The London School of Economics and Political Science

Reworking the Common Sense of British Muslims: Salafism, Culture, and Politics within London's Muslim Community

Iman Dawood

A thesis submitted to the Department of Government of the London School of Economics and Political Science for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, London, July 2021

Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. Quotation from it is permitted, provided that full acknowledgement is made. This thesis may not be reproduced without my prior written consent.

I warrant that this authorisation does not, to the best of my belief, infringe the rights of any third party.

I declare that my thesis consists of 98, 975 words.

Abstract

The rise of Salafism in various localities around the world has captured the attention of many researchers. Existing approaches to Salafism do not, however, give enough attention to the cultural dimensions of the movement. This thesis thus proposes the adoption of a Gramscian lens in the study of contemporary Salafism—one that takes seriously power and politics as well as culture and religion. Taking London's Muslim community as a case study, it examines the attempts of Saudi Arabia (and other members of the transnational Salafi historical bloc) to introduce Salafism as an alternative hegemonic conception within London's Muslim community. It explores the Salafi movement through all its "molecular phases" between 1980-2020, focusing on how the movement has impacted the common sense (or taken for granted heterogenous ideas) of British Muslims through the years. Based on more than 150 interviews and 20 months of participant observation in Salafi and non-Salafi spaces in London, it argues that Salafism is no longer confined to Salafi shaykhs (scholars), leaders, or members of the movement, but that elements of it have become ingrained in the common sense of a much wider segment of London's Muslim community. At the same time, however, it finds that this has been a far from straightforward, complete, or irreversible process. In fact, it finds that even British Muslims who adopted Salafism during the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, have experienced several contradictions as they attempted to live their lives according to a Salafi conception of the world, and many have gone on to rethink Salafism. This thesis also pays particular attention to the lives of Salafi women, challenging accounts that present them as fully compliant with Salafism, and shedding light on their conscious and unconscious departures from Salafi gender norms.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Note on Transliteration, Translations, and Referencing

For this thesis, I have relied on the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES) transliteration system when rendering Arabic words in the Latin alphabet. I have not italicized commonly used words, such as hijab. For participant and group names, I have followed the spelling adopted by my participants/groups themselves. I have also chosen to keep the original spelling of quotations from textual sources, so there may be slight inconsistencies in the spelling of words and names within quotations. I have translated words once in each chapter, and included translations of frequently used words in the glossary.

As for referencing, where information is obtained from interviews, I have clearly indicated this either by referencing the interview in a footnote, or referring to the name and/or pseudonym of my interviewee within the text. I have also included a list of interviewees at the end of this thesis. I also cite my field notes within the footnotes.

Glossary

ʿAbāya	A full-length over-garment typically worn by some women in Saudi Arabia
Amīr	Leader
ʿAqīda	Creed
Al-ḥamdu li-llah	Thank God
Al-Salaf al-ṣāleḥ	The Pious Ancestors
Al-wala' wa-l-bara'	Loyalty and disavowal, or loving and hating for the sake of Allah
Bidaʿh (singular), bidaʿ (plural)	Reprehensible innovation(s)
Daʿwa	Religious mission, preaching Islam to others
Dhikr	Remembrance of God
Dīn	Religion
Duʿāt	Missionaries
Fatwa (singular) fatāwa (plural)	Religious ruling(s)
Fiqh	Islamic jurisprudence
Hadith (singular), *aḥādith* (plural)	Report of the words and deeds of Prophet Muhammad
Ḥajj	Religious pilgrimage
halal	Permissible
Ḥarām	Impermissible
Hijra	Religious migration
Ḥizbīyya	Partisanship
Imam	Islamic leader, leader of the mosque and/or the prayer
Jilbāb	A loose outer-garment that conceals everything but the hands and face
Khuṭab	Sermons
Madhhab (singular), *madhāhib* (plural)	School(s) of Islamic jurisprudence
Manhaj	Methodology or practical implications of creed
Masjid	Mosque
Mawlid, milad	The Prophet's birthday
Niqab	Full face veil
Pirs	Sufi teachers believed to have saintly and supernatural spiritual qualities
Ṣaḥābah	Prophet's Companions
Ṣalah	Prayer
Shaykh (singular), *shyūkh* (plural)	Scholar(s)
Shirk	Polytheism, associating partners with God
Sunna	Traditions and practices of the Prophet
Tawḥīd	Oneness of God
Umma	Larger community of Muslims

