with him wherever he went and preaching to Muslims at every given opportunity.²⁸⁴ For example, he would stop children playing football and taxi drivers parked on taxi ranks and convince them to "lend him an ear" so that he could read to them passages of the Quran in English.²⁸⁵

In 1983, Abu Muntasir took over a study circle for Muslim teenagers at a UK Islamic Mission weekend study circle in Leyton. According to Abu Aaliyah (Surkheel Sharif), who attended this circle, he and his peers were particularly drawn to Abu Muntasir's proficiency in English, his passion for Islam (he would often cry after reading passages) and self-reliance (he would spend his own university grant money and time to photocopy and staple handouts).²⁸⁶ He further reveals that Abu Muntasir's reading out translated verses of the Quran was a 'rare thing' at the time and immediately impacted its listeners who could not yet understand the Arabic language.²⁸⁷ It is noteworthy that in 1977, a World Conference on Muslim Education was held in

²⁸¹ *Ibid*; Bowen, *Medina in Birmingham*, 60.

²⁸² *Ibid*.

²⁸³ *Ibid*.

²⁸⁴ Interview with Abu Aaliyah, 10 September 2019.

²⁸⁵ Interview with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019.

²⁸⁶ Interview with Abu Aaliyah, 10 September 2019 and 16 February 2022. For the circumstances of Abu Muntasir's "take-over", or 'loving coup' as described by Abu Aaliyah, see Dawood, 'Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims', 76-77; Abu Aaliyah recalls in this account that Abu Muntasir had a M. Y. Ali translation of the Quran, and would only say to attendees "and God says" or "the Qur'an says" which was 'the strangest thing.'

²⁸⁷ *Ibid*.

Mecca, and called for more Arabic tuition ‘outside the Muslim world’; in Britain thereafter, ‘in cities where the Muslim population was large, Arabic classes were developed quickly and became large in scope.’²⁸⁸ Madrasahs, where such classes took place (like Madaris Salfia), concentrated on learning how to *read* the Quranic script in Arabic, but not understand its meanings. For teenagers like Abu Aaliyah, he could finally understand his religion, albeit in translation, even if it meant bypassing people in favour of paper.

Abu Muntasir quickly forged a loyal multi-ethnic cohort of young Muslim adults, including Londoners Abu Aaliyah (a South Asian who would become Abu Muntasir’s right-hand man), Abu Sufyan (Abdulkareem McDowell, a black convert) and Abdur Raheem Green (a white convert originally from Tanzania)²⁸⁹, and Dawud Burbank (d. 2011), a white convert from Leicestershire.²⁹⁰ Anglo-Islamic texts were vital to this budding cohort’s formulating what Islam meant in English. Green, for example, carried a translation of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s *Kitāb al-Tawhīd (Book of Monotheism)* around with him as a reminder of Quranic verses and ḥadīths.²⁹¹

The same cohort began conducting Islamic circles in English in various mosques and university ISOCs across Britain and received the title of the “circle brothers.”²⁹² Abu Muntasir, for example, led a regular Sunday class at Hasan’s Masjid Tawhid in Leyton; according to Hasan’s son Usama, who attended these very same classes, Abu Muntasir was a “God-send” to his father because the former could articulate himself in clear English and appeal to young people using Quran and Hadith.²⁹³ Hasan, like Saqib before him, states that he was then of the opinion that ‘the younger generation... are more capable of taking the banner of *da‘wah* in this country’ while the ‘older generation’ did their part by establishing mosques.²⁹⁴ This indicates that youth empowerment was widely accepted by MJAH leaders.

²⁸⁸ Jed Fazakarley, *Muslim Communities in England 1962–90: Multiculturalism and Political Identity* (Cham: Springer Nature, 2017), 69.

²⁸⁹ Abu Sufyaan and Green gained considerable fame during the 1980s and 90s after publishing a series of video cassettes entitled *Dawah in the Park* in which both candidly preached about Islam at Hyde Park in London. Green would later co-establish the Islamic Research Academy (iERA). For more about this particular academy, consult Baz, ‘Online Islamic *Da‘wah* Narratives in the UK.’

²⁹⁰ Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 132.

²⁹¹ Bowen, *Medina in Birmingham*, 69; interview with Green, 25 May 2020.

²⁹² Interview with Abu Aaliyah, 10 September 2019.

²⁹³ Cf. Amin, ‘Salafism and Islamism in Britain’, 122; Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 79.

²⁹⁴ Interview with Hasan, 1 May 2019.

Outside of mosques, Green would also hold Islamic circles in his home in South London which would attract large numbers.²⁹⁵ One of the things which attracted listeners to these classes, according to one convert Muslim who attended them, was the fact that they were led by young, multi-ethnic and dynamic speakers proficient in the English language.²⁹⁶ Another was the potency of their “evidence-based” message, centred primarily around Quran and Sunnah, the two foundations of Sunnism, and *tawhīd* (Islamic monotheism).²⁹⁷ It is reasonable to suggest that such a current, driven by young Muslim activists, was only made possible by the availability of Anglo-Islamic literature.

The “circle brothers” were acutely aware however that they lacked religious authority, understanding and leadership. Abu Muntasir and a number of likeminded peers visited the “elders” of the Ahl-e-Hadith in Birmingham in or around 1983 in order to incorporate their Islamic circles under the banner of MJAHA. To his surprise, Abu Muntasir found MJAHA elders unwilling and unable to lead his young group of adults.²⁹⁸ MJAHA’s youth initiatives like Madrasah Salfia were primarily focused on young, primary and secondary-school children. MJAHA’s leaders largely appear to have been less confident in managing young adults and university students interested in *da‘wah*. Instead, it encouraged aspiring *du‘āt*²⁹⁹ to study Islam and the Arabic language from reputable Salafi universities, or in other words, “get qualified first.” As such, from 1983, MJAHA began advertising scholarships on behalf of the IUM in their magazines and offering help to applicants; a year later, three Ahl-e-Hadith youth were admitted there, setting a precedent for future aspiring students.³⁰⁰

Harakat Islah Shabab Al Muslim (HISAM)

Saqib saw the potential of collaborating with Abu Muntasir and forming a new youth-led organisation, for the youth, and entirely in the English language. The two met and

²⁹⁵ Iman Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 82–83.

²⁹⁶ Interview with Baker, 20 March 2022.

²⁹⁷ On the impact of *Tawhīd* on Salafis, see Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 189–193. See also Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 126–129.

²⁹⁸ Interview with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019.

²⁹⁹ Pl. of *dā‘ī*, one who carries out *da‘wah*.

³⁰⁰ *Sirat-e-Mustaqeem*, February/March 1983, 14 and October/November 1984, 23; Farquhar, *Circuits of Faith*, 163. I am unaware as to what happened to these three students: Arshad Mahmood (Bradford), Tariq Mahmood (Leeds) and Naweed Malik (Birmingham).

agreed to form Harakat Islah Shabab Al Muslim (HISAM), which translates as “The Movement for Reforming the Muslim Youth.”³⁰¹ Saqib, despite being elder and more learned, placed Abu Muntasir at the helm thereby empowering the “next” generation with more than just words. HISAM combined Saqib’s MYM and Abu Muntasir’s “circle brothers.”

My findings suggest that the group was initiated in 1984 for two reasons: the first is that this is the year in which Bowen, Gilliat–Ray, Inge, Amin, Dawood and Anwar all claim JIMAS was launched, most likely because JIMAS itself marks it as the year of its inception.³⁰² It appears that JIMAS, which I will argue began later in the same decade, adopted 1984 as its year of establishment because Saqib and Abu Muntasir eventually fell out with one–another (see below). The second reason is that in 1984, a three–day camp was held at GLM and organised by Saqib ‘with the co–operation of the brothers from Birmingham and London.’³⁰³ Both Saqib and Abu Muntasir presented lectures at the event around the subject of Muslim unity. According to “Tariq”, a former Muslim activist, he recalls hearing about HISAM for the first time when he attended this event.³⁰⁴ Soon after, HISAM began organising “Islamic” summer retreats at a student campus in the University of Leicester (this was later co–opted by JIMAS).

As with MYM, *The Straight Path* magazine was the key mouthpiece for HISAM. However, the same magazine does not mention HISAM by name; this I believe, was because Saqib was not entirely convinced of the organisation’s longevity or that he was unable to monitor its members from behind the scenes (see below). Instead, Abu Muntasir harnessed his knowledge in information technology to print out HISAM’s objectives (see fig. 7).

³⁰¹ According to Saqib, younger members toyed with the idea of calling the organisation Youth of Salafis in order to resemble the Ahl–e–Hadith Youth Force organisation in Pakistan; Saqib was averse to both labels as they could potentially alienate new members who did not wish to be ‘put in a box.’ Interview with Saqib, 1 February 2022.

³⁰² Bowen, *Medina in Birmingham*, 60; Gilliat–Ray, *Muslims in Britain*, 81; Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Muslim Woman*, 27; Amin, ‘Salafism and Islamism in Britain’, 122; Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 103; Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 126; Munwar Ali, ‘Abu Muntasir’s Blog’, JIMAS, accessed 4 March, 2022, <http://www.jimas.org/initiatives/abu-muntasirs-blog>; JIMAS, ‘JIMAS – UK Charity for All’, Facebook, accessed 9 February, 2022, <https://en-gb.facebook.com/DynamicDawah>.

³⁰³ *The Straight Path*, February/March 1985, 24–25.

³⁰⁴ Correspondence with “Tariq” (anonymised), 15 April 2022.

A FEW FACTS

ABOUT

HARAKATU
ISLAHISH - SHABAB
AL - MUSLIM

حركة إصلاح الشباب المسلم

Figure 7

His opening words provides some insight into the mindset of HISAM's members, some of whom were originally part of the "circle brothers":

We were pained by the disunity and the injustices the Muslims of the world, and indeed the whole of mankind was facing (and still does), and we were

desperately craving for the light of Islam, the Islam that Muhammad (sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam [peace and blessings be upon him]) taught and fought for. This was partly because the variety of “Islam” practised by people confused us and the unashamed hypocrisy and laziness that was displayed by most of the Muslims we knew at that time disturbed us profoundly. Offcourse {sic.} we were later to learn that the different strains of Islam that we witness now in the society are mainly due to people’s ignorance of what the Qur’an and the Sunnah actually says, and thus they are medleys of foreign ideas and values, innovations and cultural influences of the jahiliyya [ignorant] societies they grew up in... After 6 years of work, the expansion of our Islamic circles and the growth in the number of brothers and sisters attached to us through shared ideas and feelings for Islam, the stage had come where we needed to be identified by a name chosen by ourselves, not by what people called us, some out of spite and some out of love. We found that da’wa could be done more effectively and conveniently under a name, and that was the main reason why we chose to do away without our previously agreed upon principle of not going anywhere near forming “another group!”³⁰⁵

This passage reveals that HISAM members were influenced by both Ahl-e-Hadith (Quran and Sunnah) and Islamist writings. Abu Muntasir’s reference to *jāhiliyyah* is telling. In traditional Islamic literature, *jāhiliyyah* (lit. ignorance) is typically used to signify the state of the Arab world prior to the emergence of Islam, that is, one of irreligiosity and backwardness. In modern Islamist/jihadi thought, *jāhiliyyah* is used to associate the modern Arab world to its pre-Islamic “ignorance” and thereby provides license for reformation, excommunication and military intervention.³⁰⁶ This is further supported by HISAM’s goals set out in the same publication: i) to ‘revive the practical understanding of Tawheed based on the Qur’an and the Sunnah’; ii) to free Muslims ‘from the despicable tradition of the so-called intellectuals and philosophers who cloud the literal meaning of the Qur’an and the Sunnah’; iii) to ‘root out all innovations’; iv) to ‘eradicate all forms of sectarianism, much of which is intrinsic to the popular Faith of the people’; v) to ‘establish brotherhood with all Muslims’; vi) to promote sacrifice and self-reliance among young Muslims; vii) to

³⁰⁵ [Abu Muntasir], *A Few Facts About Harakatu Islahish Shabab Al-Muslim* (Ipswich: Harakatu Islahish Shabab al-Muslim, 1984), 2–3. According to Saqib, this work was entirely written by Abu Muntasir. Interview with Saqib, 1 February 2022. This is also indicated by the pamphlet’s correspondence address in Ipswich where Abu Muntasir was based and still remains today.

³⁰⁶ The concept of modern-*jāhiliyyah* was a key argument in the works of both Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966) and Maududi. Consult Sayed Khatib, “‘Hakimiyyah’ and ‘Jahiliyyah’ in the Thought of Sayyid Qutb”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 3 (2002): 145–70; Zhongmin Liu and Peng Fan, ‘On the Three Pivotal Doctrines of Islamism’, *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies* 13, no. 3 (2019): 295–309.

establish the Islamic State.³⁰⁷ It is also noteworthy that Saqib also described the United Kingdom as a mixture of *jāhiliyyah* and man-made practises in an earlier issue of *The Straight Path*.³⁰⁸

Unfortunately, Abu Muntasir’s abovementioned pamphlet is undated. His reference to “six years of work” can be interpreted in two ways: i) This publication was released in or around 1989, shortly before HISAM splintered (see below); ii) Abu Muntasir was in fact referring to the late 1970s as the start of his *da‘wah* “circles” because around this time he would have joined Kingston’s ISOC. Similarly, subsequent HISAM publications are undated:

1. [Abu Muntasir], *Imam Muhiuddin Abu Zakariya Yahya Navavi [al-Nawawī]: The Fearless Scholar of Damascus*;³⁰⁹
2. [Abu Muntasir], *Dialogue Between Christians and Muslims*;³¹⁰
3. Surkhail Shareef [Abu Aaliyah], *A Prod to the Carefree Muslim*;³¹¹
4. [Saqib], *Masnoon Duas (Morning, Evening and Daily [Supplications])*.

Such texts were relatively simple, mostly containing text, and the inside pages typeset in plain English with the occasional Arabic term left untranslated, demonstrating the usage of an “Islamic English” (see Chapter One). On the other hand, when the need arose for Arabic texts in *Masnoon Duas* for readers to be able to read and memorise prayers, Saqib physically penned in the Arabic and corresponding Urdu scripts, suggesting that technology at the time had its limits. These publications were printed by local print shops and distributed through word-of-mouth and at HISAM events.³¹² Given the lack of distribution channels during the 1980s, they appear to have quickly fallen out of circulation.³¹³ Saqib admits that these publications were entirely through

³⁰⁷ *A Few Facts About Harakatu Islahish Shabab Al-Muslim*, 3–6.

³⁰⁸ Saqib, *Sirat-e-Mustaqeem*, February 1980, 13. In a later issue, an excerpt on the concept of *jāhiliyyah* by Qutb is also found in *The Straight Path*, January 1985, 4–7.

³⁰⁹ Abu Muntasir, *Imam Muhiuddin Abu Zakariya Yahya Navavi [Nawawī]: The Fearless Scholar of Damascus* (Ipswich: Harakatu Islahish-Shabab Al-Muslim, n.d.).

³¹⁰ *Dialogue Between Christians and Muslims* (Ipswich: Harakatu Islahish-Shabab Al-Muslim, n.d.).

³¹¹ Surkhail Shareef, *A Prod to the Carefree Muslim* (Ipswich: Harakatu Islahish-Shabab Al-Muslim, n.d.).

³¹² Correspondence with Usama, 30 May 2022.

³¹³ I was only able to find original copies in Abu Muntasir’s library during my interview with him on 10 November 2019.

the efforts of Abu Muntasir.³¹⁴ For example, *A Prod to the Carefree Muslim* was loosely based on the translated works of Maududi and Qutb; its author, Abu Aaliyah, admits that this was Abu Muntasir's choice of title and the latter revised the entire booklet because the latter's English, 'was far better than mine at that time.'³¹⁵

HISAM in *The Straight Path*

As well as Salafi and Islamist influences, HISAM members were equally shaped by geopolitical events including the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the plight of Palestinians and Indian Kashmiris. As such, its members sometimes spoke of jihad and the virtues of martyrdom in the "way" of Allāh, both of which are based on Quranic verses and ḥadīths. This attitude reflected in HISAM's unofficial dress code: turbans, army jackets and boots; Saqib on the other hand would prefer blazers and trousers thereby distinguishing himself.³¹⁶ HISAM's jihadi mindset at the time is further captured in one issue of *The Straight Path* in which Abu Muntasir contributed a short think-piece entitled 'O Muslims open your eyes'; in it he complained of atrocities committed against Muslims in Burma and other countries and invited readers to become mujahidin.³¹⁷

In the same abovementioned issue, HISAM member Burbank contributed an article entitled 'Jihad: the Forgotten Aim for Muslims' in which he championed jihad as being the way of Prophet Muḥammad and his companions.³¹⁸ Another anonymous author, one year later, encouraged readers to 'reject these [modern-day] taghoots in all forms, strive hard and prepare yourself for Jihad to overthrow these corrupt and taghooti [government] systems' and that 'Together, we will begin Inshaa Allah [by God's will] Jihad for the sake of Allah against the corruption in our societies.'³¹⁹ The Arabic term 'taghoot' is often used to describe false gods but linguistically, implies some form of transgressing the bounds of sharia. In jihadi and Islamist discourse, it is the designation most used to describe 'tyrannical Muslim rulers' that have 'fallen into

³¹⁴ Interview with Saqib, 1 February 2022.

³¹⁵ Interview with Abu Aaliyah, 10 September 2019.

³¹⁶ Interviews with Usama Hasan, 29 September 2019; correspondence with "Tariq" (anonymised), 15 April 2022.

³¹⁷ Abu Muntasir, *The Straight Path*, August/September 1984, 2 and 31.

³¹⁸ Burbank, *The Straight Path*, August/September 1984, 4-7.

³¹⁹ *The Straight Path*, January 1985, 21.

disbelief by failing to rule by the *shari‘a*.³²⁰ It is also a reoccurring theme in the works of Ibn ‘Abd al–Wahhāb, and the basis of early “Wahhābī” reasoning for taking up arms against neighbouring Arab tribes.³²¹

All of the above coincided with the backdrop of a rising global “Jihadi” movement and with far–reaching events such as the Cold War and the assassination of Anwar Sadat (d. 1981), former president of Egypt. A key ideologue of the Jihadi movement responsible for Sadat’s assassination, Muḥammad Farāj (d. 1982), authored the book *Jihād: The Absent Obligation*, which bears resemblance to the title of Burbank’s article mentioned above.³²² Abu Aaliyah, Green, Karmani and Saqib admit that Abu Muntasir and several members (besides Saqib) of HISAM were pro–jihad as well as “kind of” *takfīrī* (those who excommunicate others from Islam); furtively, they considered Arab rulers at the time to be disbelievers (*kuffar*) for ruling their countries by other than the pure sharia.³²³ Correspondingly, a growing number of Arab dissidents, migrants, exiles and refugees alike, also emerged in Britain during this time and were vocally militant and/or anti–establishment while borrowing elements of Salafi discourse (see Chapter Five).³²⁴ HISAM clearly reflected shared concerns.

Generation Clash?

The literature on Muslims in post–war Britain often speaks of generational “shifts”, “gaps” and “clashes between “first” and “second” generations. These studies do not always account however for overlaps in terms of people, ideas, networks and timeframes.³²⁵ Furthermore, the patterns of migration among Muslims in Britain

³²⁰ Shiraz Maher, *Salafi–Jihadism: The History of an Idea* (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 2017), 90.

³²¹ Cole M. Bunzel, ‘Manifest Enmity: The Origins, Development, and Persistence of Classical Wahhābism (1153–1351/1741–1932)’ (Ph.D., Princeton, Princeton University, 2018), 3, 145, and 194–195.

³²² A key argument in Farāj’s work was that jihad today is an individual obligation (*farḍ ‘ayn*) on every Muslim irrespective of borders, treaties and citizenships. For more about Farāj’s work and his usage of references also favoured by Salafis, see Johannes Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat’s Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1986); Maher, *Salafi–Jihadism*, 89–92. Burbank’s views on jihad changed considerably in following years as with other JIMAS members (see following chapter).

³²³ Interviews with Abu Aaliyah, 16 February 2022; Green, 25 May 2020; Karmani, 27 May 2020; Saqib, 1 February 2022; Usama, 29 September 2019.

³²⁴ Bowen, *Medina in Birmingham*, 66; Amin, ‘The Shifting Contours of Saudi Influence in Britain’, 297–298.

³²⁵ See for example, Joly, *Britannia’s Crescent*, 20–21, 73–74; Geaves, *Sectarian Influences Within Islam in Britain with Reference to the Concepts of ‘Ummah’ and ‘Community’* (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1996), 57–59; Ashraf–ul Hoque, ‘Generation Terrorised: Muslim Youth, Being British and Not

means that terms like “first generation” and “pioneers” are limited and only useful in as much as they relate to a specific ethnic community.³²⁶ HISAM illustrates the complexities of working inside a religious youth movement which was both divided and enabled by cross-generational actors, ideas and conceptions.

One of these divides was based on energy; Abu Muntasir recalls when HISAM would visit MJAHA branches, he and Abu Aaliyah proved to be dynamic English speakers but that their efforts would be ‘ruined’ when followed by Saqib, who would talk for two to three hours in a flat tone and ‘we would sometimes not get invited back again because of Saqib.’³²⁷ Politics was a further divide; Saqib had dreams of running Pakistan and appointing Abu Muntasir and Abu Aaliyah as ministers while Abu Muntasir merely wanted to re-establish a caliphate, through jihad if necessary.³²⁸ Abu Muntasir and younger members further imagined Islam as decultured and the Muslims as one *ummah* (nation-body), without borders; much to their dislike, Saqib and fellow Ahl-e-Hadith members celebrated Pakistan’s annual Independence Day and spoke and behaved like they were at times, still “back home” in Pakistan.³²⁹ Another divide was based on leadership; according to Saqib, Abu Muntasir was given leadership of HISAM by him and told that others would also have the opportunity to lead at a later date. Abu Muntasir objected to this on the pretext that the first caliphs of Islam and companions of Prophet Muḥammad remained in charge until their deaths.³³⁰ This suggests that following the Quran and Sunnah meant different things inside of HISAM and that occasionally, literal readings of Anglo-Islamic literature produced inconsistent readings of Islam.

so British’ (PhD, SOAS, University of London, 2012) 109–111; Sameera Ahmed, ‘Young British Muslims: Social Space and Active Identity’ (PhD, University of Leicester, 2003), 2–3; Kylie Baxter, ‘From Migrants to Citizens: Muslims in Britain 1950s–1990s’, *Immigrants & Minorities* 24, no. 2: 177 and 187. The “first” generation of Muslim migrants being pioneers, mostly working men, who went on to establish permanent homes in Britain and collectively built Muslim and Islamic spaces. The “second” generation are the children of these pioneers who were born and educated in Britain and multifariously lost their ethnic culture (for example, language and/or culture). Further still, a “third” generation comprises of children born to second-generation British-born Muslims and so on.

³²⁶ Somali refugees, for example, who entered Britain in the 1990s might not be referred to as “first generation” in the traditional sense because that is normally reserved for South Asian pioneering migrants or refugees, but are, in their own right, a “first” generation just as they are “pioneers” within their own communities.

³²⁷ Interview with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019.

³²⁸ *Ibid*; Abu Aaliyah suggests that younger members of the group were entirely uninterested about geopolitics and did not relate to Saqib’s probing questions on political activism. Interview with Abu Aaliyah, 16 February 2022.

³²⁹ Interviews with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019; Usama, 29 September 2019.

³³⁰ Interview with Saqib, 1 February 2022.

At the same time, there are numerous examples of cooperation between the Ahl-e-Hadith and HISAM. The latter's members still relied on Ahl-e-Hadith leaders like Hasan and Mirpuri for religious guidance. Abu Muntasir and other members were still in the process of reading and studying Islam and clearly respected Ahl-e-Hadith seniors for their knowledge and commitment of the Quran and Sunnah. Abu Muntasir even wrote to Saqib and asked him how one could be 'spiritually fed'? The reply was printed in a 1985 issue of *The Straight Path*.³³¹ MJAHA leaders were equally accommodating of HISAM, partly because of Saqib's involvement, but also because the movement was not overtly controversial and was at its root, a Salafi outfit. The fact that HISAM was also influenced by Islamism was a relative non-issue.

During MJAHA's 1986 conference for example, both Abu Muntasir and Abu Aaliyah were invited to address the audience because of their commendable efforts in *da'wah*.³³² Video recordings of the same conference include two telling banners which were displayed in the lecture hall; the first of these banners is a revised version of the earlier 1980's "We Call You" published in *Sirat-e-Mustaqeem* and authored by Saqib.³³³ The second banner, as confirmed by Abu Aaliyah, is inspired by a Muslim Brotherhood slogan.³³⁴ This suggests that like HISAM, MJAHA was equally supportive of Islamist causes. This did not at the time, after all, translate into violence. In Abu Muntasir's speech at MJAHA's 1986 conference, for example, he was critical of Muslim leaders who 'betray' fellow Muslim peoples by 'submitting themselves in front of Israel... America and Russia'; however, he did not "name and shame" these leaders, call them disbelievers or call for their overthrow but instead, urged attendees to follow the Quran and Hadith (much to the satisfaction of the organisers).³³⁵

Another reason why the Ahl-e-Hadith accommodated HISAM was because it was an asset in English-language *da'wah*, both oral and print. When Saqib stepped down from his role as editor of *The Straight Path*, Mirpuri took his place and urged the elders of

³³¹ Saqib, *The Straight Path*, January 1985, 20.

³³² '1986 Islamic Dawah Conference (English) Green Lane Masjid – Pt. 1' and '1986 Islamic Dawah Conference (English) Green Lane Masjid – Pt.2', Green Lane Masjid, YouTube, accessed: 3 April, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6axLUfbsGI&ab_channel=GreenLaneMasjid, and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7eRCeDKXIQ>.

³³³ This particular version was routinely printed on the back cover of *The Straight Path* beginning in February 1982.

³³⁴ Interview with Abu Aaliyah, 16 February 2022; Abu Muntasir also begins his speech with the Muslim Brotherhood slogan in Arabic. '1986 Islamic Dawah Conference (English) Green Lane Masjid – Pt. 1', accessed 3 April, 2022.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

the Ahl-e-Hadith to work with the youth by harnessing the English language; in his 1986 editorial piece in *The Straight Path*, he reflected on the achievements of Muslims in Britain over the preceding two decades and stated:

The youth of today are highly literate and speculative. If we want them to appreciate and accept Islam we must present it to them in a way that appeals to them... We must accept that our children are no longer Pakistanis but we must bring them up as Muslims and teach them to appreciate and uphold the culture of their ancestors... The Muslims in Britain have come a long way in the past twenty years but they now face the gravest challenge and they must meet it in order to survive. **It is a question of adapt or die.**³³⁶

Increasingly, members of the Ahl-e-Hadith leadership shared this sentiment. One imam, for example, stated as late as 1993 that little change had taken place in Britain since ‘Certain mosques are giving Islam a very bad name with their insistence on sticking to their cultural backgrounds.’³³⁷ Al-Oomeri, who joined MJAH in the early 1980s as a teacher in Madrasah Salfia, recalls how senior Ahl-e-Hadith members saw no problem in adopting the English language more since their primary concern was to ‘teach them [the youth] about Islam, not a language itself.’³³⁸ This suggests that English was gradually being embraced as the primary language of *da‘wah* by Britain’s Ahl-e-Hadith; the Urdu language also had its place since its “first generation” were better versed with it and Madrasah Salfia continued teaching it into the 1990s. Thus, while generational clashes were certainly taking place, they did not result in absolute divides.

Leading by Books

Increasingly, members of HISAM led by Abu Muntasir began depending less on Ahl-e-Hadith elders for religious instruction and more so on available Anglo-Islamic texts and transnational Anglo-Salafi preachers. The increasing availability of both in Britain allowed HISAM members to bypass “qualified” local scholars and conform to what Rock-Singer describes as ‘strict models of embodied practice.’³³⁹ During Abu

³³⁶ M. Mirpuri, *The Straight Path*, July 1986, 27–28. Emphasis mine.

³³⁷ Ehsan Masood, ‘A Conversation with Imam Abduljalil Sajid’, *Q News*, 2 July 1993, 5.

³³⁸ Interview with al-Oomeri, 17 March 2020.

³³⁹ Rock-Singer, *In the Shade of the Sunna*, 7.

Aaliyah's 1986 conference presentation, he appealed to attendees to even consult Anglo-Islamic scriptures for themselves:

We get oppressed from the *kāfirs*, and even the Muslims oppress themselves. How do they oppress themselves? They do injustice to themselves when amongst Muslims, amongst us, there are people who say that “you can't read the Quran and Sunnah... because it's too hard... to understand...” For the brothers who are just English speakers and brought up in this society, really all we are telling you to do, all everyone here is telling you to do, is just to follow the Quran and Sunnah. You can pick up the Quran and read it to the best of your ability. The Quran was meant for all of us... that is what we're asking the people to do. To read the Quran and ḥadīth and to act upon it, *in-shā' Allāh* [God willing].³⁴⁰

This was particularly novel at the time. A number of my interviewees who adopted Salafism during the 1980s and 90s suggest that non-Salafi elders were averse to the idea of children reading about Islam for themselves and bypassing scholars. For example, Abu Tayyib claims he was discouraged from reading about Islam ‘all the time’ and it was one of the reasons why he was “kicked out” from a Deobandi mosque in Newcastle; he recalls being told by one Deobandi, ‘You can't read Bukhārī... you're not trained, you're not a scholar!’ to which he retorted ‘Well, you're saying I can read *Fazal-e-Amal* [a popular Deobandi and Tabligh-i Jamaat manual] but I can't read *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*?’³⁴¹ In contrast, Abu Tayyib found that Salafis ‘would always encourage you to read, to always look for the evidence.’³⁴² In another example, Aqib Hussein, who adopted Salafism in the 1990s, recalls reading a translation of the Quran in a Tabligh-i Jamaat mosque and being interrupted by an elder who said:

No you can't do that... just do *tilāwat* (recitation of the Arabic text) only, but if you want to know what it says or what it means, that's what the Maulana-sahib is there for. Don't try to read it yourself, you'll get misguided.³⁴³

As Brown points out, the democratisation of scripture has been a constant feature of Salafi discourse since the nineteenth century but is not ‘substantively consistent’ because it challenges the same scholarly authority which provides interpretative

³⁴⁰ ‘1986 Islamic Dawah Conference (English) Green Lane Masjid – Pt. 2’, accessed 3 April, 2022.

³⁴¹ Interview with Abu Tayyib, 9 October 2019.

³⁴² *Ibid.*

³⁴³ Interview with Aqib, 19 January 2022.

control.³⁴⁴ Al-Oomeri suggests however that democratisation is part of the appeal of Salafism: no party has a ‘monopoly’ over another, which in turn gives Salafism a particular edge over Islamic trends because the former distinguishes fact from fiction, religion from culture, evidence from hearsay.³⁴⁵ Thus, it is unsurprising why “brother” Saqib, as HISAM members would affectionately call him, was increasingly viewed by younger members as a mere “student of knowledge”, and *not* a scholar.³⁴⁶ Abu Muntasir recalls that Saqib was only the ‘main guy’ in HISAM because he was a ‘graduate... he had the most Arabic... he could quote’ but nevertheless, ‘his knowledge was very, very limited. It was just very basic.’³⁴⁷ Members of HISAM in London and Birmingham would also rarely meet, further adding to the gulf.³⁴⁸

Simultaneously, members of HISAM became increasingly attracted to Arab Salafi ulema, albeit through translators, thereby bypassing the need to resort to South Asian scholars. Arab ulema seemed to provide the all-important “interpretive control” highlighted by Brown above. At the head of the translators was Burbank, who while working as a librarian in TIF’s office in Leicester, found an advertisement by IUM inviting applications to study in Medina. Burbank was soon accepted onto a IUM scholarship and spent the next three years there where he completed the Arabic programme in 1988.³⁴⁹ Abu Aaliyah recalls that HISAM members were introduced to al-Albānī through Burbank’s translations and that this led members to focus more on *present* Salafi scholars instead of *past* ones like Ibn Taymiyyah.³⁵⁰

This suggests that media played a key role in the reworking of Salafism, or *re-Salafication*, among younger HISAM members and that living ulema were central to this shift. Al-Albānī visited Britain on at least two occasions (1975 and 1977) but this did not amount to any perceivable changes according to Hasan, who accompanied him;³⁵¹ instead, it was through the influence of translations of al-Albānī’s message,

³⁴⁴ Brown, ‘Is Islam Easy to Understand or Not?’: 119.

³⁴⁵ Interview with al-Oomeri, 17 March 2020.

³⁴⁶ In contrast, MJAHL leaders would refer to Saqib as “Maulana”, thereby acknowledging him as a scholar.

³⁴⁷ Interview with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019.

³⁴⁸ Interview with Abu Aaliyah, 9 October 2019.

³⁴⁹ Abu Abdillah UK, ‘The History of the Salafi Da’wah in the UK (PART 1)’, YouTube, 13 October, 2011, accessed 15 October 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=erI6OMamEWM>. Burbank did not however, go on to complete the Bachelor’s Degree as commonly believed. Interview with Abu Khadeejah, 11 May 2020.

³⁵⁰ Interview with Abu Aaliyah, 9 October 2019.

³⁵¹ Interview with Hasan, 1 May 2019.

partly owing to Burbank, that HISAM members outside of Saqib’s circle of influence found was a more detailed version of Salafism.³⁵² The fact that Burbank and likeminded secondary–authorities were essentially gatekeepers of information was largely undetected by members of HISAM because trust was an essential part of information exchange between Arabic and English–speaking Salafis. My survey of *The Straight Path* magazines issued during the 1980s also reveals there were numerous Arabic to English translations of Saudi Salafi texts and far fewer Urdu to English Ahl–e–Hadith counterparts.

Furthermore, during MJAH’s 1986 conference, Abu Muntasir and Abu Aaliyah met Abdullah al–Farsi (d. 2018?), an Arab–American mechanical engineer turned Islamic worker who delivered the final lecture of the day about the ‘proper way of *da‘wah*’; al–Farsi was introduced by Mirpuri in the conference as a ‘very famous, studied, scholar in the United States’ and ‘representative of Jamiat al–Quran wal–Hadīs from USA.’³⁵³ This is most likely a reference to al–Qur’an was–Sunnah Society of North America (QSS) which was also established in Canada, 1986.³⁵⁴ According to Abu Aaliyah, who would host al–Farsi in future visits to the country and study Islamic texts under, the latter was a ‘hard–core Najdī’, a reference to his dedication to Saudi Salafism. Al–Farsi not only provided the younger cohort with a more systematic curriculum, but also convinced them that their *takfir* of Arab rulers, support for suicide bombings and calls for jihad without an *emir* did not confirm to the Quran and Sunnah.³⁵⁵ HISAM’s members outside of Birmingham also found the literature produced by QSS better quality, and more substantial, evidence–based and decultured (see fig. 8).³⁵⁶

³⁵² Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 132; Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 25. For more about al–Albānī’s influence beginning in Jordan, consult Wagemakers, *Salafism in Jordan*, 100–108.

³⁵³ ‘1986 Islamic Dawah Conference (English) Green Lane Masjid – Pt. 2’, accessed 3 April, 2022.

³⁵⁴ QSS was first established by the Kuwaiti religious charity organisation Jam‘iyyat Ihyā’ Turāth al–Islāmī (The Revival of Islamic Heritage Society, JITI, est. 1981); it then became an independent organisation in 1989 and later formerly incorporated in 1995. QSS was first chaired by Mahmood Murad, a translator of Islamic works in English and contributor to *The Straight Path*, between 1986 and 1991, followed by Muhammad al–Jibaly, a direct student of al–Albānī and author of several Anglo–Salafi publications, from 1991 to the 2000s. See Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 242, footnote 20; Alexander Meleagrou–Hitchens, ‘Salafism in America’, Program on Extremism (The George Washington University, October 2018), 41–42.

³⁵⁵ Interview with Abu Aaliyah, 16 February 2022.

³⁵⁶ See for example, Abdur–Rahmaan Abdul–Khaliq, *The General Prescripts of Belief in the Qur’an and Sunnah*, trans. Murad (British Columbia: Ihyā’ Turāth, 1985).

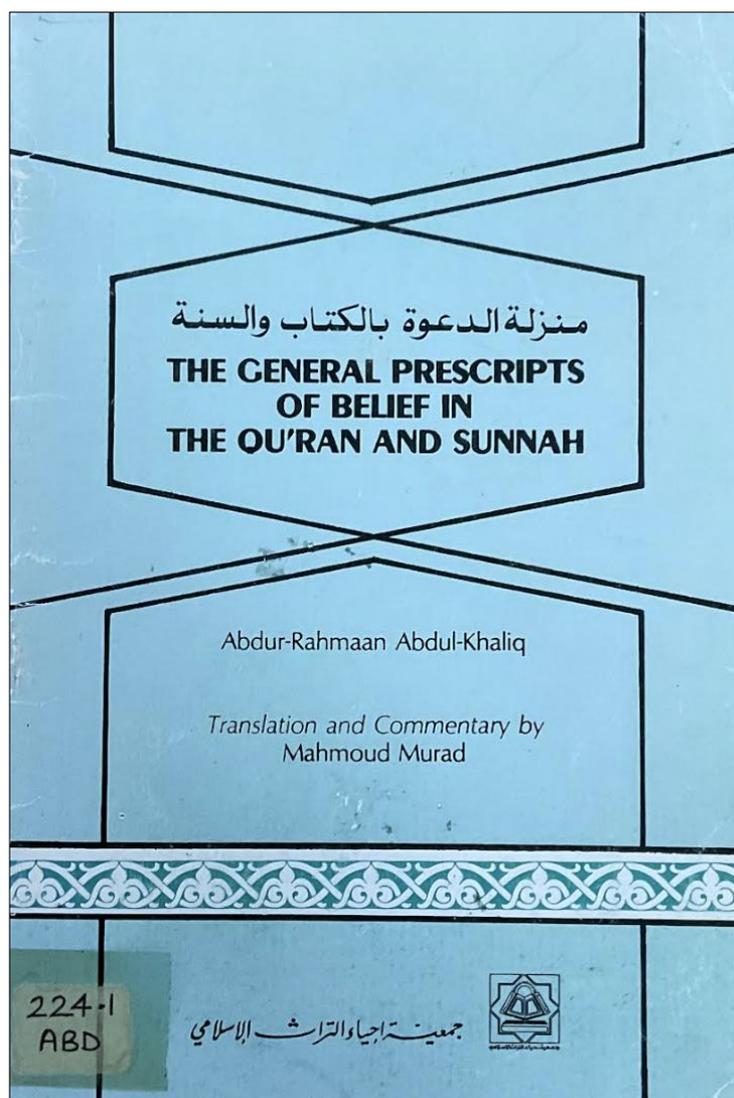


Figure 8.

QSS's new-found connections with Abu Muntasir allowed for translated publications to flow to-and-fro the United States and Britain.³⁵⁷ In contrast, Abu Aaliyah for example, who describes himself a 'veracious reader', informed me that he does not recall having ever read an issue of *The Straight Path* or Abu Muntasir referring to it during their study circles.³⁵⁸ Consequently, Abu Munstasir and younger members

³⁵⁷ Roy, *Globalized Islam*, 242, footnote 20.

³⁵⁸ Interview with Abu Aaliyah, 16 February 2022. Abu Aaliyah was surprised to learn during the same interview that one of his articles was published in *The Straight Path*; this suggests that the magazine's respective editors sometimes chanced upon available literature already in English. See Abu Aaliyah, *The Straight Path* September/October 1987, 34.

mirrored QSS' preferentialism for Arab Salafism as defined by al-Albānī and Saudi ulema.³⁵⁹

The "Circle Brothers" who became HISAM members also increasingly spoke about *Salafīyyah* (Salafism) although they did not yet formerly identify as "Salafis." Mirpuri hints to this shift in attitude when he wrote the following in a 1987 issue of *The Straight Path*:

The Ahl-e-Hadith movement which originated in India during the nineteenth century is merely a small part of the wider movement amongst Muslims, which has been in existence throughout the history of Islam which invites Muslims to return to the original teachings of Islam as embodied in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Adherents to this principle are found in all Muslim communities throughout the world and are known by different names, **sometimes they are called Salafi whilst in the Indian subcontinent they are known as Ahl-e-Hadith.**³⁶⁰

This indicates that Mirpuri was keen to attach the Ahl-e-Hadith to the wider Salafi movement gaining currency in Britain. GLM's position as Britain's extension of this current was also at stake. In 1986, Al-Muntada al-Islami, an Arab-led mosque was set up in London and described itself as the 'leading centre for the propagation of the teachings of *al-salaf al-salih*'; it also welcomed Abu Muntasir and other senior members to conduct *da'wah* which was increasingly more in line with Arab Salafism.³⁶¹

Simultaneously, Burbank and QSS *du'āt* introduced HISAM members to the concept of following only "authentic" ḥadīths and "sticking" to the *kibār* (senior) ulema. Green claims that members fully understood that they couldn't 'just open the Quran and ḥadīth and act on it... we needed scholars, and we were not scholars.'³⁶² This move all

³⁵⁹ Dawood, 'Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims', 84.

³⁶⁰ M. Mirpuri, *The Straight Path* (MJA, 1987): 25, cited in Amin, 'Salafism and Islamism in Britain', 70–71. Emphasis mine.

³⁶¹ Interview with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019; Dawood, 'Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims', 88; Al-Muntada al-Islami, *Mission Statement* (leaflet 02/09) (London: Al-Muntada al-Islami, n. d.), cited in Al-Rasheed, *Saudi Religious Transnationalism in London*, 157. According to Al-Rasheed, al-Muntada was established by Saudi Arabia although its director at the time informed her that the centre is 'independent... We do not depend financially on any country. We try to stay away from links from particular countries.'

³⁶² Interview with Green, 25 May 2020.

but changed the hierarchy of authority, partly through print, and ideas about “pure” Islam among Britain’s Salafi youth.

In or around 1989, Hasan chaired an arbitration between HISAM members. In conclusion of this meeting, members agreed that Saqib and his mostly Birmingham–based members would retain HISAM while Abu Muntasir would form a new organisation.³⁶³ The vast majority of members, many of whom were young and first attracted to the organisation through the English *da‘wah* efforts of Abu Muntasir and mostly–London based members, cut off from HISAM irrevocably. According to Saqib, HISAM continued for another few years under various leaders before dissolving in the early 1990s.³⁶⁴ It would appear that Saqib was also distracted by larger aspirations; his desire for an independent and segregated Islamic school was realised in 1988 with the establishment of Al–Hijrah Secondary School in Birmingham.³⁶⁵ Saqib remained in charge of the school until around 2010 and has since concentrated his efforts in overseeing a similar school and college project in Pakistan under the same name.³⁶⁶

Abu Muntasir on the other hand, fared better after the split having retained most of HISAM’s members, publishing rights, a growing network of scholars and “students of knowledge” (including Hasan), as well as the right to hold future retreats at the University of Leicester. According to one interviewee and current Anglo–Salafi publisher, he attended JIMAS’ conference in Leicester in 1989, and recalls it being ‘the first one after breaking from HISAM.’³⁶⁷ Thus, despite Saqib empowering the youth, he inadvertently paved the way for them to “revolt” and shape a second articulation of Salafism rooted in Arabia and no longer South Asia.

Jam‘iyyat Ihyaa Minhaaj As Sunnah (JIMAS)

³⁶³ Interview with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019.

³⁶⁴ Interview with Saqib, 1 February 2022.

³⁶⁵ Saqib, *The Straight Path*, May/June 1989, 29; Saqib and his wife, Ijaz Begum acted as full–time voluntary teachers and began with only 40 pupils. Al–Hijrah Secondary School was later registered in 2002 with Ofsted and according to the latter’s last count in 2017, 767 pupils were on the school roll. See ‘Al–Hijrah School’, Ofsted, accessed 15 February, 2022, <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/28/133306>. The leadership of HISAM after Abu Muntasir fell temporarily to Tahir Alam, who alongside a number of governors of Muslim schools in Birmingham including Al–Hijrah, were embroiled in the infamous Trojan Horse scandal. Personal correspondence with Tahir Alam, 19 January 2022.

³⁶⁶ Al–Hijrah Secondary School is currently non–operational after continually failing to meet Ofsted requirements. ‘Al–Hijrah School’, Ofsted, accessed 15 February, 2022.

³⁶⁷ Interview with “Nawaz” (anonymised), 26 March 2020.

In or around 1989, following the abovementioned arbitration, Abu Muntasir formed Jam'iyyat Ihyaa Minhaaj As Sunnah, which translates as The Organisation for Reviving the Methodology of the Sunnah.³⁶⁸ Despite being called a *jam'iyyah* (organisation) like MJAHA, JIMAS did not operate from any single mosque or base.³⁶⁹ Its spelling, however, hints at Abu Muntasir's adoption of a more Arabic name.³⁷⁰ Abu Muntasir recalled to me with a smile how 'a random brother' he asked at his workplace suggested that a *jam'iyyat* (organisation) should be formed, and more importantly for Abu Muntasir, not a *jamā'ah* (a sect/faction).³⁷¹ Abu Muntasir, like Saqib before him, was keen to promote Muslim unity and both he and Abu Aaliyah stressed that JIMAS was only a name which they could have operated without.³⁷² According to Karmani, who joined JIMAS around its launch, the organisation was 'more or less *Ikhwānī*', that is, influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood, and mixed with the 'Jihadi scene' at the time.³⁷³ This indicates that at some level, JIMAS was not too different from HISAM, hence, its appearance in the late 1980s can be viewed as the first phase of its evolution (or "1.0").

During this first phase, JIMAS "1.0" members had not yet fully embraced the "Salafi" title. According to one former member, its policy was to "call" to the Quran and Sunnah from existing mosques like GLM because 'they had an appreciation for the Sunnah.'³⁷⁴ This indicates that despite the fallout with Saqib, Ahl-e-Hadith leaders in general viewed JIMAS "1.0" as important to their changing attitudes towards the English language as a medium of *da'wah*. JIMAS "1.0" activities began in much and the same way as they did under HISAM but now concentrated less on issues pertaining to jihad and politics and more on theological purity. Abu Muntasir and fellow members still aspired for the re-establishment of the caliphate but their primary concern was to create, partly through print, an "imagined community" of orthodox-like believers and,

³⁶⁸ Interview with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019; Abu Aaliyah, 10 September 2019.

³⁶⁹ In fact, JIMAS's correspondence address has almost always been Abu Muntasir's home address.

³⁷⁰ In contrast MJAHA was a "jamiat", hinting at its South Asian pronunciation.

³⁷¹ Interview with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019. Abu Muntasir may have also wanted to resemble the Kuwaiti-Salafi organisation JITI.

³⁷² *Ibid* and interview with Abu Aaliyah, 10 September 2019.

³⁷³ Interview with Karmani, 27 May 2020.

³⁷⁴ 'The History of the Salafi Da'wah in the UK (PART 1)', accessed 15 October 2022.

in Asad's words, 'not a mere body of opinion but a distinctive relationship... of power to truth.'³⁷⁵

The organisation's "upper tier" (Abu Muntasir, Abu Aaliyah, Green, Abu Sufyaan) would travel up and down the country holding lectures at mosques (including MJAH branches) and university Islamic Societies (ISOCs). According to Karmani, who joined JIMAS "1.0" in or around 1990, the organisation was:

Dynamic... charismatic... radical... exciting, it was brotherhood and love, it was family, it was sexy, we were changing the world... Theology was actually secondary... and for the first time we actually had people speaking in English which was very powerful... it was very empowering to have Quran and Sunnah given to you, as a real theology in action. We had this idea of really symbolising the *ṣaḥābah* [companions of Prophet Muḥammad]... we had the multicultural... there was militancy... it was a real big two fingers to everyone.³⁷⁶

Karmani adds that from a sociological perspective, the organisation was 'completely' a counter-culture movement (hence the reference to a symbolic swear with two fingers).³⁷⁷ At its yearly retreat held at University of Leicester, JIMAS "1.0" offered British Muslims a unique all-English Islamic event. The first such conference drew a crowd of approximately 350–400 people; this gradually increased to 3,500 by 2008.³⁷⁸ It also happened to coincide with a rise in religiosity among young British Muslims which can partly be attributed to the "Rushdie Affair" of 1990 and racism.³⁷⁹ According to Dawood, 'This re-exploration of Islam usually took place during college and university years' and appealed to young British Muslims' "common sense" by

³⁷⁵ Asad, 'The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam': 22; he further states on the same page, 'Wherever Muslims have the power to regulate, uphold, require, or adjust *correct* practises, and to condemn, exclude, undermine, or replace *incorrect* ones, there is the domain of orthodoxy.' See also Rock-Singer, *In the Shade of the Sunna*, 7.

³⁷⁶ Interview with Karmani, 27 May 2020.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*; Amin, 'The Shifting Contours of Saudi Influence in Britain', 294.

³⁷⁸ Interview with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019.

³⁷⁹ Interview with Usama Hasan, 29 September 2019, and Karmani, 27 May 2020. Consult Hamid, 'Introduction', in *Young British Muslims: Between Rhetoric and Realities*, ed. Hamid (London: Routledge, 2017), 4; Gilliat-Ray, 'Multiculturalism and Identity: Their Relationship for British Muslims', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 18, no. 2 (1998): 347–354; S. Ahmed, 'Young British Muslims', 19; Baxter, 'From Migrants to Citizens': 172, 177–184; Anwar, 'An Ethnography', 177–183. Based on my interviews, other reasons also fuelled religiosity, ranging from the Iranian revolution, Islamophobia, media depictions of Muslims, and to personal difficulties which brought about conversations with God. Some interviewees further expressed they were simply raised in religious households and they naturally gravitated towards Islam from a young age.

encouraging critical thinking, particularly when substantiating their own views on Islam by drawing on evidences “only” from the Quran and Sunnah.³⁸⁰

Given that JIMAS “1.0” was a new and independent organisation, it was particularly keen to assert its distinctiveness and rivalry to HISAM through literature and “circles” of knowledge. As such, earlier HISAM publications were quickly rebranded under JIMAS “1.0” and the latter was poised to construct Anglo–Salafi texts on its own terms.³⁸¹ At least three new pamphlets were published by the organisation before or by 1990. These staple–bound pamphlets however only consisted of a dozen or more pages each. These newer titles are telling of Abu Muntasir’s lack of native translators: *The Unique Quranic Generation* was a translation of one of Qutb’s essays and most likely sourced from a publication by WAMY, IIFSO or MWL; *O You Who Believe Obey Allah & Obey the Messenger* was sourced from existing translations of the Quran (particularly that of A. Y. Ali) and ḥadīth; Ibn ‘Abd al–Wahhāb’s *Things Which Nullify a Muslim’s Islam* was lifted from an existing translation by a certain Ahmadu ‘Abdul Qaabidh and ‘originally published by As–Suq Booksellers, Brooklyn, New York.’³⁸²

All in all, my findings suggest that during the 1980s, Anglo–Salafi publications in Britain were limited to the following: i) *The Straight Path* magazine; ii) Saqib’s “Salfia Publications” series of booklets; iii) Hasan’s AQS correspondence courses and the odd stand–alone booklet; iv) HISAM’s few booklets; v) a number of Saudi Salafi WAMY sponsored publications distributed by MWL and similar organisations; vi) a number of booklets sourced from North America, most likely through or by QSS; vii) a number of publications sourced from Pakistan and published by Zaheer’s Idara Tarjuman Al–Sunnah; viii) JIMAS “1.0” booklets, former HISAM titles and now rebranded, or newer titles, and ix) a handful of texts published by Bilal Philips, a Canadian–Jamaican

³⁸⁰ Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 94–98. Taylor observes a similar trend in North American Salafi and Christian evangelical trends in Taylor, ‘Commonsense Scripturalism.’

³⁸¹ During my interview with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019, I was shown a library of JIMAS publications, four of which were clearly HISAM publications but had JIMAS labels unevenly laid over the words HISAM. The earliest JIMAS publication I found was dated 1989 which further leads me to believe JIMAS was established by the same year.

³⁸² [Abu Muntasir], *O You Who Believe Obey Allah & Obey the Messenger* (Ipswich: JIMAS, 1989?); Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al–Wahhāb, *Things Which Nullify a Muslim’s Islam* (Ipswich: JIMAS, 1989–90?); [Sayyid Qutb], *The Unique Quranic Generation* (Ipswich: JIMAS, 1989?). Abdul–Qaabidh is relatively unknown although a search online reveals that he is a co–founder of the Islamic Culture School in Brooklyn and studied for some time in Riyadh.

convert to Islam.³⁸³ The following title by Philips was particularly influential on JIMAS “1.0” members and underscored the Salafi idea that *tawḥīd* (Islamic monotheism), particularly when it pertains to belief and worship, is the starting point in *da‘wah*.