List of Abbreviations

FPM	Finsbury Park Mosque
HCM	Harrow Central Mosque
HISAM	Harakat Islah al-Shabab al-Muslimin
HT	Hizb ut-Tahrir
iERA	Islamic Education & Research Academy
ISOC	Islamic Society
IUM	Islamic University of Medina
JIMAS	Jamiat Ihyaa Minhaaj al-Sunnah
LeT	Lashkar-e-Taiba
MAB	Muslim Association of Britain
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
MBS	Mohammed Bin Salman
MRDF	Muslim Research and Development Forum
MWL	Muslim World League
OASIS	Organization of Associated Salafi Islamic Societies
RIHS	Revival of Islamic Heritage Society
SMT	Social Movement Theory
SP	Salafi Publications
TI	Traditional Islam
TJ	Tablighi Jama'at
UKACIA	UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs
UKIM	UK Islamic Mission
WAMY	World Association for Muslim Youth
WCM	Wembley Central Mosque
YM	Young Muslims

Table of Figures

Introduction

> **Me**: Do you follow a particular *madhhab* [school of Islamic jurisprudence]?
> **Hani**: No, I don't. I only follow the Qur'an and Sunna [traditions and practices of the Prophet].
> […]
> **Me**: What do you think about Salafism?
> **Hani**: I don't think about them [the Salafis], I might fault them if I do. I don't want to be judgmental. […] I don't want to be in a situation where this is *bida'h* [a reprehensible innovation], this is *bida'h,* this is *bida'h*.
> **Me**: How do you feel about celebrating the *mawlid* [Prophet's birthday]?
> **Hani**: For me it's a *bida'h*. We should only do whatever the Prophet did. The *Ṣaḥābis* [*Ṣaḥābah*, Prophet's companions] didn't celebrate it and they had more knowledge than us.
> - Excerpt from my interview with Hani, 18 years, from a Somali background

Salafism is frequently referred to as the fastest growing Islamic movement in Europe (Bowen, 2014; Burack, 2019; Inge, 2016; "Salafist places", 2018). Researchers, policymakers, intelligence agencies, the media, and even Salafis themselves allude to the increasing number of Salafis and Salafi mosques as evidence of the movement's success. Within the UK, some researchers have noted, for example, that the number of Salafi-controlled mosques increased by 50% between 2009-2013—taking this as an indication that half of UK mosques could be Salafi-controlled within a generation (Bowen, 2014). Thus, when I first began my fieldwork for this thesis in London—one of the oldest, and most prominent hubs of Salafism in the UK and Europe at large, I too set off to understand why and how such a large number of British Muslims and British Mosques were "becoming" Salafi. Yet, after a few months of fieldwork, I began to realise that although the Salafi movement has certainly been an important player within London's Muslim community, accounts of the movement's unadulterated growth have been exaggerated and sensationalized. I also came to find that 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 reworking of British Muslim common sense.

By common sense here, I am not speaking about British Muslims' "ability to think about things in a practical way and make sensible decisions" (Oxford University Press, n.d.) as the term common sense typically denotes in the English language. I am referring instead to Gramscian common sense or *senso comune*, a term which Gramsci used to refer to "the generic form of thought common to a particular period and a particular popular environment" (1971, p. 330). As Green and Ives explain "Gramsci describes common sense as a 'fragmentary collection of ideas and opinions' drawn from differing

philosophies, ideologies, religion, folklore, experience, superstition, and from 'scientific notions and philosophical opinions which have entered into common usage'" (2009, p. 12). Common sense is thus "not critical and coherent but disjointed and episodic", it is fragmented, and "strangely composite" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 324)—containing various beliefs and opinions affiliated with different phases of history.