Case Study: The Fundamentals of Tawheed

After converting to Islam in Toronto in 1972, Philips received a free scholarship to attend IUM; he joined the institute and graduated in 1980; thereafter he moved to Riyadh where he pursued a Master’s degree at King Saud University in Riyadh in *‘aqīdah* (theology).³⁸⁴ Alongside his studies, he worked part time as an Islamic Studies teacher at Manarat al-Riyadh, an international secondary school which teaches an English–language curriculum; the same school was co–founded by his father and mother who were both educators, the former a teacher in English and the latter in Maths.³⁸⁵ According to Philips, his early works ‘came out of a need’ for a book about *tawḥīd* and not out of a creative writing passion.³⁸⁶

This Anglo–Salafi information “gap” expressed by Philips would continue to be felt by Salafis in Britain well into the 1990s (see following chapter). Philips completed *The Fundamentals of Tawheed* to address this gap in Riyadh in 1982 and compiled it from his teaching notes at Manarat; since his students were teenagers, the language of this publication (like most of his works), was ‘purposefully uncomplicated.’³⁸⁷ He struggled to find a publisher in and outside of Saudi Arabia despite its “indispensability”, and so he self–published *The Fundamentals* in 1989 ‘with the help

³⁸³ Consult Adis Duderija and Ghulam Rasool, ‘Bilal Philips as a Proponent of Neo–Traditional Salafism and His Significance for Understanding Salafism in the West’, *Religions* 10, no. 371 (2019): 1–2; Clemens Holzgruber, ‘Pierre Vogel’s and Bilal Philips’s Criticisms of Jihadism’, *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 9 (2020): 153.

³⁸⁴ Philips, ‘My Writings: Islamic Studies Book Series’, accessed 27 December, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REppVzaZCps&list=PL0siBcQqUbDdwMIDs6qclH898g5aUFB_v&index=1&ab_channel=BilalPhilips.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ Philips, ‘My Writings: The Fundamentals of Tawheed’, accessed 27 December, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REppVzaZCps&list=PL0siBcQqUbDdwMIDs6qclH898g5aUFB_v&index=1&ab_channel=BilalPhilips.

³⁸⁷ Philips, *The Fundamentals of Tawheed (Islamic Monotheism)* (New Delhi: Islamic Book Service, 2002), ix.

of some Saudi brothers who helped to cover the cost for printing... and it began circulating.’³⁸⁸

In a summative opening statement, Philip defines in a very Salafi way the idea of *tawhīd* as follows:

Literally, Tawheed means “unification” (making something one)... However, when the term Tawheed is used in reference to Allaah (i.e. Tawheedullaah), it means the realizing and maintaining of Allaah’s unity in all of man’s actions which directly or indirectly relate to Him. It is the belief that Allaah is One, without partner in His dominion and His actions (*Ruboobeeyah*), One without similitude in His essence and attributes (*Asmaa wa Sifaat*), One without rival in His divinity and in worship (*Ulooheeyah/‘Ebaadah*). These three aspects form the basis for the categories into which the science of *Tawheed* has been traditionally divided. The three overlap and are inseparable to such a degree that whoever omits any one aspect has failed to complete the requirements of *Tawheed*. The omission of any of the above mentioned aspects of *Tawheed* is referred to as “*Shirk*” (lit. sharing); the association of partners with Allaah, which, in Islamic terms, is in fact idolatry.³⁸⁹

This passage sets the tone for the remainder of the book; after explaining the three categories (*Ruboobeeyah*, *Asmaa wa Sifaat* and ‘*Ebaadah*) in more detail, Philips goes on to describe ways in which they are nullified by corresponding categories of *Shirk*. The remaining chapters then systematically emphasises the necessity of *Tawhīd* and how it is violated by various actions such as astrology, magic and saint and grave worship. A closer inspection of Philips’ sources in *The Fundamentals* suggests a hybrid construction combining al–Albānī’s ḥadīth gradings, Taymiyyan texts, the works of Ibn ‘Abd al–Wahhāb and his progeny, Anglo–Islamic translations of various Islamic texts including A. Y. Ali’s Quran translation, and Western academic publications including the *Readers Digest Great Encyclopaedic Dictionary* (1975).

The Fundamentals was an immediate hit in JIMAS “1.0” circles in Britain; the book was distributed in Britain through networks which Philips built during earlier visits to the country, including members of JIMAS. According to one of my interviewees, a co–founder of a prominent Salafi mosque, *The Fundamentals* was one of the first books he came across during the early 1990s and which he immediately fell in love

³⁸⁸ ‘My Writings: The Fundamentals of Tawheed’, accessed 27 December, 2022.

³⁸⁹ Philips, *The Fundamentals of Tawheed*, 1.

with ‘because I didn’t know about this *Shirk* ... so that book had a big influence on me.’³⁹⁰ Another recalls *The Fundamentals* being one of the first titles he read as a new Muslim convert and that he found it ‘ground-breaking.’³⁹¹ Meanwhile, “Ahmad” recalls reading *The Fundamentals* seven times ‘because there weren’t many [Salafi] books.’³⁹² According to one another interviewee who later produced *da‘wah* leaflets loosely based on *The Fundamentals*, before Philips’ publication, JIMAS members had only been exposed to abstract texts like Quranic passages and ḥadīths; he states,

Of course there’s nothing wrong with that but this was the first time someone, at least that I saw in writing, contextualised them to things we were more familiar with... I remember other people also found that really exciting.’³⁹³

This, admits Philips, was by design; his focus has always been on addressing problems which exist in western communities, and therefore his mission has never been to simply translate classic works into English.³⁹⁴ For example, when writing about types of *Shirk*, Philips explains why horoscopes, often found in British tabloids at the time, involve a forbidden form of astrology.³⁹⁵ Furthermore, it demonstrated to members of JIMAS “1.0” that Anglo–Salafi titles had commercial value. This would spark the production of the organisation’s more substantial publications in the following decade (see following chapter). As such, according to Karmani, *The Fundamentals* became the ‘archetype’ of early JIMAS literature being ‘well-referenced’ and having a ‘strong ascription to the Salaf and not simply a *madhhab*.’³⁹⁶

Furthermore, Philips was among the earliest Anglo–Salafi publishers to harness computer software to incorporate design elements into his works; he personally designed his colourful graphic cover pages and inserted Arabic texts of Quranic verses and ḥadīth to provide primary references within the same pages and which did not require cross-referencing (see fig. 9).³⁹⁷

³⁹⁰ Interview with “Ahmad” (anonymised), 24 August 2019.

³⁹¹ Correspondence with Abdulhaqq Baker, 27 March 2021.

³⁹² Interview with “Ahmad” (anonymised), 24 August 2019.

³⁹³ Correspondence with “Arif” (anonymised), 27 March 2021.

³⁹⁴ Interview with Bilal Philips, 25 January 2021.

³⁹⁵ Philips, *The Fundamentals of Tawheed*, 94–96.

³⁹⁶ Interview with Karmani, 27 May 2020.

³⁹⁷ ‘My Writings: The Evolution of Fiqh’, accessed 27 December, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MghZnPvHShs&list=PL0siBcQqUbDdwMIDs6qclH898g5aUFB_v&index=3&ab_channel=BilalPhilips. See also: Philips, *The Evolution of Fiqh* (Riyadh: IIPH, 1998;

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“I have not created Jinn or mankind except for my worship.”¹

Major *Shirk* represents the greatest act of rebellion against the Lord of the Universe, and is thus the ultimate sin. It is a sin so great that it virtually cancels out all good a person may do and guarantees its perpetrator eternal damnation in Hell. Consequently, false religion is based primarily on this form of *Shirk*. All man-made systems in one way or another invite their followers to the worship of creation. Christians are called upon to pray to a man, a Prophet of God named Jesus, whom they claim to have been God incarnate. Catholics among Christians pray to Mary as the “mother of God”, to the angels like Michael who is honored on May 8 and September 29, Michaelmas Day, as St. Michael,² as well as to human saints, whether real or fictitious.

Muslims whose acts of worship fall into this category of *Shirk* are those who pray to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) or to mystics in the *Sufi* hierarchy of saints believing that they can answer their prayers, though Allaah has clearly said in the Qur’aan:

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَتَتْكُمُ السَّاعَةُ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ
تَدْعُونَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

“Say: Think to yourselves, if Allaah’s punishment came upon you or the Final Hour, would you then call on other than Allaah? (Reply) if you are truthful.”³

¹ Soorah adh-Dhaariyaat, 51:56.

² William Halsey (ed.), *Colliers Encyclopedia*, (U.S.A: Crowell-Collier Educational Foundation, 1970, vol. 16, p. 110.

³ Soorah al-An’aam, 6:40.

Figure 9.

Under the same pretext, Philips also appears to have pioneered a transliteration system which, unlike the Anglo-Islamic intellectual print project, bypassed academic conventions in favour of spellings which helped English-speaking Muslims pronounce

reprinted from the original 1988 edition) and *Islamic Rules on Menstruation and Post-Natal Bleeding* (Sharjah: Dar Al Fatah, 1995).

Arabic terms more accurately. For example, in *The Fundamentals* Philips writes *Allaah* instead of *Allāh* and *Islaam* instead of *Islam*; by doing so he employs double letters to signify long vowels (eg. *al-Hukoomah al-Islaameeyah* instead of *al-Hukūmah al-Islāmīyyah*); in another case, he retains Arabic “sun” letters (*al-ḥurūf al-shamsiyyah*) when rendering words preceded by the definite article (eg. “ash”–Shahrastanee and not “al”–Shahrastānī). In cases where the letter *zā*’ (ظاء) was transliterated, Philips awkwardly adopted *dHaa* in order to differentiate it from *dhāl* (ذال) which is translated by him as *dhaa*, and *zā*’ (زاء) which is transliterated by him as *zaa*; hence, *Manzūr* is spelt, for example, as *MandHoor*.

This hints at Philips’ own reading of Salafism and the relative creativity when constructing Anglo–Salafi texts. He admits that al–Albānī had the biggest influence on him in terms of translating Salafism for English–speaking Muslims.³⁹⁸ This often plays out in Philips’ footnotes where he resorts to al–Albānī’s ḥadīth gradings for collections besides *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (which are widely regarded by Sunnis as entirely authentic). Al–Albānī’s influence is also underscored in Philips’ approach to Islamic law which evaluates conflicting positions and concludes with the “strongest” opinion which agrees with proofs from the Quran and Sunnah, as well as his reading on the “evolution” of Islamic law and *taqlīd*.³⁹⁹ At the same time, Philips’ reading of *tawḥīd* closely reflects that of Saudi Salafi ulema and his studies at Saudi Islamic universities. Philips describes *The Fundamentals* as ‘based on the approach used in classical Arabic texts on the science of *Tawheed* such as *al-‘Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*’ – the same credo translated by Hasan (see previous chapter).⁴⁰⁰ When interviewed, he acknowledges that al–Ṭahāwī’s creed was in fact one of three books which form the core basis of *Fundamentals*; the other two being *Lum‘at al-I‘tiqād* by Ibn Qudāmah al–Maqdisī (d. 1223) and *Taysīr al-‘Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, a commentary of Ibn ‘Abd al–Wahhāb’s *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* by his grandson Sulaimān b. ‘Abd Allāh (d. 1817). In fact, this last text appears to have been Philip’s primary source as his chapter headings, usage of Quranic verses and ḥadīths and comments shadow those found in *Taysīr*.

³⁹⁸ Interview with Philips, 25 January 2021.

³⁹⁹ ‘My Writings: The Evolution of Fiqh’, accessed 27 December, 2022.

⁴⁰⁰ Philips, *The Fundamentals of Tawheed*, viii. Philips’ reading of Al–Ṭahāwī’s creed is mediated through the “Taymiyyan” commentary of Ibn Abī al-‘Izz (d. 1390). For more about the significance and reinvention of this commentary in the modern era, see Shiliwala, ‘Constructing a Textual Tradition’.

The Fundamentals happened to reach Britain during a particular crossroad, one in which young Salafis, now mobilised under JIMAS “1.0”, were looking for a English reading of the Quran and Sunnah which was decultured from South Asian Islam and cultured by Arab Salafism, in as much as it repositioned *tawhīd* as the central message of Islam in line with the Quranic verse “I [Allāh] did not create jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”⁴⁰¹

Given the above, *The Fundamentals* continues to be one of the most influential Anglo–Salafi texts in print. Its popularity can be partly appreciated today by considering the numerous republications it has undergone, although Philips admits, it is unknown how many physical copies have actually ever been printed. *Fundamentals* was self–published by Philips (1989), and then republished by Dar al–Fattah (1990s?), Tawheed Publications in Riyadh (1990), Darussalam in New York (1999), Islamic Book Service in Delhi (2002), A. S. Noordeen and Dar al–Wahi Publications in Kuala Lumpur and Millat Book Centre in New Delhi (2003), IIPH (2006) and Al–Hidaayah in Birmingham (2008); IIPH has also translated *Fundamentals* into French, German, Urdu and Burmese (2006) and Sean Publications into Bengali (2015). Few western–born Muslim authors of Anglo–Islamic texts have enjoyed similar international exposure.⁴⁰²

Conclusion

This chapter complements the one before it by having offered a closer inspection of Anglo–Salafi print culture in Britain during the 1980s. It focuses on Salafi youth initiatives because it is through these that English immediately formed the primary language of communicating religious ideas in print. It reveals that the Ahl–e–Hadith empowered the “next generation” of mostly young men to lead English–language *da‘wah* initiatives in several ways: i) the Ahl–e–Hadith imparted the Salafi message onto young Muslim activists and encouraged them to shoulder the responsibility of educating Muslim communities; ii) the Ahl–e–Hadith provided infrastructure for Salafis to deliver classes and conference presentations; iii) Saqib’s *The Straight Path*

⁴⁰¹ Al–Quran, 51:56.

⁴⁰² For example, Pickthall and A. Y. Ali’s respective Quran translations have been republished, though never translated, by dozens of international publishers. Consult Kidwai, *Bibliography*, 86–133 and 300–368.

provided these activists with a platform to share their ideas about the Quran and Sunnah as well as politics and jihad, and iv) HISAM gave these same activists another platform from which they could publish independent publications from those of MJAH.

Unwittingly, the Ahl-e-Hadith's empowerment of young adult activists could not be contained. The latter, through some recourse to Anglo-Islamic texts, developed their own attachment to Arab Salafism primarily at the hands of Western born or based Salafis influenced by al-Albānī and scholars in Saudi Arabia. As such, by the end of the 1980s, Salafis were divided into two trends: the South Asian Ahl-e-Hadith and a multi-ethnic organisation of young Salafi activists. The English language was primarily the domain of the latter. As with the previous chapter, my findings here suggest that the Anglo-Islamic intellectual project in post-partition South Asia had some influence in 1980s-Britain where Salafis worked alongside Islamists and harnessed print *for* Islam. The position of Salafi print-*da'wah* however, was largely aimed at the masses and not specifically elites; as such, its publications were largely free. Philips' print venture marked the beginnings of a viable commercial marketplace for Anglo-Salafi print culture in Britain and demonstrated to Salafis that self-publishing would bring about greater exposure for the movement in the Anglosphere, thus joining the wider Anglo-Islamic print project.

This chapter has also offered a closer inspection of the history of Salafism in Britain during the 1980s and reveals for the first time details about MYM and HISAM which have previously been neglected in earlier studies of British Salafism. Hamid, for example, only briefly acknowledges Saqib led HISAM and that Abu Muntasir 'later assumed... leadership' while the same organisation is surprisingly absent in Amin's thesis⁴⁰³; mention of MYM is furthermore entirely missing in the literature. It also provides details corresponding to Geaves' observations on the conflicts between first and second generation Muslims in Britain surrounding the language of education and reform.⁴⁰⁴ Correspondingly, it corrects the narrative surrounding the establishment of JIMAS which started much later in the 1980s than previously thought and provides a more nuanced picture of its beginnings.

⁴⁰³ Hamid, *Sufis, Salafis and Islamists*, 56.

⁴⁰⁴ See in particular Geaves, *Sectarian Influences*, Chapter Three.

Chapter Four

Towards an Anglo–Salafi Personal Library

At the onset of the 1990s, the respected Indian Muslim polymath Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (d. 1999) visited Britain at the behest of local South Asian Muslim leaders. During his tour, he visited The Islamic Foundation (TIF) in Leicester and delivered a speech in which he spoke about the Quranic conception of *da‘wah* in the West; he observed how during ‘British rule of the Indian subcontinent... No one could imagine at that time that the message of Islam would spread to Britain.’⁴⁰⁵ Nadwi was all too aware of how the religious landscape in Britain had changed immensely over the past century. He was one of most widely regarded scholars of India and an alumni of the prestigious Nadwatul Ulama institute (est. 1898 in British India) which was formed by members of various Islamic trends including the Ahl–e–Hadith; by his own admittance, the school

aimed at training and producing Muslim scholars and preachers... conversant with other faiths, Western languages, particularly English, ... so that they may address new generations in their own idiom and guide the Muslim community on current issues.⁴⁰⁶

Nadwi consequently urged TIF members to “equip” themselves with ‘knowledge and scholarship’ and ‘a powerful and effective language’ so that *da‘wah*, be it oral or written... would ‘yield fruits in the West.’⁴⁰⁷ It would appear that he was partially calling for *more* Anglo–Islamic books. Unbeknownst to him and at the same time, Salafis in Britain realised the potential of harnessing English–language media for the purpose of *da‘wah* and would, alongside a network of transnational actors, construct an Anglo–Salafi book market which would become highly visible by the end of the same decade.

⁴⁰⁵ Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Da‘Wah in the West: The Qur’ānic Paradigm*, trans. Abdur Raheem Kidwai (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1992), 15.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

This chapter continues on from the previous one by examining how the Ahl-e-Hadith and Jam'iyyat Ihyaa Minhaaj As Sunnah (JIMAS) shaped Anglo-Salafi print culture in Britain during the early 1990s; it offers a re-examination of the latter's split during the mid-1990s and how this contributed to a third Salafi trend in Britain made up of "cooperatives" of mostly second-generation and former JIMAS members; it ends by examining how these three abovementioned trends, alongside their respective transnational networks, established a commercial marketplace for Anglo-Salafi texts in Britain and in effect, a local Salafi institute without walls.

Constructing a Salafi *Manhaj* (Methodology) in English

The previous chapter highlighted how the Ahl-e-Hadith empowered the "next generation" of Salafis in Britain and that the latter became self-standing by the end of the 1980s under JIMAS "1.0" and embraced a more Arab Salafi form. Starting in the 1990s, JIMAS underwent a second phase ("2.0") whereby it more assertively distinguished itself from Markaz Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith (MJAH) and HISAM. Its members did this in three ways: i) they fully embraced the "Salafi" label; ii) they continued to be drawn towards Arab Salafism and its language of Arabic, and iii) they forwarded a Salafi *manhaj* inspired in part by al-Albānī's students who began frequenting Britain. This particular phase reflected in the organisation's subsequent publications.

On the first point, prior to the 1990s, members of JIMAS "1.0" did not necessarily use the term "Salafi" to demarcate themselves. According to Abu Aaliyah, who was particularly active in East London: 'There wasn't any concept of the Ahl-e-Hadith in our minds, and certainly no concept of Salafism. We [members of JIMAS] were just people calling to Quran and Sunnah.'⁴⁰⁸ Furthermore, a number of Salafi *du'āt* (proselytisers) who had studied in Saudi Arabia prior to moving to Britain popularised Salafi discourse without employing any labels including American Muslim convert, Širāṭ 'Abd al-Mālik (d. 1994) in Brixton and foreign university students from Nigeria,

⁴⁰⁸ Interview with Abu Aaliyah, 9 October 2019. The London MJAH branch is in fact Masjid Tawheed, founded by Hasan. See *The Straight Path*, October 1982, 23.

Algeria and elsewhere.⁴⁰⁹ In or around 1990, JIMAS “2.0” members began formerly identifying as “Salafis” in line with “global” Salafi trends.⁴¹⁰

On the second point, JIMAS “2.0” members now embraced Arab Salafi culture: its members began dressing in ankle-length thobes and sometimes Arab head-scarves (*ghutra*); female members opted for loose black gowns (*abāyah*), full head-scarves (*hijāb*) and even face coverings (*niqāb*) in place of South Asian modest dresses (*shalwar kamīs*).⁴¹¹ Correspondingly, members of JIMAS “2.0” also embraced the Arabic language as the only true medium of Islam. According to Haykel, this is observable in global Salafi trends:

The importance of the Arabic language cannot be overstated for the members of this movement because they emphasise the study and constant referencing of revealed texts, the Qur’an and *hadith*. And because of this, Arabs –and those with native fluency in classical Arabic– have and will continue to dominate this movement, and non-Arabs will continue to invest great effort and energy in learning this difficult language, and take pride in its mastery.⁴¹²

A number of my interviewees expressed this same sentiment.⁴¹³ Even so, my findings suggest that few members of JIMAS “2.0” could actually understand the Arabic language. As such, Abu Muntasir admits to having invited Islamic speakers to JIMAS conferences, even if they were not “recognised” ulema, because they could quote things in Arabic and seemed ‘to know the Quran and Sunnah better than the average guy in Britain.’⁴¹⁴

Thirdly, despite al-Albānī visiting Britain in 1975 (see Chapter Two) and again in 1977, his teachings did not create a stir until JIMAS “2.0” members embraced them fully during the 1990s.⁴¹⁵ Like his Saudi counterparts, al-Albānī emphasised the

⁴⁰⁹ Interviews with Baker, 13 December 2019 and Abu Tayyib, 9 October 2019; Bowen, *Medina in Birmingham*, p. 69.

⁴¹⁰ Interviews with Abu Aaliyah, 10 September 2019, and Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019;

⁴¹¹ Amin, ‘The Shifting Contours of Saudi Influence in Britain’, 295.

⁴¹² Haykel, ‘On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action’, in *Global Salafism*, 35.

⁴¹³ Interviews with Abu Tayyib, 9 October 2019, “Nawaz” (anonymised), 26 March 2020, and Usama Hasan, 12 September 2019.

⁴¹⁴ Interview with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019.

⁴¹⁵ Interview with Hasan, 1 May 2019. For more details about al-Albānī’s *manhaj*, or religious programme, consult: Lacroix, ‘Between Revolution and Apoliticism: Nasir al-Din al-Albani and His Impact on the Shaping of Contemporary Salafism’, in *Global Salafism*, 58–80 and Jacob Olidart, ‘The Politics of “Quietist” Salafism’, The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World (Brookings: Center for Middle East Policy, 18 February 2015).

importance of *Tawhīd* and following the Quran, Sunnah and Salaf; unlike them, he further undermined the utility of *madhhabs* and application of Islamic texts which cannot be traced through an “authentic” chain of narrators (*isnad*).⁴¹⁶ According to one online bookseller who does not identify as a “Salafi”, he personally witnessed Salafis start a trend in 1990s–Britain by asking “What is your evidence?” and that “many” British Muslims adopted Salafism because the former provided “proofs” on request.⁴¹⁷ Al–Albānī’s perceivable influence in this change of attitude was further underscored by the frequent visits of two of his most prominent students who toured the country and lectured at JIMAS “2.0” conferences: Jordanians ‘Alī Ḥasan al–Ḥalabī (d. 2020) and Salīm al–Hilālī.

As a result of these shifts, members of JIMAS “2.0” reconfigured their religious ideas and practises to be more in line with that of al–Albānī which required one to identify as “Salafi” and follow the Quran and Sunnah “according to the *way (manhaj)* of the *Salaf*.” Green recalls how one JIMAS “2.0” member challenged him for standing at Speaker’s Corner in Hyde Park in order to preach about Islam to the British public; Green was told this method was not the “way” of the *Salaf* to which Green responded ‘The Prophet used to go to the Ka ‘bah, people used to worship idols and... make *ṭawāf* (circumambulation) naked, and he would go down there to give *da ‘wah*... I don’t think Speaker’s Corner is that bad!’ to which his interlocutor told him, ‘Well... would Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal have done it?’⁴¹⁸ As a result, Green realised that JIMAS was no longer simply “following the Quran and Sunnah” but also “the understanding of the *Salaf*,” albeit “imagined.”⁴¹⁹

The abovementioned shift in turn happened to impact members of Britain’s Ahl–e–Hadith community. This is indicated foremostly by the direction taken by MJAḤ after Hasan was elected emir in 1992. In the same year, Saqib stepped down as editor of *The Straight Path* to pursue his school project and Hasan assumed the former’s role. Hasan, often quizzed by individuals like Abu Aaliyah for references, wrote the following in his inaugural editorial:

⁴¹⁶ Lacroix, ‘Between Revolution and Apoliticism’, 58–80; Olidart, ‘The Politics of “Quietist” Salafism’; Emad Hamdeh, *Salafism and Traditionalism: Scholarly Authority in Modern Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

⁴¹⁷ Interview with “Shuaib” (anonymised), 17 March 2020; a similar observation was also made by Usama, 29 September 2019.

⁴¹⁸ Interview with Green, 25 May 2020.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*

The Straight Path magazine is under new management... A strict policy of following the Qur'an and Sunnah will henceforth be enforced... Islamic archives are full of books, indeed encyclopaedias, by our scholars past and present... As much of this precious material is in Arabic and un-translated, we shall be translating some of the words to make them accessible to all our brothers and sisters Insha Allah [God willing].⁴²⁰

The key to Hasan's revamp of the magazine was the medium of translation (Arabic to English);⁴²¹ it also reflected a more pronounced version of Salafism, drawing on Arab ulema and "authentic" texts so as to appeal to members of JIMAS "2.0."

JIMAS "2.0" could not have influenced the Ahl-e-Hadith in such a way without being supported by a growing transnational Salafi network with similar ideas about the Salafi *manhaj*. Abu Muntasir organised tours for scholars from Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt; these included al-Halabi and S. al-Hilali as well as Egyptian Isma'il al-Muqaddam; similarly, Abu Muntasir invited Western-born "students of knowledge" and translators to Britain including leaders of QSS, Bilal Philips and American-Arab IUM graduate Ali al-Tamimi.⁴²² Collectively these "students of knowledge" bridged the West with al-Albani and Saudi ulema including Ibn Baz and al-Uthaymin, albeit through translations in print or by tele-links. To a lesser extent, the Ahl-e-Hadith hosted some of these same figures in its branches. They had previously introduced al-Farsi to HISAM members (see previous chapter); furthermore, Murad (former chair of QSS) contributed to *The Straight Path* with several articles including 'Adhering to the Practise of the Pious Predecessors is the Way.'⁴²³ Some level of co-operation clearly existed between the two trends.

JIMAS "2.0"'s success in all of this was notably achieved without owning any physical assets (such as a mosque) or being led by "qualified" leaders. One reason why is because JIMAS operated inside and outside of Islamic spaces and thereby attracted Muslims who did not necessarily attend Salafi mosques. Campuses for example

⁴²⁰ Hasan, *The Straight Path*, July/August 1992, 3; Interview with Abu Aaliyah, 16 February 2022.

⁴²¹ In the same issue, Hasan's daughter Khola, for example, contributed the following article, 'The Islamic Ruling on Singing and Listening to Music', being a translation from an Arabic article originally published by Dar al-Ifta', Riyadh. In subsequent issues, Khola would also translate sections from Arabic and Urdu-Salafi publications.

⁴²² Interview with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019.

⁴²³ *Ibid.* This marked the first mention in Britain's Ahl-e-Hadith English-language magazine of a distinct Salafi code: following the Quran and Sunnah, according to the *way of the Salaf*.

provided ample ground for JIMAS members attending university to organise Salafi *da'wah* activities or influence Islamic societies.⁴²⁴ At the University of Bradford for example, Abu Khadeejah (Abdul Wahid Alam), who would go on to co-establish one of Britain's most visible Salafi organisations (Salafi Publications, see below), "discovered" Salafism while studying at university through the efforts of JIMAS "2.0" members including Karmani.⁴²⁵ Another reason why is because JIMAS turned more properly towards the potential of print and reaped its benefits.

Publishing "Authentic" Islam

While members of JIMAS "2.0" were certainly more Arab-centric in terms of dress, discourse and dependency on Arab Salafi ulema, few members understood the Arabic language and were forced to rely on "students of knowledge" since there were "no scholars in the West."⁴²⁶ Moreover, as Pall and De Koning note, 'Salafism is highly decentralised' while Haykel describes Salafis as having a 'relatively shallow and limited hierarchy of scholarly authorities.'⁴²⁷ Indeed Abu Muntasir and fellow preachers were mostly self-taught. In Luton, for example, JIMAS "2.0" member Abdul Qadeer Baksh co-established a *da'wah* centre and prayer room in a Muslim-populated area after studying Arabic at IUM between 1991 and 1994.⁴²⁸ Baker, on the other hand, converted to Islam in 1990 and quickly started his own study circle in Croydon at the behest of Abu Muntasir even though he admits, 'I was a new Muslim in that instance' and did not understand the Arabic language.⁴²⁹ In similar fashion, Karmani, joined JIMAS in or around 1990 and within a few years was given the title of "Emir of the North" by Abu Muntasir.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁴ Interview with Abu Tayyib, 9 October 2019. See also Anwar, 'An Ethnography', 125.

⁴²⁵ Interview with Karmani, 27 May 2020.

⁴²⁶ Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 16; For more about this idea, and its particular impact on Salafism in the United States, consult Emily Goshey, 'No Scholars in the West: Salafi Networks of Knowledge from Saudi Arabia to Philadelphia', *American Journal of Islam and Society* 39, no. 1–2 (2022): 41–71.

⁴²⁷ Pall and De Koning, 'Being and Belonging in Transnational Salafism: Informality, Social Capital and Authority in European and Middle Eastern Salafi Networks', *Journal of Muslims in Europe*, no. 6 (2017): 84; Haykel, 'On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action', in *Global Salafism*, 36. See also Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Muslim Woman*, 113.

⁴²⁸ Baksh would later co-establish a Salafi mosque in Luton (see below). 'About Abdul Qadeer', Abdul Qadeer Baksh (blog), accessed 27 May, 2013, <https://abdulqadeerbaksh.wordpress.com/about>.

⁴²⁹ Interview with Baker, 13 December 2019.

⁴³⁰ Interview with Karmani, 27 May 2020.

Although Salafism emphasises direct study under scholars, it equally obligates Muslims to acquire “authentic” knowledge for themselves, and as much as is needed to satisfy their personal obligations. As such, many members of JIMAS “2.0” became ‘prolific readers’ and felt it was ‘essential’ to collect Anglo–Islamic books available in print.⁴³¹ They recognised, however, the shortage of Anglo–Salafi texts which spoke to their ideas about *manhaj* and authenticity. Green, for example, states that it was ‘absolutely the case’ that there was a void for “authentic” knowledge.⁴³² Similarly, Baker recalls: ‘When I came into the *dīn* (religion of Islam)... there wasn’t much literature that was referencing authentic narrations... aspects of *ibādah* (worship), methodology, manners, the like.’⁴³³ He recalls that he and other members of JIMAS would scrutinise contents of Anglo–Islamic texts for references and only purchase books ‘referencing authentic narrations.’⁴³⁴

As for *The Straight Path*, it appears that few JIMAS “2.0” members were aware of its circulation, perhaps because it was officially subscription–based but also because the level of English competency, according to Abu Muntasir, did not satisfy university students like himself.⁴³⁵ Despite Hasan’s revamp of the magazine, it also failed to provide JIMAS members with more than just short articles devoid of details. This prompted JIMAS “2.0” to produce Anglo–Salafi books; its members were already routinely sharing hand–outs about specific issues or fatwas, often translated by Burbank, and later ‘typed, photocopied and re–photocopied.’⁴³⁶ As a means of remedying the “Anglo–Salafi information gap”, Abu Muntasir quickly issued a series of booklets in order to provide JIMAS “2.0” members with “trust–worthy” reading material and ammunition to contest ideas and practises that did not fit with their view of “authentic” Islam.⁴³⁷

⁴³¹ Interview with “Ahmad” (anonymised), 24 August 2019, and “Nawaz” (anonymised), 26 March 2020.

⁴³² Interview with Green, 25 May 2020.

⁴³³ Baker, ‘The Contribution & Impact of Salafism in the West || Dr Abdul Haqq Baker & Dr Khalid Green’, A H Baker, YouTube, accessed 14 September, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=169BwqROF_A&ab_channel=AHBaker.

⁴³⁴ Interview with Baker, 13 December 2019.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁶ Interview with “Ahmad” (anonymised), 24 August 2019.

⁴³⁷ See for example: [Abu Muntasir], *A Guide to Celebrate the Eid Day* (Ipswich: JIMAS, 1990?); ‘Alī al–Ḥalabī, *Warning Against the Book “Ihya’ ‘Uloom Ud–Deen”* (Ipswich: JIMAS, 1990); ‘The Salafi Scholars of Holland’, *In Support of Hijaab*, trans. K. Hasan (Ipswich: JIMAS, 1990); Abu Muntasir, *Some Causes Why a Man Does Not Act According to his Knowledge* (Ipswich: JIMAS, 1990).

Much like HISAM's publications, these booklets were also short staple-bound, and contained little to no Arabic texts. Instead, they were composed in English and for the Anglo-Muslim reading public using the technology of the time. Hardly any attention was paid to the artistic element of these publications; their appeal was strictly on the merit of their contents. This not only made them cheap to print locally, but also inexpensive to sell and purchase. Thus began a cottage industry of Anglo-Salafi printed booklets. JIMAS "2.0" publications were also not produced with the aim of profiting the organisation, but to assert Salafi ideas in print. It would appear that they were mostly distributed through word-of-mouth and at JIMAS events,⁴³⁸ for example, Abu Muntasir listed all available publications by his organisation at the back of every title along with contact details to facilitate orders (see fig. 10).

Other publications by the Jam'iat Ihyaa' Minhaaj Al-Sunnah include:

- 1) Things Which Nullify a Muslim's Islam.
- 2) O You Who Believe Obey Allah & Obey the Messenger.
- 3) In Support of Hijaab.
- 4) A Prod to the Carefree Muslim.
- 5) Guide to An-Nawawi's 40 Hadith.
- 6) Fundamentals of Aqeedah.
- 7) Hell Fire Described in the Quran and the Sunnah.
- 8) Dialogue between Christians and Muslims.
- 9) The Unique Quranic Generation.
- 10) Letters against Martin Ling's Biography of the Prophet.
- 11) A Guide to Celebrate the Eid Day.
- 12) The Fearless Scholar of Damascus.
- 13) Warning Against the Book "Ihyaa' 'Uloom Ud-Deen".
- 14) An Adapted Extraction from Jallaludin Al-Ansari's book Maruf & Munkar.
- 15) Imam Sufyan Al-Thawri - Glimpses from the Life of a True Scholar.
- 16) Muslim's Practical Guidelines about the Mosque.
- 17) Masnoon Duas (morning, evening and daily).
- 18) Some Causes Why a Man does not Act According to his Knowledge.
- 19) Understanding the Evil of Innovations.

Produced by
JAM'IAT IHYAA' MINHAJ AL-SUNNAH
 [Redacted] Ipswich, [Redacted]
 Tel. [Redacted] [Home] & [Redacted] [Office]
 August 1991

Figure 10.

⁴³⁸ I did not find any of the abovementioned titles for sale in any commercial Islamic bookstores. Abu Muntasir confirmed that he does still receives email requests for JIMAS publications which he posts out directly from his office in Ipswich. Interview with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019.

Fellow members often felt that Abu Muntasir was, according to Karmani, ‘the sole conduit for religious ideas and instruction.’⁴³⁹ This is evidenced by the fact that early JIMAS “2.0” publications were often composed by him and confirmed his own volitions. According to Usama, Abu Muntasir informed him that JIMAS “2.0”’s *Some Causes Why a Man Does Not Act According to his Knowledge* (1990), priced at 50 pence, was directed at Saqib without identifying him by name; the charge of not implementing the Quran and Sunnah despite having studied them was less ambiguous.⁴⁴⁰ Abu Muntasir would also insert himself into translated texts by penning a publisher’s introduction. For example, *In Support of Hijaab* (1990), priced at 50 pence, Abu Muntasir inserted JIMAS’ objectives which included ‘A return to the sublime Qur’aan and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet... and to comprehend them both according to the understanding of *as-Salaf us-Saalih* (the Pious Predecessors)’ and ‘to revive true Islamic thought in the light of the Book and the *Sunnah* and upon the way of *as-Salaf us-Saalih* of this *Ummah* and to remove the stagnated blind following of *madhhabs*.’⁴⁴¹

By 1993, a few JIMAS “2.0” publications were more substantial in pages (usually more than 50 in number) so as to warrant glue-binding them onto gloss-laminated card covers featuring colourful cover art.⁴⁴² In the same year, the organisation also published *A Brief Introduction to the Salafi Da’wah* spelling out in real terms what “following” the Salafi *manhaj* entailed.⁴⁴³ Consisting of only 16 pages not including the cover, and priced at 50 pence, Abu Muntasir elaborated on JIMAS “2.0”’s earlier objectives, albeit in equally vague terms:

1. To produce “true” muslims *{sic}*.
2. To bring into existence a “true” Islaamic Society...
3. To establish the proofs of Allah against the Kuffaar [non-Muslims] and the deviant heretics and groups within the ‘Ummah...
4. To absolve ourselves with Allah by discharging the trust of Da’wah which He has made obligatory upon us...⁴⁴⁴

⁴³⁹ Interview with Karmani, 27 May 2020.

⁴⁴⁰ Correspondence with Usama, 28 May 2022.

⁴⁴¹ *In Support of Hijaab*, inside back cover.

⁴⁴² See for example, Al-Albānī, *The Etiquettes of Marriage & Wedding in the Pure Tradition of the Prophet*, ed. Abu Muntasir (Ipswich: JIMAS, 1992).

⁴⁴³ [Abu Muntasir], *A Brief Introduction to the Salafi Da’wah* (Ipswich: JIMAS, 1993).

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 15–16.

Despite its brevity, Hamid states that ‘most Muslims reading this booklet would find little to disagree with in the sense that the reference points... are normative aspects of Muslim belief and praxis.’⁴⁴⁵ This is confirmed by Abu Tayyib who states that Salafism was particularly appealing in the 1990s among young Muslims educated in Britain and was ‘literally spreading like wildfire’ because it was a ‘breadth of fresh air’, ‘evidence-based’, provided “clarity” (by “proving” claims with scripture) and its followers ‘looked the part, sounded the part’ while non-Salafis simply relied on what their “Pir” [saint] said, “Maulana” said, or “*madhhab*” said.⁴⁴⁶ Similarly, Anwar suggests that Anglo-Salafi publications ‘were very popular among upwardly mobile, university-educated, British-born Muslims.’⁴⁴⁷ A current Anglo-Salafi publisher, “Nawaz”, also attributes the appeal of Salafism in Britain to the social context in Britain, where everyone is ‘literate and have access to texts’ which is ‘what Salafis offer more than others.’⁴⁴⁸

In contrast, Amin points out that during this time, ‘movements, such as the Deobandis, Tablighi Jamaat, and the Barelwis and other Sufis, had yet to adapt themselves to the new British context to attract the new generation.’⁴⁴⁹ Both Birt and Dawood suggest that in response to Salafis in Britain, these same rival Islamic trends turned scripturalist.⁴⁵⁰ For example, the Leicester-based Ḥanafī publisher UK Islamic Academy published its own translation of al-Ṭaḥāwī’s credo which Hasan had published a decade earlier, this time, without Ibn Bāz’s notes (see Chapter Two).⁴⁵¹ However, South Asian movements, I would argue, were already scripturalist, but had yet to take Anglo-Islamic print culture more seriously.⁴⁵² The impact of not doing so is underscored by Dawood’s observation that while the Salafi movement’s growth in Britain has been sensationalized, the ‘more profound change over the years has not been a dramatic increase in the number of Salafis and Salafi mosques, but a more subtle

⁴⁴⁵ Hamid, *Sufis, Salafis and Islamists*, 57.

⁴⁴⁶ Interview with Abu Tayyib, 9 October 2019.

⁴⁴⁷ Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 202.

⁴⁴⁸ Interview with “Nawaz” (anonymised), 26 March 2020.

⁴⁴⁹ Amin, ‘The Shifting Contours of Saudi Influence in Britain’, 295.

⁴⁵⁰ Birt, ‘Wahhabism in the United Kingdom’, 174. Birt goes on to explain how, for example, Deobandis began teaching difficult texts like *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* to ordinary Muslims whereas before such texts would have been reserved for aspiring scholars in Darul Uloom alone. See also Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 127 and 132–135.

⁴⁵¹ Abū Ja’far aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī, *Islamic Belief (Al-‘Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwīyah)* (Leicester: UK Islamic Academy, 1995). The same credo has since been translated by other Islamic trends in Britain.

⁴⁵² On this point, consult Zaman and Metcalf’s respective works on the Deobandi movement.

reworking of British Muslim common sense.⁴⁵³ The following JIMAS “2.0” publication is a case in point:

Case Study: The Prophet’s Prayer Described

Whereas *A Brief Introduction to the Salafī Da’wah* (1993) provided Muslims with a theoretical primer to Salafism, the translation and publication of al–Albānī’s prayer manual in the same year would essentially put Salafism, as construed by JIMAS “2.0”, on the British Muslim map. Prayer is the second pillar of Islam and Sunnis are required to perform its ritual five times a day. *The Prophet’s Prayer Sallallahu ‘Alaihi Wasallam [peace and blessing be upon him] Described* claimed to substantiate through authentic ḥadīths exactly *how* Prophet Muḥammad performed his daily prayers, and al–Albānī promised to describe its details ‘as though you see it (*ka’annaka tarāhā*).⁴⁵⁴ As well his prayer manual presenting a seemingly different “way” the Prophet prayed in comparison to that of later *madhhabs*, he further gathered the statements of the eponyms of the four *madhhabs* asserting the authority of ḥadīth over their own opinions, thus implying that prayers offered by Sunnis according to their respective *madhhabs* fell short of their own imam’s words *and* the Prophet’s command ‘Pray as you have seen me pray.’⁴⁵⁵

Portions of *The Prophet’s Prayer* were translated by Burbank in the early 1990s after which Usama Hasan, who at the time was 18 years old and studying in Cambridge University, took up the task of translating the entire text at the behest of Abu Muntasir.⁴⁵⁶ After a lengthy process of editing, *The Prophet’s Prayer* was finally printed in 1993 in Malaysia at the expense of Abu Muntasir’s brother–in–law.⁴⁵⁷ Notably, it was published by Al–Haneef Publications, a ‘publishing division’ of

⁴⁵³ Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 13.

⁴⁵⁴ Muḥammad Nāṣir al–Dīn al–Albānī, *Ṣifāh ṣalāt al–nabī ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam min al–tabḥīr ilā ‘l–taslīm ka’annaka tarāhā* (Riyadh: Maktabah al–Ma’ārif, 1990; tenth edition). Al–Albānī also authored a three volume extended edition and a pocket–size summary.

⁴⁵⁵ Al–Bukhārī et al, *Ṣaḥīḥ al–Bukhārī* (Karachi: Altaf & Sons, 2008), vol. 2, no. 6008, 1693.

⁴⁵⁶ Interview with Usama, 6 October 2020.

⁴⁵⁷ Interview with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019.

JIMAS “2.0.”⁴⁵⁸ Unlike other JIMAS publications, this particular one had a colourful hand-painted cover design (see fig. 11).

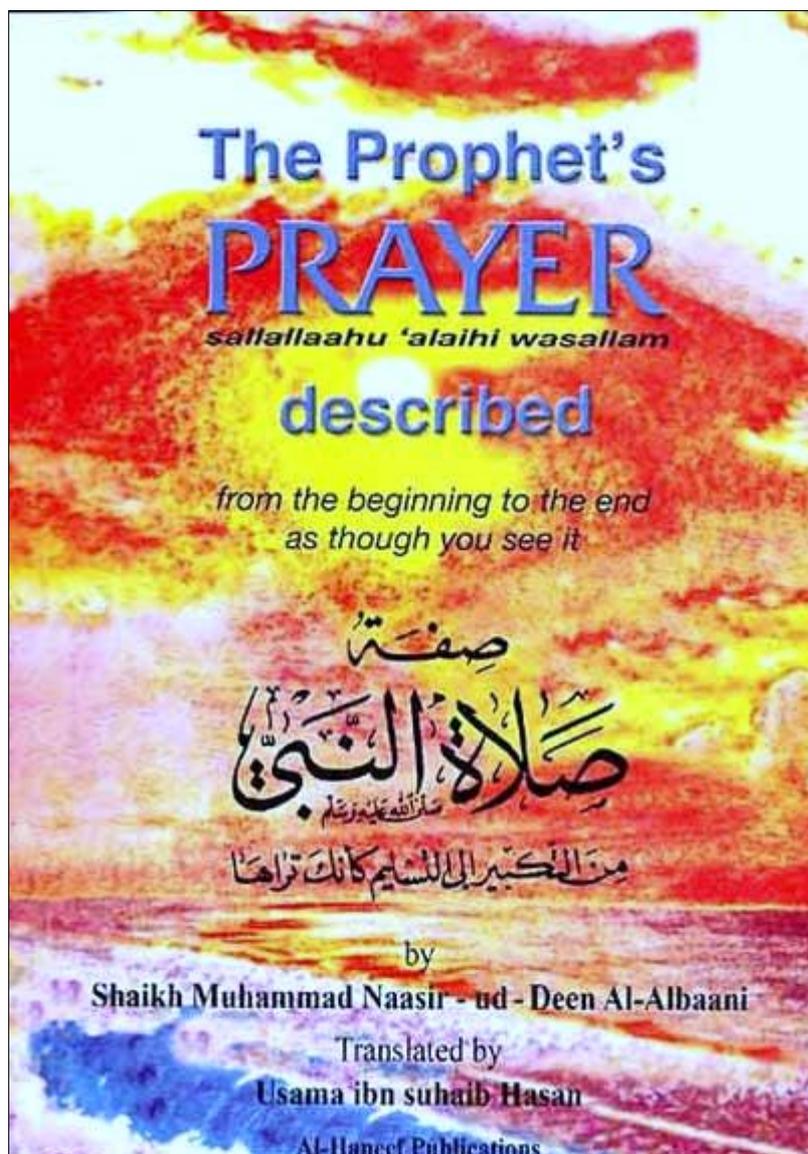


Figure 11.

According to Abu Aaliyah, the reason this particular text was produced ‘completely, independently of Abu Muntasir’ was ‘not because we were trying to split, but because we just wanted to see the book would have its own brand.’⁴⁵⁹ Usama, expands on this by stating that senior members of JIMAS differed with Abu Muntasir over the

⁴⁵⁸ Muhammad Naasir-ud-Deen Al-Albaani, *The Prophet's Prayer Sallallaahu 'Alaihi Wasallam Described: From the Beginning to the End as Though You See It* (Ipswich: Al-Haneef Publications, 1993).

⁴⁵⁹ Interview with Abu Aaliyah, 9 October 2019.

conventions of transliterating Arabic terms. Abu Muntasir was keen to employ double ‘a’s, ‘e’s and ‘o’s, partly because he found macrons difficult to implement on his early Apple Macintosh, but also because he felt it was closer to the intended pronunciation; others preferred existing academic conventions and Usama cheerfully admits to having compromised with Abu Muntasir, retaining the double ‘a’s and omitting double ‘e’s at the end of nouns by using a standard ‘i’.⁴⁶⁰ It is possible that Abu Muntasir was partly inspired by Philips’ novel transliteration system (see previous chapter) and such decisions suggest that Anglo–Salafi print culture was a relatively creative project.

Unlike previous JIMAS publications, this text was published with a fancy glue–bound cover laminated in gloss, and included vowelised prayer supplications in Arabic. The book was sold commercially and its print costs were to be paid back to the financier before JIMAS was able to self–finance further reprints, which it did so given its popularity; Usama believes its print run currently exceeds 100,000 copies.⁴⁶¹ In Karmani’s view, *The Prophet’s Prayer* is the ‘most significant book’ produced by Salafis in Britain which ‘set a trend for all the books thereafter’ in providing “robust” arguments against rival Islamic trends.⁴⁶² According to Baker, ‘For me, as a new Muslim, I got it as soon as it was released... for us it was this transmission, a senior, great imam, that was now being translated amongst our own cohort and we were the carriers of that work.’⁴⁶³ Baker went on to purchase a carton of copies which he distributed to attendees at Brixton Mosque.⁴⁶⁴ Instantaneously, *The Prophet’s Prayer* led JIMAS “2.0” members to “change” the way they prayed. For example, during the seated position in prayer (*al–tashshahud*), Salafis began using a phrase addressing the Prophet in the third–person (‘*alā al–nabī*’) unlike the majority of Muslims who address him in the first–person (‘*alaika ayyuh al–nabī*’) entirely based on al–Albānī’s argument.

It was potentially unknown to Usama that al–Albānī’s work first published in Arabic *circa* 1965 was the cause of controversy in Muslim–majority countries. According to Lacroix, ritual differences stemming from its publication led to ‘quarrels and arguments in the mosques of Medina and other cities where [the Salafi] movement had

⁴⁶⁰ Interview with Usama, 12 September 2019.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶² Interview with Karmani, 27 May 2020.

⁴⁶³ Interview with Baker, 8 October 2020.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

taken root, driving al–Albani’s disciples to gather in mosques under their own control.’⁴⁶⁵ This controversy transferred into Britain as *The Prophet’s Prayer* was picked up by non–Salafis, largely consisting of Ḥanafī Muslims. According to Andrew Booso, who was studying at the London School of Economics when *The Prophet’s Prayer* was published and later began a career in editing Anglo–Sufi publications:

I recall [*The Prophet’s Prayer*] being highly influential. I remember how even people who were from a Barelwi/Hanafi background were tempted, and started praying according to it, even though they were not become fully–fledged Salafis, but definitely being influenced by it to change.⁴⁶⁶

While Usama did not intend for the book to be sectarian, his inclusion of ten appendices of which several directly challenged the authenticity of Ḥanafī practises, inadvertently created a stream of counter–publications which have largely remained unaddressed by Salafis in Britain.⁴⁶⁷ Perturbed by *The Prophet’s Prayer*, local Ḥanafī scholars sought to reassert the validity of their mode of prayer through ḥadīth, and engage with Salafis, ‘particularly on the publishing front.’⁴⁶⁸ The first substantial response was penned in 1996 by Abdur–Rahman Yusuf, a graduate of Darul Uloom Bury, and entitled *Fiqh al–Imam: Key Proofs in Hanafi Fiqh*; the author confirms his anti–Salafi stance in his introduction:

Many Muslims nowadays are often confused by the appearance of variations in the way other Muslims pray... To add to this confusion, there are some people who officiously go about informing other worshippers that their method of prayer is wrong and that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ never used to pray that way. They also regularly condemn anyone who follows a position other than their own... in view of the oft–repeated claim made by those who do not practise *taqlīd* of a *madhhab* –that the traditional schools of jurisprudence base their

⁴⁶⁵ Lacroix, ‘Between Revolution and Apoliticism’, 72. One of al–Albānī’s rivals in Jordan even published a counter–publication with a similar title. See See Ḥasan al–Saqqāf, *Ṣaḥīḥ ṣifāḥ ṣalāt al–nabī – ṣalallah ‘alaihi wa sallam – min al–takbīr ilā ‘l–taslīm ka’annaka tanzur ilaiḥā* [...as though you are looking at it] (Amman: Dār al–Imām al–Nawawī, 2000).

⁴⁶⁶ Interview with Andrew Booso, 9 October 2020. See also Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 90.

⁴⁶⁷ For counter–replies to Hanafis, see in particular the efforts of Abu Khuzaimah and Abu Hibban who have both published detailed tracts on specific issues related to prayer which are contended by Hanafis as well as online publications directly addressing Haqq’s usage of Ḥadīth in his *The Salah of a Believer*. See for example, Badee’ ud–Deen as–Sindhee, *The Position of the Hands in the Salah of the Prophet* (Birmingham: Maktabah Imaam Badee’ ud–Deen, 2001); Abu Hibban and Abu Khuzaimah Ansari, ‘A Specific Rebuttal Of The Book “Salah of the Believer” of Riyadh Ul Haq – Chapter: The Position of the Hands in the Salah’, Salafi Research Institute (blog), accessed 10 October, 2020, <http://www.salafiri.com/a-specific-rebuttal-of-the-book-salah-of-the-believer-of-riyadh-ul-haq-chapter-the-position-of-the-hands-in-the-salah>.

⁴⁶⁸ Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 133.

opinions and rulings on mere conjecture and analogy rather than sound evidences— it was necessary to compile the evidences of the Hanafi school.⁴⁶⁹

Fiqh al-Imam was soon followed in 1998 by another rejoinder by Riyadh ul Haq, a young and upcoming Deobandi scholar who regularly engaged in English discourse and utilised technology to disseminate talks via publications and cassette tapes.⁴⁷⁰ Like *Fiqh al-Imam*, Haq draws on the *Salaf* to counter Salafi arguments. Sectarianism was thus engulfed in British Muslim spaces and partly took place through and because of ideas often codified into print.

“Shaykhs” and Ladders

During the 1990s, Salafi youth mobilisation was marred in Britain by internal debates as to who was qualified to speak on behalf of the Salafi *manhaj* and which scholars in particular should be “propped” or “dropped.” In British Muslim spaces, JIMAS “2.0” was experiencing relative success in forwarding a Salafi *manhaj* and convincing some non-Salafis to join the organisation because of its robust claims, backed by scriptural proofs set in print. Internally, however, the same organisation was impacted by events outside of Britain which had local ramifications centred around authority.

Firstly, the Gulf War of 1990–91 was particularly controversial because Saudi Arabia allowed the United States to establish a military presence in the kingdom and base from where it could launch attacks against Iraq; essentially, a Muslim government had supported non-Muslims in the killing of fellow Muslims. Although al-Albānī cited ḥadīths to object to the presence of American troops in the land of the Two Holy Mosques, senior Saudi ulema including Ibn Bāz and Ibn al-‘Uthaymīn supported their kingdom’s controversial alliance. British Salafis found themselves torn between the two positions.⁴⁷¹

Secondly, the same Gulf War underlined the divide between Saudi-born or based Salafi scholars loyal to the kingdom with that of members of the “Awakening”

⁴⁶⁹ Abdur-Rahman (Yusuf) Mangera, *Fiqh Al-Imam: Key Proofs in Hanafi Fiqh* (London: White Thread Press, 2003; third revised edition), xiii–xvii.

⁴⁷⁰ Riyadh ul Haq, *The Salah of a Believer in the Quran and Sunnah* (Birmingham: Al Kawthar Publications, 1998), 5–6.

⁴⁷¹ Interview with Usama, 12 September 2019.

(Sahwa) movement; the latter was made up of various Arab scholars, Saudi and otherwise, attached to the Muslim Brotherhood, including Muḥammad Qutb (d. 2014), or the existing Saudi establishment, including Salmān al-‘Awdah and Safar al-Ḥawālī.⁴⁷² The Sahwa movement called for a number of reforms in the Saudi kingdom, including the expulsion of all American troops, and was quickly suppressed by authorities and blacklisted by loyalist scholars; Saudi Sahwa scholars including al-‘Awdah and al-Ḥawālī were further imprisoned creating both positive and negative auras about them. This divide transferred into Britain and pulled some members of JIMAS “2.0” closer to “senior” Salafi ulema in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, and others, including Abu Muntasir, towards the Sahwa.⁴⁷³

Thirdly, the Salafi *manhaj* in Britain was still being formulated at the time and JIMAS “2.0” had not fully transitioned away from its earlier version. This is hinted at by one of the organisation’s objectives in 1990 of bringing about ‘about a society guided by the Revelation, and for Allaah’s laws to be applied upon the earth.’⁴⁷⁴ These ideas reflected closely the discourse of Sahwa scholars in the Middle East and local sympathisers including Muḥammad Surūr (d. 2016). A Syrian nation and former member of MB, Surūr arrived in Britain in 1984 after being expelled from Saudi Arabia and spending a decade in Kuwait. He was initially based in Al-Muntada after which he established the Center for Islamic Studies in Birmingham shortly after and began publishing the Arabic journal *As-Sunnah* combining Salafi and Islamist ideas.⁴⁷⁵ By befriending Surūr and frequenting Al-Muntada, Abu Muntasir and some members of JIMAS “2.0” ‘were more drawn to a political version’ of Salafism in contrast to a more ‘quietist, pietistic form’ adopted by most members who “stuck” to “senior” and anti-*Sahwā* ulema.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷² For a detailed study about the Sahwa movement, see Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*, trans. George Holoch (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011). See also Bishara, *On Salafism*, 108–109; Amin, ‘The Shifting Contours of Saudi Influence in Britain’, 296–298.

⁴⁷³ Interview with Usama, 12 September 2019; Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 127–130; Amin, ‘The Shifting Contours of Saudi Influence in Britain’, 296–297.

⁴⁷⁴ *In Support of Hijaab*, inside back cover.

⁴⁷⁵ Dawood, ‘Who Is a “Salafi”?’: 244 and 248.

⁴⁷⁶ Bowen, *Medina in Birmingham*, 63; Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 106 and ‘Who Is a “Salafi”?’: 244. Al-Muntada was one of the few mosques in London which accommodated JIMAS speakers and published Salafi magazines in English. Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 87–88.

Fourthly, members of JIMAS “2.0” were also at odds as to whether *Tawhīd* could be divided into four categories and not three as Philips had previously encoded in *The Fundamentals* (see previous chapter); the additional category of *al-Ḥākimiyyah* (rulership) was first coined by Maududi, and later popularised by Sahwa scholars who used it to counter their more loyalist Salafi counterparts in the Arab world by asserting that ‘faithful application of *shari’*a is an integral part of *tawhid*.’⁴⁷⁷ The implications of defying Allāh’s sovereignty had very real and immediate consequences on the Muslim world: namely, if a Muslim ruler was guilty of committing *Shirk al-Ḥākimiyyah*, or associating partners with Allāh by legislating by other than what He revealed (the sharia), he was no longer a Muslim and ought to be disposed, violently, if necessary. In contrast, “senior” Salafi scholars declared that *al-Ḥākimiyyah* was a religious innovation and that violent uprisings contravened the Salafi *manhaj*.⁴⁷⁸

Fifthly, Abu Muntasir, given his support of the Sahwa and earlier part-Islamist readings, drew on statements made by Arab Salafi ulema which apparently confirmed Sahwa contentions. For example, he published *Ruling By The Law* in 1993, priced at 40 pence, and originally authored by Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Āl al-Shaykh, former Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia who passed away in 1969.⁴⁷⁹ This booklet, a translation consisting of only 16 pages, condemned secularism and obliged Muslim rulers to rule by the sharia. A number of younger JIMAS “2.0” members interpreted this move by Abu Muntasir as one of politicising *Tawhīd* and using it to make *takfīr* [excommunication] of Muslim rulers. Since M. I. Āl al-Shaykh’s book was controlled interpretively by living “senior” Saudi ulema, thereby curbing its political implications, such statements were treated by younger members as theoretical only and did not justify armed rebellions or political dissension.⁴⁸⁰

Finally, JIMAS “2.0” members disagreed over issues pertaining to jihad. During the 1993 JIMAS retreat in Leicester, a private gathering was held in the presence of al-Ḥalabī and al-Muqaddam. When questions surrounding the Gulf War led to tensions among attendees, al-Ḥalabī was particularly vocal in condemning the Sahwa thereby

⁴⁷⁷ See Lacroix, *Awakening Islam*, 54 and 148. For a substantial analysis of the intra-Salafi contestations regarding this fourth category, consult Mimouni, ‘Debating Al-Ḥākimiyyah and Takfir in Salafism.’

⁴⁷⁸ Mimouni, ‘Debating Al-Ḥākimiyyah and Takfir in Salafism’, 81–85.

⁴⁷⁹ Muhammad Ibrahim, *Ruling By the Law* (Ipswich: JIMAS, 1993).

⁴⁸⁰ Correspondence with Abdulhaqq Baker, 27 March 2021.

confirming what position al-Albānī sympathisers should adopt.⁴⁸¹ Another controversy later broke out at the annual JIMAS conference of 1995 when al-Halabī challenged two guest speakers and members of the Pakistani-jihadi group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) over their conception of the duty of jihad during the war in Bosnia (1992–95).⁴⁸² The argument revolved around whether jihad in Bosnia was an individual duty on *all* Muslims (the position of LeT) or permissible for non-Bosnians on the condition that they fought as part of the official Bosnian army (the position of al-Albānī).

Given these disparities, younger members of JIMAS “2.0” developed a heightened sensitivity about authority. For example, after Philips lectured at Brixton Mosque in 1994, he was banished from addressing Brixton’s Salafis again after word got around that while he might disagree with *Tawhīd* being divided into four categories, he saw no problem in doing so theoretically.⁴⁸³ According to Karmani, while Philips’ *The Fundamentals* was a ‘seminal book’, it essentially opened a ‘Pandora’s box’ for anti-establishment Salafis by introducing the concept of *al-Ḥākimiyyah* into English by writing:

The acceptance of non-Islamic rule in place of *Sharee‘ah* in Muslim lands is *Shirk* and an act of *Kufr* [disbelief]. Those in a position to change it must do so, while those unable to do so must speak out against the rule of *Kufr* and call for the implementation of *Sharee‘ah*. If even this becomes impossible, un-Islamic government must be sincerely hated and despised for the pleasure of God and the upholding of *Tawheed*.⁴⁸⁴

Philips was thus among the first Anglo-Salafi authorities “dropped” by certain quarters of JIMAS “2.0.” Meanwhile, JIMAS “2.0” members like Abdulilah Lahmami and Farhat Abbas were now enrolled at IUM giving them direct access to “proper” scholars. The latter had the opportunity to meet al-Albānī and ask him directly about cooperating with non-Salafis; al-Albānī advised against Salafi *da‘wah* being conducted under a *jam‘iyyah* (which JIMAS was) and instead, recommended that such work be done as a co-operative, between mosques and cohorts located in different cities.⁴⁸⁵ During the same abovementioned time, Burbank began translating sections

⁴⁸¹ Interview with Abu Khadeejah, 30 September 2019.

⁴⁸² Bowen, *Medina in Birmingham*, 61–62.

⁴⁸³ Correspondence with Baker, 27 March 2021.

⁴⁸⁴ Philips, *The Fundamentals of Tawheed*, 24–26. Emphasis mine.

⁴⁸⁵ Interview with Abu Khadeejah, 30 September 2019.

of an essay by al-Ḥalabī which criticised the formation of Islamic groups and parties like Jamaat-i Islaami in order to work for the reform of Muslim societies; instead, al-Ḥalabī urged Muslims to unite under a single banner, the Salafi *manhaj*.⁴⁸⁶

This anti-organisational understanding would further decentralise JIMAS “2.0”’s local hierarchy and position Arab ulema at the forefront. According to one former member of JIMAS “2.0”, fellow members thus became ‘territorial’ about “proper” Salafism as represented by the “heirs of the Prophet” – a reference to scholars in a Prophetic ḥadīth.⁴⁸⁷ Abu Muntasir’s leadership and influence over younger members of JIMAS “2.0” was on the wane since he could not yet speak Arabic, was “unqualified” to speak in English about controversial matters, seemingly supported the Sahwa instead of the “senior” scholars and sat with “known” innovators like Surūr. Abu Muntasir’s own essay on religious innovations would come back to haunt him; for example, he wrote: ‘The Salaf of the past would not even want to hear the talk of the innovators let alone sit with them to learn anything of the Deen [religion of Islam] from them.’⁴⁸⁸ Why then, asked younger members of JIMAS “2.0”, did Abu Muntasir talk and sit with Sahwa-sympathisers and members of the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-i Islaami?

These inconsistencies happened to occur between 1993 and 96, during which, according to Abu Aaliyah and Karmani, JIMAS “2.0” members failed to oust Abu Muntasir during member-only gatherings.⁴⁸⁹ Abu Muntasir’s waning influence over younger members of JIMAS “2.0” may well have underscored their decision to publish *The Prophet’s Prayer* under Al-Haneef Publications in 1993 and not JIMAS directly. Naeem and Saeed, made a more definite move during the same year for autonomy from Abu Muntasir by establishing Al-Hidaayah Publishing & Distribution in Birmingham after graduating from university.⁴⁹⁰ In or around the same time, another

⁴⁸⁶ This book was later published in 1997 by Salafi Publications under the title *Muslim Unity in Light of the Numerous Groups and Parties* and then again, in 2001 with a different title. See ‘Ali ibn Hasan Al-Ḥalabee, *The Call to Allaah Between Group Partisanship and Legislated Co-Operation* (Birmingham: Salafi Publications, 1997; second edition 2001).

⁴⁸⁷ Interview with “Nawaz” (anonymised), 26 March 2020.

⁴⁸⁸ Abu Muntasir, *Understanding the Evil of Innovations*, 29.

⁴⁸⁹ Interview with Abu Aaliyah, 9 October 2019; Karmani, 27 May 2020; Abu Khadeejah Abdul-Wahid, ‘1995: End Of The JIMAS Era, One Year Before The Inception Of Salafi Publications’, Abu Khadeejah, 5 December, 2013, accessed 5 June, 2022, <https://www.abukhadeejah.com/1995-salafi-dawah-in-1995-one-year-before-the-inception-of-salafi-publications>.

⁴⁹⁰ Interview with Mohammed Naeem, 23 January 2021. Naeem adds that his brother-in-law was also a co-founder and had already gained experience working with books at a publishing house.

group of JIMAS “2.0” members, including Abbas, established Invitation to Islam publishing house in East London.⁴⁹¹ Abu Aaliyah meanwhile, launched a new magazine in 1995 entitled *Al-Ibaanah: The Clarification* which was strictly based on translations of works by Salafi ulema and would only contain ‘essential articles expounding the correct Islaamic ‘*aqeedah* [creed] and *manhaj*.’⁴⁹² The first issue of *Al-Ibaanah* included Abu Muntasir as part of the editorial staff but his name was altogether dropped by the second issue four months later.⁴⁹³

According to Naeem, three motives underscored the establishment of Al-Hidaayah: Firstly, a shortage of ‘good books in the English language.’⁴⁹⁴ This suggests that the “Anglo-Salafi information gap” was still perceived into the 1990s although “good” here was clearly a reference to “pure” Arab Salafism which suggests a gap within a gap. Secondly, existing books were poorly produced or ‘difficult to read.’⁴⁹⁵ This suggests that Salafis born or educated in Britain saw themselves as better suited than their transnational counterparts in imparting Salafism into the English language; it may also be a reference to JIMAS’ lack of professional finish. Thirdly, there was a ‘demand’ for Salafi material.⁴⁹⁶ This suggests that commercially, Anglo-Salafi publishing offered members of the cooperative a means of earning a healthy “halal” income while working in the *da‘wah*-sphere; this was especially important for Naeem and Saeed who needed a viable career which complimented their religious beliefs following university.

During the same time, Green also recalls Abu Muntasir travelled to Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt and met with Salafi ulema including al-Albānī; Green describes this journey as Abu Muntasir’s “road to Damascus” whereby he became entirely dismayed by the direction JIMAS “2.0” was taking towards a more elitist brand of Salafism than

⁴⁹¹ Interview with Abu Abdullah, founder of FatwaOnline.com and Madeenah.com, 3 April 2020 and 9 March 2022; correspondence with Abu Aaliyah, 9 March 2022.

⁴⁹² *Al-Ibaanah: The Clarification*, April 1995, 2. *Al-Ibaanah* only ran into three issues. A review of them reveals that the magazine was almost entirely built on translations of Quranic verses, ḥadīths, sayings of classic scholars (such as members of the *Salaf* and Ibn Taymiyyah), or sections from existing works in Arabic by Saudi and Jordanian Salafi scholars. Parts of al-Ḥalabī’s critique of Islamic groups and parties, for example, feature in all three issues. The actual original input of Abu Aaliyah and fellow editors is extremely little indicating that the magazine was to serve as a channel for disseminating the words of Salafi ulema, not ordinary Salafis.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid*; *Al-Ibaanah: The Clarification*, August 1995.

⁴⁹⁴ Interview with Naeem, 23 January 2021.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid*.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid*.

the one he first constructed and which embraced Islamist and Jihadi currents.⁴⁹⁷ On his return to Britain, Abu Muntasir began criticising al–Albānī, one of the three major Salafi ulema at the time, and alongside al–Tamimi, alleged that American–backed Saudi spies were infiltrating his organisation.⁴⁹⁸ The ‘straw which broke the camel’s back’ followed at the 1996 JIMAS conference when al–Tamimi, at the behest of Abu Muntasir, delivered a lecture entitled ‘A Word of Advice to the Salafis of the UK.’⁴⁹⁹ During this lecture, al–Tamimi translated a declaration made by a group of Kuwaiti scholars “endorsed” by Ibn Bāz on a range of Salafi tenets, among which, al–Tamimi claimed, justified dividing *tawhīd* into four categories, as well as participating in ‘parliamentary elections, Jihad and political agitation.’⁵⁰⁰

In the eyes of JIMAS “2.0” members who were already wary of Abu Muntasir’s allegiance to Salafism, al–Tamimi’s lecture was in blatant disregard for senior Salafi ulema who condemned these ideas as religious innovations. A large number of JIMAS members then renounced their membership and thus emerged a Salafi cooperative in accordance with al–Albānī’s “advice.”⁵⁰¹ Abu Muntasir thus became victim to the very Salafi *manhaj* he helped construct.

The Salafi “Cooperative”

Inspired by al–Albānī’s advice, a Salafi “cooperative” emerged out of JIMAS “2.0.” This was made up of mostly students at British universities or recent graduates who asserted “pure” Salafism, its label and strict links to “senior” Arab Salafi ulema; they first gathered in Birmingham under the newly–formed Organisation of Associated Salafi Societies (OASIS). According to its co–founder Abu Khadeejah, the organisation was set up to counter the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) which was influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood.⁵⁰² OASIS organised its first national conference in Birmingham in August 1996 and Abu Muntasir was decisively

⁴⁹⁷ Interview with Abdur Raheem Green, 25 May 2020.

⁴⁹⁸ Interview with Abu Khadeejah, 30 September 2019.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰¹ According to Karmani, almost 90% of JIMAS’ members walked away from Abu Muntasir following the 1996 retreat. Interview with Karmani, 27 May 2020.

⁵⁰² Interview with Abu Khadeejah, 30 September 2019. Abu Khadeejah informed me that OASIS was a play on FOSIS while Yusuf Bowers, a longstanding member of Salafi Publications meanwhile stated in a lecture, ‘Yes, we did name it after the [British] Rock group cos it sounded good!’ See ‘The History of the Salafi Da’wah in the UK (Part 1)’, accessed 25 May, 2020.

not invited following earlier attempts at reconciliation.⁵⁰³ Abu Aaliyah, Green, Baker, Baksh and Hasan, all “students of knowledge” were asked to speak under the banner ‘Islam Unveiled From its Very Core.’⁵⁰⁴ The original line up was quickly dropped by the organisers when three Arab Salafi scholars visiting Britain during the same month agreed to present lectures at the conference.⁵⁰⁵ The conference ended with these scholars drawing distinct lines as to what is, and what is not, the Salafi *manhaj*; they also “named and shamed” individuals and organisations like the Muslim Brotherhood and Saudi Sahwa. OASIS’s closest allies gathered at Brixton Mosque (under the leadership of Baker) and in Luton (under the leadership of Baksh) and undermined MJAH.

Other members of the cooperative retained their links with the Ahl-e-Hadith but disagreed with the latter’s affinity to Jamaat-i Islaami. For example, Al-Hidaayah co-founders and brothers Mohammed Naeem and Mohammed Saeed attended Madrasah Salfia during the early 1980s, and joined Saqib’s Muslim Youth Movement (MYM), then HISAM, then JIMAS “2.0.”⁵⁰⁶ Both brothers continued to attend Green Lane Masjid (GLM) and Saeed was also *The Straight Path’s* circulation manager from 1992–onwards.⁵⁰⁷ A year after splitting with JIMAS, Al-Hidaayah published a translation of Rabī’ al-Madhkalī’s essay on *da’wah* and criticism of Islamist organisations.⁵⁰⁸ Meanwhile, Usama, like his father, still retained his Ahl-e-Hadith roots and worked under MJAH. He also married the daughter of Khurshid Ahmad (co-founder of TIF); both son and father also continued to co-operate with Abu Muntasir after the fall-out of JIMAS “2.0”; as such, the more “hard-line” Salafi cooperative stopped cooperating with them. Disenchanted by the younger Salafi cooperative’s

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 11 May 2020.

⁵⁰⁴ Baker, ‘Chronicles of UK Salafism: An insider perspective, Part 7, 1996’, Anchor, accessed 26 May, 2020, <https://anchor.fm/a-h-baker>. According to Baker, his name was added to the event flyer without consulting him first and he refused to participate having been unimpressed by younger JIMAS members.

⁵⁰⁵ Namely, Muḥammad b. Hādī al-Madhkalī and ‘Abd al-Salām al-Burjis (d. 2005) from Saudi Arabia and Muḥammad al-‘Anjarī from Kuwait. Interview with Abu Khadeejah, 30 September 2019; Abu Khadeejah, ‘May 1996: OASIS & Salafi Publications – Spreading Salafi Da’wah’, accessed 25 May, 2020, <https://www.abukhadeejah.com/may-1996-oasis-salafi-publications-a-new-approach-to-salafi-dawah>.

⁵⁰⁶ Interview with Naeem, 23 January 2021.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁸ Rabee’ al-Madhkalee, *The Methodology of the Prophets In Calling to Allaah: That is the Way of Wisdom & Intelligence*, trans. Burbank (Birmingham: Al-Hidaayah, 1997).

“harshness”, members like Abu Aaliyah, Green and Karmani separated ways with their former peers and went solo (see Chapter Seven).

Members of the remaining cooperative introduced a newer pool of senior scholars into the English language through print and web projects to distinguish the “purity” of their message from that of their “soiled” predecessor (JIMAS “2.0”). By the end of 1996, OASIS’ co-founders were so averse to the idea of resembling JIMAS that they dissolved the organisation and established Salafi Publications (Spubs) in its place, ‘for the purpose of spreading Da’wah Salafiyyah through writings, articles, leaflets, books and online work.’⁵⁰⁹ Like JIMAS, Spubs also issued its objectives in print, this time distinguishing its loyalty to the “pure” Salafi *manhaj*, one which respects ‘Senior Shaikhs’ and warns not to “help criminals” by belittling ‘Scholars of the *Sunnah*’ and leaving them ‘as booty for the *Du’aat* (callers) of political agitation and incitement.’⁵¹⁰ Alongside Burbank, Abu Iyaad (Amjad Rafiq), quickly assumed the role of translator under this publishing house having taught himself the Arabic language.⁵¹¹ Abu Iyaad graduated from the University of Essex in 1997 before which he was already actively publishing Anglo–Salafi material on the university’s intranet; he went onto establish Salafipublications.com which, according to Anwar, ‘soon became a household name for those practising Salafism and an essential resource for those in search of “authentic” Islamic material online.’⁵¹²

Further publishers also joined the abovementioned print cooperative, including Al–Irshād (est. 1997?) and Daar us–Sunnah Publications (est. 1998). Unlike JIMAS, the cooperative’s publications were entirely translated from Arabic works and originally authored by imams, classic (like Ibn Taymiyyah) and contemporary (like Ibn Bāz); their collective aim was to finally connect British Muslim audiences to “qualified” authorities and create an “imagined community” which embodied the Salafi *manhaj*. Notably, their publications were unapologetically selected to counter any and all non–Salafi ideas.⁵¹³ Instead of addressing these local issues by training to be scholars for

⁵⁰⁹ Abu Khadeejah, ‘May 1996: OASIS & Salafi Publications – Spreading Salafi Da’wah’, accessed 25 May 2020.

⁵¹⁰ ‘Our Call’ in *The ‘Aqeedah of Imaam al–Bukhari*, trans. Rafiq and Burbank (Birmingham: Salafi Publications, 1997; second edition 2004), 145–147.

⁵¹¹ Interview with Abu Khadeejah, 11 May 2020; Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 27.

⁵¹² Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 205.

⁵¹³ For details on their “opponents”, consult Bowen, *Medina in Birmingham* and Gilliat–Ray, *Muslims in Britain*.

themselves, they acted as transmitters for authorities like Saudi-based Ṣāliḥ al-Fawzān, Aḥmad al-Najmī (d. 2008), R. al-Madhkalī, Muḥammad b. Zaid al-Madhkalī and ‘Ubayd al-Jābirī (d. 2022), Ethiopian-born and Saudi-based Muḥammad Amān al-Jāmī (d. 1996), and Yemeni Muqbil b. Hādī al-Wādī‘ī (d. 2001).⁵¹⁴

This attachment to a particular cohort of Arab Salafi ulema would further intensify after 2001 when the Salafi “giants”, Ibn Bāz, al-Albānī, Ibn al-‘Uthaymīn and al-Wādī‘ī passed away leaving behind only their works and direct students (see Chapter Seven). Through print, the Salafi cooperative joined the wider Salafi sphere where Rock-Singer states: ‘reflected and reinforced broader dynamics of authority... by enabling editors [in the British context: translators and publishers]... to police the boundaries of acceptable discourse and practise.’⁵¹⁵ The Anglo-Salafi cooperative were further backed by North American Salafis including QSS for some, and The Reign of Islamic Da’wah (TROID, est. 1998) for others. For example, one of Ibn al-‘Uthaymīn’s students, Saudi-born and QSS-connected Saleh as-Saleh (d. 2008), contributed numerous English translations of his teacher’s works in print and during live lectures on Paltalk, an online chat service.⁵¹⁶

Examples of the growing body of Anglo-Salafi translations “made in Britain” by the abovementioned cooperative leading up to 2001 confirm their shared emphasis on translation instead of original and localised compositions: Al-Hidaayah’s *An Introduction to the Principles of Tafseer* by Ibn Taymiyyah (1993), *Blind Following of Madhhabs* by Muhammad al-Khajnadee (1993) and *A Glimpse at the Way of the Companions* by ‘Abdul-Qaadir al-Arna’oot (1994); Invitation to Islam’s *Invalidation of Actions in Light of the Noble Qur’aan and the Pure Authentic Ahadeeth* by al-Hilaalee (1997) and *The Waasitah [Mediation] Between Allaah & the Creation* by Ibn Taymiyyah (1998); Spubs’ *The Creed of the Imaam of Hadeeth Abu ‘Abdullah Muhammad bin Ismaa’eel al-Bukhari* (1997) and *Bidah: the Unique Nature of the Perfection Found in Islaam and the Grave Danger of Innovating into it* by Ibn al-‘Uthaymīn (1999); Masjid Ibnu Taymeeyah’s (Brixton Mosque) *The Creed of the*

⁵¹⁴ Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 119.

⁵¹⁵ Rock-Singer, *In the Shade of the Sunna*, 7–8.

⁵¹⁶ See for example: Muhammad bin Salih Al-Utheimeen, *Natural Blood of Women*, trans. Saleh As Saleh (Al Qassim: Daar Al-Bukhari, 1994); ‘Index Page’, Saleh As-Saleh, accessed 29 December, 2022, <https://salehassaleh.com/sitemap>.

Pious Predecessors & the People of Hadeeth by Ismaa'eel as-Saaboonee [d. 1057] (1999); Daar us-Sunnah's *The Correct Islaamic 'Aqeedah & that which opposes it* by Ibn Bāz (1999).⁵¹⁷

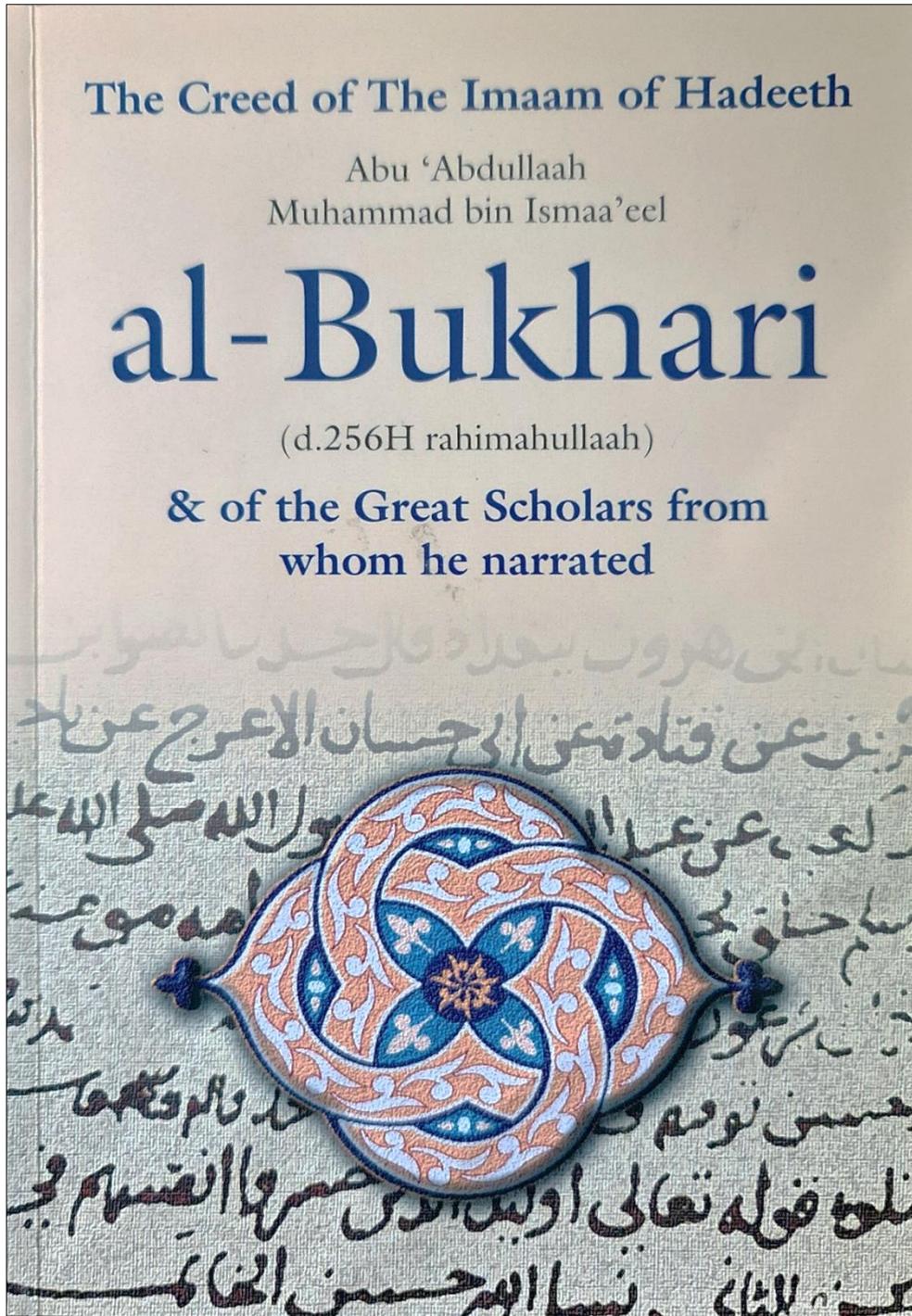


Figure 12.

⁵¹⁷ Consult my bibliography for full references.

There are several reasons why the Salafi cooperative emphasised translations: i) as with JIMAS “2.0”, few members of the Salafi cooperative could translate Arabic into English; ii) the same cooperative also felt under-qualified to compose their own works, and iii) they committed themselves to “senior” and “recognised” Arab Salafi ulema and as such, everyone in between was a “student of knowledge”, translator or transmitter, nothing more. As such, Baker emphasises that he and other members of the cooperative “trusted” Anglo–Salafi publications because the latter created a chain of transmission between scholar and layman.⁵¹⁸ “Nawaz”, an avid Anglo–Salafi reader and publisher likewise, likens an Islamic book with references to an *isnād* [chain of authority], ‘connecting the reader to the sources... not having to depend on someone’s interpretation and the issue of trusting the author if he’s not a scholar.’⁵¹⁹ Similarly, John Fontain, a Mancunian who converted to Islam later in 2009, finds translations of Anglo–Salafi books ‘very valuable’ because ‘obviously, I didn’t have access to Arabic, and I didn’t have access to scholars... having a book means having something you can trust... you always have to put your trust in someone.’⁵²⁰

The abovementioned publications were all published in gloss–laminated card covers featuring colourful and attractive computer–generated cover designs (see fig. 12); aside from a few which were staple–bound, they were mostly glue–bound, gloss–laminated and printed on soft–back card. This underscores the shift from free and rudimentary booklets to professional commercially–viable products in Anglo–Salafi print culture (and Anglo–Islamic print culture more widely), ranging in and around the £1–10 mark. They also illustrate the emphasis that the Salafi cooperative paid to the subject of *‘aqīdah* as a means of codifying “the understanding of the *Salaf*.” As such, the translation and publication by the same cooperative of a number of credos authored by early members of the Ahl al–Ḥadīth school emerged.⁵²¹ Such works belong to a wider Salafi genre of “classical” theological works which seek to codify what the *Salaf* believed in the *past* so as to emulate them in the *now* and secure salvation in the *future*. The underlying “trust” for translations and emphasis on the *Salaf’s manhaj* helps

⁵¹⁸ Interview with Baker, 13 December 2019.

⁵¹⁹ Interview with “Nawaz” (anonymised), 26 March 2020.

⁵²⁰ Interview with John Fontain, 27 March 2020.

⁵²¹ See for examples: *Mountains of Knowledge*, trans. Burbank and Rafiq (Birmingham: Salafi Publications, 1998, second edition 2001) and Ahmad Bin Hanbal, *Foundations of the Sunnah*, trans. Burbank and Rafiq (Birmingham: Salafi Publications, 2003, second edition); Ismaa’eel as–Saaboonnee, *The Creed of the Pious Predecessors: The People of Hadeeth*, ed. Badr al–Badr (London: Masjid Ibnu–Taymeeyah, 1999).

explain why one particular Anglo–Salafi translation particularly stood out in the mid–1990s and helped the Salafi cooperative distinguish itself from the type of “watered–down” Salafism espoused by JIMAS “2.0”:

Case Study: The Explanation of the Sunnah

In highlighting the contentious nature of the Salafi imagination, Evstatiev observes,

Based on shared beliefs and ideological positions that claim to represent the constant truth of authentic Islam, Salafism has profound social implications built on two sets of factors. They are grouped together, first, around the established normative doctrine and, second, around the approaches to their contextualization in social practice.⁵²²

Towards codifying this doctrine, Al–Haneef Publications’ manager Shaukat Islam moved back to Birmingham from London in 1995 following the break–down of JIMAS “2.0”; he longer had publishing rights to reprint *The Prophet’s Prayer* which compelled him to commission Burbank to translate new Anglo–Salafi texts with relative freedom to pick from Arabic titles.⁵²³ Following a consultation with Abu Aaliyah, Burbank decided to translate *Sharḥ al–Sunnah (The Explanation of the Sunnah)*, a credo attributed to al–Ḥasan b. ‘Alī al–Khalaf al–Barbahārī (d. 940), but more persuasively to, his predecessor Aḥmad al–Bāhili, famously known as Ghulām Khalīl (d. 888).⁵²⁴

The Explanation of the Creed (instead of *Sunnah*), was a substantial addition to the Anglo–Salafi library; it offered 170 points related to creed, rituals and social engagement written by ‘The Imaam of Ahlus–Sunnah Wal–Jamaa’ah Of His Time.’⁵²⁵ It provided rules of engagement with detractors and validated the Ahl al–Ḥadīth’s

⁵²² Evstatiev, ‘Salafism as a Contested Concept’, in *Knowledge, Authority and Change in Islamic Societies: Studies in Honor of Dale F. Eickelman*, ed. Allen James Fromherz and Nadav Samin (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 175.

⁵²³ Interview with Naeem, 23 January 2021.

⁵²⁴ Abu Muhammad al–Hasan Al–Barbahaaree, *Explanation of the Creed*, trans. Burbank (Birmingham: Al–Haneef Publications, 1995); ‘#APieceOfCake Special #Podcast with Surkheel Abu Aaliyah’, YouTube, 26 September 2020, accessed 4 March, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHVleKOvYLU>. For a critical analysis of why Khalīl more likely composed *Sharḥ al–Sunnah*, consult Maher Jarrar and Sebastian Günther, *Doctrinal Instruction in Early Islam: The Book of the Explanation of the Sunna by Ghulām Khalīl (d. 275/888)* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

⁵²⁵ Al–Barbahaaree, *Explanation of the Creed*, front cover.

practise of inquisitions, boycotting, separating and shunning people for violating the Sunnah; in local terms, anyone could be charged with being an “innovator” or at the very least, associating with non–Salafis and thereby violating the Salafi *manhaj*. For example, the following points in *The Explanation of the Creed* read:

144. If you see a man sitting with one of the people of innovation, warn and inform him. If he sits with him after knowing, beware of him, for he is a person of desires.

152. To set up trials in Islaam is an innovation. As for today, people should be tested about the *Sunnah*... So look and see if he is a person of the *Sunnah* with comprehension and is truthful then write from him and if not then leave him.

170. ...Al–Fudayl ibn ‘Iyaad [d. 803] said, “Whoever honours an innovator has assisted in the demolition of Islaam.”⁵²⁶

These types of strong condemnations in black–and–white, as Rock–Singer observes in Arab Salafism more generally, had real social implications when put into practise in Britain.⁵²⁷ Baker confirms that *The Explanation of the Creed* was essentially weaponized by the Salafi cooperative against their own adherents; he states,

the refutation of *ahl al–bida* [*lit.* “people of innovation”] was taken out of context, in time and place, and applied within a twentieth–twenty first century context by those who had no qualifications to even begin to explain that particular book. And that’s why I say it was a problem that being translated, without any caveat, without any introduction, without any disclaimer that this needs to be taught by a qualified individual... So you had those who had not studied or even graduated from even secondary school, picking this book up and using it to say, “This is the creed that we are upon, and anyone who isn’t on this creed, is *ahl al–bidah*.”⁵²⁸

Similarly, “Farid” recalls some Salafis quoting *The Explanation of the Creed* against other Salafis and effectively excommunicating them from Salafism; it led “Farid” to believe certain texts should *not* be translated if they could so easily be misapplied or did not have a corresponding commentary by a scholar to provide essential context.⁵²⁹ Abu Aaliyah, on the other hand, believes the weaponization of the *Salaf* was already

⁵²⁶ *Ibid*, 92–107.

⁵²⁷ Rock–Singer, *In the Shade of the Sunna*.

⁵²⁸ Interview with Baker, 4 March 2021.

⁵²⁹ Interview with “Farid” (anonymised), 3 February 2020.

in motion during JIMAS' heydays leading up to the mid-1990s; accordingly, *The Explanation of the Creed* did not invoke a harsh attitude in British-born Salafis but did *embody* it in a single pragmatic manual.⁵³⁰

By democratising classical texts through the medium of translation, statements like those made in *The Explanation of the Creed* were brought into the *present* in new contexts which led to equations between *past* "innovators" with contemporary and local actors. In effect, Barbahāri's Baghdad was transposed into Britain through translation and some quarters of the Salafi cooperative expected *all* claimants of Salafism to remain faithful to his text. The fact that al-Barbahāri's context was entirely different was effectively lost in translation. Left to their own application, the more "hard-line" Salafi cooperative fell into internal disputes which partially justify why by 2001, Salafi Publication broke ties with its former allies in Brixton and Luton.⁵³¹ Thereafter the cooperative became *cooperatives*.

The Business of Anglo-Salafi Books

To summarise the Anglo-Salafi landscape in Britain leading up to 2001, three visible trends have so far been identified: the Ahl-e-Hadith, JIMAS "2.0" and the Salafi cooperative. All three contributed to Anglo-Salafi print culture; aside from not-for-profit "offerings", they, like Christian Protestant Evangelicals, pursued 'financial profit through devotion to the act of selling' and 'portray their commercial objectives and activities as forms of divine service.'⁵³² Aside from *The Straight Path* and Hasan's Al Quran Society correspondence courses, the Ahl-e-Hadith's involvement took a significant turn under Darussalam International (Riyadh, est. 1986), which capitalised on its networks with diasporic Ahl-e-Hadith members (see Chapter Six).

A number of "branch" Darussalam bookstores or Islamic bookstores acting as agents subsequently appeared during the 1990s as far and as wide as Riyadh, Jeddah, Lahore, Houston, New York, Kuala Lumpur, Colombo, and Dhaka. Moreover, in Britain it

⁵³⁰ Interview with Abu Aaliyah, 21 March 2021. Abu Aaliyah's observation rings true when reading Abu Muntasir, *Understanding the Evil of Innovations*.

⁵³¹ Interviews with "Farid" (anonymised), 3 February 2020, Baker, 4 March 2021, and Abu Khadeejah, 3 September 2019.

⁵³² Vaca, 'Introduction', in *Evangelicals Incorporated*, 4. This comparison is also the subject of Taylor's PhD thesis 'Commonsense Scripturalism.'

would find its most strategic marketplace and distribution point. Rizwanullah, a member of the Ahl-e-Hadith in Birmingham, opened Darussalam UK bookstore in the same city in 1992 and became the first official British franchise to distribute Darussalam translations in English. According to him, he began his business by distributing 5,000 copies of Khan and al-Hilālī's Quran translation providing Britain's Salafis with what Inge rightly notes 'is the version that Salafis in the United Kingdom prefer.'⁵³³ Rizwanullah also went on to publish several titles on his own accord under the name Maktabah Dar-us-Salam.⁵³⁴

A second Darussalam franchise was established in London in 1999 by Hafiz Wahid, a Pakistani Ahl-e-Hadith member, further asserting Darussalam Int.'s dominance in Britain. This franchise provided Anglo-Salafi publications in Britain greater visibility for two reasons: i) it leased a vacant space inside of London's Central Mosque and opened a Salafi bookstore giving it a central position in London's Muslim community, and ii) it established a warehouse in Leyton supplying books to bookstores across the United Kingdom and the wider Anglosphere. After starting with 200 Darussalam Int. titles, Wahid diversified his warehouse stock and quickly began stocking Anglo-Salafi titles published by British and North American counterparts.⁵³⁵

A third Darussalam franchise bookstore was opened in Walthamstow by an Ahl-e-Hadith member in London during the early 2000s; this was eventually sold to Wahid.⁵³⁶ Wahid further began publishing his own Anglo-Salafi texts in the 2000s; a number of his most recent titles, for example, are translations licensed from Abdul Ali Hamid (d. 2021), an Indian-born Ahl-e-Hadith scholar based in London who was appointed editor of *The Straight Path* between 1996–97.⁵³⁷

With respect to JIMAS "2.0", the organisation continued to publish Anglo-Salafi texts even while the abovementioned internal disputes took place.⁵³⁸ For example, as late as

⁵³³ Personal correspondence with Rizwanullah, 23 February 2021; Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 29.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*; 'Darussalam – About Us', Darussalam, accessed 23 February, 2021, <http://www.darussalaam.co.uk/About-Us>.

⁵³⁵ Interview with Hafiz Wahid, 12 September 2019.

⁵³⁶ Darussalam Walthamstow was bought out by Darussalam Leyton in or around the early 2010s. *Ibid.*

⁵³⁷ See for example Ibn al-Jazri, *Al-Hisn al-Hasin*, trans. Abdul Ali Hamid (London: Darussalam, 2020).

⁵³⁸ See for example: Al-Albānī, *The Knowledge of Current Affairs* (Ipswich: JIMAS, 1994); Husayn Al-'Awaishah, *The Book of Du'a* [Supplications] (Ipswich: JIMAS, 1995); 'Obaid al-Jabiri,

2000, JIMAS published *A Statement and Clarification of AL-SALAFIYYAH: Concept and Principles*.⁵³⁹ This text, originally endorsed by Ibn Bāz, was the same text read out to JIMAS “2.0” attendees by al-Tamimi during the 1996 retreat suggesting that Abu Muntasir wanted to salvage his Sahwa-sympathetic organisation as a Salafi outfit despite its reputation being damaged. However, JIMAS “2.0” appears to have slowed down its production of Anglo-Salafi texts by the turn of the millennium. According to Abu Muntasir, one of the main factors was that his organisation simply could not compete with the output of the newer publishers (Darussalam Int. and the Salafi cooperative):

[W]e were also trying to promote Salafiyyah so what we thought was good, we would do... And I stopped because you can't compete because their quality's better, better graphic design... covers look better, the printing looks better, and they seized the market.⁵⁴⁰

This suggests that religious literacy alone was not the defining factor of the success of competing Anglo-Salafi publishers; so too was good business, publishing and marketing practises, as well as technological literacy.

These qualities combined in Darussalam internationally and the Salafi cooperative locally and the two often cooperated in circulating Anglo-Salafi texts even if they did not entirely agree on *manhaj*, indicating some level of financial pragmatism. Luton's Salafi community, for example, prior to establishing a mosque in 2001, first launched a *da'wah* centre and bookstore during the mid-1990s called “Call to Islam”; this provided Luton's cooperative much-needed income to cover the cost of renting a building and its stock was mainly sourced from Darussalam Leyton.⁵⁴¹ According to one of its co-founders, the bookstore was itself ‘a way of giving *da'wah* and encouraging people to study and learn’ while also bringing in between £1,200 and £1,500 a month.⁵⁴² Similarly, “Nawaz” began publishing Anglo-Salafi texts and

Facilitation by Allah in Explaining the Evidences of the Conditions of “La Ilaha Illa Allah”, trans. Burbank (Ipswich: JIMAS, 1995).

⁵³⁹ *A Statement of Clarification of Al-Salafiyyah: Concept and Principles*, trans. Muhammad Mohar Ali (Ipswich: JIMAS, 2000). This particular text was translated by Abu Muntasir's father M. M. Ali (d. 2007) despite the latter never publicising his Salafi leanings.

⁵⁴⁰ Interview with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019.

⁵⁴¹ Interview with “Ahmad” (anonymised), 24 August 2019.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*

supplying to Darussalam franchises because it seemed a ‘lucrative and halal trade.’⁵⁴³ Another important factor was the increasing availability of desktop computers which facilitated publishing with software like Microsoft Word.⁵⁴⁴ The internet, in like–fashion, fostered networks between Salafi distributors, publishers and consumers worldwide (see Chapter Seven).⁵⁴⁵

The impact that Anglo–Salafi print culture has had in Britain is hard to both qualify and quantify. From the Salafi cooperative’s perspective, the fact that non–Salafis were “converting” to Salafism or at the very least, printing or reading Anglo–Salafi publications was evidence enough of the veracity of its message. For example, Baker recalls a “liberal sister” working in government showing him her library of Anglo–Salafi books because, she would admit, ‘they’re all really authentic’ though she disagreed with the Salafi ‘world–view.’⁵⁴⁶ Similarly, “Ahmad” recalls visiting a member of the Tabligh–i Jamaat and spotting a book by Ibn Bāz in the latter’s personal library indicating to him ‘the success of the Salafi *da‘wah*.’⁵⁴⁷ “Farid” meanwhile has found that many of his extended family of Muslim converts agree with Salafism in principle but do not necessarily identify as “Salafis”, thanks partly to the widespread availability of Anglo–Salafi publications.⁵⁴⁸ In another instance, Message of Islam, a bookstore and publisher, despite being non–Salafi, published a book by Ibn al–‘Uthaymīn and translated by as–Saleh; the latter permitted others to publish his rendition ‘for free distribution or for a sale price that covers the cost only.’⁵⁴⁹

The increasing commercialisation of Islamic goods like decorated Qurans, prayer mats and clothing in Britain during the 1990s was also key to the abovementioned Salafi cooperative penetrating Muslim spaces. It provided opportunities for the Salafi cooperative in particular to set up shops selling books alongside other “halal goods.” For example, Al–Hidaayah and Spubs established bookstores within a few yards of one–another in Small Heath, Birmingham (1994 and 1998 respectively); Anwar describes the latter, the Salafi Bookstore, in particular as a ‘focal point for the growing

⁵⁴³ Interview with “Nawaz” (anonymised), 26 March 2020.

⁵⁴⁴ Interview with “Abu Khuzaimah”, 28 July 2019.

⁵⁴⁵ Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 76.

⁵⁴⁶ Interview with Baker, 13 December 2019.

⁵⁴⁷ Interview with “Ahmad” (anonymised), 24 August 2019.

⁵⁴⁸ Interview with “Farid” (anonymised), 3 February 2020.

⁵⁴⁹ Muhammad Al–Utheimeen, *Explaining the Fundamentals of Faith*, trans. As–Saleh (Hounslow: Message of Islam, n.d.), 1.

needs of a flourishing Salafi community in Birmingham.⁵⁵⁰ Abu Tayyib, meanwhile, volunteered in a Sufi-owned bookstore and filled it with available Anglo-Salafi titles sourced from London and Birmingham.⁵⁵¹

This is not to say that everything that was stocked by Darussalam franchises, Al-Hidaayah and Spubs was produced by Salafis. On the contrary, each individual bookseller, in varying degrees, resorted to selling books by non-Salafis if they published a title for which a Salafi alternative had yet to materialise. Nevertheless, these not-by-a-Salafi titles had to satisfy their respective Salafi booksellers. Wahid states that he has only ever stocked books which “agree” with the Quran and Sunnah.⁵⁵² Meanwhile, “Ahmad” admits he would personally carry out weekly checks on what books were being stocked in Luton’s Call to Islam bookstore by examining the publisher, author and/or translator, their respective affiliations and who they would refer to if they themselves were not recognised Salafi scholars.⁵⁵³ According to “Anwar”, a current Salafi bookseller, ‘There’s a science to buying books’ and while he does stock Arabic language study books by non-Salafis, anything related to belief and *manhaj* ‘has to be Salafi.’⁵⁵⁴ These measures helped the Salafi cooperative ensure their standard of “authentic” knowledge was maintained. For the more “hard-line” leaders of Spubs, it meant selling some of Hasan and Philips’ works with the following disclaimer:

Disclaimer by Salafi Publications

The contents of this book are considered by us to be sound & in accordance with the Qur’aan & Sunnah, therefore we have stocked it in our Bookstore. This however does not mean we necessarily recommend the author, because it is possible that a author may be using the Qur’aan & Sunnah only to promote his deviation.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵⁰ Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 140.

⁵⁵¹ Interview with Abu Tayyib, 9 October 2019.

⁵⁵² Interview with Hafiz Wahid, 12 September 2019.

⁵⁵³ Interview with “Ahmad” (anonymised), 24 August 2019.

⁵⁵⁴ Interview with “Anwar” (anonymised), 18 January 2020.

⁵⁵⁵ Hasan, *An Introduction to the Science of Hadith* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1996); Philips, *Islamic Rules on Menstruation and Post-Natal Bleeding* (Sharjah: Dar Al Fatah, 1995). Both titles I purchased from Spubs’ Salafi Bookstore in Birmingham during the early 2000s. For further context, compare: Abu Khadeejah, ‘Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips: The Misguided Deceitful Defender of Ahlul-Bid’ah [The People of Innovation]’, Abu Khadeejah, December, 2013, accessed 22 February, 2021, <https://www.abukhadeejah.com/bilal-philips-the-deceitful-defender-of-ahlul-bidah-with-Philips-rebuttal-Philips-Reply-To-Critics-Dr-Abu-Ameenah-Bilal-Philips/>, Philips, accessed 22 February, 2021, <https://bilalphilips.com/reply-to-critics>.

Irrespectively, the abovementioned Salafi franchises and bookstores operated as “gatekeepers” of religious information *and* as conduits for education in lieu of any Salafi college in Britain; Anglo–Salafi publications provided its curriculum *without walls*.