It is important to note, however, that although common sense contains ideas from several sources, these sources are not immediately apparent. The contents of common sense tend to be taken for granted as simply "the way things are". As Hall and O'Shea argue, speaking about common sense, "[i]ts virtue is that it is obvious. Its watchword is, 'Of course!'. It seems to be outside time. Indeed it may be persuasive precisely because we think of it as a product of Nature rather than of history" (2013, p. 9). Common sense is also consequential because it "holds together a specific social group, it influences moral conduct and the direction of will, with varying efficacy" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 333). It informs individuals' world views and helps them make sense of their world (Hall and O'Shea, 2013, p. 8). It is for these reasons, and others that will be discussed later in this chapter, that common sense is imperative for those seeking social transformation. Indeed, for these actors, common sense is worth fighting for.

These characteristics of common sense all help to explain why British Muslim common sense has been a crucial site of struggle for Saudi Arabia and other actors involved in the propagation of Salafism in the UK. Indeed since the 1980s, Saudi Arabia has, along with other state and non-state actors, played a key role in the diffusion of Salafism and the reworking of Muslim common sense in the UK and other localities around the world. This research thus departs from most studies of Salafism that tend to focus only on self-identifying members (and particularly male leaders) of the movement, and instead follows in the footsteps of the Salafi movement itself in giving attention to the common sense of British Muslims. The main question guiding this thesis, then, is how has the Salafi movement impacted the common sense of British Muslims?

Using a Gramscian lens, this thesis examines the Salafi movement through all its "molecular phases", investigating how the movement has impacted the common sense of British Muslims in London between 1980-2020. Based on more than 150 interviews and 20 months of participant observation in Salafi and non-Salafi spaces in London, this thesis argues that Salafism is no longer confined to Salafi shaykhs (scholars), leaders, or

members of the movement, but that elements of it have become ingrained in the common sense of some British Muslims—appearing "objectified, as unquestioned givens cut off from the socio-historical processes and interests through which they had evolved" (Giroux, 1983, p. 25). Indeed, during the early months of my fieldwork with British Muslims in London, I lost track of the number of times that I had come across British Muslims who either had no idea what Salafism was, and/or could not see the connection between their approach to Islam and Salafism—yet at the same time had been clearly influenced by Salafism in the way that they understood and practiced Islam. This was the case with one of my participants, Hani, an 18-year old young woman from a Somali background, who as can be seen in the excerpt of my interview with her in the beginning of this chapter, spoke to me at length about the need to only follow "Qur'an and Sunna" and rely on the Ṣaḥābah's understanding of Islam, while speaking about Salafism as a completely foreign approach to Islam.

At the same time, however, this thesis stresses that this has been a far from straightforward, complete, or irreversible process. In fact, even in the case of British Muslims, who have "adopted" Salafism during the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, the re-working of common sense has been a complex process, ridden with contradictions. This thesis therefore gives particular attention to the contradictions that British Muslims have faced as they attempted to live their lives according to a Salafi conception of the world, as well as to the other challenges that the Salafi movement has faced during the past four decades. This thesis also explores the movement's attempts to defend, and renew itself in the face of these challenges, shedding light on Salafism's continued relevance in London—as well as the movement's processes of becoming through the years.

In the next section of this chapter, I provide a brief discussion on the origins of contemporary Salafism as well as the role that Saudi Arabia has played in its propagation. Next, I critically engage with literature that has sought to explain the rise and impact of the Salafi movement in the UK and globally, before setting out in more depth the conceptual approach of this study. I subsequently outline my research design and introduce my methodology. Finally, I conclude the chapter by providing an outline of the remaining chapters of this thesis.

Salafism – A Brief History

Salafism is an Islamic movement in which adherents, referred to as "Salafis", claim to be emulating the beliefs and practices of *Al-Salaf al-ṣāleḥ*[1] (the pious ancestors, usually understood to be the first three generations of Muslims i.e. from the Qur'an's revelation till the death of the jurist Ahmad ibn Hanbal in 855[2]) as carefully as possible. Salafis tend to justify this approach by quoting several hadiths (reports of the words and deeds of Prophet Muhammad)—arguing that the Prophet Muhammad said, for example, that "the best of my community" (*khayr ummatī*) or "the best people" (*khayr al-nās*) are "my generation [*qarnī*] and then the ones who follow them [*thumma lladhīna yalūnahum*] and then the ones who follow them [*thumma lladhīna yalūnahum*]"[3] (Sahih Bukhari, Book 62, Hadith Numbers 2-3; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Book 44, Hadith Numbers 2533–2536 as cited in Wagemakers, 2016a). It is important to note that Salafism is not a movement with a formal hierarchical or organizational structure, and does not operate under the leadership of one figure or authority. Due to the continued growth and diversification of the movement, and the fact that the movement's adherents themselves do not agree on a universally accepted definition of Salafism, what exactly constitutes "Salafism", and where Salafism begins and ends, is difficult to pin down.

There are certain theological elements of the movement, however, that tie it together and allow us to speak of it as a unity. Haykel, for example, has identified several theological features of the Salafi tradition. He argues, as mentioned above, that Salafism tends to emphasize the beliefs and practices of *Al-Salaf al-ṣāleḥ*. Salafis also tend to have a particular approach to *tawḥīd*—emphasizing the importance of worshipping God alone and considering many traditional Islamic practices to be *shirk* (associating partners with God). Salafis usually speak of three categories of belief and action: the Oneness of Lordship (*tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya*), the Oneness of Godship (*tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya),* and the Oneness of the Names and Attributes (*tawḥīd al-asmāʾ wa-l-ṣifāt*), though as we will see later in this thesis, even this is contested. This focus on *tawḥīd* often translates into a focus on combatting any ideas or practices that Salafis have deemed to constitute *shirk*. In terms

---

[1] Meijer notes that the majority of the companions of the Prophet had died by 690 CE, most of the second generation died around 750 CE, and finally most of the third generation died around 810 CE (Meijer, 2009b).

[2] There is some debate about this, some include the scholar Ahmad ibn Hanbal, while others limit this period to the four rightly-guided Caliphs (632-661 CE).

[3] It is important to note, however, that Salafis are not alone in their desire to follow the *Salaf*, and that Muslims generally seek to also imitate the Prophet and the *Salaf*.

of religious authority, Salafis tend to insist on the Qur'an, Sunna, and the consensus of the Prophet's companions as the only valid sources of authority. Salafis are also concerned with purging Islam and Muslims of all reprehensible innovations (*bida'*) that they believe to have corrupted Islam since the time of *Al-Salaf al-ṣāleḥ*. Finally, Haykel argues that Salafis insist that Qur'an and Sunna are "sufficient to guide Muslims for all time and through all contingencies" (2009, p. 40) and that "the proof-texts of revelation are obvious to find and easy to understand" (2009, p. 57).

Contemporary Salafi movements belong to a much older Salafi tradition.[4] The origins of these contemporary movements can be traced back to the Ahl al-hadith movement in Baghdad which emerged in the ninth century. The Ahl al-hadith argued that hadith should be the basis of legal reasoning as opposed to informed opinions or *ra'y* (Coulson, 1999 as cited in Wagemakers, 2016b). Prior to the emergence of the Ahl al-hadith movement, Muslims mostly depended on several sources for religious authority. In addition to the Qur'an, the Sunnan of early believers, Muslims would also rely on *ra'y* and scholarly consensus. Yet, members of the Ahl al-hadith movement like Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (d. 855), who later founded the Hanbali school of jurisprudence, contested this approach. The approach of the Ahl al-hadith was also revived hundreds of years later, in the fourteenth century, by Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyyah (d.1328) and his student Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d.1351), who were scholars within the Hanbali school of law (Meijer, 2009b, p. 4).