Case Study: Thalāthat al–Uṣūl (The Three Fundamental Principles)

In comparison to rival Islamic trends, Salafis leading up to the 2010s largely operated without a formal religious institute/college, or *Dār al–‘Ulūm*. One reason why is that unlike communities like the Barelwis and Deobandis who did set up such intellectual spaces, the Salafi community was still small in number and spread thinly across London, Birmingham and Northern towns and cities like Bradford.⁵⁵⁶ Another reason why is that internally, the Salafi community was fractured post–Gulf War. In 1994, Hasan attempted to remedy the shortfall of “qualified” *du ‘āt* in Britain by establishing MJAH’s first (and only) Salafi *dār al–‘ulūm* in Birmingham; the institute promised to offer aspiring students with ‘a deeper understanding of the Qur’an and Sunnah and the Classical works of scholars as well as the Arabic language’ by following the curriculum at IUM (see fig. 13).⁵⁵⁷

His decision to replicate Medina’s curriculum instead of South Asia’s *dars–e–nizami* demonstrates the Ahl–e–Hadith’s move towards Arab–centric Salafism at the time.⁵⁵⁸ Hasan admits that the institute did not attract many sign–ups and was forced to close down within the same year. The institute clearly did not appeal to JIMAS “2.0” members even if its curriculum was Medinan. Another reason why a British Salafi institute was never realised leading up to the 2010s was that Salafi leaders encouraged study *outside* of Britain, particularly through acquiring scholarships at IUM (see Chapter Six).

⁵⁵⁶ In comparison, Sidat counts 40 Deobandi *dār al–‘ulūms* in Britain as of 2018. Haroon Sidat, ‘Between Tradition and Transition: An Islamic Seminary, or *Dar al–Uloom* in Modern Britain’, *Religions* 9, no. 314 (2018): 2.

⁵⁵⁷ *The Straight Path*, November 1994, 23.

⁵⁵⁸ For more about *dars–e–nizami*, consult Robinson, *The ‘Ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia* (London: Hurst & Company, 2001).

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Figure 13.

In lieu of a Salafi institute, Anglo-Salafi texts provided the Salafi cooperative in particular with the intellectual basis they needed to confirm their own beliefs and contest rival discourses. One such required reading was Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's

Thalāthat al-Uṣūl which was first introduced into English in or around the 1980s.⁵⁵⁹ Like many of his works, *Thalāthat al-Uṣūl* is relatively short (approximately 2,500 words) and written in the style of a teaching manual made up of principles with supporting evidences from the Quran and Sunnah.⁵⁶⁰ Given their brevity and relative simplicity, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s writings were often discounted by his antagonists as theological reductionism.⁵⁶¹ For Salafis in Britain, they underscored the simplicity of “authentic” Islam. Furthermore, shorter texts were also easier to translate than larger texts and did not require a strong background in Islamic studies or a “team” to produce.⁵⁶²

Although it does not say so explicitly, *Thalāthat al-Uṣūl* is based on a popular ḥadīth which states every human being will be asked in his or her grave by two angels, ‘Who is your Lord?’, ‘What is your religion (*dīn*)?’ and ‘Who is this man (referring to the Prophet Muḥammad)?’⁵⁶³ Whoever responds with ‘Allāh’, ‘Islam’ and ‘Muḥammad’ experiences the blessings of Paradise even before the Day of Judgement while whoever does not experiences the torment of Hell. Given the necessity of answering these questions correctly, *Thalāthat al-Uṣūl* asks the reader the same questions and steers their answers with supporting evidences.

Given the cost of learning or ignoring these three “principles”, the text was widely taught in Al Saud territories during the mid-nineteenth century after the author’s grandson and qadi, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥasan (d. 1869), instructed that mosques under Saudi control should teach the book along with other texts; simultaneously, leaders of Al Saud would ‘continuously send preachers of God to different lands, reviving the religion and asking them about “the three fundamental principles.”’⁵⁶⁴ *Thalāthat al-Uṣūl* was revived under the third Saudi state under the religious leadership of M. I. ‘Al

⁵⁵⁹ During my fieldwork, I found a total of 18 different printed editions of the text in English. From these, nine were accompanied by commentaries. All but one of these commentaries were written by Saudi-based scholars. More importantly, only four of the 18 editions were published in Saudi Arabia. The rest were all produced by Salafi publishers in Britain or the United States.

⁵⁶⁰ See in particular, *Mu‘allafāt muḥammad b. ‘abd al-wahhāb* (Riyadh: Imām Muḥammad b. Sa‘ūd University, 1976), volume 1.

⁵⁶¹ Crawford, *Ibn ‘Abd Al-Wahhab*, 48; Bunzel, ‘Manifest Enmity’, 177. Commins also describes Najd at the time of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb as a ‘remote backwater of Arabia where the tradition of scholastic learning was shallow’ and Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb as belonging to an ‘unsophisticated cluster of ulama.’ Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*, 1.

⁵⁶² Interviews with Naeem, 23 January 2021, and Abdulhaq al-Ashanti, 4 April 2020.

⁵⁶³ Consult Sulaimān b. al-Ash‘ath al-Sijistānī, *Sunan abī dāwūd* (Riyadh: Darussalam Int., 1999), no. 4753, 672.

⁵⁶⁴ ‘Abd al-Muḥsin Al-Qāsim, *Taysīr al-wuṣūl sharḥ thalāthat al-uṣūl* (Medina: 2007), introduction.

al-Shaykh.⁵⁶⁵ Its popularity was later underscored by mass media. For example, it was taught orally by senior Saudi ulema including Ibn Bāz, Ibn al-‘Uthaymīn and al-Fawzān; these lectures were recorded and distributed in cassette format, then transcribed and published as book commentaries, sometimes as the expense of the Saudi government. Furthermore, senior Saudi ulema consistently recommended that aspiring “students of knowledge” start their studies by memorising *Thalāthat al-Uṣūl* or reading it to a teacher.

The same text is today widely available in world languages; Saudi-based IslamHouse.com, which describes itself as ‘the largest and the most authentic free reference to introduce Islam in the world languages on the internet’, contains no less than 44 translations of *Thalāthat al-Uṣūl* in different languages, which is notably 30 more than the author’s main work *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*.⁵⁶⁶ In Britain, elements of *The Three Fundamental Principles* were already incorporated into JIMAS “2.0”’s 1993 publication *Fundamentals of Aqeedah (Creed)* and refashioned by Abu Muntasir for an English audience.⁵⁶⁷ After JIMAS “2.0” fractured, Al-Hidaayah published Burbank’s translation of the text in full with the original Arabic version for aid in its memorisation, along with its commentary by Ibn al-‘Uthaymīn.⁵⁶⁸ The inclusion of the original Arabic text with vowel markings was a first for Anglo-Salafi print culture. Its memorisers would be empowered when giving *da‘wah* to non-Salafis by being able to recall primary evidences in the original Arabic language and outmanoeuvring seemingly unsubstantiated beliefs and practises. Spubs later co-published a pocket-size edition with both the Arabic text and its English translation, again, to facilitate study and memorisation.⁵⁶⁹ These underlined the process of local Salafis forming a habit which Haykel notes about global Salafi trends: grounding beliefs on ‘sound proof-texts’ and recalling ‘the relevant verses or traditions every time they issue a judgement or opinion.’⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid*; Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Āl al-Shaykh, *Sharḥ thalāthat al-uṣūl*, ed. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Qāsim (Medina: 2019).

⁵⁶⁶ IslamHouse.com, accessed 2 August, 2021, <https://islamhouse.com/en>.

⁵⁶⁷ *Fundamentals of Aqeedah (Creed)* (Ipswich: JIMAS, 1993).

⁵⁶⁸ Muḥammad ibn Saalih Al-‘Uthaymeen, *Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles of Islaam*, trans. Burbank (Birmingham: Al-Hidaayah, 1997).

⁵⁶⁹ Muḥammad Bin Abdul-Wahhaab, *The Three Fundamental Principles: Your Lord, Your Religion, Your Prophet*, trans. Burbank (Birmingham: Minhaaj as-Sunnah Publications and Salafi Publications, 2006).

⁵⁷⁰ Haykel, ‘On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action’, 36.

Thalāthat al-Uṣūl's translation in English essentially provided the Salafi cooperative with a primer in Saudi Salafi theology and formed the first building block towards replicating Saudi Salafi curricula outside of Medina.⁵⁷¹ Anwar states, 'Those who were new to Salafis were strongly advised to study it, and before long, they became keenly aware of the importance of sticking to Revelation.'⁵⁷² During my fieldwork, I came across no less than 20 unique English translations, some reworked into physical workbooks while others provided commentary from other Saudi-born or based ulema. As well as encouraging self-study, a number of the Salafi cooperative also taught the text to aspiring British "students of knowledge"; Burbank, for example, delivered 50 lectures in Birmingham between 2008–09 using al-Fawzān's commentary.⁵⁷³ Texts like *Thalāthat al-Uṣūl* thus bridged everyday aspiring Salafis in Britain with ulema they could not directly sit with in foreign institutes like IUM and eclipsed earlier works on *Tawḥīd* by Philips and other "students of knowledge." It also centred Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb and his descendants (the Al al-Shaykh) at the forefront of Salafism, more so than Ibn Taymiyyah and other important figures in the Salafi sphere including al-Albānī and students. How much of this is attributable to Saudi government spending is the subject of the following two chapters.

Conclusion

A number of scholars have previously examined the globalisation of religious markets in the modern era. The Anglo-Islamic book market remains relatively unexplored but can be understood as part of a wider shift in Islamic market trends. Fischer, for example, examined how middle-class Malays in London, in conjunction with the Malaysian government, became a key node in transforming the local "halal" market for consumable foods during the 2000s.⁵⁷⁴ Borrowing from Edmund Leach's framework of "frontiers", Fischer argues that London became a "halal frontier": a

⁵⁷¹ In comparison, an English translation of Deobandi scholar Ashraf Ali Thanwi's (d. 1943) *Bahishti Zewar*, originally targeted at Muslim women, 'is now required reading for Tabligh members in Great Britain.' Metcalf, *Perfecting Women*, 5.

⁵⁷² Anwar, 'An Ethnography', 219.

⁵⁷³ Dawood Burbank, 'Playlist: The Explanation of The Three Fundamental Principles – (Sharh Usool Al Thalāthah) by Abu Talhah Dawood Burbank Rahimahullāh', Salafi Sounds, 21 July, 2020, accessed 20 December, 2022, <https://www.salafisounds.com/playlist-the-explanation-of-the-three-fundamental-principles-sharh-usool-al-thalathah-by-abu-talhah-dawood-burbank-rahimahullah>.

⁵⁷⁴ Johan Fischer, *The Halal Frontier: Muslim Consumers in a Globalized Market* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

‘space of progress and opportunity in which pioneers and entrepreneurs can cultivate their business visions and prosper’ in a “wilderness” in which ‘halal production, trade, certification, and consumption are seen as chaotic, disorderly, and undeveloped.’⁵⁷⁵ In a similar fashion, this chapter reveals that Salafis in Britain (and elsewhere) placed themselves in a “frontier” by conceptualising Salafism in the English language through media. Consequently, Salafis in Britain generated refined articulations of Salafism, addressed a perceived religious information gap for “pure” and “authentic” material, gained wider visibility (despite their small numbers and lack of religious institutes) in Muslim reading spaces and stimulated competition with each other and rival Islamic trends.

This and earlier chapters contribute to my survey of Anglo–Salafi literature leading up to 2001. Whereas Anglo–Islamic books in the 1970s were available in the hundreds, by 2001 they now numbered a few thousand. In reconciling what has so far been discussed, Anglo–Salafi print culture in Britain began formerly in the late 1970s under the Ahl–e–Hadith, gathered momentum during the 1980s under Salafi youth initiatives, and flourished in the 1990s under the same trends who harnessed desktop computers, the internet and transnational networks towards creating a commercial marketplace for Anglo–Salafi literature. This literature increasingly echoed Saudi–centric Salafism and after 9/11, as the following chapter will demonstrate, contributed to the widespread public notion that the Saudi state was somehow involved monetarily in this intellectual project.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 4.

Chapter Five

After 9/11: External Issues

Stephens argues that during the 1860s–70s, in both Victorian Britain and British India, the figure of a “Phantom Wahhābī” emerged from ‘piles of bureaucratic correspondence, judicial proceedings, newspaper reports, pamphlets, and articles.’⁵⁷⁶ Only part–real, Stephens suggests that in the ‘colonial imagination’, “Phantom Wahhābīs” were ‘construed as indicative of a pervasive political threat, imagined as the vanguard of a much wider plot to bring down the [British] empire’ and ‘merging a kernel of reality with overblown paranoia, haunted the imperial imagination as the embodiment of the intertwined threats of religious fanaticism and anti–colonial resistance.’⁵⁷⁷ British politicians were already alarmed by “Wahhabi pirates” threatening English trading ships in the Persian Gulf which only further contributed to the “phantomization” of Wahhābism in the public sphere.⁵⁷⁸ Simultaneously, a ‘deeply orientalist’ and more sympathetic portrayal of Wahhabis also emerged at the same time in British academic and media circles, ‘emphasizing the religious over the political dimensions of the movement’ and casting doubt on British Indian policies which affected the “oriental Other.”⁵⁷⁹ Consequently, the “phantomization” of Wahhabism subsided in or around the turn of the twentieth century in British territories. A century or so later, the stigmatisation of Wahhābism began bearing similar socioreligious and political implications on Ahl–e–Hadith members and Salafis in Britain. A number of parallels and contrasts can thus be drawn between the experience of Salafis in both contexts.

This chapter examines how Salafism in Britain was re–“phantomized” in modern Britain, beginning internally in Muslim spaces before 9/11, followed by externally in the public sphere after 9/11. It follows by highlighting how this stigmatisation intensified in Britain following 7/7 during which time local Salafis were conflated with

⁵⁷⁶ Julia Stephens, ‘The Phantom Wahhabi: Liberalism and the Muslim Fanatic in Mid–Victorian India’, *Modern Asian Studies* 47, no. 1 (2013): 24.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁸ Giovanni Bonacina, *The Wahhabis Seen Through European Eyes (1772–1830): Deists and Puritans of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 102.

⁵⁷⁹ Stephens, ‘The Phantom Wahhabi’: 52.

Jihadis. Lastly, it reveals why despite all the negative public scrutiny on their ties with the kingdom, Salafis in Britain continued to publish Anglo–Salafi texts with Saudi Salafi overtones and undertones. It argues that Salafism was poorly understood during the 2000s by Muslims and non–Muslim critics resulting in such connotations which contributed to the prevailing notion that Saudi Arabia finances “Wahhābī” intolerance in Britain, partly through print. This “phantomization” only subsided as academics began to unravel Salafism’s relationship to Jihadism.

“The Wahhabis Did it!”

Corresponding to the intensification of Anglo–Salafi print culture during the 1990s (see previous chapter), non–Salafi trends in Britain felt threatened by the growing visibility and spread of Salafi *da‘wah*. Consequently, the term “Wahhābī” was employed by antagonists against Ahl–e–Hadith and Salafi members. For example, the Barelwis routinely used the term “Wahhabi” as a synonym for disbeliever or heretic when addressing Ahl–e–Hadith and Salafis.⁵⁸⁰ Abu Tayyib, who adopted Salafism during the early 1990s, recalls how he was branded the “Wahhabi of Newcastle” by ‘hardcore Barelwis’ who considered “Wahhabis” ‘worse than Shiites.’⁵⁸¹ Tensions between Barelwis and Salafis in Britain however only occasionally took place in print. The Barelwis were apparently slow to respond to the Anglo–Salafi print project, but they did release in 2002 a 452–page “exposition” of “deviant sects.” Originally compiled from earlier articles published in Manchester–based Barelwi magazine *Sirat ul Muslimin* (a rival to *Sirāt–e–Mustaqīm/The Straight Path*), the publication attacked Deobandis, the Tabligh–i Jamaat and more considerably, Salafis and their figureheads Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abd al–Wahhāb.⁵⁸²

Equally perturbed by Salafism’s rise in the Anglosphere was the Traditional Islam (hereafter TI) movement, a network of American and British Sufis with ties to Sufi orders in the MENA region. Unlike South Asian counterparts, the TI movement included convert–leaders native to Britain and the United States and trained in the

⁵⁸⁰ For one example of Barelwi–Ahl–e–Hadith tensions in Birmingham, see *The Straight Path*, March 1982, 3.

⁵⁸¹ Interview with Abu Tayyib, 9 October 2019.

⁵⁸² *‘Sirat Ahl us–Sunnah’: Exposing the Beliefs of the Deviant Sects*, ed. Ishaque Hassan Zeria (Manchester: Sirat ul Muslimin, 2002).

Arabic language like Hamza Yusuf (USA) and Abdal Hakim Murad (UK), a professor of Islamic Studies at Cambridge University. Another important figure, Muhammad Hisham Kabbani, was born in Lebanon and based in the United States. Unlike the Barelwis, members of the TI movement collectively employed the English language and print just as assertively as the Anglo–Salafis did and thereby constructed a substantial counter–“orthodoxy.”⁵⁸³ In 1996, Kabbani, for example, published a translation of an early twentieth–century refutation of “Wahhabism” by an Iraqi scholar accusing “Wahhabis”/Salafis of anthropomorphism and other violations of Islamic tenets.⁵⁸⁴ Similarly, A. H. Murad confronted the Salafi idea of bypassing traditional schools of Islamic law in his 1995 *Understanding the Four Madhhabs*.⁵⁸⁵

Following Usama Bin Laden’s (d. 2011) declaration of war against the United States in 1996 and his fatwa advocating “global” jihad two years later, members of the TI movement were quick to conflate “global” Jihadism with Saudi Wahhabism in the United States and Britain. As such, the political “phantomization” of Wahhabism, as coined by Stephens, re–emerged in post–war Britain and again, threatened to incriminate Salafis (and others). In 1998, Kabbani established the Islamic Supreme Council of America (ISCA), a religious organisation which proceeded to accuse large numbers of American mosques of accommodating “militant extremists”, or more specifically, “Wahhabis”/Salafis.⁵⁸⁶ According to one American journalist writing in the aftermath of 9/11, Kabbani was treated like a ‘sage’ by politicians and ‘Probably more than any other figure... helped shape the view circulating among some American commentators and intellectuals that the problem within Islam can be attributed entirely to Wahhabism.’⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸³ Consult Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 135–140.

⁵⁸⁴ Jamal Effendi Al–Zahawi, *The Doctrine of Ahl Al–Sunna Versus the ‘Salafi’ Movement*, trans. Muhammad Hisham Kabbani (Mountain View: As–Sunna Foundation of America, 1996). See also Kabbani, *‘Salafi’ Movement Unveiled* (Mountain View: As–Sunna Foundation of America, 1997) and Gibril Fouad Haddad, *Albani & his Friends: A Concise Guide to the Salafi Movement* (Birmingham: AQSA Publications, 2003; second revised edition 2009).

⁵⁸⁵ A. H. Murad, *Understanding the Four Madhhabs* (Batley: Ashraf Publications, 1995).

⁵⁸⁶ Kabbani, ‘Revealing the Roots of Militant Extremism’, Islamic Supreme Council of America, February, 1999, accessed, 27 September, 2021, <https://wpisca.wpengine.com/?p=152>.

⁵⁸⁷ Laurie Goodstein, ‘A Nation Challenged: The Cleric; Muslim Leader Who Was Once Labeled an Alarmist Is Suddenly a Sage’, *The New York Times*, 28 October, 2001, accessed 27 September, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/10/28/us/nation-challenged-cleric-muslim-leader-who-was-once-labeled-alarmist-suddenly.html>.

In the aftermath of 9/11, A. H. Murad issued the following reflection hinting at how this conflation between Wahhabism, Jihadism and Salafism took its course:

Among Muslims, the longer-term aftershock will surely take the form of a crisis among “moderate Wahhabis”. Even if a Middle-Eastern connection is somehow disproved, they cannot deny forever that doctrinal extremism can lead to political extremism... It is true that not every committed Wahhabi is willing to kill civilians to make a political point. However it is also true that no orthodox Sunni has ever been willing to do so... No-one has ever heard of Sufi terrorism. Everyone, enemies included, knows that the very idea is absurd.⁵⁸⁸ Two years ago, Shaykh Hisham Kabbani of the Islamic Supreme Council of America, warned of the dangers of mass terrorism to American cities; and he was brushed aside as a dangerous alarmist. Muslim organisations are no doubt beginning to regret their treatment of him. The movement for traditional Islam will, we hope, become enormously strengthened in the aftermath of the recent events, accompanied by a mass exodus from Wahhabism, leaving behind only a merciless hardcore of well-financed zealots. Those who have tried to take over the controls of Islam, **after reading books from we-know-where [Saudi Arabia]**, will have to relinquish them, because we now know their destination.⁵⁸⁹

Here Murad insinuates that Saudi-subsidised literature and financing were responsible for creating extremist Wahhabism (Salafism) in Britain; the following chapter highlights that this notion may have been widespread given the availability of Anglo-Salafi literature with Saudi roots. The stark difference here is that A. H. Murad was a seasoned academic with a theological bias against Wahhabism *and* a public platform. The following chapter highlights how much of the Saudi-centrism which pervades Anglo-Salafi print culture is “made in Britain.”⁵⁹⁰ This trend continued into the 2000s.

For example, Fatwa Online, is an online database of contemporary Salafi fatwas and biographies, established in 1999 and created by “Abu Abdullah”, a British-Pakistani graduate of IUM. His venture into *da‘wah* began in 1999 while working in Saudi Arabia following his graduation in 1996. Having adopted Salafism while in Medina

⁵⁸⁸ This is not entirely true as the Taliban in Afghanistan are Deobandis and by extension, both Hanafi and Sufi. As is widely documented, suicide bombings and terrorist attacks targeting civilians were committed by the Taliban following the US invasion of Afghanistan and leading up to the reestablishment of the Taliban Islamic Emirate in 2021. See also Harry S. Neale, *Sufi Warrior Saints: Stories of Sufi Jihad from Muslim Hagiography* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2022).

⁵⁸⁹ A. H. Murad, ‘Recapturing Islam From the Terrorists’, Masud, 2001, accessed 1 October, 2021, <http://masud.co.uk/ISLAM/ahm/recapturing.html>. Emphasise mine.

⁵⁹⁰ In contrast, members of the Salafi cooperative have largely eschewed Egyptian Salafism, partly because of “inconsistent” positions held by Egyptian Salafi ulema with respect to political activism. Consult *Salafism After the Arab Awakening*.

through a friend, he was largely unaware of any Salafi *da'wah* in Britain until dial-up internet was introduced in Saudi Arabia in 1999 after which he learned of Salafi Publications (Spubs) and other British outfits.⁵⁹¹ “Abu Abdullah” immediately utilised his skills as a programmer and established Fatwa Online which garnered 2,000 unique visitors a day and a mailing list of 10,000 subscribers prior to social media.⁵⁹² In 2004, he began publishing Anglo–Salafi books, producing them in Medina, printing them in Turkey, and distributing them through British channels like Darussalam London and Invitation to Islam.⁵⁹³ Despite living in Saudi Arabia, “Abu Abdullah” claims he never received a riyal from Saudi donors for his own media projects.⁵⁹⁴

In another example, Jamiah Media was established in London in 2005. Its co-founder, Abdulhaq al–Ashanti (Paul Addae), admits that while he would have welcomed Saudi’s money towards publishing books, Jamiah Media has always struggled to afford related costs and depends on local donations; he insists that A. H. Murad’s idea of Saudi Arabia subsidizing Anglo–Salafi texts is nothing but ‘nonsense’ and a ‘myth.’⁵⁹⁵ Al–Ashanti is in fact a British–African convert to Islam from Christianity. According to him, he began frequenting Brixton Mosque in the late 1990s and studied Arabic under a Moroccan attendee; while learning Arabic, he co-authored an essay on Jesus’ early followers with another convert, Abdur–Rahman Bowes while studying history at SOAS University; they later published the essay as a booklet, *Before Nicea*, which was printed and photocopied at the university after which he was offered local donations to print 5,000 copies of the same title “more properly.”⁵⁹⁶ Once al–Ashanti was proficient in Arabic, he turned to translating texts and publishing titles under Jamiah Media, some of whose first drafts are posted online as PDF e–books on his co-administered website SalafiManhaj.com.⁵⁹⁷

It is reasonable to assume that the widespread availability of Anglo–Salafi texts in Britain during the 1990s and leading up to 2001 as highlighted in the previous chapter

⁵⁹¹ Interview with “Abu Abdullah”, 3 April 2020.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*

⁵⁹³ See for example, Muhammad ibn Saalih Al–’Uthaymeen, *The Book of Knowledge* (London: Invitation to Islam, 2004), back cover, where Fatwa Online, Invitation of Islam and Darussalam Walthamstow are all partnered up.

⁵⁹⁴ Interview with “Abu Abdullah”, 3 April 2020.

⁵⁹⁵ Interview with al–Ashanti, 4 April 2020.

⁵⁹⁶ Interview with al–Ashanti, 4 April 2020; al–Ashanti and Abdur–Rahman Bowes, *Before Nicea: The Early Followers of Prophet Jesus* (London: Jamiah Media, 2005).

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

was misconstrued by members of the TI movement as being Saudi-sponsored. But even when publications originate in Saudi Arabia, it does not necessitate that Saudi state officials are involved. For example, JIMAS “2.0” published the first English translation of the Quran by a Salafi outfit in Britain.⁵⁹⁸ Its translator, M. M. Ali, was in fact Abu Muntasir’s father who completed his word-for-word translation while working in Medina for the King Fahd Glorious Quran Printing Complex (KFGQP). This publication, despite being produced in Medina, was a personal project conducted in the Prophet’s mosque by M. M. Ali because, he would state: ‘I do not consider any of the [existing] translations [of the Quran in English] to be reliable or good.’⁵⁹⁹ As with other JIMAS publications, it was entirely self-funded. Similarly, Al-Muntada published *The Qur’ān*, another Salafi translation of the Quran, in 2004. This particular translation was a reprint of an earlier publication by Jeddah-based Saheeh International, paid for and produced by three American converts to Islam living in Saudi Arabia, one of whom owned the publishing house.⁶⁰⁰

Saudi-based Darussalam Int. was equally productive in the 2000s but, as the following chapter will detail, was established by a Pakistani Ahl-e-Hadith member living in Riyadh. As well as publishing its own word-for-word edition of *The Noble Quran*; Darussalam Int. achieved the prestige of being the first Anglo-Islamic publisher to complete the translation of the entire set of the “six books of ḥadīth” (*kutub al-sittah*).⁶⁰¹ Prior to this time, aside from Khan’s translation of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in nine volumes, South Asian publishers had only issued translations of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (1976), *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (1984) and *Sunan Ibn Mājah* (1994).⁶⁰² Darussalam Int. not only

⁵⁹⁸ *A Word for Word Meaning of the Qur’ān*, trans. Muḥammad Mohar Ali, 3 vols (Ipswich: Jam’iyat Ihyaa’ Minhaaj Al-Sunnah, 2003).

⁵⁹⁹ *The Muslim World League Journal*, February 2002, 41.

⁶⁰⁰ Jannah Institute, ‘First All-Female Team To Produce A Quran Translation: Saheeh International’, YouTube, 3 November 2021, accessed 23 September 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRDAaiS8svc&ab_channel=JannahInstitute.

⁶⁰¹ Al-Bukhārī, *The Translation of the Meanings of Saḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*; Muslim Ibn Al-Hajjaj, *English Translation of Saḥīḥ Muslim*, trans. Nasiruddin Al-Khattab, 7 vols (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007); Sulaiman bin Ash’ath, *English Translation of Sunan Abu Dawud*, trans. Yaser Qadhi, 5 vols (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2008); ‘Eisā Mohammad Ibn ‘Eisā At-Tirmidhī, *English Translation of Jāmi‘ At-Tirmidhī*, trans. Abu Khaliyl, 6 vols (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007); Ahmad bin Shu’aib bin ‘Ali An-Nasā’i, *English Translation of Sunan An-An-Nasā’i*, trans. Nasiruddin Al-Khattab, 6 vols (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007); Muhammad Bin Yazeed Ibn Majah Al-Qazwīnī, *English Translation of Sunan Ibn Mājah*, trans. Nasiruddin Al-Khattab, 5 vols (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007).

⁶⁰² *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, trans. ‘Abdul Ḥamid Ṣiddīqī, 4 vols (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1976); *Sunan Abu Dawud*, trans. Ahmad Hasan, 3 vols (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1984); Muhammad b. Yazid Ibn-i-Maja, *Sunan Ibn-i-Majah*, trans. Muhammad Tufail Ansari, 5 vols (New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 1994).

published completely new translations of these four works but also the remaining two which had yet to be seen in English, namely *Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī* and *Sunan al-Nasā‘ī*. Aside from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, the remaining five were all issued between 2007 and 2008 in a total of 29 hardback volumes. According to Abu Khaliyl, who translated *Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī* and edited many of the other volumes, this project was the combined effort of North American Salafis and Ahl-e-Hadith Salafi university students in South Asia.⁶⁰³

The widespread availability of Anglo-Salafi publications in Britain, Saudi or otherwise, was further enhanced in 2005 when Ahmed Shalaan, an Egyptian entrepreneur, established Dar Makkah International in Small Heath, Birmingham. In addition to publishing its own titles, Shalaan’s warehouse, entirely independent of any government subsidies, stocks one of the largest repositories of Saudi-centric Arabic and English Salafi books in Britain.⁶⁰⁴ At the same time, the internet allowed Salafis involved in the production of Anglo-Islamic books to stake a portion of the online marketplace. For example, Spubs launched the SalafiBookstore.com to sell physical copies of their titles and other works selected by them.⁶⁰⁵ On equal terms, online Islamic bookstores unaffiliated to the Salafi movement often acted as buyers of Darussalam Leyton or Dar Makkah Int.’s Anglo-Salafi stock.⁶⁰⁶ Salafi *da‘wah* in Britain was of course not entirely built in the 2000s through physical books, but it almost certainly played an important role in its disproportionate visibility. On a wider scale, Anglo-Salafi discourse also permeated Anglo-Muslim spaces through satellite shows presented by Salafi leaders (including Hasan) and aired on Islam Channel TV and Peace TV, both broadcast in English to global audiences.⁶⁰⁷ Despite A. H. Murad’s insinuations, the Saudi government’s monetary involvement in all of the above was entirely lacking.

⁶⁰³ Interview with Abu Khaliyl, 16 August 2020. These students were responsible for writing explanatory comments to *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, *Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī*, *Sunan al-Nasā‘ī* and *Sunan Ibn Mājah* while the North Americans were tasked with translating the actual ḥadīths.

⁶⁰⁴ Correspondence with Ahmed Shalaan, 21 February 2021.

⁶⁰⁵ Salafi Bookstore, accessed 22 December, 2022, <https://salafibookstore.com>.

⁶⁰⁶ Interview with “Shuaib” (anonymised), 17 March 2020.

⁶⁰⁷ Hamid, *Sufis, Salafis and Islamists*, 79–80; Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 226.

“Salafis... Not Wahhabis!”

Salafis in Britain and elsewhere were perturbed by public connotations with “Wahhābī” Islam primarily because of its political implications. For example, Charles Allen, a popular British historian, published *God’s Terrorists: The Wahhabi Cult and the Hidden Roots of Modern Jihad*.⁶⁰⁸ This book promised to trace the roots of modern-day Islamic terrorism back to the late eighteenth century in Central Arabia under the Wahhabi “cult” which was then exported into British India and led to the 1857 Indian Mutiny and the North–West Frontier wars. The Arabian and Indian Wahhabis, according to Allen, regrouped in 1980s–Afghanistan and formed two notorious parties: the Taliban and Al–Qaeda. Allen concluded that ‘So long as the world buys oil from the Saudis, Wahhabism will prosper in Arabia’, and that the Indian Wahhabis (Deobandis and Ahl–e–Hadith) have the respective zeal ‘to revitalise Islam in their own image’ and play the ‘principal role in promoting Islamist extremism in South Asia and beyond.’⁶⁰⁹ Indeed both the Deobandis and Ahl–e–Hadith had sizeable communities in Britain; The latter was particularly vocal about its support of Saudi Arabia and alongside its more youthful articulation, driven by Salafi cooperatives, routinely published Saudi–centric literature. This begged the question as to whether the British public should be worried about British “Wahhābīs”?

Given such connotations after 9/11, Salafis in Britain, like their British Indian counterparts over a century earlier, denounced the “Wahhabi” label. In Bowen’s useful survey of Islamic activism in Britain, her chapter title on Salafis reflects this sentiment: ‘The Salafis: “Don’t Call us Wahhabis!”’⁶¹⁰ Simultaneously, a similar narrative to that of the TI movement surrounding Saudi “soft power” was gaining currency in academia following Al–Rasheed’s 2005 edited volume *Transnational Connections and the Arab Gulf*.⁶¹¹ Despite the shortage of hard evidence, the same volume subsequently informed dozens of academic studies and security reports related to Saudi and/or Wahhabi expansionism.

⁶⁰⁸ Charles Allen, *God’s Terrorists: The Wahhabi Cult and the Hidden Roots of Modern Jihad* (London: Abacus, 2007; originally published by Little, 2006). See also Allen, ‘The Hidden Roots of Wahhabism in British India’, *World Policy Journal* 22, no. 2 (2005): 87–93.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 295–296.

⁶¹⁰ Bowen, *Medina in Birmingham*, Chapter 3.

⁶¹¹ See in particular Al–Rasheed, ‘Introduction’ and ‘Saudi Religious Transnationalism in London’, and Birt’s ‘Wahhabism in the United Kingdom’ in the same volume.

The Barelwis, TI movement, and British journalists, authors, and academics were not entirely unjustified in using the label “Wahhābī” given the history and connections between Saudi figureheads and Ahl-e-Hadith/Salafis in Britain. Saqib in *The Straight Path* would describe Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb as a “true” caller to Islam whose mission was ‘embodied in the teachings of the Qur’an and the Prophet Muhammad.’⁶¹² In the Urdu counterpart magazine, Saqib once dedicated an entire cover and theme to the same “true” caller.⁶¹³ Translations of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s works were also circulated by MJAH during the mid-1980s.⁶¹⁴ In 2000, MJAH also made the unprecedented move, due to the growing stigma surrounding Wahhabism in the Anglosphere caused by the TI movement, of dedicating their 24th Annual Conference (Urdu and English) to defending Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s reputation.⁶¹⁵

JIMAS similarly favoured Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and published at least three of his titles in the 1990s, counting him and ‘his many students’ as ‘Scholars of the Ahl-us-Sunnah wal-Jamaa’ah’ after the Salaf ‘who followed their way in belief and deed.’⁶¹⁶ Following the breakup of JIMAS, the Salafi print cooperative promoted Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb even further; they forged ties with mostly Saudi-born or trained scholars who commented on his works; among these, is Ibn al-‘Uthaymīn’s commentary on Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s *Thalāthat al-Uṣūl* (see Chapter Four).⁶¹⁷ Darussalam Int. further popularised his works by publishing *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* (Book of Monothiesm) in 1996, his biography by Ibn Bāz in 1997 and more recently, a new rendition of Ibn al-‘Uthaymīn’s commentary mentioned above.⁶¹⁸ American-born or based Salafis also issued commercial publications about Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s disconnection with Al

⁶¹² Saqib, *The Straight Path*, June 1982, 7. A translation of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s ‘Excellent Qualities of the Holy Quran’ was also later featured in *The Straight Path*, September 1997, 6–7 and 9.

⁶¹³ *Ṣirāt-e-Mustaqīm*, August 1980.

⁶¹⁴ This includes an apologetic published by Al Jamia tus Salafiah, Varanasi: Masood Alam Nadwi, *Mohammad Bin Abdul Wahhab: A Slandered Reformer*, trans. M. Rafiq Khan (Varanasi: Idaratul Buhoosil Islamia, Jamia Salafia, 1983). See its review in *The Straight Path*, January 1985, 22–23.

⁶¹⁵ *The Straight Path*, November/December 2000, 29–30. Invitees included Ṣāliḥ Āl al-Shaykh (a descendant of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and Head of Saudi’s Ministry of Religious Affairs) and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sudais, then imam of the Grand Mosque in Mecca.

⁶¹⁶ Abu Muntasir, *A Brief Introduction to the Salafi Da’wah*, 1–2.

⁶¹⁷ For another such commentary in translation, consult ‘Ubaid al-Jaabiree, *A Gift for the Intellectuals in Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles of Islaam* (Birmingham: Salafi Publications, 2010).

⁶¹⁸ Muhammad bin Abdul-Wahhab, *Kitab at-Tauhid* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1996); Abdul Aziz Ibn Baz, *Imam Muhammad Bin Abdul Wahhab: His Life & Mission* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1997); Muhammad Al-‘Uthaimin, *Commentary on the Three Fundamental Principles of Islam* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2009).

Qaeda including Haneef James Oliver, a Muslim convert, who released the aptly titled *The 'Wahhabi' Myth*.⁶¹⁹

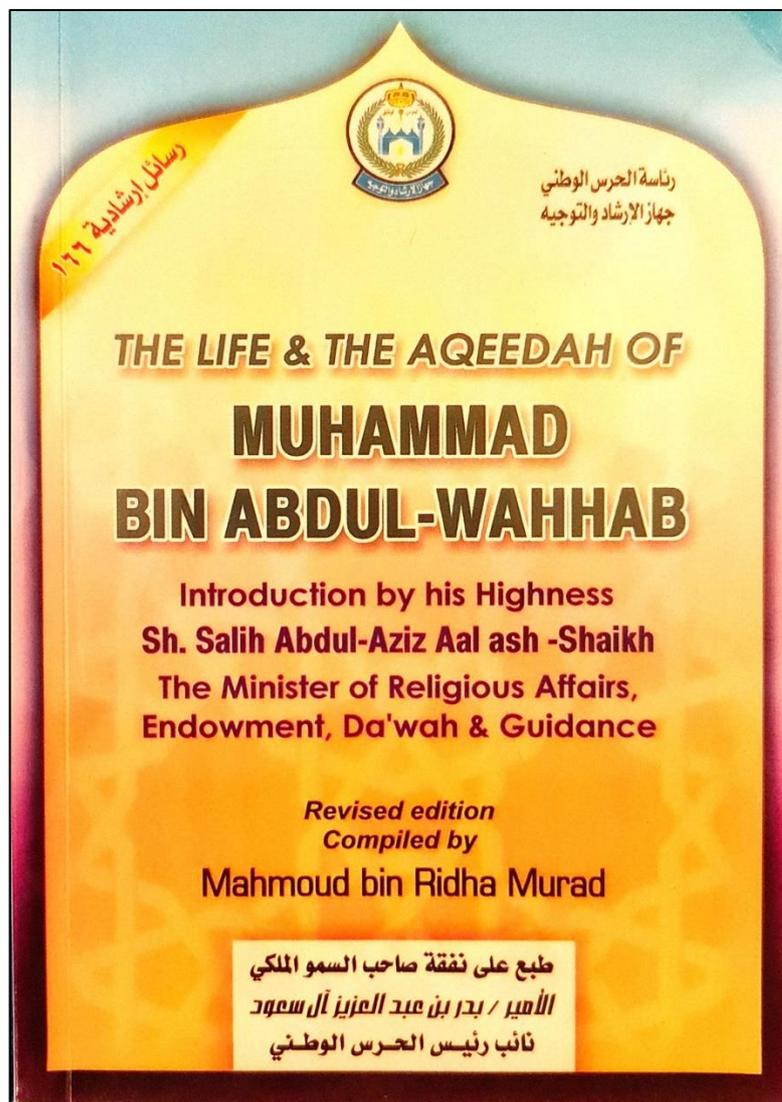


Figure 17.

These efforts happened to coincide with Saudi Arabia's religious policy at the time for the same reason.⁶²⁰ The seemingly widespread ignorance and misconceptions surrounding "Wahhābism" and its eponymous leader concerned officials like Ṣāliḥ Āl al-Shaykh, a descendent of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb and Saudi's Minister of Religious

⁶¹⁹ Haneef James Oliver, *The 'Wahhabi' Myth: Dispelling Prevalent Fallacies and the Fictitious Link with Bin Laden* (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2005). See also Jalal Abualrub, *Biography and Mission of Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab* (Orlando: Madinah Publishers, 2003).

⁶²⁰ Consult Abdullah Ansary, 'Combating Extremism: A Brief Overview of Saudi Arabia's Approach', *Middle East Policy* 15, no. 2 (2008): 111–142; Hegghammer, 'Islamist Violence and Regime Stability in Saudi Arabia', *International Affairs* 84, no. 4 (July 2008): 701–715.

Affairs, Endowment, Da'wah & Guidance. In 2000, he wrote a foreword to Murad's *The Life & the Aqeedah [Creed] of Muhammad Bin Abdul-Wahhab* (see fig. 17).⁶²¹ The same publication was distributed freely and clearly contains references to a Saudi publisher while the cover reads at the bottom: 'Printed at the expense of His Royal Highness Amīr 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-'Azīz Āl Su'ūd, Deputy Head of the National Guard.'⁶²²

Similarly, Zarabozo, an American–Salafi convert to Islam and prolific translator and author of Anglo–Salafī texts, published a substantial biography of Ibn 'Abd al–Wahhāb, again with the support of Ṣ. Āl al–Shaykh and his ministry.⁶²³ Both Murad and Zarabozo's publications were distributed freely but their exact numbers are unknown. Saudi interest, both at state and institutional level, in popularising and defending Ibn 'Abd al–Wahhāb was thus matched by British and American Salafis, often at the latter's own expense besides the abovementioned two titles. Collectively, these instances almost certainly contributed to the impression that Salafism in Britain was merely a reflection of Saudi Wahhābism.

After 7/7

Shortly after the terrorist attacks in London on 7 July 2005, this time carried out by British Muslims acting on behalf of Al Qaeda, the negative spotlight on "British Wahhabism" was amplified by members of the TI movement, and journalists, academics, politicians and political analysts alike.⁶²⁴ In 2007 alone, three very public expositions made particularly damning claims.

⁶²¹ Murad, *The Life & the Aqeedah of Muhammad Bin Abdul-Wahhab* (Riyadh: Jihāz al–Irshād wa 'l–Tawjīh, 2000). See also Muhammad bin Sulaiman at–Tamimi, *The Fundamentals of Islam Followed By The Four Rules*, trans. Murad (Riyadh: Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Da'wah and Guidance, 1998). Note here that Murad purposefully used Ibn 'Abd al–Wahhāb's less recognisable name and lineage to appeal to readers averse to Wahhābism.

⁶²² Murad, *The Life & the Aqeedah of Muhammad Bin Abdul-Wahhab*, front cover and 1.

⁶²³ Jamaal al–Din Zarabozo, *The Life, Teachings and Influence of Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab* (Riyadh: Ministry of Islamic Affairs & Endowments, 2005), Preface. This publication was freely distributed by the ministry as well as by Imam University, Riyadh.

⁶²⁴ On the wider impact of 7/7 on Muslim communities in Britain, consult Javaid Rehman, 'Islam, "War on Terror" and the Future of Muslim Minorities in the United Kingdom: Dilemmas of Multiculturalism in the Aftermath of the London Bombings', *Human Rights Quarterly* 29, no. 4, November 2007: 831–878.

The first of these was a Channel 4 *Dispatches* documentary entitled ‘Undercover Mosque’ in which a group of reporters posing as worshippers secretly filmed alleged “hate speeches” in mostly Salafi/Ahl-e-Hadith mosques and uncovered messages of “intolerance” in speeches by Islamic University of Medina (IUM) graduates and in “Wahhabi” publications.⁶²⁵ Among the mosques featured was Green Lane Masjid (GLM) and speakers included Hasan and Philips (during a tour of Britain). The same documentary provided a platform for A. H. Murad and other critics of Wahhabism to comment. Repeatedly, the documentary stressed the import of “petrodollar”-fuelled Wahhabism penetrating British Muslim spaces and overshadowing “moderate” Muslim voices. A. H. Murad, for example stated in one scene:

A number of bookshops known to me have actually gone out of business because they’ve been undercut by the more fundamentalist literature that’s being supplied for free by Saudi Arabia.⁶²⁶

This anecdote was left unchecked by the filmmakers despite it suggesting that the Saudi government works in tandem with Muslim private booksellers in Britain. A 2008 sequel to ‘Undercover Mosque’ reiterated some of the same criticisms and centred on three institutions in London affiliated to Saudi Arabia: London Central Mosque (including the Darussalam bookstore located inside), the Muslim World League (MWL) headquarters and King Fahad Academy.⁶²⁷

The second expose was a think-tank report published by the Centre For Social Cohesion entitled ‘Hate on the State.’ Its authors, James Brandon and Douglas Murray –both public critics of “extremist Islam”–, “uncovered” the disproportionate amount of “extremist” Islamic literature available at public UK-taxpayer funded libraries, specifically in Tower Hamlets where the Muslim population in Britain is most largely concentrated. Brandon and Murray focused on literature produced by several Islamic trends, beginning with ‘Salafi and Wahhabi-influenced books’ which they admit, ‘deal with theological issues which may appear abstract and worldly’ but ‘can also play an important role in encouraging Muslim readers to see themselves as separate, and

⁶²⁵ ‘Terrorism in Mosques: Undercover in British Wahabi/Salafi Mosques’, accessed 7 July, 2022.

⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁷ ‘Dispatches – Undercover Mosque The Return’, accessed 20 February, 2022.

opposed to, mainstream British society.’⁶²⁸ The authors cited controversial passages from titles by authors such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn ‘Abd al–Wahhāb and Philips (found in *The Fundamentals of Tawheed*). The authors went on to call on libraries to regain ‘control of their collections’ because the presence of such extremist literature ‘risks radicalising Muslims while making non–Muslims more hostile towards the Islamic faith.’⁶²⁹

The third was another think–tank expose, this time issued by Policy Exchange and entitled: ‘The Hijacking of British Islam: How Extremist Literature is Subverting Mosques in the UK.’⁶³⁰ According to Inge, this particular report ‘shocked the British public by “exposing” the intolerant and patriarchal teachings taught in Salafi groups and texts.’⁶³¹ Under the same pretext as ‘Undercover Mosque’, a team of “independent experts” analysed 80 Islamic books and pamphlets secretly collected by four Muslim research teams from almost 100 Islamic institutions and mosques across the United Kingdom from “above” and “below” counters. The results were analysed by Denis MacEoin, a senior British academic in Islamic studies. MacEoin concluded that out of approximately 25% ‘radical material’ discovered at prominent sites, key themes emerged such as *al–walā’ wa ‘l–barā’* (loyalty and enmity), separatism and ‘antipathy towards western society’ and women; such themes, he contended, *may* ‘descend into exhortations to violence and jihad against the “enemies” of Islam.’⁶³² He further underlined ‘the forces vying for control of Britain’s mosques... in particular, the Wahhabites’ and proposes that Saudi Arabia should be held to account and the export of their literature halted.⁶³³ As evidence of the incriminating ideas being propagated within such literature, the report went on to cite controversial passages from the publications obtained during fieldwork.

A scrutiny of the titles listed in the same report’s appendix reveals a total of 60 publications and pamphlets excluding repeats. Including repeats, a total of 80

⁶²⁸ James Brandon and Douglas Murray, ‘Hate on the State: How British Libraries Encourage Islamic Extremism’ (London: Centre For Social Cohesion, 2007), 9.

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*, 5 and 32.

⁶³⁰ Denis MacEoin, ‘The Hijacking of British Islam: How Extremist Literature Is Subverting Mosques in the UK’ (London: Policy Exchange, 2007).

⁶³¹ Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 31.

⁶³² MacEoin, ‘The Hijacking of British Islam’, 5–6.

⁶³³ *Ibid.*, 6–7 and 169–170.

publications were scrutinised: 48% in English, 45% in Arabic and 7% in Urdu.⁶³⁴ Of these, 16 were published in Britain, six of which were produced by the Da‘wah Office in London in Arabic. Aside from four publications which do not reveal their place of origin, 30 publications were published in Saudi Arabia, of which 19 were products of government ministries or affiliated offices; of these, six were Urdu translations and one was an English translation, the remainder were in Arabic. The disproportionate number of texts stemming from Saudi Arabia or its office in London and in the Arabic language correlate to the locations many of them were collected from, including the King Fahad Academy in London and centres such as London Central Mosque and MWL, the latter two of which are funded in part by the Saudi Government. It is a given that such centres would be distribution points for Saudi subsidised literature. It nevertheless illustrates the presence of Saudi sponsored literature in Britain. Given that this literature flows outside of commercial spaces, it is difficult to gauge their exact figures or impact.

The same report also alerts us to the problem of “intolerant” teachings which pervade Anglo–Islamic books in general and circulate in liberal countries in the West. For example, a quote from a Darussalam Int. set and translation of fatwas authored by senior Saudi ulema reads that an apostate’s head ‘should be chopped off, according to the Hadith: ‘Whoever changes his religion, kill him.’⁶³⁵ The penalty of death for apostates in the traditional Sunni law schools is execution, so this is not specifically a “Wahhābī” belief. MacEoin awkwardly considers Sufis in the same report as “moderate” Muslims (and whose Islam is being “hijacked”). Yet a translation of a classic Islamic text by a prolific Sufi translator of Anglo–Islamic books, for example, contains similar, if not more provocative rules on apostacy.⁶³⁶ Furthermore, the fatwa in question is a ruling based on a jurisprudential tradition going back over a

⁶³⁴ *Ibid*, 5. Repeat publications signify specific titles which were found in more than one Islamic institution and/or mosque.

⁶³⁵ *Ibid*, 4.

⁶³⁶ Qadi ‘Iyad al–Yahsubi, *Muhammad Messenger of Allah: Ash–Shifa of Qadi ‘Iyad*, trans. Aisha Bewley (Inverness: Madinah Press, 2004; fifth reprint). See in particular Part Four. Bewley was recently awarded the ‘Muslim Woman of the Year’ award and is included in the list of 500 of the most influential Muslims in the world by The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre in Jordan. Consulted online at ‘The Muslim 500: The World’s 500 Most Influential Muslims 2023’, The Muslim 500, accessed 22 December, 2022, <https://themuslim500.com/books/The%20Muslim%20500%202023%20edition%20-%20Free%20eBook.pdf>.

millennium; while it might be enshrined in Saudi Arabia today, it certainly does not mean that Muslims enact such laws in Britain.

The complication here is whether such passages ought to be circulated in the Anglosphere; indeed they desperately need at least a footnote clarifying that capital punishments (*hudūd*) are only meted out by authorities and that sharia law does not apply in Western countries where freedom of speech and freedom to practise any religion is an individual right.⁶³⁷ In return, this might be said to impede on the freedom of expression enshrined in the West and raises the question as to what degree of responsibility must Muslims in Britain take for providing moral guidance beyond translating and/or publishing texts? If they omit something because they know it to be frowned-upon in Britain, have they committed *traduttori traditori*? Should they be scrutinised for what they do translate of classical texts while academics, for argument's sake, are free to translate similar passages as part of their translations of the Islamic tradition? These problem questions remain unresolved.

Despite these very public “exposés”, problematic though they may have been, I have found scarce evidence of Salafis in Britain responding to the abovementioned accusations. The movement, after all, was largely segregated from the public eye. This is not to say that members were unaware of what was being said in public. Hasan, for example, is critical of these programmes and reports “cherry-picking” passages; he states:

Let them understand that as far as the books are concerned, the books speak silently, they speak silently and they don't implement anything by themselves... So we know that as a Muslim minority in this country [Britain], we are not responsible for such functions which are only the right of the state to implement, like the implementation of the penal code of Islam. That is totally in the hand of the state. So if there is a mention of stoning or flogging in the books, all right, what about the Bible! The Bible will speak about the very same thing... but when it comes to practise, you are not implementing them!⁶³⁸

⁶³⁷ Former JIMAS member Usama further argues that the death penalty for apostacy was abolished by the Ottoman caliphate and Al-Azhar University in Cairo following the nineteenth century, consequently, it should not be revitalised by any existing or future Islamic governments. U. Hasan, ‘No Compulsion in Religion: Islam & The Freedom of Belief’, Religious Reform Series (London: Quilliam, 2013). While this is not the position of Salafi ulema or their followers in Britain, it highlights how Usama, using a scriptural approach like Salafis, arrives at a completely different position.

⁶³⁸ Interview with Hasan, 12 September 2019.