In the eighteenth century, Shah Wali Allah (1703-1762), based in India, also began to warn against excessive reliance on the *madhāhib* (Metcalf, 2016). Shah Wali Allah was to go on to be a major source of inspiration for the Ahl-e-Hadith movement which arose in the 19th century in the Indian subcontinent. Also in the 18th century, Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab (1703-1792), from Najd (in central Arabia, present-day Saudi Arabia), similarly began to speak of cleansing Islam from all innovations and popular religious rituals and customs that had been "added" to Islam over time. He was particularly concerned with traditions he saw around him like shrine cults, saint worship, as well as requests for intercession from anyone other than God (Commins, 2005). Having been influenced by Ibn Taymiyyah, and a follower of the Hanbali school of law, he also spoke

---

[4] This is a point that Salafis like to stress. Indeed, during my interviews with Salafi leaders in the UK, some even pointed me to Henri Lauzière's *The Making of Salafism: Islamic reform in the Twentieth Century*.

of reverting directly to the Qur'an and Sunna. Ibn Abdul Wahhab's movement gained momentum following his alliance with Muhammad Ibn Saud, a local leader. As Dallal recounts: "together they gradually spread their control over different parts of Arabia" (1993, p. 349)—eventually leading to the formation of the Saudi state in 1744. Also, around the same time in the Arabian Peninsula (this time in Yemen), Muhammad Al-Shawkani (d. 1834) spoke of the importance of the original texts of Islam and of the problems of *taqlīd* (following a *madhhab* exclusively and uncritically) (Haykel, 2003). Al-Shawkani was also to go on and influence the 19th century Ahl-e-Hadith movement mentioned above.

Though these different movements have many similarities, it is important not to blur the differences between them, or to see contemporary Salafi movements as exact replicas of previous movements. For example, it is important to make a distinction between Wahhabism and Salafism. While Salafism refers to the broader Salafi tradition outlined above, which includes Wahhabism, Wahhabism is a local movement with substantial differences. Wahhabism is associated with the Hanbali *madhhab*, and is seen in some cases as being less tolerant than the larger Salafi tradition. For example, while Wahhabis demolished tombs and shrines in the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina (Stephens, 2013), Shah Wali Allah was much more concerned with maintaining "social, intellectual and political order in a beleaguered *umma* [larger community of Muslims]" (Brown, 2007, p. 321). Similarly, the 19th century Ahl-e-Hadith, while shared many similarities with the Wahhabis, leading them to be referred to as the "Indian Wahhabis", differed in their refusal of the *madhāhib* and connection to Sufi practices (Stephens, 2013, p. 25). It is also important to distinguish the Salafi movement that is the subject of this research from the modernist Salafism of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani or Muhammad ʿAbduh whose theological approaches differ from the Salafi tradition discussed here (Haykel, 2009, p.45–47). Other Islamic scholars during this period, like the west African Uthman Ibn Fudi (1754-1817), and the north African Muhammad Ali al-Sanūsi (1787- 1859), and their respective movements, have at times been considered to be part of this tradition as well.[5] Yet, as Dallal argues, "[n]o unifying themes can be identified that warrant grouping these

---

[5] Because of themes as "the need to abide by the Qur'an and the Sunna, return to origins, revival of ijtihad and hadith studies, rejection of innovation and imitation (taqlid) in matters of law, and rejection of the excesses of sufism" (Dallal, 1993, p. 341).

ideologies, and by extension the movements they initiated, under one rubric" (1993, p. 358-9).

In terms of contemporary Salafi movements, particularly those that took off in the 1980s, like the British Salafi movement, there is no doubt that Saudi Arabia, as briefly mentioned earlier, has played an important role in spreading Salafism—influencing the way Islam is understood and practiced in different localities around the world. Al-Rasheed has spoken, for example, about Saudi Arabia's "expansionist religious policy, the main purpose of which was to protect the Saudi realm and promote its interests, in both adjacent and far-flung territories" (2008, p. 2). Farquhar (2017) has likewise explored the Saudi-backed expansion of Salafism—focusing on the Islamic University of Medina (IUM). Saudi Arabia's relationship to, and role in, disseminating Salafism will be explored in more detail later in this chapter, but also throughout this thesis.