Similarly, “Anwar”, an Anglo–Salafi bookseller, states that Islamic books “speak” to readers, ‘but at the same time, we knew that the book doesn’t talk back... you still have to go to someone [a scholar] to find out what it means.’⁶³⁹ Palestinian–American Anglo–Salafi author and translator Jalal Abualrub also alerts us to the limitations sometimes placed on translators by Islamic publishers. Abualrub translated approximately half of a Quranic exegesis (see following chapter) for Darussalam Int. and recalls spending a great deal of time adding footnotes to provide interpretive control on controversial passages already identified by Western critics. His footnotes were removed from the final publication because he believes Darussalam Int. ‘just wanted to sell books.’⁶⁴⁰ This suggests other ways in which Salafis’ ideas about authority and interpretation reflect in their print culture. In this case, a translator was obstructed from inserting himself into the discourse, irrespective of the necessity of doing so.⁶⁴¹ In contrast, two IUM graduates I met who work outside of print and who are both based in Greater Manchester, regularly employ interpretive control so that attendees of their lessons do not misconstrue Salafi “hot topics.”⁶⁴²

At the same time, some Salafis appear to be more conscious of how Anglo–Islamic texts can be misconstrued when left as they are. Hasan for example suggests that Islamic content in the future will have to be re–communicated according to the context in which it is constructed by using ‘modern language with scientific evidence.’⁶⁴³ Meanwhile, “Anwar” admits that publications by Ibn ‘Abd al–Wahhāb, for example, have some ‘weighty statements that can be easily misunderstood’ and that they demand a teacher to provide context.⁶⁴⁴ Philips also states in retrospect that *The Fundamentals* was largely based on ‘Saudi Arabian Wahhabi texts’ which have ‘very strong

⁶³⁹ Interview with “Anwar” (anonymised), 18 January 2020.

⁶⁴⁰ Interview with Jalal Abualrub, 2 November 2020.

⁶⁴¹ It is reasonable to believe that since *Tafsir Ibn Kathir (Abridged)* had already been “supervised” by a scholar (see following chapter), Darussalam Int. felt less convinced of a translator’s interpretive notes. In this regard, a study of over 3,000 ‘mainstream, Islamist, Salafi–jihadi, and counter–narrative’ texts concluded that ‘counter–narratives are failing to contest in the right theological places.’ See Milo Comerford and Rachel Bryson, ‘Struggle Over Scripture: Charting the Rift Between Islamist Extremism and Mainstream Islam’ (Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2017), 9. For an attempt to qualify jihad in a recent *tafsir* translation, see ‘When Jihad Refers to Fighting’ by the editor, Huda Khattab of Canada, in ‘Abdur–Rahmān as–Sa‘di, *Tafseer as–Sa‘di*, vol. 1 (Riyadh: IIPH, 2018), 20–22.

⁶⁴² Personal correspondence with Naveed Ayaaz, 11 April 2019, and Muhammad Huzaifah, 26 July 2021. Both Ayaaz and Huzaifah do not consider themselves as scholars and thereby provide interpretive control by consulting existing works in Arabic which can be contextualised for British audiences.

⁶⁴³ Interview with Hasan, 12 September 2019.

⁶⁴⁴ Interview with “Anwar” (anonymised), 18 January 2020.

positions’ but these were a non–issue when he first authored the book; as such, he admits ‘I should have been more careful but it came after the fact.’⁶⁴⁵ It is unclear whether this afterthought will impact Anglo–Salafi print culture in Britain in the future unless translating texts takes less precedence in favour of original “mindful” compositions authored by and for Muslims born or based in Britain.

This is especially so when the “gentlemen’s agreement”, that is an unspoken acknowledgement that books don’t “talk back”, between readers and “controversial” texts is abstract. Critics of Anglo–Islamic print culture are thus likely to clash with Anglo–Muslim publishers into the future. The most recent “martyr” in this particular “clash of civilisations” is Abu Khadeejah. In mid–2022, the British government’s Secretary of State for Education banned him from working in schools because a number of his lectures and blogposts were “intolerant” of homosexuals. Abu Khadeejah’s views on homosexuality however, upon further investigation, do not call for violence against “others” but do assert the widely–held view among Muslim jurists that homosexual acts are unlawful.⁶⁴⁶

Salafi Jihadism in Britain?

Besides accusations of “Wahhābī” intolerance, Salafis in Britain were accused in the media of espousing extremist ideas bordering violence. As a result of observers having a poor working knowledge of Islamic activist trends operating in Britain, Salafis were conflated with Jihadis. Chapter Three already highlighted how Jihadi discourse in Salafi circles and publications in Britain was present leading up to the 1990s, however, this went largely unnoticed in the public sphere. The same could be said of the growing number of outspoken Arab dissidents and advocates of Islamism and/or Jihad besides Surūr who relocated to Britain: Egyptian–born Abu Hamza al–Misri (Mustafa Kamel Mustafa) in 1980, Lebanese–born Omar Bakri in 1986, Jamaican Muslim convert Abdullah el–Faisal in 1992, Jordanian–Palestinian Abu Qatadah al–Filistini in 1993 and Saudi–exiles Saad al–Faqih and Mohammad al–Massari in 1994. Mostly centred around London, this cohort occasionally described themselves as “Salafi–Jihadi” in

⁶⁴⁵ Interview with Philips, 25 January 2021.

⁶⁴⁶ See for example, Abu Khadeejah, ‘The LGBTQ Movement: Homosexuality and Islam: Understanding Muslim Attitudes To Homosexuality (Islam 5.7)’, Abu Khadeejah, accessed 19 November, 2022, <https://abukhadeejah.com/lgbtq-homosexuality-gay-muslims-and-islam>.

the 1990s and more fully embraced the label after 2003.⁶⁴⁷ Nevertheless, I have found no evidence that they shared platforms with members of the Salafi community, published articles in *The Straight Path* or distributed their works through Salafi warehouses or bookshops so far identified in this thesis. Salafis and Jihadis, in other words, were not one-and-the-same. The following three Jihadis engaged with English-speaking audiences and demonstrate this ideological divide:

Abu Hamza arrived in Britain in 1980 where he became religious and adopted jihadism after fighting in both Afghanistan against the Russians and Bosnia against the Serbians (during these wars he lost both hands).⁶⁴⁸ He became a dedicated student of Palestinian–Jordanian Abu Qatādah al–Filistīnī (Omar Mahmoud Othman) following the latter’s arrival of into Britain in 1993. As with like-minded dissidents, Abu Hamza was critical of Arab leaders and their “boot-licking” scholars.⁶⁴⁹ He released numerous video and audio cassettes as well as a handful of books and pamphlets, including a lengthy “refutation” of the Salafi “denial” of *Tawḥīd al–Ḥākimiyyah* in 2001 (see Chapter Four).⁶⁵⁰

Meanwhile, Bakri first joined Britain’s Hizb ut–Tahrir and established the London School of Shari’ah; he later left the Hizb in 1996 in order to establish Al–Muhajiroun, a pro–Jihadi youth movement which amplified Bin Laden’s “global” jihad call in Britain as evidenced in a 1997 Channel 4 documentary. A Jewish journalist, posing as someone interested in converting to Islam, followed Bakri with a camera and captured this nuance including the latter’s failed attempt at organising an international “Jihadi” conference at the London Arena in which invited speakers were to include Bin Laden (d. 2011) and leaders of Hezbollah.⁶⁵¹ A number of Salafis have stressed that Bakri was entirely disconnected with Salafism prior to 2005 (see below).⁶⁵² This is not to say

⁶⁴⁷ Hegghammer, ‘Jihadi–Salafis or Revolutionaries?’, in *Global Salafism*, 251–252. Relatively little has been written about al–Faqih and al–Massari, although it is certain the former established the Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia in 1996 while the latter established the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights under which he and al–Faqih propagated jihadi and anti–Saudi teachings. See Gary Bunt, ‘Towards an Islamic Information Revolution?’ in *Global Dialogue* 6, no. 1/2 (2004): 112–113.

⁶⁴⁸ Raffaello Pantucci, ‘The Tottenham Ayatollah and The Hook–Handed Cleric: An Examination of All Their Jihadi Children’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 3 (2010): 228–229.

⁶⁴⁹ Abu Qatadah claimed to have studied directly under al–Albānī in Jordan. Wagemakers, *Salafism in Jordan*, 185–188.

⁶⁵⁰ Abu Hamza Al–Masri, *Allah’s Governance on Earth* (London: Supporters of Sharia’h, 2001).

⁶⁵¹ Jon Ronson, ‘Tottenham Ayatollah – Omar Bakri Muhammed’, Vimeo, 6 July, 2017, accessed 27 September, 2021, <https://vimeo.com/220494752>.

⁶⁵² Interviews with Abu Tayyib, 9 October 2019; Baker, 13 December 2019; Al–Ashanti, 4 April 2020. See also Blogging Theology, ‘The Truth About Salafis Revealed!’, YouTube, 20 June, 2021,

that Bakri did not try to appeal to Salafis; despite no record of him participating in any Salafi event or contributing to existing Salafi publications (like *The Straight Path*), he routinely claimed to have studied in both IUM and Umm al-Qura, both important Saudi institutes in the global Salafi sphere.⁶⁵³

As for el-Faisal, Baker discloses that Brixton Mosque invited him to Britain given his recent graduation from Imam University in Riyadh and the local need for a qualified imam. Following a fall-out with the administration of the mosque, el-Faisal began excommunicating members of Brixton's Muslim community, thereby providing 'an indisputable line of demarcation between el-Faisal and the Salafi community of Brixton.'⁶⁵⁴ After a fall-out with the community in 1993, el-Faisal began publicly accusing Britain's Salafis of being Saudi "stooges", hypocrites (*munafiq*)⁶⁵⁵ and King Fahad and anyone who supported him a *kāfir* (unbeliever) and *murtad* (apostate) who deserved to be killed.⁶⁵⁶ Barred by leaders from even praying at Salafi mosques as a result, El-Faisal conducted many of his Islamic activities in rented classrooms in community centres. He subsequently published over 100 cassette-recordings in order to assert his own authority. In comparison, he only published two books including a translation of oft-quoted "fabricated" ḥadīths.⁶⁵⁷

Yet another Anglo-Jihadi is American-Yemeni Anwar Awlaki (d. 2011). Awlaki gained considerable popularity in the Muslim Anglosphere during the late 1990s and early 2000s due to his professionally-produced and well-distributed series of biographies in audio-CD format.⁶⁵⁸ These were issued by Al-Basheer Publications & Translations (est. 1996), a North American Anglo-Salafi publisher which also routinely published Zarabozo's works. Awlaki moved to Britain from the United States in 2002 and preached at several mosques and Islamic events. According to Meleagrou-Hitchens' interview with Abu Muntasir, JIMAS ("2.0") contributed to Awlaki's

accessed 11 February, 2022,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P03JqfAlAQc&ab_channel=BloggngTheology.

⁶⁵³ For Bakri's alleged credentials, see Omar Bakri Mohammad, *Essential Fiqh* (London: The Islamic Book Company, 1995), 3. This was later contested in Abu Ameenah 'Abdur-Rahman and Al-Ashanti, *A Critical Study of the Multiple Identities and Disguises of 'Al-Muhajiroun'* (London: Jamiah Media, 2009), 167-169.

⁶⁵⁴ Baker, *Extremists in Our Midst*, 148-149.

⁶⁵⁵ The term *munafiq* in Arabic, unless qualified, is synonymous with *kāfir*.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 149.

⁶⁵⁷ See his list of 177 cassettes in Abdullah Faisal, *100 Fabricated Hadith* (London: Darul-Islam Publishers, 2000), 140-141.

⁶⁵⁸ Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, *Incitement: Anwar Awlaki's Western Jihad* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), 21-22.

popularity in Britain before this time by inviting him to their conferences.⁶⁵⁹ After Awlaki arrived in Britain and began ‘closed study groups in London’ espousing jihadi ideas and the lawfulness of suicide bombings, Abu Muntasir cut ties with him.⁶⁶⁰ Later in 2004, Awlaki “migrated” to Yemen and emerged as a leading figure of Al–Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula (AQAP); during his “turn” to Jihadism in Yemen, Awlaki reached out to networks built in Britain who distributed newer recordings which conveyed ‘Muslim victimhood’ and violent, cross–border jihad as the only solution.⁶⁶¹ Awlaki’s professionally–produced series of CDs were distributed by Darussalam franchises in the 2000s, most likely due to Al–Basheer’s Salafi output; nevertheless, these were quickly “destroyed” once Awlaki’s AQAP–affiliation was revealed.⁶⁶²

To add to the conflation between Salafis and Jihadis, three Anglo–Jihadi publishing houses further blurred the lines between the two trends: Al–Firdous Publications, Azzam Publications and Maktabah Al–Ansar.

Established in 1988 by a certain Shaykh Abdul Majid, Al–Firdous claims to be ‘one of the world’s leading Islamic’ book publishers and having ‘published some of the Muslim World’s famous books’, and having printed ‘on subjects which are not even touched by other publishers.’⁶⁶³ In addition to publishing several translated and abridged volumes of *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* (see following chapter), Al–Firdous also published in 1990 *The Present Rulers and Islam. Are they Muslims or Not?* by ‘Umar ‘Abd al–Raḥmān (d. 2017).⁶⁶⁴ The author was a prominent Egyptian jihadi scholar trained in Al–Azhar University and co–leader of the militant organisation Jamā‘at al–Islāmiyyah (est. *circa*–1970) and its offshoot Jamā‘at al–Jihād (est. 1992) in Egypt.⁶⁶⁵ According to Karmani, this particular text served as a theoretical manual for a growing number of British jihadis unsatisfied with the then present Muslim rulers.⁶⁶⁶ During the same period, Al–Firdous also published several titles which appealed to members

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 32–33.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid*.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid*, 3.

⁶⁶² Interview with Wahid, 12 September 2019.

⁶⁶³ ‘About – Al–Firdous Publications’, Al–Firdous Publications, Facebook, accessed 23 October, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/pg/AlFirdousPublications/about>. Darussalam warehouse (Leyton) currently stocks no less than 80 different titles produced by Al–Firdous, by authors, classic and contemporary.

⁶⁶⁴ Omar Abdurrahman, *The Present Rulers and Islam. Are they Muslims or not?* (London: Al–Firdous Publications, 1990).

⁶⁶⁵ Following the first World Trade Centre bombing in 1993, ‘Abd al–Raḥmān was arrested while preaching and raising funds for “global” jihad in the United States.

⁶⁶⁶ Interview with Karmani, 25 April 2021.

of JIMAS “2.0” including a translation of Ibn Bāz’s treatise *The Correct Belief and its Opposite and What Negates al-Islam* that appears to have been co-translated by Abu Hamza.⁶⁶⁷ However, the same publication’s appendices “compiled” by the publisher include a number of theoretical statements by senior Saudi ulema including Ibn Bāz and Ibn al-‘Uthaymīn condemning secularism as *kufur al-akbar* (a major act of disbelief), a list of secularist leaders in Muslim countries, and a fatwa of Ibn Taymiyyah advocating jihad against ‘any group of people who abandon a clear successive legislation of the *Shari’ah*... even if they utter the *Shahaadatayn* [the two testimonies of Islamic faith and first “pillar” of Islam].’⁶⁶⁸ As a result, the Salafi cooperative largely boycotted Al-Firdous on the basis that such themes were being politicised.⁶⁶⁹

Azzam Publications was founded by British-Pakistani Babar Ahmad in 1996 and named after the celebrated Jihadi ideologue and mentor to Bin Laden, ‘Abd Allāh Azzām (d. 1989).⁶⁷⁰ In the same year, B. Ahmad launched several Jihadi websites ‘primarily focused on supporting the Taliban in Afghanistan and the *mujahidin* in Chechnya.’⁶⁷¹ Azzam Publications only issued a few books, the most controversial of which is *Defence of the Muslim Lands*, an English translation of Azzām’s fatwa on jihad following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan accredited by Saudi ulema including Ibn Bāz.⁶⁷² According to Aboul-Enein, such fatwas were ‘tolerated [by scholars in Egypt and Saudi Arabia] as they were viewed as anti-communist’ and energized the global ‘Islamist militant movement beyond the decade long-Soviet-Afghan War.’⁶⁷³ Its English translation was one such example of how Islamic verdicts

⁶⁶⁷ Abd el-Aziz Bin Baz, *The Correct Belief and Its Opposite and What Negates Al-Islam*, trans. Muhammad Abdur Rahman and **Abu Hamza Maghribee** (London: Al-Firdous Ltd, 1996). Emphasis mine.

⁶⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 43–70.

⁶⁶⁹ Interview with Baker, 13 December 2019.

⁶⁷⁰ B. Ahmad was imprisoned in 2004 and extradited to the United States on terrorism-related charges in 2006. He was later released in 2015 and returned to Britain where he has since admitted to being ‘wrong and naïve to support the Taliban.’ Robert Verkaik, ‘Interview: The Trials of Babar Ahmad: From Jihad in Bosnia to a US Prison via Met Brutality’, *The Guardian*, 19 March, 2016, accessed 4 July, 2022, [theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/12/babar-ahmad-jihad-bosnia-us-police-interview](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/12/babar-ahmad-jihad-bosnia-us-police-interview).

⁶⁷¹ Michael Jacobson, ‘Terrorist Financing and the Internet’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 4 (2010): 354.

⁶⁷² Abdullah Azzam, *Defence of the Muslim Lands* (London: Azzam Publications, 1996; second edition 2002).

⁶⁷³ Youssef Aboul-Enein, ‘The Late Sheikh Abdullah Azzam’s Books. Part III: Radical Theories on Defending Muslim Land through Jihad.’ (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2001), 3–4. See also Wiktorowicz, ‘The Salafi Movement: Violence and the Fragmentation of Community’, in Miriam Cooke and Bruce B. Lawrence, eds, *Muslim Networks from Hajj to Hip Hop* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 216–218.

in print, now translated and entirely decontextualised, “energized” Anglo–Jihadism while leaning on Salafi pillars. Despite Azzam Publication’s relative popularity, it ceased operations in or around 2003 when B. Ahmad was imprisoned by British police on terrorism–related charges.

Maktabah Al–Ansar was founded in Birmingham in 1998 by British–Pakistani Moazzam Begg.⁶⁷⁴ Begg began Maktabah as an Islamic bookstore which stocked both Islamic books, videos and cassettes.⁶⁷⁵ According to one writer for *The Guardian*, an undercover reporter visited the store in 2006 and found ‘[b]ooks and DVDs promoting suicide bombings, glorifying terrorism and advocating the killing of homosexuals’ on sale.⁶⁷⁶ The same bookstore turned publisher and issued *The Army of Madinah in Kashmir* by British–Indian Dhiren Barot, a Muslim convert who participated in guerrilla attacks on Indian forces in “occupied” Jammu and Kashmir; Barot was later sentenced to prison in Britain in 2006 on terrorism–related charges.⁶⁷⁷ Maktabah also published a new translation of Qutb’s *Ma’ālim fi l’–Ṭarīq (Milestones on the Path)* with nine appendices including a translation of Ibn Nuḥās’ (d. 1411) manual on jihad originally taught by al–Awlaki in Britain and Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al–Banna’s (d. 1949) *Kitab al–Jihad (Book on Jihad)* as part of the ‘Ikhwan [Brotherhood] Syllabus Pre–[Sayyid] Qutb.’⁶⁷⁸ The same title appeals to Anglo–Salafi reading publics by including commendations of Qutb and his writings by al–Albānī, Bakr Abu Zayd (d. 2008) and ‘Abd Allāh b. Jibrīn (d. 2009), the latter two being “senior” Saudi ulema.⁶⁷⁹ Maktabah appears to have ceased operations in the early part

⁶⁷⁴ Following a series of police raids on Begg’s home, Begg and his family relocated to Afghanistan in mid–2001 and then to Pakistan following the United States–led war on the Taliban. Begg was detained in Pakistan by security forces in 2002 and transferred to American troops stationed in Afghanistan who then transported him to the controversial Guantanamo Bay detention camp in the following year. Begg was released in 2005 and returned to Britain, joining the Muslim prisoner advocacy agency Cage Prisoners (est. 2003, now Cage) as outreach director. According to Begg, he regards himself a Salafi but does not associate with the Salafi movement. See Hamid, *Sufis, Salafis and Islamists*, 141.

⁶⁷⁵ Anne Stenersen, ‘A History of Jihadi Cinematography’, in *Jihadi Culture: The Art and Social Practices of Militant Islamists*, ed. Thomas Hegghammer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 111. I visited this bookstore during the early 2000s and found titles by Azzam, JIMAS, Darussalam Int. and Al–Firdous.

⁶⁷⁶ Antony Barnett, ‘Bookshop’s Messages of Racist Hate’, *The Guardian*, 4 February 2007, accessed 1 July, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/feb/04/terrorism.world>.

⁶⁷⁷ David Carlisle, ‘Dhiren Barot: Was He an Al Qaeda Mastermind or Merely a Hapless Plotter?’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 12 (2007): 1057–1071.

⁶⁷⁸ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones: Ma’ālim Fi l’–Tareeq*, ed. A. B. Al–Mehri (Birmingham: Maktabah, 2006).

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 and appendices iv–vi.

of the following decade after its acting manager was temporarily imprisoned for publishing and distributing extremist texts (he was later acquitted).⁶⁸⁰

In all three cases, whether or not Al-Firdous, Azzam and Maktabah considered themselves Salafis like the Ahl-e-Hadith, JIMAS or Salafi cooperatives, there was an obvious attempt at compelling reading publics of the validity of “global” jihad using many of the same ulema the latter considered authoritative. According to “Abu Khuzaimah”, Maktabah in particular ‘sort of portrayed that they were Salafis’ and ‘a lot of people got... fooled by them.’⁶⁸¹ More specifically, Maktabah sold a number of publications produced by Darussalam and other Anglo-Salafi publishers, particularly when no Jihadi-equivalents were available. The same could not be said of Anglo-Salafi booksellers who boycotted their Jihadi counterparts.

For similar reasons as to why the “phantomization” of Wahhābism subsided in the early twentieth century, the rise in public interest in Salafism following 9/11 led to an increase of academic studies delineating the movement and its exact relationship to Wahhābism and “global” Jihadism. A number of typologies of Salafism were introduced in the literature (see introduction) and effectively countered some of the conflation between Salafis and Jihadis.⁶⁸² As such, a number of Salafis in Britain recognise the utility of dividing Salafis into analytical categories, although they might not necessarily agree with them since it betrays the idea that Salafism is one and indivisible.⁶⁸³

Despite a growing understanding in academia, the media and TI movement’s conflation of Britain’s Jihadis with Salafis glossed over the polemics which separated the two into distinct movements at loggerheads with one-another. It would equally be reasonable for observers to excuse themselves from having understood any such nuances or theological differences at the time, especially when some Jihadis not only used Salafi dialectics but also occasionally published or sold Salafi texts to support their ideas. “Abu Khuzaimah” also admits that Jihadis would pray in Salafi mosques

⁶⁸⁰ Dominic Casciani, ‘Analysis: Why a “terror Bookseller” Won His Appeal’, BBC News, 9 January, 2013, accessed 17 November, 2022, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-20940716>.

⁶⁸¹ Interview with “Abu Khuzaimah”, 28 July 2019.

⁶⁸² See for example, Hamid, ‘The Attraction of “Authentic Islam”’, 396; Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain*, 71. Birt also admitted to feeling no longer comfortable with labelling Salafis “Wahhabis” in ‘Wahhabi Wrangles’, 2 November, 2007, accessed 22 April, 2019.

⁶⁸³ Interviews with Green, 25 May 2020, “Nawaz” (anonymised), 26 March 2020 and “Abu Khuzaimah”, 28 July 2019.

because ‘they didn’t have anywhere else to pray.’⁶⁸⁴ Another reason is that Jihadis felt closest to Salafis in terms of aspiring to follow the Quran and Sunnah. The stark difference between the two movements was nevertheless underlined by a number of Anglo–Salafi publications which sought to counter Jihadi arguments and qualify what Salafi ulema quoted by the latter stated on controversial issues and figures like Qutb.

Counter–Jihadism: Between Salafi Brits and Saudis

According to Shavit’s survey of a number of counter–extremist Salafi texts published in Britain and Germany, European Salafis took to printing counter–jihad publications because they faced two challenges in the aftermath of 9/11: i) their authority was being undermined by Salafi–Jihadis and ii) European publics and policy makers suspected Salafi teachings of being a radicalising force.⁶⁸⁵ In response, Salafis embedded counter–jihad arguments into a ‘plethora of books, articles, leaflets and audio and visual posts’ to convince Western governments and publics, and Muslim communities, that Salafism was neither a security risk nor was indiscriminate violence the “way” of the Salaf.⁶⁸⁶

This counter–project in fact started before 9/11. As early as 1997, JIMAS “2.0” was addressing Jihadi currents in print. Abu Muntasir, for example, adapted and published *On the Issue of Takfeer* by Egyptian Salafi scholar Ahmad Fareed, in an effort to thwart Jihadi discourse and ‘relegate the task of *takfeer* to those who are qualified for this duty.’⁶⁸⁷ Similarly, “Abu Khuzaimah” published a Pakistani Ahl–e–Hadith’s counter–Jihadi fatwa in 2000 because the former found ‘a lot’ of Jihadi ‘ideology floating around’ in Birmingham.⁶⁸⁸ Following 9/11, this type of Anglo–Salafi publication became commonplace. For example, a month after 9/11, Spubs published a counter–Jihadi booklet drawing on earlier translated fatwas condemning Bin Laden, Qutb and “global” Jihadi discourse; it’s cover colourfully declared Muslim terrorists as ‘brothers

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁵ Shavit, ‘Embattled Minority In–Between Minorities’: 188.

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*: 193 and 200.

⁶⁸⁷ ‘Preface by Abu Muntasir’, in Ahmad Fareed, *On the Issue of Takfeer: Caution Against Holding a Muslim to be a Disbeliever Due to his Sins and Ignorance* (Ipswich: JIMAS, 1997), 4.

⁶⁸⁸ Interview with “Abu Khuzaimah”, 28 July 2019. See Taalib ur Rahmaan, *Jihaad: is it Fardh–ayn [an individual obligation] or Fardh–kifaayah [a communal obligation]? A Refutation of the Jihaadee Groups*, trans. Abu Khuzaimah and Abu Hibban (Birmingham; 2000). As the title suggests, this short work critiqued “jihadi” arguments revolving around the individual and collective duty on Muslims to perform jihad.

of the devils,’ echoing a verdict made by Ibn Bāz against Egypt’s Jamā‘at al-Jihād in which he encouraged Muslims not to co-operate with them (see fig. 18).⁶⁸⁹

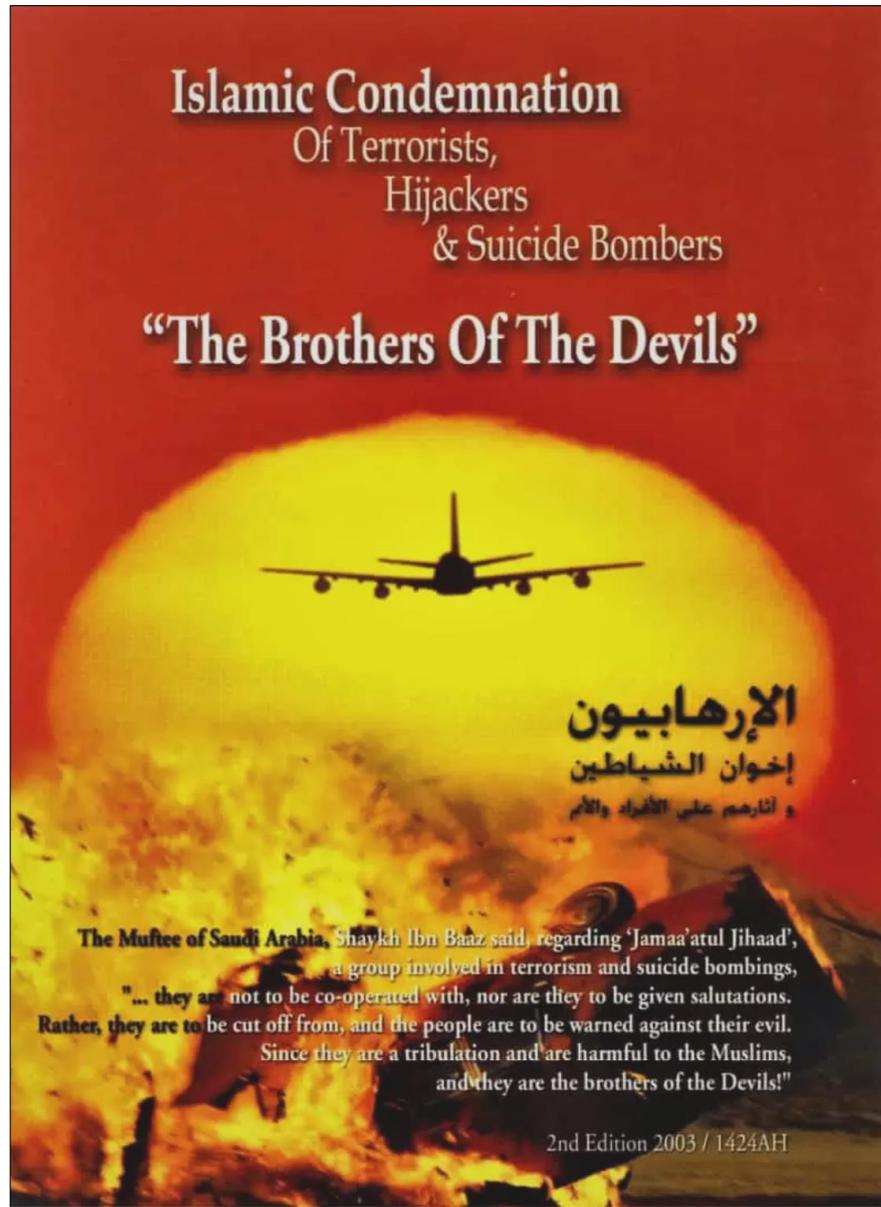


Figure 18.

In another example, Call to Islam Centre in Luton published 100,000 leaflets in a series entitled *Refuting Extremism*.⁶⁹⁰ Furthermore, the Anglo-Salafi book market in Britain was dominated by Ahl-e-Hadith and Salafi cooperatives who stifled Jihadis from reaching a wider Anglo-Islamic reading public. In 2005, for example, Al-

⁶⁸⁹ *Islamic Condemnation of Terrorists, Hijackers, & Suicide Bombers: "The Brothers of the Devils"* (Birmingham: Salafi Publications, 2001).

⁶⁹⁰ Interview with "Ahmad" (anonymised), 24 August 2019.

Muhajiroun’s attempts at selling their own publications through Darussalam Leyton were outrightly rejected by its owner Wahid.⁶⁹¹

As a result, the public “phantomization” of Britain’s Salafi community appeared to subside or become more nuanced towards the end of the 2000s. Birt, for example, acknowledged that Salafis were at the forefront of refuting Jihadism but still maintained in 2007 that Salafi preachers trained in Saudi institutes continued to have an impact in Britain due to their ‘mass investment in the dissemination of Salafi teaching through publishing and the internet.’⁶⁹² Another factor why the “phantomization” subsided was the British government’s change of laws surrounding the exhortation to violence and terrorism. As a direct result, in 2002, Abū Qatādah was imprisoned by the British authorities and later deported to Jordan in 2013; in 2003, el-Faisal was imprisoned for advocating violence and later deported back to Jamaica in 2007; in 2004, Abu Hamza was imprisoned by the British authorities and extradited to the United States to face terrorism-related charges in 2012; in 2005, Bakri fled the United Kingdom indefinitely and returned to his home-country of Lebanon; meanwhile, Awlaki was killed by a US drone strike in Yemen, 2011.

Despite these occurrences, the “phantomization” of Salafis in Britain never completely stopped. One reason why is that in or around 2005, Al-Muhajiroun began formally identifying as Salafis after their original group was banned by the British government and Bakri fled the country. The latter, from his home in Lebanon, soon contributed to connotations between Salafis and Jihadis by stating to a journalist:

We follow the Nahj-ul-Salaf (the path of the pious predecessors)... In the Salafi worldview there can be no separation between Aqeedah and Shariah; they have to be moulded together... The CIA knows exactly what they are up against; they are up against the most determined Salafi-Wahabis who have come together in al-Qaeda. That is why the Americans are trying to stop the dissemination of works by Sheikh ibn Abdul Wahab. They are also trying to change the curriculum in some countries. But by starting the war against Islam they have imperilled their own future.⁶⁹³

⁶⁹¹ Interview with Wahid, 12 September 2019.

⁶⁹² Birt, ‘Wahhabi Wrangles’, accessed 22 April 2019.

⁶⁹³ Mahan Abedin, ‘Al-Muhajiroun in the UK: An Interview with Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed’, The Jamestown Foundation, 25 May, 2005, accessed 25 September, 2021, <https://jamestown.org/interview/al-muhajiroun-in-the-uk-an-interview-with-sheikh-omar-bakri-mohammed/>.

Worryingly for Britain's Salafis, Bakri was now redefining Salafism publicly and tying it and their mainstay Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb to al-Qaeda and "global" Jihadi theology.⁶⁹⁴ Bakri's antagonism towards Saudi clerics and co-opting Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb as a Jihadi ideologue suggests that his reading of Salafism more closely mirrored that of Abu Muḥammad al-Maqdisī, a Jordanian ideologue credited with developing a Wahhabi-Jihadi discourse and intellectual basis for Al-Qaeda and subsequent "global"-Jihadi groups.⁶⁹⁵ This nuance was hard to capture by every observer. In 2008, former members of Al-Muhajiroun also assumed further Salafi symbols and adopted a number of co-identities including the Salafi Youth for Islamic Propagation, Salafi Youth Association and Salafi Youth Movement; in or around 2009, the same group began operating almost entirely under the banner of Salafi Media UK (SMUK) which gained traction in media circles.

In response, Abu Ameenah AbdurRahman and al-Ashanti published *A Critical Study of the Multiple Identities and Disguises of "Al-Muhajiroun"* in which they argued that Bakri and his followers merely appropriated what Inge describes as the 'elastic identity label' of "Salafi" but were very much still political—"Kharijites."⁶⁹⁶ A number of my interviewees expressed the same opinion; according to one, Al-Muhajiroun "re-invented" themselves to appear more 'bona fide' because they would not be taken seriously otherwise.⁶⁹⁷ "Ahmad" on the other hand, recalls Luton's SMUK members being encouraged by Bakri to attend local Salafi classes at Luton Islamic Centre (est. 2001); when SMUK members attempted to join these classes they were physically kicked out by Luton's Salafi cooperative.⁶⁹⁸

In 2010, borrowing from AbdurRahman and al-Ashanti's research, Spubs also published their own counter-extremist book entitled *The Rise of Jihadist Extremism*

⁶⁹⁴ This further extended to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, another key figure in the Salafi sphere. See O. B. Muhammad, *Ahluṣ-Sunnah wal Jama'ah: Their Beliefs, Attributes and Qualities* (London: ALM Publications, 2004), Appendix 1.

⁶⁹⁵ Consult Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁶⁹⁶ Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 8; Bishara, *On Salafism*, 48; 'Abdur-Rahman and Al-Ashanti, *A Critical Study of the Multiple Identities and Disguises of 'Al-Muhajiroun'*, 49–50 and 61–63. The authors go on to compare 25 major issues in which Bakri and his followers diverge from senior Salafi ulema followed by British Salafis. The term *Khārijī* (Kharijite) is a reference to the early Muslim *Khawārij* sect which among other theological disparities with the *Salaf*, supported armed rebellions against Muslim leaders. Contemporary Salafis often liken "jihadis" to the same sect for this reason.

⁶⁹⁷ Interview with "Abul Amin" (anonymised), 13 September 2019.

⁶⁹⁸ Interview with "Ahmad" (anonymised), 24 August 2019.

in the West, which sought to explain ‘the factors that have led to... extremist ideology becoming uncomfortably prevalent in the West’, and specifically encouraged Muslims and non-Muslims to ‘understand the context within which these extremist sects operate and the principles they have invented to propagate their dangerous ideology.’⁶⁹⁹ In 2011, Jamiah Media further published three “refutations” against Al-Muhajiroun, el-Faisal and Awlaki.⁷⁰⁰

With respect to the second challenge highlighted above by Shavit, of European publics and policy makers suspecting Salafi teachings of being a radicalising force, it appears that some researchers and policy-advisors also recognised the potential of Salafi counter-extremist project in combatting Jihadi ideology.⁷⁰¹ For example, a 2006 report issued by the Combating Terrorism Center in New York suggested,

While it may be distasteful to work with non-violent Salafi leaders, they are best positioned to delegitimize Jihadi violence and monitor the activities of the more militant elements of their movement.⁷⁰²

Similarly, the British think-tank Demos published a report on community-based approaches to counter-terrorism and recommended that then British Labour-led government work alongside conservative Islamic groups like the Salafis against dangerous elements within the Muslim community and fund initiatives like Strategy to Reach, Empower and Educate Teenagers (STREET), a community outreach programme developed by Baker which involved reforming “extremist” prisoners.⁷⁰³ One of these “tools” utilised by Baker’s team was print literature although little has been documented about its effectiveness.⁷⁰⁴ Lambert does however note, ‘Many Salafis candidly admit that they were nearly won over by the blandishments of such compelling recruiters as Abu Qatada before they acquired the knowledge and skill to

⁶⁹⁹ *The Rise of Jihadist Extremism in the West*, back cover.

⁷⁰⁰ ‘Abdur-Rahman and al-Ashanti, *7 Reasons Why Al-Muhajiroun Are Deviants* (London: Jamiah Media, 2011), ‘Abdullah El-Faisal al-Jamayki’: *A Critical Study of His Statements, Errors and Extremism in Takfeer* (London: Jamiah Media, 2011) and *A Critique of the Methodology of Anwar Al-Awlaki and His Errors in the Fiqh of Jihad* (London: Jamiah Media, 2011).

⁷⁰¹ Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 32.

⁷⁰² William McCants, ‘Militant Ideology Atlas’ (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2006), 11. See also, Todd C. Helmus, Erin York, and Peter Chalk, ‘Promoting Online Voices for Countering Violent Extremism’ (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2013).

⁷⁰³ Rachel Briggs, Catherine Fieschi, and Hannah Lownsbrough, ‘Bringing It Home: Community-Based Approaches to Counter-Terrorism’ (London: Demos, 2006), 77–78. Baker did indeed receive funding under the Labour-led government (1997–2010).

⁷⁰⁴ See Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 78–79 and 86–88 for examples.

countermand them.⁷⁰⁵ As such, in response to being “undermined” by Jihadis, Salafis in Britain harnessed print to codify the limits of jihad and respond to “doubts.” A number of my interviewees admitted to once having harboured Jihadi views and then leaving them after acquiring “Salafi knowledge” and reading “refutations” like the ones published by Spubs mentioned above.⁷⁰⁶

Nevertheless, not every quarter of the British public was convinced of Salafism’s disconnectedness to Jihadism, Wahhabism and/or religious intolerance. In 2007, for example, an article in a British newspaper article described “Wahhābism” as a “deadly scripture.”⁷⁰⁷ Following the murder of a British soldier on the streets of Woolwich in 2013 at the hands of Muslim extremists linked to SMUK, Taj Hargey, an Oxford–trained historian and director of the Muslim Educational Centre of Oxford, blamed the event on the ‘poisonous propaganda by... the mullahs, the mosques and the madrasahs... funded by Saudi petrodollars.’⁷⁰⁸ Baker, who has since pursued an academic career in security studies, warned that such generalisations between SMUK and Britain’s Salafis ran the risk of ‘marginalising and indeed criminalising the Salafi community.’⁷⁰⁹

Indeed the English Defence League (EDL, est. 2009), a momentary anti–Jihadi collective of disgruntled native–Britons, did just this. Luton Islamic Centre, was firebombed in 2009 by suspected EDL members causing £40,000 worth of damage to the mosque.⁷¹⁰ EDL was first founded in Luton and the town’s Salafis interpreted this attack as a consequence of SMUK staging a protest in the same year against returning British soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan causing public backlash and racial tensions. Shortly after the attack, approximately 500 members of Luton Islamic Centre physically apprehended SMUK members from leafleting near the mosque.⁷¹¹ Similarly, JIMAS’ plans to convert a church in Ipswich purchased in 2010 into an

⁷⁰⁵ *Ibid.*: 84.

⁷⁰⁶ Interviews with “Farid” (anonymised), 3 February 2020; “Abul Amin” (anonymised), “Yusuf” (anonymised) and “Dawud” (anonymised), 13 September 2019; “Ahmad”, 24 August 2019.

⁷⁰⁷ Michael Savage, ‘Wahhabism: A Deadly Scripture’, *Independent*, 1 November, 2007, accessed 27 September, 2021, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/wahhabism-deadly-scripture-398516.html>.

⁷⁰⁸ Taj Hargey, ‘First Person – Dr Taj Hargey: We Must Seize Agenda Back’, *Oxford Mail*, 30 May, 2013, accessed 30 June, 2022, <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/10453482.first-person—dr-taj-hargey-must-seize-agenda-back>.

⁷⁰⁹ Baker, *Extremists in Our Midst*, 7.

⁷¹⁰ Interview with “Ahmad” (anonymised), 24 August 2019.

⁷¹¹ *Ibid.*

Islamic community centre abruptly ended after a similar fire–bomb attack in 2011.⁷¹² In yet another example, Philips was banned from entering the United Kingdom in 2010 without explanation.⁷¹³ This, despite him consistently opposing Jihadism and condemning the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) who in turn declared him and others ‘Imams of Kufr [disbelief] in the West’ and ‘called upon its supporters to assassinate.’⁷¹⁴

Despite these odd occurrences, Salafis remained publicly resolute in their support of Ibn ‘Abd al–Wahhāb’s teachings because they believed they represented Salafi creed and when mediated by contemporary Saudi ulema, harmonised the Salafi *manhaj* being lived out in Britain.⁷¹⁵ Furthermore, a review of Anglo–Salafi counter–terrorism publications reveals that Salafis in Britain, as with other matters of discourse, echoed Saudi Arabia’s counter–terrorism project made up of various texts emphasising the Salafi view on tolerance and co–existence, and deconstruction of Jihadi arguments.⁷¹⁶ These types of works provided equally important lines of arguments in British Salafi counter–extremist literature.⁷¹⁷ Independent “loyalist” Saudi ulema also composed works under the same pretext which were harnessed by Anglo–Salafi publishers. A key source in Jamiah Media’s counter–Jihadi publications, for example, is ‘Abd al–‘Azīz al–Rays who has authored a number of such texts in Arabic.⁷¹⁸

The same Salafi counter–Jihadi publications, produced in Britain and Saudi Arabia, however, did little to convince all Western publics. Saudi sponsored literature, for example, had little reach outside of Muslim spaces and Saudi magazines like ‘Al

⁷¹² Bob Pitt, ‘Muslim Centre in Ipswich Burnt to the Ground in “Deliberate Attack”’, Islamophobia Watch, 10 March 2011, accessed 13 July, 2022, <https://www.islamophobiawatch.co.uk/muslim-centre-in-ipswich-burnt-to-the-ground-in-deliberate-attack>.

⁷¹³ Interview with Philips, 25 January 2021.

⁷¹⁴ Holzgruber, ‘Pierre Vogel’s and Bilal Philips’s Criticisms of Jihadism’: 150–174.

⁷¹⁵ Members of the TI movement equally remain critical of Wahhabism. See for example: Namira Nahouza, *Wahhabism and the Rise of the New Salafists: Theology, Power and Sunni Islam* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2018). Nahouza is a research fellow at the TI–affiliated Cambridge Muslim College and her sometimes polemical stances against Wahhabism/Salafism is picked up in a book review. See Haykel, ‘Wahhabism and the Rise of the New Salafists. Theology, Power and Sunni Islam, Written by Nahouza, Namira, 2018.’

⁷¹⁶ Shavit, ‘Embattled Minority In–Between Minorities’: 191; For an analysis of Saudi’s counter–terrorism strategy, see Meijer, ‘Islam and Saudi Arabia’s Counterterrorism Strategy’, in *Non–Western Responses to Terrorism*, ed. Michael J. Boyle (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 344–63.

⁷¹⁷ See for examples: *AL DAWAH* (Al–Daaqah Establishment, Riyadh, 2001), nos. 1–2. See also *The Muslim World League’s Position Towards Terrorism* (Mecca: Muslim World League, n. d.).

⁷¹⁸ Consult the following website for al–Rays’s works: Islam Ancient, accessed 2 December, 2022, <https://www.islamancient.com/author/1/?cat=247>.

Dawah’ were not widely–circulated. Anglo–Salafi texts produced in Britain likewise were distributed through mainly Salafi bookstores, thereby escaping the attention of wider Western audiences. Moreover, it is reasonable to assume that their authors were not addressing a non–Muslim audience in the first place but only “guiding” fellow Muslims. As such, Inge suggests that ‘many in the West regard the presence of Salafi communities as a real or potential security threat.’⁷¹⁹ The “phantomization” of Wahhābism has thus clearly subsided in recent years, but never completely so, much to the dissatisfaction of Salafis in Britain.

ISIS and the Salafi–Jihadi Islamic State

A more pertinent problem and potential cause for further “phantomization” affected Salafis in Britain during the 2010s as a direct result of events pertaining to the Arab Spring and in particular, the Syrian Revolution. The latter gave rise to the highly mediatised and iconoclastic offshoot of Al Qaeda: ISIS, or Daesh in Arabic circles, which in 2014 declared Abu Bakr al–Baghdadi (d. 2019) the caliph of all Muslims. Unlike Al Qaeda, ISIS provided a stronger connection between Jihadism, Wahhābism and Salafism. Its founder, Abu Muṣāb al–Zarqāwī (d. 2006), was mentored by al–Maqdisī and drew on early “Wahhābī” texts to theologize *takfir* of Arab rulers. Like the early “Wahhābī” movement, ISIS quickly gained notoriety for executing opponents and destroying Sufi shrines and tombs.⁷²⁰ While there is evidence that Al Qaeda was conflated by observers with “Wahhābism” and Salafism in North America and Britain shortly before and after 9/11 (as highlighted above), the same conflation between ISIS and the latter two seems less potent, thanks somewhat to a better understanding of Salafism in academia. This is not to say that Anglo–Salafism was not impacted by wider security measures and media coverage in Western countries.⁷²¹ Anwar notes, for example, how Salafi women in Britain felt unsafe when news agencies aired ‘images of female ISIS fighters in attire almost identical to the Sunnah–compliant hijab of Salafi women.’⁷²²

⁷¹⁹ Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 5.

⁷²⁰ Ondřej Beránek and Pavel Ťupek, *The Temptation of Graves in Salafi Islam: Iconoclasm, Destruction and Idolatry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 172–219.

⁷²¹ Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 234.

⁷²² Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 267–268.

At a state level, the conflation between Salafis and violent extremists like ISIS took another turn. In 2015, Britain's then Prime Minister David Cameron stated in a public speech on extremism:

What we are fighting, in Islamist extremism, is an ideology... But you don't have to support violence to subscribe to certain intolerant ideas which create a climate in which extremists can flourish. Ideas which are hostile to basic liberal values such as democracy, freedom and sexual equality...

[A]s we counter this ideology, a key part of our strategy must be to tackle both parts of the creed – the non-violent and violent. This means confronting groups and organisations that may not advocate violence – but which do promote other parts of the extremist narrative. We've got to show that if you say "yes I condemn terror – but the Kuffar [disbelievers] are inferior", or "violence in London isn't justified, but suicide bombs in Israel are a different matter" – then you too are part of the problem. Unwittingly or not, and in a lot of cases it's not unwittingly, you are providing succour to those who want to commit, or get others to commit to, violence.⁷²³

Cameron's speech was objected to by a number of Muslim activists, journalists and politicians on the basis that the terms "extremism" and "extremist" were used too broadly, and entered into theological debates without acknowledging the diversity of Muslim voices.⁷²⁴ In the same year, the government published its Counter-Extremism Strategy and defined "extremism" as,

[T]he vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.⁷²⁵

Neither the Prime Minister's speech nor the strategy mentioned "Wahhabism"/Salafism by name. For some Salafis in Britain, it was clearly a reference to them including Baker because his STREET project was defunded shortly after the change of government (Labour to Conservative).⁷²⁶ This was further underscored in 2016 when a government review of "extremist" literature discovered in British prisons

⁷²³ See the entire speech here: 'Extremism: PM Speech', Gov.UK, 20 July 2015, accessed 23 September, 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/extremism-pm-speech>.

⁷²⁴ Khadijah Elshayyal, *Muslim Identity Politics: Islam, Activism and Equality in Britain* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2018), 180–181.

⁷²⁵ Samantha Godec, 'The Challenges of Countering Extremism', UK Parliament, accessed 29 December, 2022, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/the-challenges-of-countering-extremism>.

⁷²⁶ Interview with "Farid" (anonymised), 3 February 2020.

recommended Philips’ *The Fundamentals* be banned alongside translations of works by Islamists and Jihadi–favourites Qutb and Maududi.⁷²⁷ In another sign of the times, Sara Khan, a human rights activist and most recently, Lead Commissioner for Countering Extremism (CCE), an independent advisory organisation to the British government, published *The Battle for British Islam* and warned of “Salafi–Islamism” and directly implicated Abu Muntasir and other like–minded figures of espousing religious intolerance.⁷²⁸

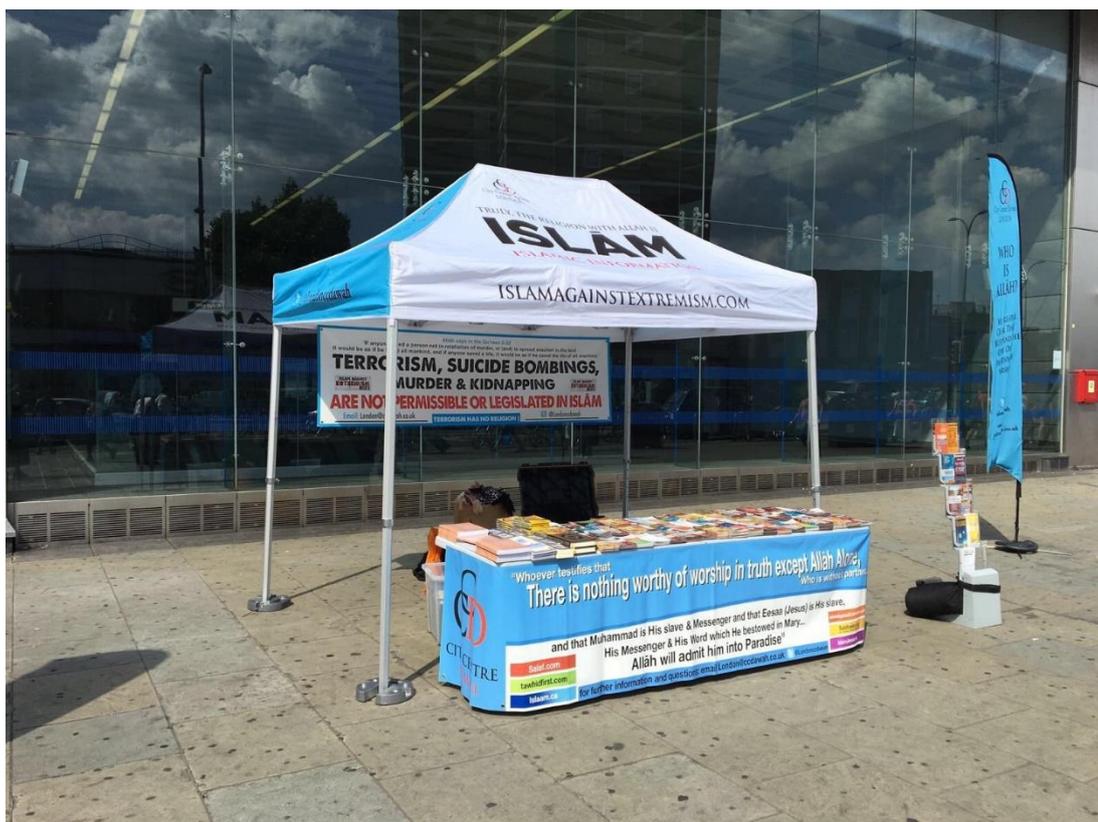


Figure 19.⁷²⁹

In what would appear to be from *some* lessons learned in the 2000s, the Salafi–led counter–Jihadi project now pays greater attention to its own public image. For example, Masjid Daar us Sunnah (DuSunnah, est. 2010), a mosque located in

⁷²⁷ Sajid Iqbal and Noel Titheradge, “‘Extremist’ Books Remained in Prisons Despite Warning”, BBC News, 28 July, 2016, accessed 14 September, 2022, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-36774358>. The authors note some of the same texts (aside from *The Fundamentals of Tawheed*) had already been banned in Saudi Arabia by that time.

⁷²⁸ Sara Khan, *The Battle for British Islam: Reclaiming Muslim Identity from Extremism* (London: Saqi Books, 2016).

⁷²⁹ ‘Our Fight Against Terrorism’, Masjid Daar us Sunnah, accessed 21 July, 2021, <https://dusunnah.com/fight-against-terrorism>. Reproduced with permission from a Masjid Daar us Sunnah administrator.