This section demonstrates the importance of historicizing when speaking of contemporary movements like the Salafi movement. Gramsci's "historicist approach to philosophical activity" is useful here because it "acknowledge[s] the role played by both past forms of thought and previous historical conditions in shaping subsequent ideas and existing social relations" (Morton, 2007, p. 30). Understanding history, in this way, keeps us alert to the possibility that "old and new forms of thought combine within the social relations of a particular epoch so that within every historical period there could be a recurrence of previous questions alongside the need to consider new issues" (Morton, 2007, p. 30). This has certainly been the case, as we have seen in this section, with certain ideas like "the return to Qur'an and Sunna" and "rejection of Sufism" that have re-emerged at different points and within different contexts, merging with new ideas and issues, through the years.

Classifying Salafism

In this thesis, I employ the terms quietist, activist, and jihadi to help make sense of the different Salafi streams and networks present in the UK. These terms are a slight amendment to Wiktorowicz's original typology (2006) of purists, politicos, and jihadis, and are also quite similar to the terms that Wagemakers has proposed (2017). I use the term quietist, as Wagemakers has, to refer to those who tend to focus on propagation, purification, and education, view politics as leading to deviancy, and are not very

interested in political debate and activism in society. I use the term activist to refer to those who are more comfortable with political participation and elections, tend to have more interest in domestic and international issues, and have been somewhat influenced by political groups like the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). Though this research mainly deals with quietists and activists, I do likewise use the term jihadi to refer to those who view revolutionary, and in some cases global, jihad as necessary. I use these terms not as reified categories but think of them, and the actors and movements they encompass, as "lived" and "developing forms" (Williams, 1977, p. 130). Used in this way, these terms are able to "capture the ambiguity, flexibility, and even contradictory nature of Salafism" (Meijer, 2010, p. 40). In the next section, I briefly review existing empirical works on Salafism in the UK, setting out the empirical gaps in the literature and clarifying how my study fills those gaps.

Empirical Work on British Salafism

Although, as we will see in Chapter 2, Salafism took off in the 1980s in the UK, it wasn't until the 2000s that academics began to pay attention to Salafism. Birt and Al-Rasheed were the first to examine Salafism in the UK in the 2000s as part of research on transnational cultural flows and networks linked to the Arabian Gulf. The first works on Salafism in the UK thus paid particular attention to Saudi Arabia and its role in the diffusion of Salafism. Al-Rasheed's chapter, for example, focused on Saudi Arabia's attempts to influence and/or control important religious institutions in London, like Regent's Park Mosque.

As the Salafi movement became a more established player within the UK Islamic scene, it also became the subject of a number of short chapters in various works like Meijer's seminal edited volume *Global Salafism* (2009a), Giliat-Ray's book *Muslims in Britain* (2010), and Bowen's *Medina in Birmingham, Najaf in Brent: Inside British Islam* (2014). These chapters alluded to the growth of the movement, with Bowen deeming it the "fast[est] growing of the UK's major Islamic trends" (2014, p. 80) for example. These works also provided a brief historical overview of the movement, highlighted its diverse nature, and alluded to reasons for the movement's appeal amongst British Muslims.

The Salafi movement has also featured as part of comparative works on Islamic movements in the UK. Hamid (2016) has examined Salafi activism as part of his book on

Islamic activism—situating Salafis amongst other groups like Young Muslims (YM), Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), and the Traditional Islam (TI) movement. Hamid's work carefully differentiates between these different forms of Islamic activism and traces their evolution. Amin's thesis on Salafism and Islamism in the UK (2017) has also examined the history of the Salafi movement with a particular focus on the South Asian Ahl-e-Hadith. She demonstrates how the Ahl-e-Hadith had connections with Middle Eastern scholars, though it also sought to "localise" Islam and fashion a "Western Muslim Consciousness" within the UK. Hamid and Amin's works offer insight into how, and why, the Salafi movement in the UK was able to make inroads within the British Muslim community. Hamid, for example, highlights the "frames"[6] that Salafis (and other organizations) have used to mobilize British Muslims and Amin uses "brand" theory and the concept of "cool" to demonstrate how the Salafis (and the Jamaat-e-Islami) fashioned their own "brand" of Islam. I critically engage with these works, and their conceptual approaches, in the next section of this chapter.