Shephard's Bush and affiliated to Spubs, set up a weekly *da'wah* stall outside Westfield shopping centre in West London pushing its counter-extremist project onto the street (fig. 19).⁷³⁰ The stall is run by volunteers, some of whom are self-confessed "ex-Jihadis"; according to "Abul Amin", one such volunteer, the stall is targeted at Muslims and non-Muslims, and the local community has expressed appreciation to the mosque for combatting extremism.⁷³¹ "Abul Amin" points out the importance of literature at the stall by suggesting 'everything gets lost in conversation' whereas leaflets can be taken away for further reflection and "confidence" is acquired through reading references and fact-checking Salafi arguments.⁷³²

Aside from distributing general leaflets about Islam catered towards Muslims, the stall's banner and marquee directed the public to IslamAgainstExtremism.com, an information site managed by Abu Iyaad 'exposing deviant ideologies, extremism, terrorism and their proponents.'⁷³³ The same website provides the basis for a number of the same stall's printed leaflets, published by Spubs or its affiliates, including 'A Warning Against Terror Groups ISIS & Al-Qaeda and the Correct Islamic Position Regarding Them!' and 'ISIS: Jihad in the Path of Satan.'⁷³⁴ According to Masjid Daar us Sunnah, their 'fight against terrorism' has since involved the printing and distribution of over 50,000 'anti-ISIS pamphlets all over the UK with the help of local donations.'⁷³⁵ Similarly, SalafiManhaj.com has issued a number of online PDF "refutations" against ISIS including 'ISIS Are Not Salafi' and 'On the So-Called "Islamic State of 'Irāq and Shām" [ISIS/ISIL] and "Caliph" (?) Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī.'⁷³⁶ Again, these largely draw on Saudi Arabic-language publications on the same topic. Since "Wahhābism" in the West has never completely been de-"phantomized", any attempt at publicly dissociating Salafism from Jihadism, Al Qaeda and ISIS has therefore been restricted at times by Salafis themselves primarily addressing Muslim audiences and relying on Saudi ulema. In this regard, "Farid", reflecting on his 20-plus years as a Salafi and Muslim convert, admits that while

⁷³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷³¹ Interview with "Abul Amin" (anonymised), 13 September 2019.

⁷³² *Ibid.*

⁷³³ 'Home', Islam Against Extremism, accessed 21 July, 2022, <http://www.islamagainstextremism.com>.

⁷³⁴ PDF copies of these leaflets are available on the same site. *Ibid.*

⁷³⁵ 'Our Fight Against Terrorism', accessed 21 July 2021..

⁷³⁶ See these and other related PDFs here: 'Extremism', Salafi Manhaj, accessed 21 July, 2022, <http://salafimanhaj.com/category/extremism>.

people are better aware that Salafis in Britain are not the same as ISIS, there is more work needed from Salafis to spread Salafism so that it is understood correctly by the British public and not misconstrued as a product of Saudi Arabia or part of “global” Jihadism.⁷³⁷

Conclusion

This chapter examined the external challenges faced by Salafis in Britain shortly before and after 9/11 and during the height of the global “War on Terror.” It has highlighted how following 9/11, British Salafism was propelled into the public sphere and underwent intense scrutiny on two fronts: the first was at the hands of ideological rivals, particularly the TI movement and the second was at the hands of the British establishment (government, academia and media). It has highlighted how this scrutiny and “phantomization” contributed to the idea that Saudi Arabia has funded “Wahhābī”/Salafī *da‘wah*, both oral and print, as part of a wider religiopolitical expansionist programme. Simultaneously, it contributed to conflation between Salafism and “global” Jihadism. Leading up to 2001, as the following chapter will demonstrate, Saudi’s influence in Britain was in fact limited. Nevertheless, following 9/11, conflation was routinely made by observers and critics in the public sphere. Instead of shying away from religious links to the kingdom, Salafis in Britain doubled-down on their support of Saudi Salafism because of their historical relationship, shared religious beliefs and united counter-response to “global” Jihadism.

This chapter has also provided some context as to why Salafis in Britain were stigmatised in the public sphere for espousing “extremist” beliefs. It revealed that the movement had to contend with a local Jihadi trend which increasingly sought to appeal to the wider Anglo-Muslim reading public with Salafī dialectics. This partly explains why observers conflated Salafis with “violent” extremists. Even so, since the mid-2000s, scholars have increasingly developed a better understanding of Salafism in general and even “helped” ordinary Salafis by distinguishing them from “violent” counterparts. Simultaneously, Salafis in Britain have expanded their Anglo-Salafī print culture to counter “Islamic” extremist discourse; this project has been met with

⁷³⁷ Interview with “Farid” (anonymised), 3 February 2020.

relative successes and failures; the former includes keeping a number of Salafis away from Jihadism while the latter includes failing to convince the British public of Salafism's compatibility with modernity. Saudi Salafism also continues to be an important local source for countering Jihadi arguments also built on scripture. The same loyalty to Saudi readings however, will inevitably contribute to critiques of "Wahhābī" spending in Britain.

Chapter Six

The United Kingdom... of Saudi Arabia?

‘It’s okay to be religious... but not this type of religious!’ So said one of my interviewees who recalls what he thought when he first met Salafis in Britain during the early 1990s and whom he believed were mouthpieces of Saudi Arabia. Having been raised in a traditional Pakistani–Sunni home and later joining several political groups in his teens, “Ahmad” was enamoured by Iran’s Islamic Revolution and their implementation of Islamic law. He subscribed to an Iranian newspaper which informed him that there are three types of Muslims: Sunni, Shiites and “Wahhābīs.” The same newspaper described the Sunnis and Shiites as “brothers” and the “Wahhābīs” as their “enemies.” When a Salafi later handed “Ahmad” a book by Canadian–Jamaican and Saudi–trained Bilal Philips, the former thought the contents would be ‘full of lies’ since it was “obviously” Saudi propaganda. The book was a translation of Ibn Jawzī’s (d. 1201) critique of Shiite Islam.⁷³⁸ When “Ahmad” realised the author lived several hundred years ago, he realised there’s a “bit more” to these “Wahhābīs” than he had previously thought. “Ahmad” picked up more Anglo–Salafi books as a result and in 1994, embraced Salafism wholeheartedly having become convinced by its message.⁷³⁹

This anecdote alerts us to how easily Salafis and Anglo–Salafi texts in Britain can be misconstrued as Saudi products.⁷⁴⁰ The reality of the matter is far more complicated. In this example, while Philips was certainly trained in Saudi institutions, his English translation above was composed in Riyadh, type–set in London and printed and published in New York; the Saudi government had no direct involvement in Philips’ print project although the latter’s attempt at countering Iranian propaganda was certainly in alignment with the kingdom’s anti–Iranian policy.

⁷³⁸ ‘Abdur–Rahmaan Ibn al–Jawzee, *The Devil’s Deception of the Shee’ah*, trans. Philips (New York: As–Suq Bookstore, 1985).

⁷³⁹ Interview with “Ahmad” (anonymised), 24 August 2019.

⁷⁴⁰ For a similar discussion about Salafism in Malaysia but not necessarily the same results, consult Mohd Faizal Musa, ‘The Riyal and Ringgit of Petro–Islam: Investing Salafism in Education’, in *Islam in Southeast Asia: Negotiating Modernity*, ed. Norshahril Saat (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2018), 63–90.

This chapter breaks from the earlier chronological analysis to take stock of Saudi Arabia's governmental influence in Britain leading up to 2001 after which Saudi spending subsided under increasing scrutiny of Western governments. I focus here on three potential grounds under which Saudi Arabia could be viewed as having "sponsored" Salafism in Britain: i) printing and distributing free Islamic literature; ii); training British Muslims in Saudi Islamic universities, and iii) Subsidising Salafi mosques. It argues that Saudi Arabia's influence in all three areas was limited and/or mediated by Salafis born or based in Britain, particularly in the Anglo-Salafi commercial book market which is the domain of local and transnational entrepreneurs. This nuance was largely misinterpreted in the public sphere in the wake of 9/11.

"A Gift from the King": Saudi-sponsored Literature

There is scarce evidence of Saudi Arabia's involvement in Anglo-Islamic print culture leading up to the 1970s in Britain and elsewhere. I have yet to find any evidence of such before the establishment of the Muslim World League (MWL) in Mecca, 1962, which, Schulze describes as an outward looking Islamic organisation made up initially of Wahhabi ulema, Hijazi elites and Islamists including the Muslim Brotherhood (MB).⁷⁴¹ In Jameelah's bibliography of Islamic books in English (see Chapter One), the only Saudi publication to feature is the first volume of Asad's translation of the Quran published by MWL.⁷⁴² The same organisation is at least partly funded by the Saudi government although Schulze admits that 'there is no reliable information of the level of [governmental] financial support granted' to it.⁷⁴³

The financial sponsorship may well have been significant given that in 1981, the MWL was involved in the 'printing of 40 million copies of the Holy Quran' to be 'distributed among Muslims all over the world.'⁷⁴⁴ In the following year, the organisation opened its London offices (28 August 1982). The first sign of the Ahl-e-Hadith working in tandem with MWL was when the latter's London director, Hashim al-Mahdi, contributed an article in *The Straight Path*; Saqib also used the same issue to "assure"

⁷⁴¹ Schulze, 'Transnational Wahhabism', 93-97.

⁷⁴² Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Quran* (Mecca: Rabita al Alam al Islamiya, 1965) as mentioned in Jameelah, *A Select Bibliography*, 2.

⁷⁴³ Schulze, 'Transnational Wahhabism', 104.

⁷⁴⁴ *Sirat-e-Mustaqeem*, June 1981, 19.

al-Mahdi of Markaz Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith's (MJAH) 'unconditional cooperation towards Islamic activities in Britain.'⁷⁴⁵ In the following year, *The Straight Path* published an interview with al-Mahdi whereby he stated MWL's aims in Britain being to help 'preserve' Muslim rights and remove their differences.'⁷⁴⁶ Aside from further mentions in *The Straight Path* of MWL leaders attending MJAH events, there is no trace of the former's publications being distributed through the latter's UK branches. In one 1997 issue of *The Straight Path*, however, an article published in a MWL English-language magazine is reproduced on the issue of straightening the rows in prayer.⁷⁴⁷

In contrast, the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), established in Riyadh, 1972, and at least partly funded by the Saudi government, distributed Anglo-Islamic literature in Britain. Like MWL, WAMY's budget reports are difficult to obtain; unlike MWL, WAMY was geared towards Muslim students, particularly Saudis studying in countries like the United States.⁷⁴⁸ Schulze notes that WAMY published various texts but these were mostly MB-influenced reflecting its leadership; in Britain, it thus cooperated with organisations like the MB-influenced Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) and Jamaat-i Islaami's The Islamic Foundation (TIF).⁷⁴⁹ Abu Muntasir, to cite one example, recalls collecting Anglo-Islamic books published by WAMY during his studies at university.⁷⁵⁰ Another contributor is the Islamic Solidarity Fund based in Jeddah which donated \$33,000 to The Islamic Research Institute, a branch of the International Islamic University of Islamabad in 1980 for the purpose of 'publication and dissemination' of Islamic literature 'to the right quarters in various parts of the globe for spreading the message to all mankind.'⁷⁵¹ The institute published a *Da'wah Directory* in 1986 and listed several British-based outfits involved in the distribution of the fund's-sponsored Islamic literature.

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the abovementioned publications were other than free distributions.⁷⁵² The same can be said about the Da'wah Office in

⁷⁴⁵ Saqib, *The Straight Path*, November/December 1982, 4–6 and 23.

⁷⁴⁶ *The Straight Path*, January 1983, 6–7.

⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid*, December 1997, 6–7.

⁷⁴⁸ Schulze, 'Transnational Wahhabism', 101.

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 101–104.

⁷⁵⁰ Interview with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019.

⁷⁵¹ *Da'wah Directory*.

⁷⁵² The same can be said about the following Anglo-Islamic publication I located in the TIF library sponsored by the King Sultan al-Qasimi of Sharjah in Muhammad Ibraheem El-Geyoushi, *The*

London which shares a space with MWL (see Chapter Two). This office is Britain's counterpart to Dār al-Iftā' (DAI), Saudi Arabia's Office for Islamic Verdicts. As well as publishing numerous Islamic texts in Arabic, Urdu and English, it appears to be the main conduit of distribution for similar publications published by Saudi's Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Ministry of Education respectively (see previous chapter). When Hasan moved from Kenya to Britain in 1976 (see Chapter Two), he reported to the Da'wah Office, and it is reasonable to conclude that through him, Saudi sponsored literature may well have reached MJAH branches and Jam'iyyat Ihyaa Minhaaj As Sunnah (JIMAS) conferences.

A number of freely distributed Saudi sponsored texts were indeed channelled into Britain through the abovementioned Saudi channels. Unfortunately, it has been impossible to locate many of these texts and any corresponding data which would confirm their quantities or reach in Britain.⁷⁵³ This is not to say that there is anything clandestine about Saudi-state *da'wah*. Publications paid for by the kingdom or organisations clearly tied to it are normally identifiable in several ways: the most obvious of which is when a cover clearly states: "A gift from the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques [of Mecca and Medina]." Al-Rasheed, for example, found 'stacks of unopened boxes' containing Urdu translations of the Quran inside London Central Mosque; she also found other piles containing other translations including English, Turkish and Bengali.⁷⁵⁴ These translations, freely distributed to pilgrims and Muslim organisations across the world, are products of the government-sponsored King Fahd Glorious Quran Printing Complex (KFGQP) which was established in Medina in 1985. The same can be said of publications printed and published by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs.⁷⁵⁵

Meaning of Islam (London: London Central Mosque, 1978), 1, and the Qatari government in Mustapha Ibrahim, *Towards Understanding of the Islamic Faith (Five Pillars of Islam)* (Accra: Islamic Council For Development, 1998; revised second edition 1999), 1.

⁷⁵³ I was able to locate a handful from The Islamic Foundation library in Markfield including Abdul Aziz Bin Baz, *A Rejoinder to Those Who Seek Help in Other Than God or Those Who Believe in Soothsayers and Fortune-Tellers*, trans. Muhammad Munawar Nainar (Riyadh: Presidency of Islamic Research, Ifta and Propagation, 1988).

⁷⁵⁴ Al-Rasheed, 'Saudi Religious Transnationalism in London', 156.

⁷⁵⁵ See for example: Hafiz Al Hakami, *The Sunnah's out Spread Flags of the Belief of the Safe Supported Group* (Riyadh: The Under-Secretariat for Publication and Research, Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Da'wah and Guidance, 2004). This particular publication, which I picked up in a Salafi mosque in Leicester, also mentions the Saudi NGO Sulaiman Bin Abdul Aziz Alrajhi Charitable Foundation, suggesting that the Saudi government may not always be alone in covering print-costs.

Another telling sign is the copyright page: publications produced in Saudi Arabia normally identify the city of origin (usually Medina, Riyadh or Jeddah) while others include a reference from the King Fahd National Library containing a catalogue number and International Standard Book Number, or ISBN. Another more subtle sign is the design of the publication. Some of the Saudi-sponsored literature I have collected is somewhat underwhelming, containing little to no photographic elements, and often printed with green coloured-covers (see fig. 15).

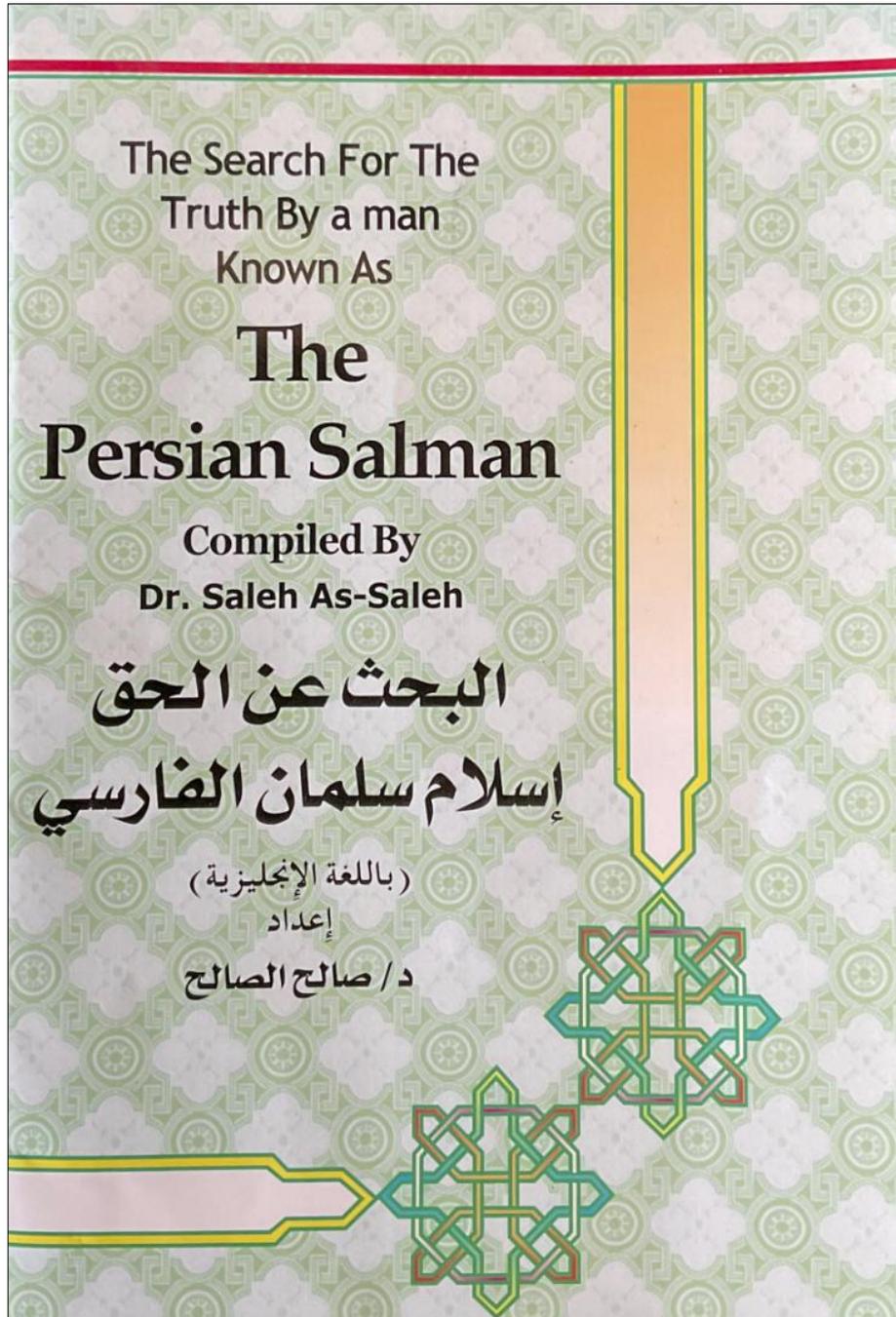


Figure 15.

For example, a number of freely distributed Arabic titles published by the Da‘wah Office (London) as part of its *rasā‘il al-iṣlāh wa ‘l-fiqh* (treatises on reformation and jurisprudence) series are printed on glossy covers with few colours, a simple border and a title in Arabic calligraphy.⁷⁵⁶ Given that Saudi Arabia’s *da‘wah* project outside of its borders is partly to enhance its image among Muslim communities, it is unsurprising that such publications would publicise their place of origin and/or sponsor, though why more care was not given to their appearance is unclear.

As for Anglo–Salafi texts produced by Salafis born or based in Britain, there is no evidence that Saudi Arabia sponsored their respective print projects. According to Inge, the leaders of JIMAS, Salafi Publications (Spubs) and Brixton mosque, all of whom have published Anglo–Salafi texts, have ‘categorically stated that they have never received Saudi or other foreign governmental or NGO funding.’⁷⁵⁷ Furthermore, Saqib and Hasan confirmed to me that their respective magazine and correspondence courses were entirely published thanks to local donations.⁷⁵⁸ Likewise, Saqib’s series of “Salfia Publications” including *A Guide to Prayer in Islam* were entirely self-funded. According to him, he would encourage his students to donate pocket-money, instead of buying chocolates or chips, in order to help print his works and *The Straight Path*.⁷⁵⁹

HISAM’s publications on the other hand were entirely paid for by Abu Muntasir.⁷⁶⁰ After the organisation fractured, Abu Muntasir developed its own novel system of collecting funds from fellow JIMAS members in order to cover costs of printing literature, producing cassettes and holding conferences. Abu Muntasir describes how as follows:

So we’d get out brothers together, Abu Aaliyah would be there, AbdurRaheem Green, even perhaps Abu Khadijah later on was... big meetings, 70–80 brothers and sisters. Call a meeting, have some food, and say, “Okay, now who will give how much?” Just like that. “Brother, how much do you pledge?” “£100.” “£1,000.” And even then many of them would not fulfil their pledge but somehow every time we’d do a conference on a shoe-string, I’d think we’re

⁷⁵⁶ See for example: Ibrāhīm al-Fāris, *Ashar a‘immat al-da‘wah khilāl qarnayn* (London: Darulifta Office, 1991).

⁷⁵⁷ Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 28.

⁷⁵⁸ Interview with Saqib, 1 February 2022, and Hasan, 1 May 2019.

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁰ Interview with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019.

going to go into debt, and then after the conference all the bills are paid, back to zero again. We really sacrificed.⁷⁶¹

JIMAS, thus, was very much a grass-roots movement like HISAM in that it did not rely on foreign subsidies despite its potential availability.⁷⁶² Abu Aaliyah recalls the following exchange with Abu Muntasir:

Everyone was taking money from the local government to do Islamic work, or work for [South] Asian Muslims... Abu Muntasir [would say]: “No money.” Not because it was *ḥarām* (unlawful); we don’t want to take any money because we wanted to be independent. **And we don’t take money from Saudi because it’s “tied aid”...** He explains to me “tied aid”... how Britain gives loads and loads of money to poorer countries, and after a while, they become so dependant on it that Britain can then dictate terms and conditions. He then gives me an Oxfam book, which I still have today, about “tied aid” and how... it’s a double-edged sword. And so he was just using that context to say, “Well, that happens Islamically as well.” So no money. Whatever we can do from our own pockets. And *our* own money.⁷⁶³

As for JIMAS, Abu Muntasir describes it as ‘*our* work, *our* say, it’s on *our* footing. What Allāh gave [us], we spend from that.’⁷⁶⁴ His view on “tied aid” suggests that despite JIMAS adopting a more Arab Salafi construct during the 1990s, it did not necessarily translate into depending on Arabs for support. It also underscores JIMAS “2.0’s” resemblance to its more Islamist counterparts which were equally distrusting of Arab governments. Saqib expressed the same distrust; his later school project and charity work, for example, was entirely funded by local donations.⁷⁶⁵

By the mid-1990s when differences within JIMAS “2.0” led younger cohorts to establish their own Salafi cooperative. The corresponding emergence of a globalised market for Anglo-Salafi texts encouraged a self-made and paid cottage industry. For example, publishers like Al-Haneef Publications, Al-Hidaayah, Spubs and Invitation to Islam were entirely self-funded and thrived primarily on book sales.⁷⁶⁶ The Salafi

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶² Interview with Usama, 12 September 2019 and Karmani, 27 May 2020.

⁷⁶³ Interview with Abu Aaliyah, 16 February 2022. Emphasis mine.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.* In contrast, consult Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 80.

⁷⁶⁵ Interview with Saqib, 1 February 2022.

⁷⁶⁶ Interviews with Abu Khadeejah, 30 September 2019; Baker, 13 December 2019; Naeem, 23 January 2021; Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 119.

cooperative thus combined between *da'wah* and business as a means of asserting “pure” Salafism through print. They were altogether wary of the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-i Islaami influences in sponsored Saudi literature.⁷⁶⁷ This enterprise was facilitated by the availability of desktop computers and their literacy of publishing software like Microsoft Word.⁷⁶⁸ As well as being aimed at a local market, Anglo-Salafi publications were often “made in Britain.” Invitation to Islam, for example, printed its publications through “Impeks” printers in London and urged readers in their publications to donate towards ‘the translation of Islaamic literature into various languages’ and distribution.⁷⁶⁹ By 1997, the same outfit claimed to have distributed over 25,000 publications (some of which were in languages other than English) in over 50 countries while promising, ‘any funds we make or receive will be channelled back into the da'wah activities.’⁷⁷⁰

Aside from its *da'wah* potential, Anglo-Salafi book publishing provided the Salafi cooperative with a “halal” income and alternative to working for non-Muslims.⁷⁷¹ This does not necessarily mean that every Salafi publisher was commercially successful. For example, “Abu Khuzaimah”, who began publishing Anglo-Salafi titles in 2000, printed 3,000 copies of his first title locally to resell and ‘raise more money to publish more books’; having little business experience, the same title was mostly distributed for free due to lack of sales which he claims made him ‘more happy’ since the knowledge was “out” in the public irrespective of profits.⁷⁷²

The vast majority of Anglo-Salafi publications produced in Britain appear to have been selected, translated and published locally without written approval or permission from their original Arab authors or publishers. Few examples suggest otherwise. For example, when a member of MJAH contacted Saudi’s current grand mufti ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Āl al-Shaykh for permission to translate and publish selected fatwas issued by Saudi’s Permanent Committee for Scholarly Research and Fatwas (*Lajnat al-dā'imah*

⁷⁶⁷ See for example: Abul’ Ala Maududi, *Worship in Islam* (Riyadh: Presidency of Islamic Research, Ifta and Propagation, 1984).

⁷⁶⁸ Interview with “Abu Khuzaimah”, 28 July 2019.

⁷⁶⁹ Saleem al-Hilaalee, *Invalidation of Actions in Light of the Noble Qur’aan and the Pure Authentic Ahadeeth* (London: Invitation to Islam, 1997), 64–73.

⁷⁷⁰ This included the translation and printing of 100,000 copies of *Fortification of the Muslim Through Remembrance and Supplications from the Qur’aan and the Sunnah* by Saudi scholar Sa’īd al-Qaḥṭānī (d. 2018). *Ibid.*, 66–67; see 68–72 for details of what titles were sent to some of these 50 countries.

⁷⁷¹ Interviews with Salafi publisher “Nawaz” (anonymised), 26 March 2020 and Naeem Mohammed, 23 January 2021.

⁷⁷² Interview with “Abu Khuzaimah”, 28 July 2019.

lil-buḥūth wa 'l-iftā'), the mufti responded by letter requesting a sample of the translation before granting permission.⁷⁷³ In another rare example, Spubs published a letter in which al-Ḥalabī and al-Hilālī (both al-Albānī's students) granted the organisation exclusive rights to translate and publish their works.⁷⁷⁴ While it cannot be ruled out that private correspondences might take place between foreign scholars and British Salafi publishers privately, it would appear that for the most part, the former has little say or knowledge of the latter's "products" and indeed wider impact (see previous chapter). Salafi Publishers may find asking for permission from scholars as an unnecessary precondition for various reasons including the potential delay in releasing titles if they are to be vetted. Otherwise, including a scholar's indorsement to a translation of one of his works would assumedly enhance a publication.

The abovementioned examples demonstrate that there was sufficient motive in harnessing print for *da'wah* purposes, through either self-investment or donations. There was also a viable, even profitable, marketplace for Anglo-Salafi publishers in Britain leading up to the turn of the millennium; so much so that Saudi sponsorship or that of other Arab governments was needless. Unlike MJAḤ, members of JIMAS and its offshoots were either wary of "tied aid" or simply did not have the same connections with senior Saudi officials like Hasan. "Abu Khuzaimah" for example, confirms his print-*da'wah* project is 'entirely self-funded' and that he has never been interested in receiving financial support from outsiders because 'we didn't want anyone telling us to "do this book, do this book, I don't agree with this book."' ⁷⁷⁵ It is reasonable to believe that publishers like "Abu Khuzaimah" are telling the truth. Any stigma attached to allegations of receiving Saudi funds has subsided in recent years in comparison to the 2000s (see previous chapter) and moreover, at least some Salafi publishers are openly in favour of Saudi financial contributions to religious projects outside of its borders. In any case, there is no evidence to my knowledge that Muslim governments pay attention to the commercial marketplace for Anglo-Islamic texts, let alone the emerging Salafi one. The same cannot be said of Saudi-born or based entrepreneurs invested in *da'wah*.

⁷⁷³ The Scholars of Markazi Jamiat Ahle Hadith UK, 'A Response to the Unjust Deceptive and Slandorous Allegations Made Against Markazi Jami'at Ahle Hadith UK', 2009, 36 and 40.

⁷⁷⁴ Consult Al-Halabee, *The Call to Allaah*.

⁷⁷⁵ Interview with "Abu Khuzaimah", 28 July 2019.

Darussalam International

As mentioned in my introduction, Darussalam International was established in Riyadh by a Pakistani national and Ahl-e-Hadith member. Namely, Abdul Malik Mujahid. Little has been uncovered about this company and its founder despite Darussalam Int. publishing to date ‘more than 1400 authentic multi-lingual Islamic books... in numerous languages’ (approximately 38 titles a year).⁷⁷⁶ What can be ascertained is that Mujahid was born in 1955 in Pakistan and belongs to the Kaylani family which includes a number of Ahl-e-Hadith scholars.⁷⁷⁷ Mujahid is also currently emir of the Arab division of Markaz Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith Pakistan and is one of the only Ahl-e-Hadith publishers based outside of South Asia.⁷⁷⁸ Philips mentioned to me that Mujahid taught him in Riyadh during the 1980s the process of laying pages out by hand for the purpose of lithographic printing; during this period, computers had not yet been widely adopted in Saudi Arabia.⁷⁷⁹ It is quite possible that Mujahid was one of many Pakistani migrant workers living in Saudi Arabia at the time and that he was somehow involved in a printing press. This would help explain how he understood printing processes and why he himself established a publishing house in 1986. Even so, I have not found a single Darussalam Int. publication printed before the 1990s.

In or around the early-1990s, Darussalam Int. quickly became a recognisable brand in Salafi circles in Britain for three reasons: i) it published numerous soft-cover books on various Islamic themes which were not Salafi in name, but certainly confirmed the Ahl-e-Hadith’s textualist approach; ii) it published a number of hard-back books, some of which are voluminous, and which were unique for Anglo-Islamic print culture at the time (given that the vast majority of Salafi books are printed in soft back), and iii) as detailed in Chapter Four, Darussalam franchises appeared in Birmingham and London.

A survey of Darussalam Int.’s early soft-cover titles reveals that Mujahid was well-connected with British Ahl-e-Hadith members. Rizwanullah had already established

⁷⁷⁶ ‘About Darussalam Publishers’, Darussalam, accessed 15 February, 2021, https://uk.darussalamstore.com/uk_en/about-darussalam.

⁷⁷⁷ A. H. Khan, *The Efforts of the Ahl-e-Hadith Scholars in Service of the Quran* (Gujranwala: Umm-ul-Qura Publications, 2020), 46–47, 74 and 83.

⁷⁷⁸ ‘مرکزی کابینہ’, Markaz Jamiat Ahle Hadees Pakistan, accessed 26 November, 2022, <https://ahlehadith.pk/introduction/markazi-kabina>.

⁷⁷⁹ Interview with Philips, 25 January 2021.

a Darussalam franchise in Birmingham a year before Mujahid presented a speech at MJAHS's 1993 annual conference in Urdu.⁷⁸⁰ Darussalam and its franchises would also routinely advertise new publications in *The Straight Path*.⁷⁸¹ In 1997, Mujahid republished Saqib's *A Guide to Prayer* and in several of Hasan's Al Quran Society (AQS) publications including *An Introduction to the Science of Hadith*.⁷⁸² Similarly, Mujahid networked with the al-Qur'an was-Sunnah Society of North America (QSS); a number of his early publications were translated or edited by QSS member Murad, including a two-volume translation of al-Nawawī's (d. 1277) widely-read ḥadīth collection *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn (Gardens of the Righteous)* accompanied by a commentary by Pakistani Ahl-e-Hadith scholar Ṣalāh al-Dīn Yūsuf (d. 2020).⁷⁸³

Alongside these obvious Ahl-e-Hadith publications, most of Darussalam Int.'s publications were translations of works by Saudi ulema including Ibn Bāz's biography of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb. This publication reveals that Mujahid was also publishing texts in Arabic and that the English translation was produced 'on account of the popularity and readership received by its original in the Arabic language.'⁷⁸⁴ Mujahid's decision to concentrate on mostly Saudi Salafi texts is reasoned by the fact that he was living in the kingdom but also because he, like many Ahl-e-Hadith scholars before him, construed Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb as a 'Great Reformer' and his mission as "upholding" the 'pristine purity of Islam based on the Qur'ān and Sunnah' (consult Chapter Two).⁷⁸⁵ This indicates that Saudi-based publishers are not necessarily afraid of "falling foul" of Saudi censors as opined by Birt (see introduction); they appear supportive of the kingdom's religious elite.

Darussalam Int. publications, unlike other works stemming from Saudi Arabia at the time, feature attractive covers printed in full-colour and variable fonts; their contents are neatly typeset and included Quranic verses in the same calligraphic script employed in Saudi printed Qurans (more commonly referred to as the *Medina muṣḥaf*). The publishing house is also backed by a "research department" and the odd British or

⁷⁸⁰ *The Straight Path*, July/August 1993, 18.

⁷⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 23 and May/June 2004, 26.

⁷⁸² See for examples: Saqib, *A Guide to Salat (Prayer)* (Riyadh: Darussalam Int., 1997) and Hasan, *An Introduction to the Science of Hadith* (Riyadh: Darussalam Int. 1999).

⁷⁸³ See for example, Yahya An-Nawawi and Hafiz Salahuddin Yusuf, *Riyāḍ-us-Ṣāliḥeen*, 2 vol, ed. Murad, (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1999).

⁷⁸⁴ Abdul Aziz Bin Baz, *Imam Muhammad Bin Abdul Wahhab: His Life & Mission* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1997), 6.

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

American Salafi translator (see below); their names however are rarely publicised. It's more significant publications tend to be printed in hard-back and artificial leather-bound covers with gold embossing so as to resemble Arabic works; again, these are professionally typeset and contained Arabic script. The most widely distributed titles in this respect include Mujahid's 1993 reprint of M. M. Khan and al-Hilālī's *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an* (see Chapters One and Four). Mujahid also acquired sole publishing rights on M. M. Khan's extended edition of *The Noble Qur'an* (10 volumes), *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (nine volumes) and its summary (one volume), and a collection of ḥadīth collected and "agreed upon" by both al-Bukhārī and Muslim (two volumes). Other popular Darussalam Int. titles include *The Sealed Nectar*, an international-prize winning biography of Prophet Muḥammad authored by Ahl-e-Hadith scholar Ṣafī al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpūrī (d. 2006), and *Tafsir Ibn Kathir (Abridged)* (see below).

It should be noted that alongside Darussalam Int., other commercial Saudi-based publishers also contribute to the Anglo-Salafi print project including Abul-Qasim Publishing House (est. 1985?) in Jeddah, Daar Al-Bukhari (est. 1994?) in Al Qassim, and the International Islamic Publishing House (IIPH, est. 1997?) in Riyadh. Through its network, Darussalam Int. however asserted itself as the most powerful Anglo-Salafi publisher in the Anglosphere and inside Saudi Arabia itself. Their titles appealed to wider Anglo-Muslim reading publics, particularly Salafis. According to "Farid", a Salafi and Muslim convert, he "trusted" Darussalam Int. because they published books that satisfied his want for "authentic" Islamic information.⁷⁸⁶ According to another one of my interviewees, books by Darussalam Int provided him and his peers with "safe" material, and 'generally in accordance with Quran and Sunnah.'⁷⁸⁷ This might also explain why non-Salafi bookstores stock Darussalam Int. titles since they have a wider appeal. The latter rarely reveals its Salafi orientations but instead, claims to address an universal audience while "strictly" adhering 'to the original context of Quran and Sunnah.'⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁶ Interview with "Farid" (anonymised), 3 February 2020.

⁷⁸⁷ Interview with "Khalid" (anonymised), 27 July 2019.

⁷⁸⁸ One of the 'key principles and guidelines' it sets for itself is 'presenting books without any sectarian material.' 'About Darussalam Publishers', accessed 15 January, 2021, https://uk.darussalamstore.com/uk_en/about-darussalam. The only exception I have found to this rule is the following pocket-size publication with obvious Salafi overtones: *A Summary of the Creed of As-Salaf As-Saalih (The Righteous Predecessors)* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2012).

This is not to say that Darussalam Int. is entirely “safe” from sectarianism. Following the break-up of JIMAS in 1996, some members of the Salafi cooperative have become wary of Anglo-Saudi Islamic publications when the authors are identifiable as “pure” Salafi ulema. For example, one of my Salafi interviewees who adopted Salafism in the 2000s admits to steering clear of books by Darussalam Int. and IIPH unless the author is a “known” Salafi scholar.⁷⁸⁹ In another example, members of Spubs posted on its forum a list of all the pages where Qutb and Maududi are cited in *The Sealed Nectar*; given its sensitivities towards Islamism, Spubs thereby welcomes its forum members to “purge” unwanted material from a widely-accepted Salafi text.⁷⁹⁰ Some non-Salafis are also acutely aware of Darussalam’s Saudi Salafi leanings. One Sufi critic, for example, published an assessment of Darussalam Int.’s *Riyâḍ al-Sâliheen* and concluded that the ‘unprincipled editors and translators’ showcased ‘deceit and a grave betrayal of the trust (amāna) of the translation of one the motherbooks {sic} of knowledge in Islam’ and that Muslims should ‘Avoid this 2-volume English translation...!’⁷⁹¹ For the most part, however, Darussalam Int. has gained widespread popularity among Anglo-Muslim reading publics.

The obvious question here is how has Mujahid financed his enterprise? Unfortunately, he has never disclosed this information in his publisher’s notes routinely included in Darussalam Int. titles. It is quite possible that Mujahid was already wealthy enough in 1980s-Riyadh to establish himself as an international publisher; it is also possible that he was financed by a wealthy Saudi *kafil* (migrant sponsor) and a percentage of his profits are thus shared by an undisclosed figure.⁷⁹² Nevertheless, according to Mujahid’s son Talha, who is currently a senior member of Darussalam Int.’s management team and resides in Britain, his father’s publishing house is an

⁷⁸⁹ Interview with “Abul Amin” (anonymised), 13 September 2019. This may partly be down to the fact that several of IIPH’s publications are by Jordanian-Salafi Sulaimān al-Ashqar (d. 2021), a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. IIPH also published a book “produced” by JIMAS “2.0” after its split in 1996. See Muhammad Naasir-ud-Deen al-Albaanee, *The Rites of Hajj & Umrah from the Book of Sunnah and Narrations from the Pious Predecessors* (Riyadh: IIPH, 1998).

⁷⁹⁰ Aboo Sufyaan ‘Uthmaan bin William Beecher, ‘Some of the sources quoted in Ar-Raheeq Al-Makhtoom’, Salafi Talk, accessed 21 December, 2022, <http://www.salafitalk.net/st/viewmessages.cfm?Forum=19&Topic=6056>.

⁷⁹¹ Moin Shaheed, ““Salafi” Tampering of Riyad al-Salihin’, Living Islam, accessed 21 December, 2022, https://www.livingislam.org/trs_e.html.

⁷⁹² For more about the *kafil* system, consult Ray Jureidini and Said Fares Hassan, ‘The Islamic Principle of Kafala as Applied to Migrant Workers: Traditional Continuity and Reform’ in *Migration and Islamic Ethics: Issues of Residence, Naturalization and Citizenship*, ed. Ray Jureidini and Said Fares Hassan (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 92–109.

independent business and its publications are *not* subsidised by the Saudi government.⁷⁹³ Similarly, Darussalam London's manager Wahid states that Mujahid has personally informed him that the latter does not receive external subsidies; as far as his own franchise is concerned, Wahid states,

to be quite honest, I have opened my Darussalam, not a single penny somebody has given us... We are selling books, and through selling books we are paying our wages, our taxes, electricity, gas... everything has been paid from the sale of these books, nobody has supported us from a country. As far as the contents of the books are concerned... we are just a distributor, [we] bring the knowledge to the market, and it's up to the people to agree or not to agree to the contents.⁷⁹⁴

If this is to be taken at face value, it suggests that the Anglo-Islamic book market is profitable on its own merit. Talha does however admit, that occasionally, departments within the Saudi kingdom have collaborated in the printing and distribution of specific titles for free (amounting to less than 10).⁷⁹⁵ One such example is Darussalam's edition of M. M. Khan and al-Hilālī's Quran translation; as well as being available for purchase in commercial warehouses like Darussalam London, an untold number of copies were also printed and distributed at the expense of King Fahad and distributed in Britain through mosques sponsored by Saudi Arabia. For example, my personal copy clearly states on the cover in Arabic and English: 'A Gift From The Mosque Of The Custodian of The Two Holy Mosques King Fahad Bin Abdulaziz Alsaud & Islamic Centre of Edinburgh.'⁷⁹⁶ For the most part, however, Darussalam Int. operates on its own terms and with the support of a non-governmental transnational networks of Salafis as can be seen in the following case study of a popular publication.

Case Study: Tafseer Ibn Katheer (Abridged)

Irrespective of Darussalam Int.'s financial source(s), the publishing house continues to dominate the Anglo-Salafi book market, and to some extent, permeate the wider Anglo-Islamic one too. Its Riyadh headquarters, British franchises, numerous

⁷⁹³ Correspondence with Talha Mujahid, 10 January 2021.

⁷⁹⁴ Interview with Wahid, 12 September 2019.

⁷⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁶ Muhammad Muhsin Khan and Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilālī, trans., *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'ān* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1996; fifteenth revised edition 2000), front cover and spine. The King Fahad Mosque in Edinburgh was established in 1998 and is named after its key benefactor.

translations of Saudi Salafi texts and select subsidised publications paid for by the Saudi royal family would easily lead one to believe that Darussalam Int. is a Saudi-sponsored mouthpiece in Britain. Only a more critical analysis suggests otherwise. It's publication of *Tafseer Ibn Katheer (Abridged)* in 2000 is a case in point.

Ismā'īl b. 'Umar b. Kathīr (d. 1373) is one of Ibn Taymiyyah's most celebrated students and a scholar in his own right; his most widely-accepted works are a history (*Al-Bidāyah wa 'l-Nihāyah*, or *The Beginning and End*) and a Quran *tafsīr* (exegesis) entitled *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* (more universally known as *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*). The latter was one of a number of manuscripts edited and published during what El Shamsy describes as the "rediscovery" of Islamic Classics in the Arab world during the twentieth century.⁷⁹⁷ Salafis are particularly drawn to this text as part of their 'revival effort' because its author was not only Ibn Taymiyyah's student but also engaged in Taymiyyan hermeneutics while interpreting the Quran.⁷⁹⁸

As highlighted by Pink, one of the means by which the "revival" involving this exegesis was achieved was by 'reworking' it into abridged editions and translations.⁷⁹⁹ The trend of summarising (*ikhtiṣār*), simplifying (*taysīr*) and refining (*tahdhīb*) is a popular method employed by modern Islamic publishers borrowing on earlier traditions of condensing large works to make them more accessible to audiences.⁸⁰⁰ The reworkings of *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* are substantial.⁸⁰¹

Few exegeses of the Quran existed in English prior to the 1990s, let alone one which would provide a Salafi viewpoint. This void was first addressed by Al-Firdous Publications in London. Given its Jihadi and Islamist leanings, however, Britain's Salafi cooperative were wary of anything Al-Firdous published (see previous chapter). When Al-Firdous began a serial translation of a summary of *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* endorsed by Ibn Bāz and others, the same cooperative grudgingly sought out copies.⁸⁰²

⁷⁹⁷ El Shamsy, *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics*, 174.

⁷⁹⁸ Walid A. Saleh, 'Preliminary Remarks on the Historiography of Tafsīr in Arabic: A History of the Book Approach', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 12 (2010): 10.

⁷⁹⁹ Pink, *Muslim Qur'anic Interpretation Today*, 52.

⁸⁰⁰ This is most visible in jurisprudential works. See Mohammad Fadel, 'The Social Logic of Taqlīd and the Rise of the Mukhtaṣar', *Islamic Law and Society* 3, no. 2 (1996): 193–233; Ahmed Fekry Ibrahim, 'The Codification Episteme in Islamic Juristic Discourse between Inertia and Change', *Islamic Law and Society* 22, no. 3 (2015): 157–220.

⁸⁰¹ For two examples, see: Aḥmad Shākīr, *Umdat al-tafsīr 'an al-ḥāfiẓ ibn kathīr* (Riyadh: Dār al-Wafā', 2005; second edition); 'Alī Khallūf, *Mukhtaṣar tafsīr ibn kathīr* (Riyadh: Jeraisyy, 2008).

⁸⁰² 'Publisher's Preface' in *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr (Part One)*, ed. Muḥammad Nasīb Al-Rafā'ī (London: Al-Firdous Ltd, 1996).

Al-Firdous began their ambitious project in 1996 with the hope of translating a one-thirtieth part of the Quran per volume in soft-back, which, if priced at £9.95 like the first volume, would set back buyers almost £300 for the entire *tafsīr*, far exceeding the price of Anglo-Islamic book sets even today.

Unbeknownst to Al-Firdous, Darussalam Int. was also translating another summary of *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*;⁸⁰³ this time, a special edition ‘prepared for the sole purpose of translation into all the major language of the world’ supervised by Ahl-e-Hadith scholar al-Mubārakpūrī.⁸⁰⁴ The task of translating this important “special edition” fell to six translators, all of whom were based in North America, and editing was carried out by a number of individuals from the USA, India, Pakistan and Egypt. Abu Khaliyl, an Italian-American convert to Islam and QSS member, was charged with the final edit of the text. His most noteworthy contribution to the English edition was reviewing the entire abridged text and omitting any ḥadīth or opinion he concluded was not authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*).⁸⁰⁵ Abu Khaliyl’s strict observance of “authentic Islam” ensured that *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* in English would reflect a more Salafi reading of texts in line with al-Albānī’s hermeneutic.

Mujahid recognised English as the ‘most widely written and spoken in the world’ and ensured the first translation of their Arabic abridgement was rendered into English.⁸⁰⁶ Consequently, its *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* was published in 2000 as a complete set, and differed from Al-Firdous’ edition in other ways: Darussalam printed the entire work in 10 hard-back volumes, each of which was significantly larger in page count (by two or three times); they also included the Arabic text for every Quranic verse and Ḥadīth cited, a feature missing in the Al-Firdous edition (see fig. 15); furthermore, it did not contain controversial appendices on jihad as found in Al-Firdous volumes (see previous chapter). The cost of the entire Darussalam Int. set also ranged in or around the £100 mark making it considerably cheaper. For these reasons, Al-Firdous put an end to their own translation project of *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* after reaching volume 11

⁸⁰³ *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr (Abridged)*, ed. Safiur-Rahman Al-Mubarakpuri (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2000), 10 Vol.

⁸⁰⁴ ‘Publisher’s Note’ in *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr (Abridged)*, vol. 1, 5–6.

⁸⁰⁵ Interview with Abu Khaliyl, 16 August 2020.

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid.* I am only aware of one other language this particular edition has been translated into (French).

which uncoincidentally completed chapters 8 and 9 of the Quran discussing issues pertaining to jihad, corresponding to their “jihadi” leanings.

Sūrah 17. Al-Isrā' (41-43) (Part-15) 19

٢٨٦

ذَٰلِكَ مِمَّا أَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ رَبُّكَ مِنَ الْحِكْمَةِ وَلَا جَعَلَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا
 آخَرَ فَلَنْقَلِبْ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَلُومًا مَّدْحُورًا ﴿٤١﴾ أَفَأَصْفَكَ رَبُّكَ
 بِالْبَيْنِينَ وَاتَّخَذَ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنثًا إِنَّكَ لَنَقُولُونَ قَوْلًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٤٢﴾
 وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِيَذَكَّرُوا وَمَا يَزِيدُهُمْ إِلَّا نُفُورًا ﴿٤٣﴾
 قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ مَعَهُ آلِهَةٌ كَمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذًا لَآتَيْنَا إِلَىٰ ذِي الْعَرْشِ سَبِيلًا
 ﴿٤٤﴾ سُبْحٰنَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُقُولُونَ عَلُوًّا كَبِيرًا ﴿٤٥﴾ نَسِجَ لَهُ السَّمَوٰتِ
 السَّبْعَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يَسِجُّ بَجْدٍ وَلَكِنْ
 لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا ﴿٤٦﴾ وَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ
 الْقُرْآنَ جَعَلْنَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ حِجَابًا
 مَسْتُورًا ﴿٤٧﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آدَانِهِمْ
 وَقْرًا وَإِذَا ذُكِرْتُ بِرَبِّكَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ وَحْدَهُ، وَلَوْ أَنِ ادَّبَرْتَهُمْ نُفُورًا
 ﴿٤٨﴾ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَسْتَمِعُونَ بِهِ إِذْ يَسْتَمِعُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِذْ هُمْ يُخَوِّتُونَ
 إِذْ يَقُولُ الظَّالِمُونَ إِنَّا تَسْبِعُونَ الْأَرْجُلَ مَسْحُورًا ﴿٤٩﴾ أَنْظِرْ
 كَيْفَ صَرِيحًا لَكَ الْأَمْثَالَ فَضَلُّوا فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٥٠﴾
 وَقَالُوا أَوْ لَوْ أَنَّ كُنَّا عِظَمًا وَرَفْنَا أَوْ نَا لِمَبْعُوثُونَ خَلْقًا جَدِيدًا ﴿٥١﴾

﴿إِلَّا نُفُورًا﴾

﴿save aversion.﴾ aversion towards the truth; they go further away from it.

﴿قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ مَعَهُ آلِهَةٌ كَمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذًا لَآتَيْنَا إِلَىٰ ذِي الْعَرْشِ سَبِيلًا ﴿٤٤﴾ سُبْحٰنَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُقُولُونَ عَلُوًّا كَبِيرًا ﴿٤٥﴾﴾

﴿42. Say: “If there had been other gods along with Him as they assert, then they would certainly have sought out a way to the Lord of the Throne.﴾

﴿43. Glorified and Exalted is He high above what they say!﴾

Allāh says: ‘Say, O Muḥammad, to these idolators who claim that Allāh has a partner among His creation, and who worship others besides Him that they may bring them nearer to Him: if

Figure 15.

The publication of Darussalam Int.’s *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* is as much the product of Ahl–e–Hadith scholars as it is of North Americans. The original Arabic edition reveals that the text was summarised by a group of scholars under the directive of Ahl–e–Hadith

author and editor Aḥmad Shāghif after which al-Mubārakpūrī states, he was ‘commissioned by the brother ‘Abd al-Mālīk Mujāhid with the review and revision, so I proceeded to do so and corrected, changed, altered, added and omitted wherever I saw the need to do so.⁸⁰⁷ Al-Mubārakpūrī clearly alerts readers in Arabic that his alterations are part of *tahdhīb* (reworking), and thereby *not* Ibn Kathīr’s words verbatim. This important caveat is entirely missing in the English edition.

Nevertheless, the fact that Darussalam’s edition was summarised, reworked, and curtailed of any “weakness” does not seem to have hindered its popularity. It not only curbed Al-Firdous’ earlier attempt and provided Salafis in Britain with their first “authentic” commentary of the Quran, but it also appealed to wider Anglo-Islamic reading publics since Ibn Kathīr is a widely regarded Sunni authority. The concern of readers was not so much the author’s integrity (as this was already established in other ways) but of meaning and ‘*finding* the truth.’⁸⁰⁸ According to Abu Abdul-Kareem, a former Salafi bookseller, he recalls selling copies of *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr (Abridged)* during the 2000s; he states:

I think it was definitely a popular set, whereas the [Al-Firdous] abridged set, for some people just didn’t have enough information. The 10-volume [Darussalam] set had the Arabic-English translation, it was all referenced and during that period, the students that were interested in those types of books wanted books that were translated in English, were referenced well and were quite easy to access.⁸⁰⁹

He also recalls that free copies of the same set were also distributed to mosques, Islamic centres and Muslim converts by Al-Birr Foundation in London whose name was clearly printed on the spine cover.⁸¹⁰ This particular institute was established in London by Shareef Ahmad Hafiz, one of the IUM graduates Ibn Bāz agreed to send to MJAHA (see Chapter Two). Hafiz relocated to London from Birmingham in or around 1997 and worked under the Saudi Da‘wah Office before establishing Al-Birr.⁸¹¹ It is

⁸⁰⁷ ‘Introduction to the First Edition’ in al-Mubārakfūrī, *Al-miṣbāḥ al-munīr fī tahdhīb tafsīr ibn kathīr* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1999), 5–6. For one example, compare Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-qur’ān al-‘aẓīm* (Dammam: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 2010), vol. 1, 159–161, with *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr (Abridged)*, vol. 1, 49–50

⁸⁰⁸ Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 185; Interview with “Umm Hani” (anonymised), 24 October 2020.

⁸⁰⁹ Interview with Abu Abdul-Kareem, 1 November 2020.

⁸¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹¹ *The Straight Path*, September 1997, 13.

not clear to me whether his institute, located in Leyton, was funded by the Saudi government or how and why a commercial set like *Tafsir Ibn Kathir (Abridged)* was licensed to Al-Birr Foundation for free distribution. This would have potentially hurt the publisher's sales. It for this reason that I suspect that it was sponsored by a wealthy donor although it cannot be said for sure whether the latter was a member of the Saudi government. In any case, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir (Abridged)* and other similar publications "made in Saudi Arabia", unless stated otherwise, do not appear to be state-sponsored; they further reveal that Anglo-Salafi print culture involves transnational agencies which are key to their production and distribution in the Anglosphere. Given that these actors are usually anonymous, one could be forgiven for thinking that the Saudi government may potentially be involved.

Saudi Graduates in Britain

A more obvious medium through which the Saudi government has impacted Salafism in Britain and its Anglo-Islamic print culture is by offering free scholarships to aspiring scholars so that they can live and study in Saudi Islamic universities, especially the Islamic University of Medina (IUM); students and graduates are potential conduits for the distribution of Saudi sponsored literature and translation of Saudi Salafi discourse. Since IUM's establishment in 1961, the university has indeed provided scholarships to a host of international students, some of whom, like Mirpuri, Hafiz, Hasan and Saqib, relocated to Britain after graduating, and others who were born in Britain and visited during summer breaks and returned also after graduating. These students/graduates studied the Arabic language and Islamic sciences, and as per the university's objectives, went onto assume teaching posts in non-Saudi mosques and/or pursuing publishing projects.

However, Farquhar's seminal study on IUM problematises the extent to which being trained in Saudi Arabia translates into expanding "Wahhābism" outside of its borders; IUM was established by a cohort of Muslim scholars, not all of whom ascribe to Saudi Salafism, and not all students/graduates return to their home countries espousing

“Wahhābī” doctrines (see following chapter).⁸¹² Similarly, Anzalone and Qadhi (a former IUM graduate) conclude that:

The spread of localized forms of Salafism by non–Saudi graduates of the IUM and other Saudi universities—as evidenced by the histories of local Salafisms in Yemen, West Africa and the Sahel, Jordan, the Palestinian territories, Egypt, and other countries—also succeeded as much, if not more so, because of local social, political, and class dynamics as they did from external funding from Saudi state and parastatal institutions.⁸¹³

As such, it is necessary to look at each country in which IUM graduates operate, on a case–by–case basis, to assess the impact of Saudi training.

In the British context, IUM graduates have been particularly influential in the making of Salafism. In Chapter Two, I noted the efforts of Mirpuri, Hafiz, Saqib and Hasan in the early expansion of MJAHA. All four graduates, however, were already “qualified” scholars in Pakistan before studying in Medina having graduated from Ahl–e–Hadith seminaries. After graduating from IUM, these scholars continued to identify as Ahl–e–Hadith and as such, never adopted the Ḥanbalī *madhhab* favoured by Saudi ulema; they were consequently just as influenced by fellow Ahl–e–Hadith teachers in Medina and elsewhere as they were Ibn Bāz and other Arab ulema.

Simultaneously, MJAHA leaders held Ibn Bāz in particularly high esteem and mourned his death in 1999 in both their English and Urdu magazines⁸¹⁴; in the former, his death is noted on the front cover while in the latter, it is the overarching theme of the entire issue and cover; in the Urdu issue, one member further eulogised Ibn Bāz in an Arabic segment and revealed that the late Mufti of Saudi Arabia donated to MJAHA and also encouraged his networks to do so whenever the organisation fell into financial difficulties.⁸¹⁵

This is not to say that IUM–graduate leaders in MJAHA did not fully support Saudi Arabia’s religious mission. For example, during the late 1980s, when British–based Barelwis and Shiites collectively called for Mecca and Medina to be administered by

⁸¹² Farquhar, *Circuits of Faith*.

⁸¹³ Christopher Anzalone and Yasir Qadhi, ‘From Dir‘iyya to Riyadh: The History and Global Impact of Saudi Religious Propagation and Education’ in *Wahhabism and the World*, 67.

⁸¹⁴ *The Straight Path*, May/June 1999 and *Ṣirāṭ–e–Mustaqīm*, August/September 1999.

⁸¹⁵ Muḥammad Hafiz Allāh al–‘Umarī, *Ṣirāṭ–e–Mustaqīm*, August/September 1999, 86.

an independent Muslim body instead of the “Wahhābīs”, Mirpuri and Hasan organised a conference in London alongside MWL to rally support from various Sunni trends.⁸¹⁶ MJAHA, under the abovementioned graduates’ direction, was also the main conduit for future aspiring “students of knowledge” to acquire IUM scholarships. These scholarships were first advertised in *The Straight Path* in 1983; applicants were expected to have ‘a good conduct testimonial issued by a reliable authority’ and were invited to contact MJAHA for further information.⁸¹⁷ According to Hasan, aside from his own failed attempt at replicating Medina’s curriculum in Britain, he and other Ahl-e-Hadith IUM graduates were pivotal in securing scholarships for British applicants because the university was familiar with its alumni and trusted their recommendations above that of mosques or institutions.⁸¹⁸

MJAHA also organised two courses during the summers of 1996 and 97 in conjunction with IUM; attendees were taught various classes and undertook exams in Green Lane Masjid (GLM) (see fig. 16); aspiring students sat for interviews with university personnel and some were subsequently awarded scholarships.⁸¹⁹

One of the organisers, Mohammed Hafeez Ullah Khan, urged attendees made up of young men to stop the elder generation’s religious excesses and target future generations through studying and preaching, thus repeating MJAHA’s 1980s–empowerment of Muslim youth.⁸²⁰ During the same year, one *The Straight Path* issue stressed the importance of learning the Arabic language so as to understand the meanings of the Quran and included a translated article on the role of Muslim youth in Islamic movements by Ibn Bāz; the latter stating ‘the enthusiasm of the youth is to be checked by the wisdom and experience of the elders. **Both groups need one another.**’⁸²¹ This alerts us to the Ahl-e-Hadith’s desire to work alongside Salafi youth initiatives, even if it meant sending youth abroad.

⁸¹⁶ The conference was entitled ‘The First European Islamic Conference’ and was held between 1–3 July 1988 and organised by ‘The Council for the Preservation of the Holy Places of Islam.’ A partial recording of Mirpuri and Hasan’s presentations at the conference can be viewed here: ‘Sheikh Mahmood Ahmed Mirpuri (Rahima’hullah)’, Green Lane Masjid, YouTube, accessed 11 October, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQmU4mz8hb4>.

⁸¹⁷ *Sirat-e-Mustaqeem*, February/March 1983, 14–15.

⁸¹⁸ Interview with Hasan, 6 June 2020.

⁸¹⁹ *The Straight Path*, 1996, 7 and back cover, and 1997, 14.

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸²¹ *Ibid.*, 12–15 and 27. Emphasis mine.

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Figure 16.

Medina students and graduates were also pivotal players in the emergence of Britain's Anglo-Salafi print culture as evidenced in earlier chapters. Saqib published *The Straight Path* and issued several stand-alone publications; Hasan issued a number of correspondence courses under Al Quran Society and contributed translations of Ibn Bāz's fatwas to *The Straight Path*; Burbank, while never graduating from Medina, was the chief-translator for JIMAS before breaking away and working under Spubs and Al-Hidaayah; similarly, Abbas co-established Invitation to Islam and translated its early publications while living in Medina; in the following decade, Philips'

publications were also routinely published by Al-Hidaayah including a reprint of *The Fundamentals*, as were the works of IUM-graduate Yasir Qadhi (see Chapter Seven).

Despite their connections to IUM, none of the above happened to be sponsored financially by Saudi Arabia. The only exception is Hasan, who, having worked under the Da'wah Office, admits that Ibn Bāz personally paid for Hasan's stand-alone publication of *The Muslim Creed* (see Chapter Two).⁸²² Dār al-Iftā' also published Hasan's MA thesis and distributed it as a *waqf* (endowment).⁸²³ Otherwise, Hasan funded his local QSS projects with donations from his community in London. Similarly, Saqib appealed to locals to fund the publication of *The Straight Path* and its lack of foreign sponsorship is underlined by the fact the magazine was printed intermittently based on donations; Saqib even complained that his project suffered because of financial difficulties and would reduce in quality and production in order to continue while 'people will happily waste money on watching three or four video films each night but cannot afford to spare a few pounds for Islam.'⁸²⁴ In contrast, Spubs, Al-Hidaayah and other Anglo-Salafi publishing houses constructed a cottage-industry which paid for itself.

Even so, it is hardly deniable that being trained in Saudi Arabia has a strong connection to why IUM students and graduates preach and often publish, if they decide to do so, a more Saudi brand of Salafism in their countries of permanent residence. Hasan, for example, despite being a scholar in his own right, developed strong ties with Ibn Bāz and held him in high esteem; Amin notes how he would translate Ibn Bāz's speeches from Arabic into English via regular tele-links in Masjid Tawheed.⁸²⁵ The influence of IUM graduates on fellow Salafis in the Anglosphere can also reasonably explain why members of the community gravitate towards Saudi ulema or prefer to translate their works. Abu Iyaad is a case in point (see Chapter Four). It should be noted however, that while Burbank must certainly have had an influence on him, Abu Iyaad is self-taught and has since produced more translations of Anglo-Salafi material than any IUM graduate I have so far come across in Britain.

⁸²² Interview with Hasan, 1 May 2019.

⁸²³ S. H. Abdul Ghaffar, *Criticism of Hadith Among Muslim {sic} With Reference to Sunan Ibn Maja* (Riyadh: Presidency of Islamic Research, IFTA and Propagation, 1983).

⁸²⁴ Saqib, *The Straight Path*, November/December 1985, 3.

⁸²⁵ Amin, 'Salafism and Islamism in Britain', 70.

This alerts us to the possibility of personal initiatives underscoring Anglo–Salafi activism. Hasan for example, is proud to say that he is a ‘product’ of IUM and the first *mab‘ūth* sent by Saudi Arabia to Britain; he does however insist that his employment by the Saudi Da‘wah Office has never been preconditioned. Instead, conducting *da‘wah* has been left to Hasan’s own devices, and he began issuing a correspondence course of booklets in English primarily aimed at young people entitled *The Study of Al–Quran* (20 parts) after seeing a similar Christian correspondence course distributed in Kenya.⁸²⁶ Similarly, Al–Azhar university graduate Sayed Mutawalli Darsh worked alongside Hasan for the same Da‘wah Office as well as Saudi’s *Wizārat al–Iftā’ wa l–Buḥūth al–Islāmiyyah wa l’–Da‘wah wa l’–Irshād* (the Ministry of Religious Verdicts, Islamic Research, *Da‘wah* and Guidance) after his contract expired as imam of London Central Mosque. He too was given relative freedom to preach suggesting that being trained in Saudi Arabia was not necessarily a pre–condition for working under its religious offices.⁸²⁷ Both Hasan and Darsh were commissioned by the *Wizārat* to review A. Y. Ali’s Quran translation and “correct” its contents together despite their different readings of Islamic theology.⁸²⁸ Both also co–founded The Islamic Shari’a Council (TISC) in 1982 alongside ‘various scholars representing ten mosques in the UK’ – some of which are not Salafi.⁸²⁹ This venture had even less to do with Saudi Arabia but instead, was born out of need to provide religious services to Muslims in Britain. As Farquhar has rightly pointed out, studying in IUM does not necessarily translate into exporting strict Wahhabism.⁸³⁰

Saudi Sponsored Mosques in Britain

Another means by which Saudi Arabia has influenced Muslim communities in Britain is by its funding of some mosques. However, as Al–Rasheed points out, these are not

⁸²⁶ Interview with Hasan, 1 May 2019. The correspondence course was offered for free to anyone who wrote to AQS and requested it. Each course–booklet included lessons and a test which readers could complete and send back to AQS for evaluation.

⁸²⁷ Larsen, *How Muftis Think*, 83.

⁸²⁸ Interview with Usama, 29 September 2019. According to Usama, his father’s co–revision of M. Y. Ali’s translation of the Quran was thereafter printed by the KFGQP. For more about the (not–so) “Saudi edition”, consult: Sohaib Saeed, ‘Qur’an Translation of the Week 91: Abdullah Yusuf Ali and his Afterlives’, *Global Qur’an*, accessed 13 February, 2023, <https://gloqur.de/quran-translation-of-the-week-91-abdullah-yusuf-ali-and-his-afterlives>.

⁸²⁹ ‘About Us’, The Islamic Shari’a Council, accessed 16 May, 2022, <https://www.islamic-sharia.org/aboutus>.

⁸³⁰ Farquhar, *Circuits of Faith*, 169–170.

always easily identifiable because they are not always publicised in official Saudi state reports; she concludes that Saudi funds channelled into British Muslim communities ‘remain difficult to estimate’ and aside from some ‘highly visible projects’ publicised in official Saudi publications, ‘less prestigious organizations tend to be covert... which people are reluctant to disclose.’⁸³¹ If such organisations are indeed reluctant to share donors, it does not necessitate that they are “hiding” something; moreover, it belies the fact that Muslims outside of London are equally invested in building religious infrastructure with or without foreign subsidies. It also problematises the notion that Saudi spending in Britain is part of its agenda at promoting its image abroad. If funding mosques was towards this agenda, why would Saudi Arabia not publicise its spending like it does its sponsored literature?

What can be ascertained is that since the 1970s, various amounts of Saudi funds were channelled into Britain and included Salafi spaces. For example, Abduljalil Sajid, a Pakistani-born Ahl-e-Hadith imam in Brighton, acknowledged that MWL donated £30,000 to his community in 1976 in order to purchase a building and convert it into a mosque.⁸³² It appears to me that this donation actually stemmed from Saudi’s Da‘wah Office in London which shares a building with MWL. This is supported by the fact that Hasan introduced the two parties⁸³³; furthermore, MWL did not open its London office until 1982.

Saqib underlines Saudi’s interest in funding British mosques in *The Straight Path* as early as 1982:

The Muslims in U.K. appreciate the generosity and interest of the Saudi Arabian Government in establishing Mosques, Madrasahs, educational centres and libraries in this country. These facilities enable our children, the new generation to learn about Islam so that they are well equipped to live as Muslims in whatever society they find themselves.⁸³⁴

Hasan also admits to having received £25,000 towards the cost of purchasing a building located on 34 Francis Road, Leyton, in 1984; this donation was provided by the Saudi Embassy in London at the behest of Ibn Bāz.⁸³⁵ The building provided Hasan

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*, 154.

⁸³² Masood, ‘A Conversation with Imam Abduljalil Sajid’, 5.

⁸³³ *Ibid.*

⁸³⁴ *The Straight Path*, June 1982, 15.

⁸³⁵ Interview with Hasan, 12 September 2019.

a headquarters for his AQS and The Islamic Shari'a Council (TISC), which Hasan co-founded alongside Darsh in 1982.⁸³⁶ In addition to this, the same building also functioned as Hasan's mosque, Masjid Tawheed (est. 1984).⁸³⁷ The masjid was later relocated to Leyton's High Road at the cost of one million pounds and was mostly funded by the Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs (approximately £750,000) while the remainder was collected by the local community.⁸³⁸

Alongside his own mosque, Hasan was pivotal in securing Saudi funds for fellow Ahl-e-Hadith communities *and* rival Sunni trends. According to Hasan, he was tasked by the Saudi "Da'wah Office" during the late 1970s and 1980s with visiting Muslim communities which had either sought financial aid from Saudi Arabia or would benefit from it.⁸³⁹ Hasan consequently visited a large number of them and met with their respective committees in order to determine their needs which were later reported back to his superiors. In total, 306 of these mosques received Saudi funding, ranging in figures between several thousand pounds to complete renovations in at least two instances.⁸⁴⁰ By Hasan's own account, Saudi funds were not restricted to Ahl-e-Hadith mosques but instead spent on mostly mosques and institutes affiliated to UKIM, Jamaat-i Islami and the Deobandis and their missionary offshoot, the Tabligh-i Jamaat.⁸⁴¹

Accordingly, Birt points out that Saudi funding in Britain for Islamic causes has been 'pretty benign.'⁸⁴² However, Saudi funding was not entirely non-sectarian. Hasan in fact excluded applications from anti-Saudi Islamic trends at the time, or 'innovative types of people', namely the South Asian Barelwis and Shiites. To do so, he employed a litmus test⁸⁴³; Hasan would ask potential applicants whether they would allow Tabligh-i Jamaat into their mosques. This was used a "proxy" for saying, "Are you

⁸³⁶ 'About Us', The Islamic Shari'a Council, accessed 16 May, 2022.

⁸³⁷ Amin, 'Salafism and Islamism in Britain', 70. Hasan would translate these speeches into English for attendees.

⁸³⁸ Interview with Hasan, 12 September 2019.

⁸³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴¹ The names of these mosques are identified in Hasan, *Englistan mein islam*, 86–148. For example, although Deobandis are traditional rivals of the Ahl-e-Hadith in South Asia, Darul Uloom Bury (est. 1979) secured approximately £40,000 through Hasan's intervention, indicating that sectarianism in Britain was far more nuanced during the 1980s than previously thought. Interview with Hasan 12 September 2019. For more these movements, read Geaves, *Sectarian Influences*.

⁸⁴² Birt, 'Wahhabi Wrangles', accessed 22 April, 2019,

<https://yahyabirt1.wordpress.com/2007/11/02/wahhabi-wrangles>. See also Bowen, *Medina in Birmingham*, 5, and Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain*, 71.

⁸⁴³ Interview with Hasan, 12 September 2019.

Barelwi?” because “hard–line” Barelwis were and still remain critical of their South Asian rivals (the Ahl–e–Hadith, Deobandis and Tabligh–i Jamaat) and Saudi Arabia.⁸⁴⁴ As Geaves notes, furthermore, the more hard–line Barelwis consider these same rivals as Wahhabis, and thereby not even Muslim.⁸⁴⁵

Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia is not the only Muslim government to spend on British Muslim spaces. Birmingham Jame Masjid (est. 1988) was funded by Iraq’s late president Saddam Hussein at the cost of two million pounds, hence it was previously known as The President Saddam Hussein Mosque until 2003.⁸⁴⁶ There is also evidence of other Arab countries and affiliated–organisations spending on British Islamic projects. For example, Kuwaiti Islamic organisation Jam ‘iyyat Ihya’ Turāth al–Islāmī (JITI), according to Pall, is considered ‘one of the main bankrollers of the Salafi movement worldwide’ and is funded by both the state and Kuwaitis in the finance sector⁸⁴⁷; Pall notes that following the Gulf War, JITI fell out with Saudi government officials and ulema for accommodating *Sahwa* figures.⁸⁴⁸ According to Abu Khadeejah, the same organisation has channelled funds into British Muslim outfits since the 1990s although his co–owned Spubs has never accepted a penny from them.⁸⁴⁹ Arab individual donors have also contributed to Islamic spaces in Britain, including al–Mutawa who donated £20,000 towards MJA’s acquisition of the building which now functions as Green Lane Masjid (see Chapter Two). In a later example, a Dubai princess visited Brixton Mosque in or around 2010 and after seeing its relatively basic facilities and need for an extension, donated a suitcase full of cash to the administration.⁸⁵⁰

Despite Saudi Arabia being the largest donor in this overall project leading up to the 2000s, Hasan insists that the kingdom’s donations, ranging between £20,000 and £200,000, had no strings attached and that supporting Allah’s religion was a duty on wealthy Arab states, entirely transparent and no different to Christians funding churches in Africa for example.⁸⁵¹ This role clearly provided a great networking

⁸⁴⁴ Interview with Usama, 29 September 2019.

⁸⁴⁵ Geaves, *Sectarian Influences*, 103–104.

⁸⁴⁶ Angelique Chrisafis, ‘City dilemma over Saddam’s £2m mosque’, *The Guardian*, 31 March, 2003, accessed 21 December, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2003/mar/31/iraq.world>.

⁸⁴⁷ Pall, *Lebanese Salafis*, 82–97.

⁸⁴⁸ Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 108.

⁸⁴⁹ Interview with Abu Khadeejah, 30 September 2019.

⁸⁵⁰ Correspondence with Al–Ashanti, 26 November 2022.

⁸⁵¹ Interview with Hasan, 12 September 2019.

opportunity for Hasan who was keen to secure funding for Sunni masjids in the country and increase local Islamic spaces, Salafi or otherwise.⁸⁵² It also goes to show that Saudi funds were often channelled into Britain at the behest of British Muslims. This would confirm Mandaville's observation that 'Saudi support for religion is actually welcome in some communities... In such situations, resources from the Middle East are often vital for creating religious infrastructure.'⁸⁵³

This does not mean however that every recipient mosque was welcoming of Saudi's religious influence following their initial contribution to the former's infrastructure. Joly rightly also points out that such mosques,

[A]re essentially an autonomous, autochthonous phenomenon. They are not governed by the states of origin, whose influence remains limited; their importance stems mainly from the stabilisation of Muslim populations in the land of immigration.⁸⁵⁴

To some extent, Saudi funds did facilitate distribution channels for Saudi-financed literature, published by the government, MWL and WAMY, to enter into spaces outside of Ahl-e-Hadith/Salafi mosques.⁸⁵⁵ These also, were not necessarily welcomed by recipients. According to one of my interviewees who grew up in Walsall and attended a local Saudi-funded Tabligh-i Jamaat mosque (Masjid Farooq) during his late teens (1990s), he found 'hundreds, or even a thousand' unopened boxes of free Islamic literature paid for by Saudi donors in the mosque's converted attic space. Dismayed, he enquired as to why these books were being hidden away, and was told by members of the mosque: 'No, no, brother, these are Salafi books!'⁸⁵⁶ It is unclear why these boxes were not simply discarded unless we factor in Sunni Islamic law which sets out strict guidelines about throwing away texts containing sacred symbols.⁸⁵⁷ Islamic trends like the Tabligh-i Jamaat are further invested in their own

⁸⁵² On the rivalry between Barelwis and the "Wahhabis" and Deobandis, see for example, Sanyal, *Devotional Islam*, 231–267.

⁸⁵³ Mandaville, 'Wahhabism and the World', 22.

⁸⁵⁴ Joly, *Britannia's Crescent*, 10.

⁸⁵⁵ This would account for the occasions when I have come across free literature in several Hanafi mosques in Leicester clearly published by the Saudi government or its affiliated-organisations like MWL and WAMY.

⁸⁵⁶ Interview with Aqib Hussain, 19 January 2022.

⁸⁵⁷ Sunni scholars are divided as to whether such texts should be burned, effaced or buried. Discarding Islamic texts, containing Allāh's name or passages from the Quran, is generally forbidden and akin to debasing sacred symbols.

message and its leaders are acutely aware of disparities between them and Salafi/Ahl-e-Hadith rivals; the former are therefore less likely to contribute to the latter's *da'wah*, particularly in matters of Islamic law or the finer points of Islamic theology. This appears to yet another reason why Hira observes that while 'Saudi Arabia has played a significant role in shaping the British Muslim landscape... its influence has shifted over time.'⁸⁵⁸ Furthermore, the intense public scrutiny the kingdom experienced in the wake of 9/11 appears to have severely reduced Saudi interests in spending on Islamic projects outside of its borders and in like fashion, British Muslim interest in appearing as a Saudi mouthpiece.

Conclusion

Dawood suggests that Saudi Arabia's involvement with MJAHA was especially important to the dissemination of Salafism in Britain but 'it wasn't until the 1980s and 1990s that Salafism gained traction following concerted efforts by Saudi Arabia to introduce Salafism as an alternative hegemonic conception.'⁸⁵⁹ This chapter has gone to some lengths at surveying the limitations of Saudi Arabia's influence in Britain and its impact on Anglo-Salafi print culture leading up to 2001 after which its spending appears to have subsided. It revealed that Saudi Arabian government bodies and affiliated organisations like MWL and WAMY have channelled Saudi sponsored literature into British Muslim spaces; however, these have always been freely distributed and not always by or for Salafis. We cannot say for certain, furthermore, that such texts have had a largescale impact on Anglo-Muslim reading publics. For the most part, Anglo-Salafi publications, particularly commercial titles, were produced by Salafis born or based in Britain *for* Muslims in Britain. It also underlines what Fraser et al term as the "intertechnology" of books whereby the production of literature reflects a cosmopolitan effort and raises the question, "where do we locate the work?"⁸⁶⁰ *The Prophet's Prayer* mentioned in Chapter Four and *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* here demonstrate that Anglo-Salafi publications often transcend geographical borders complicating what it means to be a "Saudi publication."

⁸⁵⁸ Amin, 'The Shifting Contours of Saudi Influence in Britain', 290.

⁸⁵⁹ Dawood, 'Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims', 77-78.

⁸⁶⁰ Robert Fraser et al, 'Introduction', in *Books Without Borders: The Cross-National Dimensions in Print Culture*, vol. 1, ed. Fraser et al (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 3.

This chapter also underlines that Saudi trained students and graduates are important players in the spread of Salafism in Britain; they are not, however, the only important players nor they do necessarily work under the directives of the Saudi state or its institutes. It has also revealed new details on how the Saudi government has channelled funds onto British mosques; it suggests that for the most part, it has been overwhelmingly been directed to infrastructure, mostly non-Salafi, and without forcing a particular narrative on recipients.

This and earlier chapters demonstrate the import of human agency without which such a symbiosis between activists, governments and government-sponsored organisations from different countries would have been possible. The fact that Salafis in Britain have occasionally received Saudi-sponsored literature, scholarships or mosque funds should not take away from the fact that much of the movement's ground-work in Britain involves local networking, collecting donations and establishing institutions and schools; constructing Islamic discourse through print and web technologies was organic and in response to the circumstances at the time. The Saudi government nevertheless can be seen here as having contributed to the popularity and wider visibility of Salafi discourse in Britain, which in turn has contributed to the demand for Anglo-Salafi literature as well as uncomfortable connotations in post-9/11 Britain (as highlighted in the previous chapter).

Chapter Seven

After 9/11: Internal Challenges

In the year 1975, there was only one Ahl-e-Hadith mosque in Britain, the precursor to Green Lane Masjid (GLM) which later opened in 1980.⁸⁶¹ Both were established under Markaz Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith (MJAHA). The same organisation in 1980 had five branches.⁸⁶² In 1983, MJAHA controlled 24 branches.⁸⁶³ By 2001, it controlled 41 branches.⁸⁶⁴ By my own count, the number now stands at 51 “affiliated–mosques.”⁸⁶⁵ These numbers are corroborated by Mehmood Naqshabandi, an English convert to Islam, who is widely recognised for his efforts in compiling data on local mosque affiliations since the 1980s and which are now published on his website MuslimsInBritain.org. The Salafi movement in Britain was seemingly growing so rapidly that Naqshabandi would tell Bowen that his 2013 survey revealed that ‘between 2009 and 2013 the number of Salafi mosques in the UK increased by 50 percent’ but still made up ‘fewer than 100 of the UK’s 1,700 mosques.’⁸⁶⁶ According to his 2017 report, out of a total of 1,934 active mosques and prayer rooms he counted, the vast majority were controlled by Deobandis/Tabligh-i Jamaat (41.2%), followed by Bareilwis (23.7%) and then Salafis (9.4%); there were now 155 Salafi mosques.⁸⁶⁷

Given these types of figures, it is not difficult for observers to count Salafism in Britain as the fastest growing Islamic trend despite its public stigmatisation in the wake of 9/11. A key contributor to its growth is its highly visible intellectual project in both print and web mediums. That is not to say that every Salafi mosque in Britain is

⁸⁶¹ Azami, *Ahl-e-Hadith in Britain*, 22

⁸⁶² *Sirat-e-Mustaqeem*, September 1980, 22.

⁸⁶³ *The Straight Path*, February/March 1983, 22–24; Joly, *Britannia’s Crescent*, 70.

⁸⁶⁴ *The Straight Path*, May 2000, 15–18.

⁸⁶⁵ ‘Dramatic Skies: Masaajid Calendar 2019’ (MJAHA, 2019). This calendar does not include its most recent addition in Cambridge. See ‘Masjid Al Ikhlas Cambridge Affiliation with MJAHA UK’, Masjid Al Ikhlas and Cambridge Islamic Centre, YouTube, accessed 2 May, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ATwvO4X-WY>.

⁸⁶⁶ Bowen, *Medina in Birmingham*, 80.

⁸⁶⁷ The next closest in number were non-denominational prayer rooms (7.4%) followed by ‘Other Sufis’ (4.1%, that is, other than Deobandis and Bareilwis). Mehmood Naqshabandi, ‘UK Mosque Statistics / Masjid Statistics as at 16 Sep 2017’, 2017, accessed 4 April, 2020, http://www.muslimsinbritain.org/resources/masjid_report.pdf, 4–5.

unchallenged by the changing mores of Salafism itself. As such, Anglo–Salafi print culture will continue to evolve moving forward.

This final chapter concludes my analysis of Anglo–Salafi print culture in Britain by exploring the challenges which Salafis have faced internally in post–9/11 Britain and how these have impacted Anglo–Salafi print culture. It argues that newer articulations of Salafism and the internet increasingly threaten to supplant the once highly visible and Saudi–centric Anglo–Salafi book market. However, Salafis invested in print since the 1990s continue to regulate the marketplace and dominate its discourse by adapting to changes alongside new and like–minded Anglo–Salafi publishers. As such, Anglo–Salafi texts will continue to be a feature of wider Anglo–Islamic print culture though it may not be as Saudi–centric as it was in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Intra–Salafi Discursivity

Since 7/7, Hamid notes that ‘New hybridised identities are emerging which indicate the evolving nature of contemporary British Salafi trends’ in contrast to earlier ‘simplistic representations’ which contributed to the appeal of Salafism locally.⁸⁶⁸ The following is a re–examination of how and why these trends emerged.

During the 1990s and early–2000s, MJAHS leadership continued to struggle with appealing to younger generations. According to Usama, this was partly due to their ‘failure to nurture a new generation of leaders to replace mainly Urdu–speaking elders.’⁸⁶⁹ This might explain why as early as 2000, MJAHS employed Abu Usaamah “al–Dhahabi”, an African–American convert to Islam and IUM graduate, as head of the English department of Green Lane Masjid (GLM). Al–Dhahabi remains the only MJAHS employee to publicly address allegations made in ‘Undercover Mosque’ while its South Asian founding members appear not to have made any public statements as such.⁸⁷⁰ Simultaneously, MJAHS was also impacted by the rise of Birmingham’s Salafi Publications (Spubs). Even before establishing its predecessor (OASIS, see Chapter

⁸⁶⁸ Hamid, *Sufis, Salafis and Islamists*, 140–141. Consult also Amin and Dawood’s respective studies.

⁸⁶⁹ Bowen, *Medina in Birmingham*, 75.

⁸⁷⁰ ‘Abu Usama responds to “Dispatches – Undercover Mosques”’, Digital Mimbar, YouTube, 22 January, 2007, accessed 1 December, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uo7-T63UEJE>. See also Philips’ response here: ‘Bilal Philips responds to “Dispatches – Undercover Mosque’’, Digital Mimbar, YouTube, 22 January, 2007, accessed 1 December, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3_ZqeR27Mg.

Four), Abu Khadeejah occasionally organised English study circles at GLM. However, when MJAHA elders finally banned Spubs from mobilising at GLM because of their “hard-line” message, the latter began publicly denouncing MJAHA and asserting Salafism exclusively.⁸⁷¹ Usama recalls visiting GLM after this and being handed a leaflet entitled “What is a Salafi?” by a member of Spubs leafleting outside. He states:

I remember thinking, ‘This is really bizarre. These are completely new people. We’ve been coming to Green Lane for like 20 years, and these are the original Ahl-e-Hadith Salafis of this country and who the hell are you?! ...as if all of us inside in Green Lane didn’t know what a Salafi is? Laughable!’⁸⁷²

One of the reasons why MJAHA struggled to compete with Spubs was because the latter saw the potential of publishing Anglo-Salafi books to its advantage. Aside from one publication MJAHA published in 2016, few issues of *The Straight Path* were published following the 1990s.⁸⁷³ In a 2005 issue, for example, editor Shouiab Mirpuri stated that while the number of subscribers was increasing, it was not ‘at a rate whereby the magazine can be sustained at a regular issuing date...’ and that future issues would be released tri-monthly with the ‘generosity of our subscribers.’⁸⁷⁴ The same issue also published a tribute to recently deceased King Fahad confirming that Saudi was still an important Ahl-e-Hadith ally and that the king never directly sponsored MJAHA.⁸⁷⁵ The same organisation had little influence online where Spubs proceeded to accuse MJAHA in 2004 of violating the Salafi *manhaj* in various ways such as supporting democratic elections.⁸⁷⁶ A PDF counter-response was later published online by an anonymous author on behalf of the Scholars of MJAHA reasserting the organisation’s ties to Saudi ulema who permitted voting in democratic elections under the sharia maxim of taking the “lesser of two evils.”⁸⁷⁷

⁸⁷¹ Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 138–139.

⁸⁷² Interview with Usama, 29 September 2019.

⁸⁷³ See ‘Abdul ‘Azīz al-Sadhān, *The Character of the Prophets*, trans. Ahsan Hanif (Birmingham: Green Lane Masjid, 2016). Only 18 of the 120 issues of *The Straight Path* I reviewed were published between 2001 and 2006 although it is possible that Markfield library failed to acquire more issues during this time period. I have yet to find any issues of the same magazine after 2006 which gives me the impression the magazine is no longer operational.

⁸⁷⁴ S. Mirpuri, *The Straight Path*, July/August/September 2005, 4.

⁸⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 7–8.

⁸⁷⁶ ‘The Reality of Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith UK’, Salafi Talk, accessed 1 December, 2022, <https://www.salafitalk.net/st/viewmessages.cfm?Forum=9&Topic=3384>.

⁸⁷⁷ The Scholars of MJAHA UK, ‘A Response to the Unjust Deceptive and Slandorous Allegations’, 2009, 6–9 and 21–26.

Meanwhile, JIMAS “2.0” underwent a third shift in or around 2005, the year its final overtly Anglo–Salafi publication was released.⁸⁷⁸ Now JIMAS “3.0”, the organisation has since extended its remit to include charity work, interfaith meeting, and “post–sectarian” and counter extremists projects.⁸⁷⁹ By the early–2010s, Abu Muntasir all but put a stop to the once–popular yearly JIMAS retreat in Leicester and espousing Salafi motifs. According to him,

We’re no longer JIMAS or Salafi. To be honest, I don’t know the rationale for JIMAS anymore. I mean JIMAS was there wholly to promote Salafism, here I am, like, I could be anybody. What am I promoting with JIMAS? So it’s really only charity and education; it’s really not Salafi, its non–sectarian. A non–denomination.⁸⁸⁰

Chapter Four described how Abu Muntasir also struggled to compete with other Anglo–Salafi publishers. Abu Muntasir now seeks to undo his involvement in popularising jihad in Britain and the Saudi Sahwa movement during earlier years; he has since worked alongside the British Home Office and Crown Prosecution Service and featured on public platforms condemning his old “ways.”⁸⁸¹ Similarly, Usama, who now occasionally describes himself playfully as a “Wahhabi–Sufi”, reads wider Islamic literature, cooperates with The Islamic Foundation, and works on counter–radicalisation reports under the British think–tanks Quilliam and Tony Blair Institute for Global Change⁸⁸²; although he is largely ostracised by Salafi cooperatives, he still holds onto his Ahl–e–Hadith heritage and speaks fondly of his days in JIMAS.⁸⁸³

The Salafi cooperative under Spubs, Brixton and Luton also divided shortly before the turn of the millennium (see Chapter Four). The rivalries between Spubs and the latter

⁸⁷⁸ Fareed, *From the Way of Our Pious Predecessors*. Inge suggests that Abu Muntasir dropped the “Salafi” label by 2006. Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 9.

⁸⁷⁹ Amin, ‘The Shifting Contours of Saudi Influence in Britain’, 302.

⁸⁸⁰ Interview with Abu Muntasir, 10 November 2019.

⁸⁸¹ See for example, Munwar Ali, ‘Reclaiming Jihad | Manwar Ali | TEDxExeter’, TEDx Talks, YouTube, 13 May, 2016, accessed 2 December, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vi8k6BG9KVk&ab_channel=TEDxTalks.

⁸⁸² Interview with Usama, 12 and 29 September 2019; for examples of Usama’s publications post–9/11, see ‘Abd al–Ghaffar Hasan, *The Way of the Prophet: A Selection of Hadith*, trans. U. Hasan (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 2009) and U. Hasan, ‘From Dhimmitude to Democracy: Islamic Law, Non–Muslims & Equal Citizenship’, Abridged Version, Religious Reform Series (London: Quilliam, 2015).

⁸⁸³ *Ibid.*

two intensified during the 2000s and continues to this day.⁸⁸⁴ Much of the conflicts between the two, routinely publicised online by Spubs in particular, surrounds the limits of who Salafis can cooperate with internationally and locally. Many of these limits are in fact inherited from disputes between Salafi ulema in Jordan, Yemen and Saudi Arabia who have garnered a following in the diaspora.⁸⁸⁵ Thus, while Spubs is more inclined to R. al-Madhalī and has since “dropped” Yemeni and Jordanian Salafi ulema, Brixton and Luton Salafis still invite the latter to Britain and translate their works. This to-and-fro between “hard-line” Salafis has led some members of the cooperatives to experience a Salafi “burnout.”⁸⁸⁶ Some members of the Salafi cooperatives also appear to now regret their “behavioural extremism” during the 1990s and are becoming more flexible and tolerant towards fellow Salafis and non-Salafis.⁸⁸⁷

For other members of the cooperatives, translation continues to be a key node in salvaging Salafi unity. In 2002, following the fallout mentioned above, Abu Abdullah of FatwaOnline.org set up Madeenah.com in order to provide a space for Western-born IUM graduates with a “safe” space to publish translations by mostly Saudi Salafi ulema. Like SalafiManhaj.com, Madeenah.com was partly set up to provide Salafis in the Anglosphere with a ‘balanced viewpoint’ from respected Salafi ulema on issues where it was felt that Spubs misrepresents. For example, on the prohibition of voting in democratic elections, Spubs asserts the position of “the scholars of Medina” (a reference to only a cohort) to which Madeenah.com responded by translating fatwas by other Medinan ulema permitting voting under the same pretext as MJA. This demonstrates how the web continues to extend Salafi print culture and create interconnections between people, places and ideas.

A Sahwa-sympathetic current of Salafism in Britain also continues to operate under Al-Muntada. Following Surūr’s departure from Britain in 2004, his place was taken up by Haitham al-Haddad, a Saudi-trained Palestinian; al-Haddad remained at al-

⁸⁸⁴ Interviews with Baker, 13 December 2019 and Abu Khadeejah, 30 September 2019 and 11 May 2020. These same rivalries explain why both parties have offered different takes on the history of Salafi *da‘wah* in Britain. Baker, ‘Podcasts’, Abdul Haqq Baker PhD, accessed 11 February, 2022, with Abu Khadeejah’s blog, accessed 11 February, 2022, <https://www.abukhadeejah.com>.

⁸⁸⁵ See for example, Mimouni, ‘Debating Al-Hākimiyyah and Takfir in Salafism’, 105–108; Wagemakers, *Salafism in Jordan*, Chapter Four; Bonnefoy, *Salafism in Yemen*, 245–248.

⁸⁸⁶ Hamid, ‘The Attraction of “Authentic” Islam’, 394–396.

⁸⁸⁷ Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 239; Amin, ‘The Shifting Contours of Saudi Influence in Britain’, 304; interview with Baker, 13 December 2019.

⁸⁸⁸ Interview with “Abu Abdullah”, 3 April 2020.

Muntada for five years before establishing the Muslim Research and Development Forum (MRDF) ‘in an attempt to realize his goal of “home-grown” scholars and imams’⁸⁸⁹; like JIMAS “2.0”, MRDF was sympathetic to the Saudi Sahwa movement and also offered “Salafi” retreats.⁸⁹⁰ Al-Haddad’s students also harnessed the internet to develop a separate Salafi-Islamist space in direct competition with Salafi cooperatives. For example, Salman Butt co-founded Islam21C which routinely publishes think-pieces by like-minded members.⁸⁹¹ Similarly, Shakeel Begg, an IUM graduate who currently serves as imam of Lewisham Mosque was Sahwa-inclined before returning to Britain upon graduating although more recently, Dawood notes, he has mellowed and engages in ‘inter-faith, community councils, and even gang-mediation.’⁸⁹² Besides their respective online publishing activities, neither al-Haddad, MRDF, Islam21C nor Begg appear to have paid much attention to the Anglo-Salafi book market.

Elsewhere, Abu Aaliyah, who was once Abu Muntasir’s right-hand man, adopted “Atharism” as a way of distinguishing himself from the more “hard-lined” Salafi cooperative. The term *atharī* (*lit.* one who follows the *āthār*, or ḥadīths/reports of the *Salaf*) is Abu Aaliyah’s attempt at carving a space for a more “holistic” reading of Salafi theology without Wahhabism at its root. As such, he is a committed Salafi-Ḥanbalī in *madhhab* and creed as well as a devoted Sufi having befriended members of the Traditional Islam (TI) movement.⁸⁹³ Abu Aaliyah routinely posts his critiques of Anglo-Salafism on his blog TheHumbleI, a play on words reflecting his adoption of Sufism (“killing” the ego) and his Ḥanbalī training. For example, he published a 45-page e-book on the ḥadīth about the 73 sects (see Introduction) and accused Salafi cooperatives of suffering from “saved-sect syndrome” which is ‘self-referential, bigoted, closed-minded.’⁸⁹⁴ In a related post, Abu Aaliyah argues that the “Athari”

⁸⁸⁹ Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 121.

⁸⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 121–122.

⁸⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹² *Ibid.*, 122. Begg’s turn to a “lighter” discourse may be connected to his indictment by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) of spreading extremism at Lewisham Mosque. Consult Tom Wilson, ‘Extremism in the Community: The Case of Shakeel Begg’, Centre for the Response to Radicalisation and Terrorism (The Henry Jackson Society, March 2017). Begg lost his libel case against BBC and the judge concluded his speeches were ‘redolent of Jihadi Salafism.’ *Begg v British Broadcasting Corporation* [2016] EWHC 2688 (QB), 28 October 2016, cited in Wilson, ‘Extremism in the Community’, 2.

⁸⁹³ Interview with Abu Aaliyah, 10 September 2019.

⁸⁹⁴ Surkheel Sharif [Abu Aaliyah], ‘The Seventy-Three Sects: Are the Majority of Muslims Innovators?’ (Jawziyyah Institute, 2012), accessed 23 November, 2022, <https://thehumblei.com/wp->

[Salafi] creed ‘represents the earliest, purest form of the beliefs of *ahl al-sunnah* [The People of the Sunnah]’ but that their main theological rivals, the Ashā‘irah and Māturīdiyyah, are equally “orthodox.”⁸⁹⁵

A second articulation of “Atharism” is espoused by the American–Pakistani and IUM and Yale University graduate Yasir Qadhi. During the late 1990s and 2000s, Qadhi was a “celebrity” scholar in both North America and Britain, lecturing at JIMAS conferences, Salafi and non–Salafi mosques and appearing on Islam Channel, Huda TV, and Peace TV; a number of his original works and translations were also published by Al–Hidaayah.⁸⁹⁶ He fostered a relationship with Abu Aaliyah during the same time and even invited the latter to his local mosque in Texas.⁸⁹⁷ Like Abu Aaliyah, Qadhi was also “dropped” by members of the more “hard–line” Salafi cooperative for cooperating with JIMAS “2.0” and other “violations” of the Salafi *manhaj*. For example, Qadhi signed the “Pledge of Mutual Respect and Cooperation”, which gathered western–based leaders of opposing Sunni trends and called for unity and respect for differences of opinion concerning intra–Sunni polemics.⁸⁹⁸ In response, numerous American and British–born Salafis published “refutations” backed by Arab Salafi scholars forbidding cooperation with “innovators.”⁸⁹⁹ By 2013, Qadhi harnessed his “celebrity” status and many platforms to criticise Saudi–centric Salafism, particularly its Western articulation (which he admitted to contributing to).⁹⁰⁰ In 2015, he publicly denied that he ‘left the way of *Salaf*’ but that he only disagreed with ‘some of the methodological practises of the current Salafi

content/uploads/2018/09/Seventy–Three–Sects.pdf, 36. For Spubs’s particular claim of representing the “saved sect”, consult Shavit and Spengler, ‘Converting to Salafiyya.’

⁸⁹⁵ Sharif, ‘Revisiting the Sensitive Question of Islamic Orthodoxy’, The Humble I, accessed 23 November, 2022, <https://thehumlei.com/2018/01/08/revisiting-the-sensitive-question-of-islamic-orthodoxy>.

⁸⁹⁶ The biggest of which is Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur’aan* (Birmingham: Al–Hidaayah Publishing, 1999). For more about Qadhi, consult Masooda Bano, ‘In Today’s Saudi Arabia: The State, the Society and the Scholars’, in *Salafi Social and Political Movements: National and Transnational Contexts*, ed. Masooda Bano (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 51–55, and Christopher Pooya Razavian, ‘Yasir Qadhi and the Development of Reasonable Salafism’, *Modern Islamic Authority and Social Change: Evolving Debates in the West*, vol. 2, ed. Bano (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 155–179.

⁸⁹⁷ Interview with Abu Aaliyah, 21 March 2021.

⁸⁹⁸ Qadhi, ‘Update! Pledge of Mutual Respect and Cooperation’, Muslim Matters, 22 September, 2007, accessed 17 September, 2022, <https://muslimmatters.org/2007/09/22/pledge-of-mutual-respect-and-cooperation>.

⁸⁹⁹ See for example, “‘Pledge of Mutual Respect and Co–Operation’ – the Scholars Clarify”, Madeenah.com, 24 October, 2007, accessed 17 September, 2022, <https://www.madeenah.com/pledge-of-mutual-respect-and-cooperation-the-scholars-clarify>.

⁹⁰⁰ Qadhi, ‘On Salafi Islam [With New Video Lecture]’, Muslim Matters, 22 April, 2014, accessed 17 September, 2022, <https://muslimmatters.org/2014/04/22/on-salafi-islam-dr-yasir-qadhi>.

movement.⁹⁰¹ Given his turn, Al-Hidaayah no longer publishes Qadhi's newer compositions.⁹⁰²

Abu Aaliyah differentiates between his own conception of "Atharism", which he ascribes to Hanbalī thought prior to, and after, Ibn Taymiyyah in contrast to that of Qadhi which is specifically "Taymiyyan."⁹⁰³ What unites Abu Aaliyah and Qadhi is their shared devaluation of Saudi Salafism which cannot be entirely disconnected to the public stigmatisation of "Wahhābism" following 9/11 (see Chapter Five). In 2010, the former concluded in an essay that 'Wahhabi ideas are certainly the main driver behind the *jihadi-takfiri* world as evinced by the fact that all its main ideologues subscribe to the Wahhabi-Salafi form of religion.'⁹⁰⁴ Similarly, Qadhi has posted a number of YouTube "Library Chat" presentations criticising Salafi thought, including a critique of *The Explanation of the Sunnah* and its weaponization by Western Salafis and a series on "Wahhābism" and its underpinning influence in ISIS theology.⁹⁰⁵ While Qadhi is now largely shunned by British Salafi organisations, Abu Aaliyah has been welcomed to share his contentions on Baker and Green's podcast.⁹⁰⁶ Meanwhile, a much younger and upcoming self-proclaimed "Athari", "Bro Hajji" (Mohammed Naeem Safdar), routinely pronounces Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb the "godfather" of ISIS on his YouTube channel. Like Qadhi, "Bro Hajji" has appeared on podcasts with members of al-Haddad's MRDF's network.⁹⁰⁷

In addition to "Atharism", another articulation of Salafism emerged in the post-9/11 Anglosphere. Two representative institutes in particular gained considerable popularity during the 2000s and were initiated by "Western" IUM graduates: Canadian

⁹⁰¹ Qadhi, 'Is It True That You Have Left the Way of the Salaf? – Q&A – Sh. Dr. Yasir Qadhi', YouTube, 4 May 2015, accessed 17 September, 2022
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lr7aRhUahPA>.

⁹⁰² In contrast, The Islamic Foundation has recently released Qadhi's *The Parables of the Qur'an* (Leicester: Kube Publishing, 2022).

⁹⁰³ Interview with Abu Aaliyah, 22 March 2021.

⁹⁰⁴ Sharif, 'Khawarij Ideology, ISIS Savagery: the Wahhabi Inspiration?', 12 January, 2020, accessed 21 July, 2022, <https://thehumblei.com/2020/01/12/khawarij-ideology-isis-savagery-part-3-of-3>.

⁹⁰⁵ See in particular, Qadhi, 'Library Chat – Episode 4: Regarding the Book "Sharḥ al-Sunnah" Attributed to Al-Barbahārī (d. 329)', 9 June, 2020, accessed 21 March, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zd-xCTgxPcc> and episodes 8, 11, 13 and 14 in the same series.

⁹⁰⁶ '#APieceOfCake Special #Podcast with Surkheel Abu Aaliyah', 26 September, 2020, accessed 4 March, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHVleKOvYLU>. The recording has since been removed from YouTube.

⁹⁰⁷ See for example, Islam21C member Dilwar Hussain's interview with "Bro Hajji" here: '@Bro Hajji | Rulers, Rebellion and the Najdi Dawah | Blood Brothers #46', 5 Pillars, YouTube, 11 October, 2020, accessed 23 September, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P0qv4zPs8L4&ab_channel=5Pillars.

Muhammad Alshareef's (d. 2022) and Australian Tawfique Chowdhury's (Australia) Al-Maghrib Institute (est. 2001) and Al-Kauthar institute (est. 2006) respectively.⁹⁰⁸ Both institutions began offering accredited Islamic programmes in North America, Britain and Australia without the "Salafi" label and towards a 'new subculture distinct from both South Asian and Western cultural mores.'⁹⁰⁹ Both Alshareef and Chowdhury were supported by other Western IUM-graduates and lecturers including Qadhi. According to John Fontain, a Manchurian Muslim convert, both institutes and lecturers were responsible for making 'a whole generation of Salafis without even knowing it.'⁹¹⁰ Similarly, MRDF projects popularised Salafi ideas without emphasising the label and further encourage a Western Muslim identity. According to Amin, these new articulations of Anglo-Salafism are the direct result of 'internal Salafi divisions and polemics, the rise of other sectarian factions who became viable alternatives, and a reorientation toward developing an Islam of the West...'; inadvertently, she continues' they 'worked together to decenter Salafi movements within the British Muslim landscape and weaken the spectre of Saudi influence.'⁹¹¹

Another articulation of Salafism identified in my fieldwork is independent of the label "Salafi" but is very much built on its core principles. Green for example, co-founded the Islamic Education and Research Academy (iERA, est. 2008), a *da'wah* outfit which by his own admittance, is *not* a Salafi organisation and accepts any Sunni as long as they are not extremist jihadis, Sufis or Shiites.⁹¹² Nevertheless, iERA, Green states, happens to be founded by people with a Salafi background because 'I think Salafiyyah, if you understand it properly, is Islam.'⁹¹³ Senior members of iERA include personalities with various Salafi leanings. Adnan Rashid, for example, hails from a respected Ahl-e-Hadith family while Hamza Andreas Tzortzis is a reader of Taymiyyan theology.

⁹⁰⁸ Dawood, 'Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims', 123.

⁹⁰⁹ Amin, 'The Shifting Contours of Saudi Influence in Britain', 294-300; Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 86.

⁹¹⁰ Interview with Fontain, 27 March 2020.

⁹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 301.

⁹¹² Interview with Green, 25 May 2020.

⁹¹³ *Ibid.*

Adapting to Changing Mores

Bano observes that Salafis outside of Saudi Arabia are becoming less dependent on the kingdom and that in some countries, are now ‘producing a rich literature of their own.’⁹¹⁴ Some of the abovementioned articulations of Salafism in Britain confirm Bano’s observation that some sub-trends are keen to do away with conflation with Saudi Salafism. However, these same sub-trends have found relative success without having to produce print literature. Instead, they operate outside of the Anglo-Salafi book market because it continues to be controlled by agents who first established it during the 1990s. The internet in this respect has been particularly important, allowing sub-trends to counter Ahl-e-Hadith and Salafi cooperatives with relative freedom and without polemically-based censorship. This is particular so given the recent Covid-19 outbreak and rise in online information exchange. Al-Magrib and Al-Kauthar, for example, previously issued CDs and DVDs of lectures and courses, some of which were sold in Salafi bookstores like Al-Hidaayah; more recently, both institutions have adapted their institutes and almost entirely cater to online audience providing them with greater exposure.⁹¹⁵

The more obvious reason for the abovementioned trend working outside of the Anglo-Salafi book market is that the latter was constructed in the early 1990s by the Ahl-e-Hadith and Salafi cooperative who continue to dominate its discursive direction; consequently, the same book market has been difficult to penetrate for alternative Salafi articulators. At the same time, Salafi cooperatives undermine these alternative articulations with refutations. For example, “Atharis” like Qadhi and “Bro Hajji” presently conflate “Wahhabism” and ISIS in much the same way the TI movement did in the late 1990s and early 2000s (see previous chapter). In response, al-Ashanti has issued a 98 page “refutation” of “Bro Hajji” and Dilwar Hussain in PDF format, accusing the former of merely repeating ‘notions which are not particularly new and have also been picked up on by assorted Takfirīs and Sūfīs over the years’ and the latter of espousing ‘pan-Turkic views.’⁹¹⁶ He employs a creative title with a rhyming

⁹¹⁴ Bano, ‘Introduction’, in *Salafi Social and Political Movements*, 13.

⁹¹⁵ In this respect, Philips’ International Open University (est. 2007) currently boasts over 450,000 registered students; according to him, Britain is one of the top five countries where his students originate. Interview with Philips, 25 January 2021.

⁹¹⁶ Al-Ashanti, ‘Ideas, Silly & Insane, from Bro Hajji and Dilly Hussain: On the History of the Da’wah of Imām Muhammad Bin ‘Abdulwahhāb and the Issue of Revolting Against the Leaders’ (Salafi Manhaj, 2020), 3. See also Abu Khuzaimah Anṣārī, ‘Demolishing and Mutilating Bro Hajji –

structure (a standard practise in Arabo–Islamic print culture) and caricaturises his two opponents through a cover design which resembles the recognisable Looney Tunes cartoon opening title (see fig. 20).

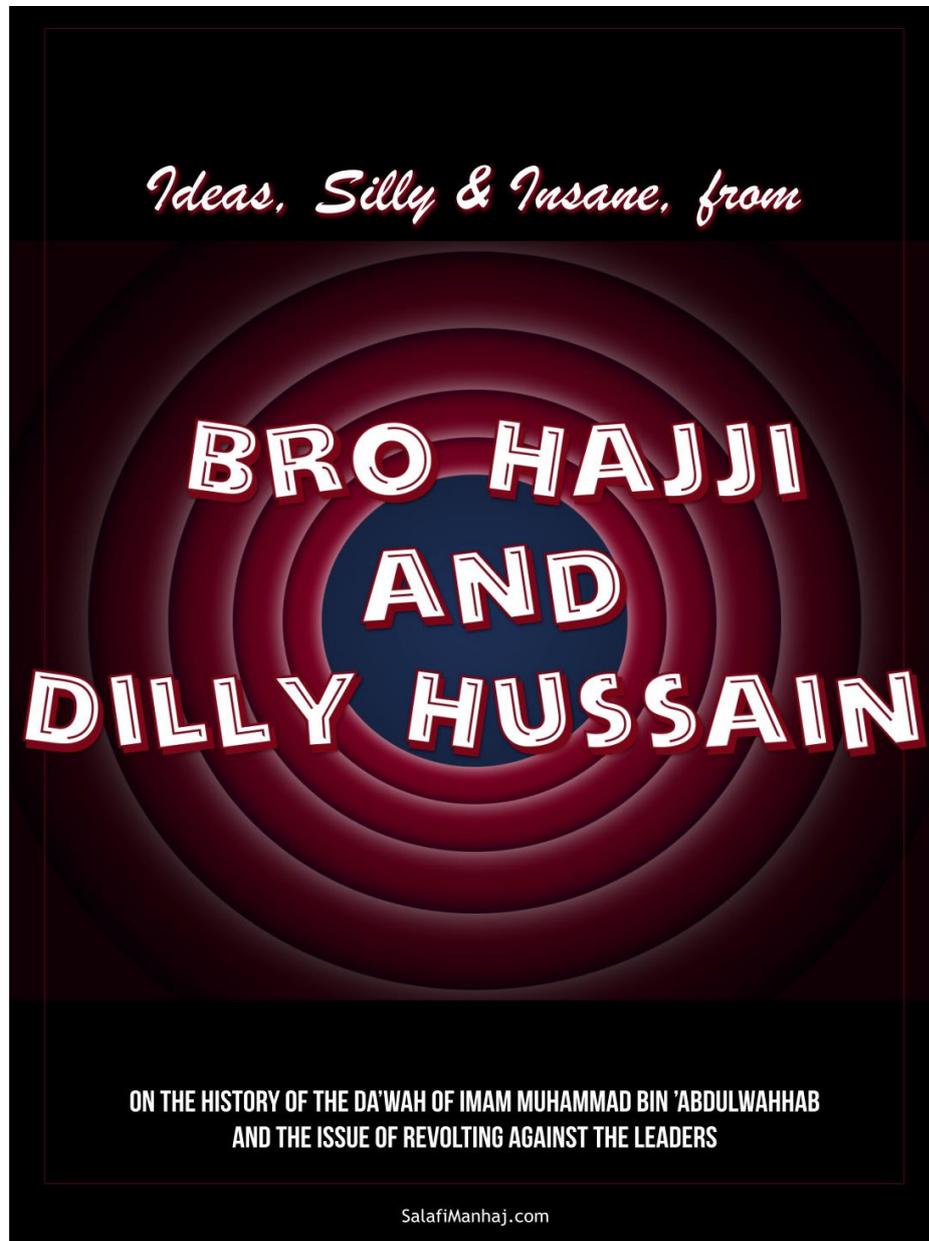


Figure 20

A large part of al–Ashanti’s polemic is a more serious assertion of the Najd’s autonomy in Arabia during the eighteenth century and independence from Ottoman–controlled lands, thereby providing religious grounds for the establishment of the First

Oh the Shame; Expanding on Outrageously Lame, Destroying the Neo–Khariji Bro Hajji’s Claim’ (Salafi Research Institute, 2020).

Saudi State. This is particularly important to Britain's Salafi cooperatives because revolting against Muslim rulers is considered a violation of the Salafi *manhaj* since armed rebellions are forbidden "by consensus" of the Salaf. In a similar context, Spubs issued an entire volume consisting of 340 pages on the establishment of the First Saudi State, describing it as an emulation of the Prophet's era in which Arabia was cleansed of idolatry.⁹¹⁷

As such, Anglo-Salafi print culture is still very much steered by individuals and organisations connected to the Ahl-e-Hadith and Salafi cooperatives in Britain and their wider transnational networks. MJAH's outreach programme Islam Wise, for example, recently received a container of 400,000 copies of Saheeh International's Quran translation from an Islamic organisation in Kuwait which are distributed onto other mosques and *da'wah* stalls.⁹¹⁸ In another example, Invitation to Islam registered as a charity in 2010 and supports *da'wah* projects in West Africa; according to its website, Invitation to Islam has distributed over 350,000 Islamic books to date and published 25 titles in English alone.⁹¹⁹ Similarly, in 2017, a collaboration between Haytham Sarhān, a Saudi-based scholar, and Nelson-based IUM-graduate Ayaaz, saw two editions of *The Three Fundamental Principles* rendered into English: one as a stand-alone text and commentary, and the other as part of a collection of study texts (*mudhakkirah*).⁹²⁰ Sarhān estimates that he has printed at least one million copies of the abovementioned texts for free distribution in total.⁹²¹ According to him, his books and websites, al-sarhaan.com and attasseel-alelmi.com, contain materials in 62 languages and are entirely funded by charitable endowments; despite these impressive figures, he confirmed to me that he has not received any funding from Saudi government sources.⁹²² Currently, his English texts are circulated in Britain by

⁹¹⁷ Muhammad Farooq, *The First Saudi State & the Story of Ad-Dir'iyyah* (Birmingham: Salafi Publications, 2016). For an analysis of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's 'imagined Medina' consult for example, Bishara, *On Salafism*, Chapter Four.

⁹¹⁸ Interview with Waqqas, former employee of Islam Wise, 17 March 2020. According to Fontain, who has cooperated with the same Kuwaiti organisation, a million copies in total were printed and distributed onto organisations in the Anglosphere. Interview with Fontain, 27 March 2020.

⁹¹⁹ 'Our Story', Invitation to Islam, accessed 23 September, 2022, <https://www.invitationtoislam.org/our-story>. See also their most recent freely-distributed publication to date in Sa'eed al-Qahtaani, *Easing of Emotions at the Death of Loves Ones & Offspring in Light of the Qur'aan and Sunnah* (London: Invitation to Islam, 2020).

⁹²⁰ Haytham Sarhān, *Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles*, trans. Ayaaz (Nelson: Salafi Events UK, 2017); Sarhān, *Gateway to Understanding Aqīdah, Fiqh, Sīrah & Tafīr*, trans. Ayaaz (Nelson: Salafi Events UK, 2017).

⁹²¹ Correspondence with Sarhān, 7 April 2019 and 2 August 2021.

⁹²² Correspondence with Sarhān, 2 August 2021.

Ayaaz’s co-founded mosque, Masjid Sunnah in Nelson (est. 2021), which was entirely funded through local donations.⁹²³

Salafism Dot Co Dot UK

The internet has had a tremendous impact on knowledge exchange, Islamic or otherwise⁹²⁴; the last time such a massive shift in reading cultures took place was in fifteenth century Europe when printing presses were first introduced and surpassed manuscript-reading culture.⁹²⁵ As mentioned in Chapter Four, the Salafi cooperatives in Britain harnessed the internet for *da‘wah* purposes from as early as the mid-1990s; this not only gave them greater exposure in the wider Anglosphere, but also contributed to their pole-position in setting Anglo-Salafi discourse over and above that of their more senior counterparts (namely, the Ahl-e-Hadith and JIMAS). It also helped connect disparate “imagined communities” of Salafis with central meeting spaces, albeit online. According to Inge, for example, several of her female participants regularly used the internet to acquire Salafi knowledge in order to “compensate” for ‘relatively inaccessible texts and circles of knowledge.’⁹²⁶

According to Amin, the internet has allowed Islamic trends in the Anglosphere, ‘especially Salafism, to become *mass* movements... not only attracting a small group of “religious” Muslims or “students of knowledge”, but... also to “common” Muslims.’⁹²⁷ Its utility aside, by the mid-2000s, the internet’s democratising effects on knowledge exchange also obstructed the Anglo-Salafi book market in Britain and elsewhere. One such effect was due to the increasing availability of PDF scans of commercial titles without the permission of their respective publishers. For example, Kalamullah.com is a popular website established in 2006 by an unknown British

⁹²³ Correspondence with Ayaaz, 14 September 2022.

⁹²⁴ On its impact in the Muslim digital sphere, consult Bunt, *Virtually Islamic* (Llandybie: University of Wales Press, 2002), *iMuslims: Rewiring the House of Islam* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2009) and *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018); Mohammed el-Nawawy and Sahar Khamis, *Islam Dot Com: Contemporary Islamic Discourse in Cyberspace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁹²⁵ Consult Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) and *The Printing Revolution in Early Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; 8th printing 2019).

⁹²⁶ Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 147.

⁹²⁷ Amin, ‘Salafism and Islamism in Britain’, 211.

Muslim (“Julaybib”) which gathers pirated copies of commercial Islamic books, videos and audios.⁹²⁸ The religious basis for doing so is provided in two fatwas, one by “Sheikh Feiz”, a controversial Australian–Lebanese IUM graduate featured in “Undercover Mosque,” and Ibn Bāz in an audio clip in which Hasan asks ‘is it permissible to copy [books and tapes]... without permission’ to which Ibn Bāz replies ‘This is related to the spread of knowledge, and it is a duty for the Muslim to spread the knowledge. By creating more tapes and books, even the prices will fall down, and it will be available to more and more people.’ As such, Ibn Bāz rules that it is allowed.⁹²⁹

The illegal reproduction of commercial Anglo–Islamic book titles predates the introduction of PDF software. For example, Philips’ popular title, *The Fundamentals of Tawheed*, was illegally printed and distributed by Hindu publishers in India during the late–1990s.⁹³⁰ Philips first used the internet to notify the public about these illegal print copies and the publisher at fault but admits that no further action could be taken given the difficulties of initiating prosecution for copyright infringement in India at the time.⁹³¹ Examples like this however are few and far between, at least, with respect to Anglo–Salafi texts. A more damaging impact on sales of *The Fundamentals* was brought about by websites like Kalamullah.com and Dar PDFs posting pirated copies online. This time, Philips admits he did not object; after all, publishers (not limited to Islamic publishers) can do little to stop this trend let alone track when and where it occurs; even if publishers like Philips contacted websites with pirated copies of his works, there is no telling whether the latter would remove them since they have already justified their actions “Islamically.”

Another corresponding factor in time which impacted sales of commercial Anglo–Salafi books was the rising popularity of visual and audio media, and later online video–sharing platforms like YouTube. This appears to have impacted Salafi reading

⁹²⁸ ‘Home’, Kalamullah, accessed 24 July, 2022, <https://www.kalamullah.com>. Kalamullah’s official Twitter account reveals its base is London, besides which there is no information about the administrator. See Kalamullah, Twitter, accessed 24 July, 2022, <https://twitter.com/wordofallah>. The Twitter account currently boasts 15.3 thousand followers.

⁹²⁹ ‘Q&A session with Sheikh ibn Baaz Rahimullah’, Kalamullah, accessed 24 July, 2022, <https://kalamullah.com/Variou%20Lectures/Copyright%20by%20ibn%20Baaz%20Rahimullah.mp3>. For a similar site and attitude towards piracy, consult ‘حقوق الطبع – Copyrights’, Dar PDFs, accessed 24 July, 2022, <https://bit.ly/darpdfs>.

⁹³⁰ Interview with Philips, 25 January 2021.

⁹³¹ *Ibid.*

publics in Britain. In 2006, MJAHA, for example, announced the opening of a Muslim Audio Centre to meet the growing demand; it distributed CDs and DVDs of lectures held at Green Lane Masjid (GLM) but the project was later shelved in order to concentrate on building a YouTube channel.⁹³² A number of interviewees also bemoaned to me that Muslims are reading fewer books and prefer learning via the internet. For example, according to “Hamad”, a second-generation Pakistani Ahl-e-Hadith member and former employee of MJAHA, before social media, ‘most of your knowledge was taken from books... [mosques] were teaching the books... you had to buy the books.’⁹³³ Now he suggest, ‘A lot less people are reading... They’re going through social media... YouTube talks... little clips rather than structured classes.’⁹³⁴ However, this may not be as widespread as “Hamad” suggests since Inge studied a number of translated Salafi texts during her two years studying in Salafi circles in London as part of her fieldwork.⁹³⁵

With the increasing availability of “smart” technology and corresponding spread of YouTube and other social media channels, the fate of physical books and libraries was on the balance. More and more online reading materials, including illegally-scanned books in PDF format were now being circulated on online spaces by anonymous agents. Seemingly, they scan texts which are otherwise costly to purchase, popular or personal favourites. Correspondingly, Anglo-Salafi book profits appear to have waned. According to Wahid, his Darussalam franchise and warehouse was ‘booming’ prior to 2017 and made him the ‘largest distributor’ of Islamic books in English ‘in the western world.’⁹³⁶ He estimates his yearly profits during that period to be approximately 2.9 million pounds, after which there has been a steady decline to almost half this amount in 2019 (1.6 million); he further expects sales to carry on declining.⁹³⁷ In contrast, “Ahmad” suggests Call to Islam bookstore, located inside Masjid al-Ghuraba in Luton, experienced a drop in book-sales beginning in 2012–13.⁹³⁸ Both Wahid and “Ahmad” point the finger, albeit partly, to the internet and online piracy. Al-Ashanti also feels that people are reading fewer physical books and

⁹³² *The Straight Path*, April/May 2006, 4.

⁹³³ *Ibid.*

⁹³⁴ Interview with “Hamad” (anonymised), 27 July 2019.

⁹³⁵ Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 104–105.

⁹³⁶ Interview with Wahid, 12 September 2019.

⁹³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹³⁸ Interview with “Ahmad” (anonymised), 24 August 2019.

preferring free digital material; he has since given up on the idea of ‘making a return’ on his Anglo–Salafi translations and prefers to trade in other goods.⁹³⁹ Other Salafi booksellers have since been forced to adapt to the changing market. For example, to stay “afloat”, Al–Hidaayah, now concentrates on Hajj and Umrah tours because it is more profitable; others have merely slowed down their production of new titles, including Spubs and Invitation to Islam.

However, the internet is not entirely to blame for the decline in Anglo–Salafi book sales. One reason which cannot be directly attributed to it is the perceived “saturation” of the Anglo–Salafi book market by Anglo–Salafi readers themselves. “Hamad” for example admits to ‘self–regulating’ his purchasing habits since he already owns the titles important to him and feels that he has too many books in his personal library; once a Salafi buys a commentary of *The Three Fundamentals Principles*, he argues, he or she is less likely to buy other available commentaries.⁹⁴⁰ This indicates the limits of the Anglo–Salafi book market; there are obviously gaps in the literature which have yet to be filled by publishers and at the same time, and by their own volition, “repeat” translations. This may have even encouraged Anglo–Salafi readers to look for Anglo–Islamic books outside of Salafi spaces; similarly, the internet provided yet another information sphere to locate Anglo–Salafi translations that had yet to be published in physical format, or would forever remain online.

“Saturation” is also partly responsible for yet another shift in Anglo–Salafi print culture whereby some publishers are expanding their titles to include titles which will appeal to wider Anglo–Muslim reading audiences. Dar al–Arqam is a case in point. This particular Salafi publishing house was set up in 2014 by Birmingham–born and bred Adnan Karim, the grandson of Asim. Despite his Ahl–e–Hadith background, Karim identifies as a Ḥanbalī in *madhhab* while still retaining his Salafi roots (particularly in Taymiyyan theology). Karim has recently published translations of several popular Ḥanbalī *fiqh* manuals, one of which includes a commentary by Ṣāliḥ al–Fawzān, a senior Saudi cleric.⁹⁴¹ Simultaneously, he is proudly Ahl–e–Hadith and

⁹³⁹ Interview with al–Ashanti, 4 April 2020. Ayaaz also suggested that “people” are reading less but also that divisions between Salafis have hindered their *da`wah*. Interview with Ayaaz, 20 March 2020.

⁹⁴⁰ Interview with “Abu Khuzaimah”, 28 July 2019.

⁹⁴¹ Ṣāliḥ ibn Fawzān al–Fawzān, *A Commentary on Zād al–Mustaqni` : Imām al–Hajjāwī’s (d. 968 H.) Classical Guide to the Hanbalī Madhab* (Birmingham: Dar al–Arqam, 2021); Maṛī b. Yūsuf al–Karmī al–Ḥanbalī, *A Hanbali Epitome: The Student’s Guide for Accomplishing the Pursued Objectives*

opposed to “blindly-following” *madhhabs* at the expense of the Quran and “authentic” ḥadīths as is reflected by his recent decision to publish al-Shawkānī’s critique of *taqlīd*.⁹⁴²

A similar case in point is that of Ali Hassan Khan, a Pakistani-born and Cambridge-based Ahl-e-Hadith member and co-owner of Umm al-Qura publishing house which publishes Urdu Ahl-e-Hadith works in Pakistan and English translations in Britain. According to him, his first publications, printed after 2010, were mostly refutations of South Asian rivals because the Anglo-Salafi book market was already “saturated” with other genres.⁹⁴³ More recently, he has translated the biographies of 40 deceased Ahl-e-Hadith ulema and an original compilation of 50 contemporary Ahl-e-Hadith ulema.⁹⁴⁴ He admits that such projects are due to the lack of Salafi works in English produced by other than Saudi or Jordanian ulema and that only one century is being represented which betrays the ‘richness’ of the Salafi tradition.⁹⁴⁵ In yet another example, Dar us-Sunnah has concentrated much of its publishing efforts in producing “heart-softening” titles, or “purification of the soul” works, which appeal to more than just Salafi readers; in doing so, the same publisher has popularised the works of Ḥanbalī ulema besides Ibn Taymiyyah, including Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn Qudāmā al-Maqdisī and Ibn Rajab, and other “Salafi” ulema in history like al-Suyūfī and al-Ṣan‘ānī. In order to present a more academic image, Jamiah Media, Daar us-Sunnah and Dar al-Arqam also employ academic transliteration conventions likely inspired by wider intellectual Anglo-Islamic print culture.

Anglo-Salafi distributors have also changed their purchasing habits. Wahid, for example, admits to restricting his current stock of book titles to “hot-sellers” because other titles are simply too ‘risky.’⁹⁴⁶ Even so his warehouse is brim-full with Anglo-Islamic publications and goods ready for resale (see fig. 21).

Pertaining to Worship, trans. Jewel Jalil (Birmingham: Dar al-Arqam, 2020); Yūsuf b. ‘Abd al-Hādī, *An Epitome of Ḥanbalī Substantive Law* (Birmingham: Dar al-Arqam, 2018).

⁹⁴² See al-Shawkānī, *A Critique of the Ruling of al-Taqlīd* (Birmingham: Dar al-Arqam, 2019). See also al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *The Eminence of the Ḥadīth Adherents* (Birmingham: Dar al-Arqam, 2020).

⁹⁴³ Interview with A. H. Khan, 10 November 2019.

⁹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*; Amin and Majothi, ‘The Ahl-e-Hadith’: 203–204. For similar reasons, “Abu Khuzaimah” tends to translate texts by South Asian ulema despite acknowledging that they are largely unknown to the wider Anglo-Salafi reading public and will consequently have limited appeal. Interview with “Abu Khuzaimah”, 28 July 2019.

⁹⁴⁶ Interview with Wahid, 12 September 2019.



Figure 21

In order to gauge commercial viability, Wahid now buys a small quantity of any given title and only purchases more significant quantities if the sample quantity sells quickly. At other times, he simply refuses to stock a certain title if his business intuition, albeit

subjective, dissuades him.⁹⁴⁷ As a result, A. H. Khan admits that he has struggled to sell his “refutations” to distributors and booksellers like Wahid.⁹⁴⁸ According to “Ahmad”, when he informed Wahid that he was thinking of publishing books too, Wahid discouraged him from publishing “controversial” books like refutations of Tabligh-e-Jamaat because ‘then people are not going to want to take [knowledge] from us.’⁹⁴⁹ In another case, according to Hasan, Wahid refused to stock *Course Book on Islam*, containing 10 lessons from Hasan’s original correspondence course (see Chapter One) because the book was printed in A4 and ‘people [customers] don’t like big A4-size books.’⁹⁵⁰ These examples confirm that warehouse keepers are another missing link of authorities in Inge’s “chain of knowledge” and even filter what texts will eventually connect ordinary Anglo–Salafi reading publics to Salafism.⁹⁵¹

Despite the challenges which the internet has posed on the Anglo–Salafi book market, as well as its “perceived” saturation, Anglo–Salafi books remain relevant to Salafis in Britain partly due to the internet. Nelson–based IUM graduate Ayaaz explains:

I think since 1990, we’ve certainly had a big share of representation on the internet... in terms of the Salafi *da`wah* on a larger scale, physical assets on the ground in terms of mosques, learning establishments and institutes, we’re always a... minority, we don’t have any schools and we still don’t at this moment in time. We didn’t really have many mosques... whereas other communities, Deobandi communities, Sufi communities, they had bigger numbers in terms of mosques, buildings and assets, and imams who are graduates from mostly their own schools... so we were a minority in terms of physical assets on the ground, but we always had the biggest share of representation on the internet, and I think the fact that we have the internet and books, and we have the English language, I think that’s what really gave us a big push early on... The reason why I believe we had such a big share on the internet was because it was relatively free, it didn’t require a lot of money, it just required your time.⁹⁵²

Ayaaz’s assessment confirms my earlier contention that Anglo–Salafi books have contributed to Salafi education in Britain in lieu of institutes, and extends it here to

⁹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁸ Interview with A. H. Khan, 10 November 2019.

⁹⁴⁹ Interview with “Ahmad” (anonymised), 24 August 2019.

⁹⁵⁰ Interview with Hasan, 12 September 2019. A more subtle reason is that Hasan and his son Usama are boycotted by certain Salafi cooperatives, Wahid’s primary customers.

⁹⁵¹ Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, 111–115.

⁹⁵² Interview with Ayaaz, 20 March 2020.

“digital” *da‘wah* material (oral, visual and written) which is relatively cheaper and easier to publish. A. H. Khan explains that since reading is the first injunction revealed in the Quran, it remains ‘the most powerful tool to rectify the individual and society as well’; he admits that while many Salafis are turning to online videos, there are a good number of them still reading, some are even ‘bookworms who read volumes.’⁹⁵³ He now markets his own translations on Facebook and bypasses traditional resellers like Wahid by uploading new publications onto Amazon.com’s print-on-demand service, Kindle Desktop Publishing; likewise, Hasan uses the same service because he feels Islamic warehouse franchises like Darussalam act like “empires” unwilling to cooperate for the common good.⁹⁵⁴ “Abu Khuzaimah” has also increased his production of polemical publications in recent years which he sells directly through his own online store; he states his project is no longer ‘for profit... people can come to our website and purchase books, we won’t go to other bookshops and publishers and say “here’s our books... sell it.” We decided we want control in how we want our vision to move forward.’⁹⁵⁵

Correspondingly, “Shuaib”, an online Islamic bookseller based in Britain, admits that the internet has affected his business while also providing him with a reasonable income because “serious” people still prefer physical books.⁹⁵⁶ He also stocks more Arabic books now after noticing a growing trend of people who understand the Arabic language.⁹⁵⁷ Similarly, Al-Hidaayah still sells books on its online bookstore while its original store is now a travel agency providing Hajj and Umrah packages. Spubs continues to have a disproportionate presence online in comparison to other British Salafi outfits, and attracts ‘three to four million hits a month.’⁹⁵⁸ According to my findings, the organisation has launched no less than 50 websites between 1993 and 2018, indicating it’s vested interest in securing online Anglo-Muslim reading audiences and addressing wider shifts in information exchange.⁹⁵⁹ Furthermore, it has secured key domain names even before breaking away from JIMAS; this ensured the

⁹⁵³ Interview with A. H. Khan, 10 November 2019.

⁹⁵⁴ Interview with Hasan, 12 September 2019, and Khan, 10 November 2019.

⁹⁵⁵ Interview with “Abu Khuzaimah”, 28 July 2019.

⁹⁵⁶ Interview with “Shuaib” (anonymised), 17 March 2020. According to “Shuaib”, his website still receives four million hits a month with 40,000 unique visitors.

⁹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵⁸ Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 302 and 82.

⁹⁵⁹ For examples, consult ‘Useful Websites’, Abu Khadeejah, accessed 21 November, 2022, <https://abukhadeejah.com/useful-websites>.

former's digital stake over symbols ("Salaf", "Madenah", etc.), primary sources (Darussalam's translation of the Quran, etc.), and "major" figureheads in the Salafi movement including Ibn Bāz, al-Albānī and al-'Uthaymīn.

Far from disrupting the Anglo-Salafi book market, some Salafis continue to prefer printed material even if they are primarily obtained from online stores. According to "Khalid", although 'education through books' has since 'died down', he continues to purchase Anglo-Islamic texts both on- and offline as and when they are taught by qualified teachers in his local mosque.⁹⁶⁰ Fontain on the other hand, views YouTube as a 'temporary thing' because 'things get hidden in the archives' while books are 'more lasting... not everyone can write a book but anyone can post online!'⁹⁶¹ Similarly, "Yusuf" continues to buy and order Anglo-Islamic books while studying the Arabic language because: 'You are what you are because of knowledge... you cannot say that you're Salafi without having knowledge of *Salafiyyah*... you have to have your evidences, you need to be equipped to deal with the doubts that people come with and we're at that time where it's full of doubts.'⁹⁶²

This seemingly shared "Salafi" attitude towards reading, with or without the internet, explains why a number of websites which either sell Salafi books (but are not necessarily Salafi-owned) or publish free content were built in Britain. For example, SalafiBookstore.com, established by Spubs in 2000, still widely distributes Anglo-Salafi books and other Islamic goods to an international audience. Most recently, the same website has functioned as a platform for Abu Khadeejah and Lahmami's serialised annotated translation of the Quran.⁹⁶³ Similarly, Darussalam Leyton's website Darussalam.com has operated as an online retail store since 2005; UmmahCentral.com, managed by a former employee of the same warehouse, has operated an online Salafi book retailer since 2009; both ship worldwide.

Generic Islamic online retailers, such as IslamicVision.co.uk, a branch of Birmingham-based IPCI (see Chapter One), also stock a number of Salafi titles alongside works by rival-trends including the TI movement; according to one online Islamic bookseller, he sees no problem in stocking titles by opposing Islamic trends

⁹⁶⁰ Interview with "Khalid" (anonymised), 27 July 2019.

⁹⁶¹ Interview with Fontain, 27 March 2020.

⁹⁶² Interview with "Yusuf" (anonymised), 13 September 2019.

⁹⁶³ *A Contextual Translation of the Glorious Qur'an*, trans. Abu Khadeejah and Abdulilāh Lahmāmī (Birmingham: Salafi Publications, 2020).

so long as their contents do not violate ‘the core principles of Islam.’⁹⁶⁴ Thousands of Salafi-based articles and PDF books are also easily accessed on information-based websites. For example, “Abu Khuzaimah’s” Salafi Research Institute, established in Birmingham in 2002, offers hundreds of translated articles and research papers for free at SalafiRI.com; simultaneously, the same institute runs a forum (Forum.Salafiri.com) and online bookstore (Bookstore.Salafiri.com).⁹⁶⁵

The internet is also being harnessed as a means of countering the lack of “physical assets” which Ayaaz believes Salafis have in Britain. He, like other millennials and “generation-Z”, are finding *da‘wah* opportunities online which often complement the study of Salafi literature. For example, Muslim convert AbdulWahid Stephenson, an IUM graduate, established Madinah College in 2016 with the help of British and Arab donors; since that time, the college, which offers courses in Islamic sciences, Quran and Arabic, has operated from a rented property in Brixton.⁹⁶⁶ A number of the college’s curriculum books are personally translated and published by Stephenson under Insight into Islam Publications and taught in person and through his online portal Madinahcollege.uk, thus allowing Stephenson to attract Salafi “students of knowledge” outside of London.⁹⁶⁷ A similar “international” online college is Al Madrasatu Al Umariyyah, which offers members-only courses in which classic and semi-classic Salafi texts are taught systematically. Its teachers include Abdulrahman Hassan, a British-Somali who has trained in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, Newcastle-born Tim Humble, a Muslim convert and IUM-graduate, Nelson-based Ayaaz and Leicester-based Abu Taymiyyah Jeylaani, a British-Somali and recent IUM graduate.⁹⁶⁸ Students are gradually introduced to the Arabic language indicating that translations of the texts taught play a role in aiding studies.

The internet has also fostered individual *da‘wah* projects which tie into wider Anglo-Salafi print culture. Manchurian Muslim convert Fontain, for example, began producing *da‘wah* booklets in English during the early 2010s because he wasn’t happy

⁹⁶⁴ Interview with “Shuaib” (anonimised), 17 March 2020.

⁹⁶⁵ Interview with “Abu Khuzaimah”, 28 July 2019.

⁹⁶⁶ Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 199–200.

⁹⁶⁷ See for example, Sa’d al-Shithri, *Usūl al-Fiqh for the Muslim who is not a Mujtahid*, trans. AbdulWahid Stephenson (London: Insight into Islam Publications, 2015).

⁹⁶⁸ For more about Jeylaani, see Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 200–203; see also 205 for more about Knowledge College, a similar venture which ‘teaches classic Salafi texts.’

with the available material at the time; he regularly advertises his new YouTube videos, *da'wah* publications and other Anglo–Islamic books to his online following of more than 20,000 on YouTube and 85,000 on Facebook.⁹⁶⁹ “Dawud” in another example, offers classes on YouTube and tends to teach Salafi texts which have already been translated and published to allow viewers to buy copies and follow his classes systematically.⁹⁷⁰ These examples suggest that Salafis in Britain are still invested in reading, buying and even publishing Anglo–Salafi texts; the internet might have harmed their book sales, but it has also contributed to it as Salafis adapt to newer technologies and platforms in lieu of more concrete institutes and mosques.

Coming Soon: Anglo–Salafi Print Culture?

It is difficult to say how Anglo–Salafi print culture will continue into the future but there is good reason to believe that it will be a persistent influence in British Salafi and wider Muslim spaces. Indeed there appear to be more Salafis in Britain than in previous decades and given their emphasis on reading, studying and *da'wah*, there will be a continual need to supply demands for Anglo–Salafi texts. Although it is impossible to enumerate how many Salafis reside in Britain, there is an obvious trajectory of the number of Salafi mosques opening locally hinting at their spread (see above).

Newer Salafi communities have contributed to these numbers. Somali refugees and EU migrants are a case in point. Inge notes that while some young Somalis “discovered” Salafism in Britain, others adopted Salafi trends in their homeland or Europe and simply brought their religious orientation along with them.⁹⁷¹ By 1995, there were approximately 40,000 Somalis in London.⁹⁷² By 2001, their numbers are thought to have been a ‘substantial part’ of the 96,000 Black African Muslims (including Muslim converts) in England and Wales.⁹⁷³ From 2005–onwards, Abu Khadeejah observed a predominantly Somali audience attending Salafi events; four

⁹⁶⁹ Interview with Fontain, 27 March 2020.

⁹⁷⁰ Interview with “Dawud” (anonymised), 13 September 2019.

⁹⁷¹ Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Muslim Woman*, 39–43 and Chapter Three.

⁹⁷² Rima Berns McGown, *Muslims in the Diaspora: The Somali Communities of London and Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 14–17 and 221–223. See also Giulia Liberatore, *Somali, Muslim, British: Striving in Securitized Britain* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

⁹⁷³ Peach, ‘Britain’s Muslim Population’, 23.

British–Somali IUM graduates were expected to join Spubs as preachers to cater to the changing landscape.⁹⁷⁴ Subsequently, a number of Somali Salafi mosques have appeared, particularly in London and the East Midlands. To a lesser degree, foreign university students, refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants from European, Arab and North African countries have also constructed Salafi spaces.⁹⁷⁵

The largest network of Salafi mosques in Britain continues to be dominated by MJAHA. The organisation however appears to have little influence on the Anglo–Salafi book market. Its former emir al–Umari admits that the Ahl–e–Hadith should be doing more in terms of publishing but his organisation is not interested in making a profit from commercial sales.⁹⁷⁶ This suggests that a relaunch of *The Straight Path* cannot be discounted since the magazine is primarily a vehicle for *da‘wah* outside of the commercial sphere. Furthermore, one of MJAHA’s young imams, Birmingham born–and–bred IUM graduate Ahsan Hanif, routinely teaches texts in Arabic alongside their English translations during MJAHA’s Ramadan programme; Hanif has recently launched Al–Isnad, a 5–6 year programme where classical Arabic texts are studied at GLM. To assist non–Arabs, English translations of the same texts are provided to registered students. This example demonstrates how MJAHA are adapting to their increasingly diverse and growing community of English–speaking Muslims while staying connected to texts. More broadly, GLM leaders work alongside younger members in offering community services which earned the mosque the title of ‘Mosque of the Year’ 2020 by the British Muslim Awards.⁹⁷⁷

Another prominent Salafi network in Britain is affiliated to Spubs.⁹⁷⁸ According to its co–founder Abu Khadeejah, 19 mosques in Britain alone are currently connected to Spubs and there are at least 20 affiliated members studying in Saudi Arabia in order to provide education to future generations.⁹⁷⁹ The same organisation established the more multi–cultural Salafi Masjid in Birmingham only 500 yards away from GLM. Aside from it being a direct competitor to MJAHA, the Salafi Masjid is proximate to the Salafi

⁹⁷⁴ Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Muslim Woman*, 41 and 230.

⁹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 40. In my own hometown of Leicester, there are at least nine Salafi mosques respectively administered by and largely for South Asians (2), Somalis (4), East/West Africans (1), North African Arabs (1), and Kurds (1).

⁹⁷⁶ Interview with al–Omeri, 17 March 2020.

⁹⁷⁷ Amin and Majothi, ‘The Ahl–e–Hadith’: 201.

⁹⁷⁸ Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 83.

⁹⁷⁹ Interview with Abu Khadeejah, 30 September 2019.

Bookstore where titles produced or approved by Spubs are sold; the same titles are also distributed to its affiliates in Britain and the wider Anglosphere. For example, affiliated members established a Salafi Bookstore in Bradford in 2004 not far from their Masjid As–Sunnah (est. 2000?); its stock closely resembles its Birmingham counterpart.⁹⁸⁰ These examples suggest that Spubs, which as mentioned in Chapter Four was established primarily for the purpose of producing Anglo–Salafi translations, has since expanded in numbers, networks and assets, all of which are partly driven by book sales while contributing to the demand for “proper” Anglo–Salafi reading material.⁹⁸¹ Dawood also notes its advantage over fellow Salafi cooperatives because of its strong web presence.⁹⁸² For example, Spubs’ forum SalafiTalk.net (est. 2001) currently has 11,921 registered members and 6.8 million visitors; in comparison SalafiRI’s forum (est. 2016) has 32 members and 1,146 visitors. The latter’s forum was clearly late in capitalising on the sharp rise in numbers of Muslims interested in Salafism.⁹⁸³

Aside from Salafis in Britain, the wider Anglo–Islamic book market is also on its way to making English the “new Persian” to borrow from Hamid and Lewis’ prediction. For example, Bewley is currently translating the classical exegesis of al–Qurṭūbī (d. 1273), volume–by–volume, under Diwan Press (est. 1975), based in Bradford and Denmark; the same publisher has also announced it will soon publish a translation of Ibn ‘Ajibah’s (d. 1809) Sufi exegesis in eight volumes.⁹⁸⁴ Significant strides are also underway in the area of ḥadīth: American publisher Visions Reality has released the first volume of its serial translation of Ibn Ḥajar’s *magnum opus* and commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ al–Bukhārī* entitled *Fath al–Bārī*.⁹⁸⁵ TIF in collaboration with ICMG Youth Australia is currently publishing a translation, volume–by–volume, of al–Nawawī’s (d. 1277) famous commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.⁹⁸⁶ In *fiqh*, London–based Turath Publishing has released a partial translation of al–Ṭaḥāwī’s compendium *Sharḥ*

⁹⁸⁰ ‘Our Call’ and ‘Bookstore’, Al Baseerah, accessed 23 November, 2022, <http://albaseerah.com>.

⁹⁸¹ Anwar, ‘An Ethnography’, 285; Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 191–192.

⁹⁸² Dawood, ‘Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims’, 198.

⁹⁸³ SalafiTalk, accessed 30 December, 2022, <https://www.salafitalk.net/st>; SalafiRI, accessed 30 December, 2022, <https://forum.salafiri.com/index.php>.

⁹⁸⁴ Diwan Press, accessed 23 November, 2022, <https://www.diwanpress.com>.

⁹⁸⁵ ‘Shop’, Visions of Reality, accessed 23 November, 2022, <https://bookstore.visions-of-reality.com/shop/fath-al-bari-victory-of-the-creator-commentary-on-sahih-al-bukhari-by-ibn-hajar-al-asqalani>.

⁹⁸⁶ To date, three volumes have been released. See ‘Publications and Books’, The Islamic Foundation, accessed 23 November, 2022, <https://www.islamic-foundation.org.uk/blog/sahih-muslim-volume-3>.

Ma'āni al-Āthār dispelling the Salafi notion of the Ḥanafī *madhhab* being based on the views of Abū Ḥanīfah and not ḥadīth.⁹⁸⁷ These are just a few of the hundreds of Anglo–Islamic titles which are appearing year–in, year–out, at the hands of other than Britain’s Salafis. It would appear the Anglo–Islamic book market is gradually levelling up to reflect the diversity of Islamic trends now looking to print *their own* traditions. This competition, not always sectarian, may well lead to further Anglo–Salafi agents reasserting themselves through print in coming years.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined some of the internal challenges which Salafi publishers in Britain have faced in the 2000s leading up the present (besides being partly “phantomized” in the public sphere, see Chapter Five). The first of these challenges is that Anglo–Salafism in Britain has diversified and now includes newer articulations which, aside from pushing back the influence of Saudi Salafism, is gaining ground as an alternative reading of classical Salafi texts. It has been argued here that despite this challenge, the Anglo–Salafi book market has largely been unaffected because it is dominated by the same Ahl–e–Hadith and Salafi cooperatives who in previous decades constructed it.

The second is the changing information landscape brought about by the internet and social media. Fewer Salafis in Britain appear to be reading books and now prefer digital content. This chapter has demonstrated how the Ahl–e–Hadith and Salafi cooperatives have adapted to this shift without sacrificing their invested interest in reading, translating, publishing and/or distributing texts. The internet has furthermore provided Salafis in Britain with another medium by which Anglo–Salafi publications and texts can be circulated or, at the very least, might compliment *da'wah* initiatives which are audio and/or visual.

Given these challenges and responses to them, Anglo–Salafi print culture could potentially continue in its trajectory in the coming years with newer publishers addressing perceived gaps in Anglo–Salafi libraries. Only now there may be greater

⁹⁸⁷ ‘Publications’, Turath Publishing, accessed 23 November, 2022, <https://turath.co.uk/publications/imam-%E1%B9%ADa%E1%B8%A5awis-sharh-ma%CA%BFani-al-athar>.

attention paid in addressing genres which have not yet “saturated”, or translating works by authors who have so far been underrepresented. This might further diminish the influence of Saudi Salafism more locally and encourage greater discursivity.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

Salafism today is one of several visible Islamic movements permeating Muslim spaces across the world and is widely associated with Saudi Arabia. This thesis has examined how the movement in Britain partly achieved this visibility through print and the true extent of its relationship with the Saudi kingdom. It asked the question: Who is responsible for the widespread availability of English-language Salafi publications in Britain? In order to answer this question, I considered three things: i) the history of Salafism in Britain; ii) the wider development of Anglo-Islamic and more local Salafi print culture; iii) the significance and limitations of Saudi influence in British Salafi spaces.

My examination of the history and development of Salafism in Britain leading up to the present has provided a more detailed account, particularly in terms of the Ahl-e-Hadith's involvement in Britain which has only previously received attention in Amin's thesis and in our jointly-authored journal article. Earlier studies, on the other hand, do not fully capture the relevance of the Ahl-e-Hadith leading up to the present day. My findings suggest that Markaz Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith (MJAHA) is not only the earliest Salafi organisation in the country, but also continues to be one of its most influential agencies in mobilizing Muslim youths, networking with transnational Salafi blocs, and providing newer Salafi cooperatives with some level of infrastructure. In similar terms, this thesis has also provided new information about MYM, HISAM, and JIMAS. The evolution of JIMAS has further underlined my steering clear from existing typologies which do not fully grasp the nuances and ambitions of human agencies vis-à-vis their own personal journeys in faith under unique socio-political contexts. Chapter Seven also introduced a range of Salafi, Salafi-oriented and post-Salafi trends whose activities play a role in the wider movement's diverse makeup at present. Aside from peripheral trends, my findings suggest that two specific articulations of Salafism in Britain have spread the furthest (a more inclusive Quran and Sunnah message and a more exclusive Salafi *manhaj*), and that this is partly due to the application of print and web as mediums of communication.

When I began this thesis, I was under the impression that Salafis in Britain were instrumental in anglicising Islamic literature and that they were the largest producers of Anglo–Islamic texts both on– and offline. By allowing myself space to continue collecting data and add to my findings even after I thought that I had reached “saturation”, I was able to arrive at a more precise picture. Firstly, the production of Anglo–Islamic literature hails back much further into history as I first imagined. Secondly, the bulk of Anglo–Islamic literature present in the world prior to the 1990s, at which time Salafis in Britain thrust themselves into widescale publishing activities, was produced in South Asia. In Pakistan for example, there was a concerted effort by publishers to address the shortage of Anglo–Islamic texts. These were not primarily addressed to Muslims in Britain although they most certainly became a significant audience. Thirdly, Salafis in Britain, not limited to British–born members, adopted print as a key medium of communicating Salafi ideas to the wider Muslim reading public; this was the result of a perceived religious information gap, then a Salafi information gap, but also a means of earning a lawful income, asserting new directions and defending personal volitions. Fourthly, other Islamic trends found in Britain (as elsewhere in the Anglosphere) are just as much involved in the construction of an Anglo–Islamic information market for similar reasons to Anglo–Salafi publishers; the latter appears to have harnessed print and democratised Islamic texts in post–war Britain before its rivals, but this has since levelled out as more local and non–Salafi Anglo–publications appear. Fifthly, Salafis in Britain, as with publishers belonging to other Islamic trends, have largely constructed their Anglo–corpuses at their own expense using local donations and personal investments.

Chapters Two to Six in this thesis in particular have demonstrated that Salafism in Britain largely owes itself to Salafis born or based in Britain and that neither its history or disproportionate presence in the Anglo–Islamic book market is the result of Saudi spending outside of three instances. The first is that several Salafi mosques in Britain received Saudi government funds leading up to 2001; however, this has neither meant that these mosques were exclusively Salafi recipients or that their daily activities addressed other than local needs (and not a Saudi agenda). The second is that the Saudi government has provided free scholarships to a limited number of British Salafis at its Islamic universities; not all of Britain’s Saudi–trained scholars and translators, however, were necessarily graduates, operated upon returning to Britain as Saudi

attaches, or necessarily transmitted what they learned in Saudi Arabia into Britain. The third is that the Saudi government has financed or bankrolled a number of free Anglo–Islamic publications and distributed them to British mosques, *da‘wah* organisations and institutes. My findings suggest that these publications have little to do with the commercial Anglo–Salafi book market; instead, they reflect a continuation of the anglicisation of Islamic literature which began well over a century ago at the impulse of Muslim intellectuals seeking to translate Islam on their own terms. Furthermore, the development of Anglo–Islamic print culture, and Anglo–Salafi print culture in particular, was all made possible with the changes brought about by information technology, the emergence of a “halal” market and rise in Anglo–Muslim reading publics. As such, Salafism in Britain ought not to be misconstrued as a by–product of Saudi spending.

In any case, it is unlikely that Saudi Arabia will have as much influence among Britain’s Salafis in the near future. In 2016, Saudi’s Crown Prince Muḥammad b. Salmān announced his “Vision 2030” which included a number of social reforms in the kingdom including a return to “moderate” Islam.⁹⁸⁸ Subsequent reforms such as the introduction of cinemas and music concerts in the kingdom may well encourage further anti–Saudi sentiments among Muslim activists, including Salafis who previously defended the Saudi government.⁹⁸⁹ The Salafi connection to Saudi Arabia’s ulema on the other hand is still a constant in Britain and it is to the latter that most of Britain’s Salafis are invested as part of a localised effort to continue growing the call to Salafism under a central authority, albeit informal. This may well change as newer Salafi articulations gain currency. It is yet to be seen whether these changes will affect public stereotypes of Salafism in Britain. Nevertheless, this thesis has provided cause for rethinking how Salafism in Britain has emerged, developed and spread largely on its own terms and expense.⁹⁹⁰

⁹⁸⁸ Martin Chulov, ‘I Will Return Saudi Arabia to Moderate Islam, Says Crown Prince’, *The Guardian*, 24 October 2017, accessed 23 September 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/24/i-will-return-saudi-arabia-moderate-islam-crown-prince>.

⁹⁸⁹ Amin, ‘The Shifting Contours of Saudi Influence in Britain’, 306–307.

⁹⁹⁰ Bonnefoy and Terje’s respective studies similarly conclude that Saudi Arabia’s influence in Yemen and Ethiopia is equally limited by localised efforts and the transfer of ideas need not necessarily be one–directional.

Admittedly, this thesis also has several limitations. As mentioned in my introduction, my findings are constrained somewhat by the fact that not all of the Salafis in Britain involved in print-*da'wah* agreed to participate in my study. I tried my best to counter this by analysing publications published by the same actors in order to ensure that my overall analysis accounted for projects by non-participants. Another limitation mentioned in my introduction is my lack of research surrounding the participation of Salafi women in Britain in both publishing and reading Anglo-Islamic texts. I have tried my best to include analysis based on interviews with the Salafi women who did agree to participate in my research, and I further mentioned related activities by Salafi women wherever possible. Anglo-Salafi print culture nevertheless is male-dominated and it is unlikely that including more women participants would have changed my overall conclusions. The overarching aim behind this research has primarily focused on Anglo-Salafi print culture and its agencies. This thesis thereby does little to uncover emerging Salafi communities (Somali, North African, Sri Lankan, Libyan, etc) which are not tied to the Ahl-e-Hadith or Salafi cooperatives. The latter, in my estimation, continues to dominate the Salafi information sphere in both print and web spaces but this could well change in future years. Similarly, my thesis does not explore Salafi Anglo-Salafi digital culture at great length despite its obvious impact in recent years. It is hoped that future studies about this fascinating aspect which falls outside the scope of my thesis will expand on how Salafism continues to evolve in the English language.

These limitations are by no means indicative of a shortage of leads which would provide future researchers new threads of enquiry. My background chapter on the rise of Anglo-Islamic literature is also relatively novel and requires further unpacking if we are to understand how Muslims adopted English as another medium for communicating Islam and why. Similarly, my thesis has focused almost exclusively on the involvement of Salafis in Britain in constructing a marketplace for Anglo-Salafi literature. If English is indeed the “new Persian” and we are undergoing a ‘seismic shift’⁹⁹¹, future researchers might just as easily focus their aims on Anglo-Salafi print culture in North America or elsewhere in the Anglosphere, or extend it onto other Islamic trends and produce, for example, new and innovative studies surrounding Anglo-Shiite, Sufi, Deobandi and Barelwi print cultures. The same could be said about what significance translated Islamic texts in English have in correlation to their

⁹⁹¹ Ahmed, ‘Anglophone Islam’: 15.

original sources, both in terms of language and locality. My thesis has demonstrated, for example, some of the religious debates emanating from rivalries in Arab countries transposed themselves into Britain by way of translation. I did not however scrutinise what impact certain translated words or excerpts may have had in contributing to different outcomes outside of their original language or locality. This further opens up a number of other questions and problems which could potentially encourage research combining fields of knowledge including sociology, psychology and linguistics.

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Appendix A

A Sample of Interview Questions

The following questions were directed to all participants during interviews:

- Do you self-identify as a Salafi?
- Can you tell me more about your affiliation (to any particular mosque or organisation) if you have any?
- Do you think publishing Islamic books in English has any impact and if so, in what ways?
- Over the past decade, several Salafi books have been identified as containing values contrary to British values; what is your opinion on this?
- Salafism has been linked to extremism by different entities including media outlets and some think-tanks; what is your opinion on this?

The following questions are examples of questions directed to all participants during interviews who are involved in publishing Anglo-Salafi books:

- I understand that you have participated in book publishing, how would you describe your role?
- Can you tell me about your experience in publishing? (When did you start, how many books you have published)
- What made you want to publish/translate Islamic books?
- Can you describe to me your process in publish/translating?
- How do you fund your publications?
- How do you distribute your publications?
- Other than collecting payments from the books you sell, do you engage with your readers in any way?
- Are your works original or translations or a mixture?
- Do you obtain permission when translating books from other non-English publishers?

- How do you engage in your literature with other Muslims in the UK when considering that some of their beliefs run contrary to yours?
- What is the future for publishing Islamic literature? Are you diversifying in any way?