Other works have examined the theological basis of the Salafi movement, as well as the narratives that certain segments of the movement have used for *da'wa* [preaching Islam to others]. Baz's PhD thesis (2017), for example, has explored the *da'wa* narratives of Islamic Education & Research Academy (iERA) (a UK-based *da'wa* organization founded by historical leaders of the Salafi movement in the UK which I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 7). Nahouza's book (2018) has drawn on some brief case studies of Salafi actors in the UK to explore theological debates around the attributes of God.[7]

As with the majority of works on contemporary Salafism, the works explored above have been overwhelmingly (if not exclusively) focused on male Salafis, and particularly male leaders of the movement. A notable exception to this, however, is Inge's work (2016) *The Making of a Salafi Woman*. Inge's work is the first to have adopted an ethnographic approach to Salafism in the UK, and has thus provided unprecedented insight into the lives of Salafi women in quietist Salafi circles. Drawing on literature on conversion and new religious movements, Inge's research sheds light on why, and how, women are drawn to Salafism—"the fastest-growing Muslim faction in Britain" (2016, p. 2). This thesis

---

[6] These frames are: To be a Good Muslim, Islam is the Solution, We are one Ummah, Struggle between Islam and the Rest, and The Search for a British Islam (2016, pp. 92—105).

[7] This book's polemical nature needs to be considered, however, as Haykel (2020) has argued in a review of Nahouza's book.

will critically engage with Inge's work at various points, but especially in Chapters 5 and 6.

Together these works provide many insights into the history, appeal, theology, and gender dynamics of the Salafi movement in the UK. Nonetheless, despite the fact that the UK (and London in particular) has remained an important hub for the Salafi movement in Europe, there remains to be an in-depth work, based on ethnographic fieldwork, that focuses exclusively on the movement (as a whole) and its interactions with, and impact on, British Muslims. The approach adopted in this thesis, and its concern with the common sense of British Muslims, allows for a more nuanced examination and understanding of Salafism's impact within and beyond Salafi-circles. This thesis also moves beyond accounts of Salafism in the UK that focus on why, and, how the movement has been successful, to a more critical analysis of how Salafism has fared through the years—shining light on the challenges that the movement has faced and the implications of these challenges. This thesis also undoubtedly fills a gap on Salafism in the UK by offering a more up-to-date account of the movement, its lived realities, and relationship with and to other actors. For example, this thesis charts the emergence of a new generation of Salafi actors that have yet to be explored in other academic works. It also traces the more recent transformations and trajectories of leaders and members of the movement that have not featured in works on Salafism in the UK—shedding light on the emergence of a "Post-Salafi" trend for example.

Literature on Global Salafism

Because of the global nature of contemporary Salafism, in this section, I discuss works on Salafism more broadly—paying particular attention to, and critically assessing, the different approaches that scholars have employed to explain the success of the movement and its impact within different contexts. As with the literature on British Salafism discussed above, most works on global Salafism tend to discuss the "rise of Salafism", focusing on the number of Salafis and Salafi mosques, as opposed to the much broader processes of religious and cultural change ongoing within Muslim communities. Only a few works, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 8, seem to be concerned with the movement's impact beyond Salafi circles. These works, as we will see, have rarely been based on empirical evidence and tend to speak of some straight-forward and often sensationalized "Salafization" process.

As with works on British Salafism, most works on Salafism have also been based exclusively on male members of the movement. Women's participation in Salafi movements has been rarely addressed within larger works on Salafism.[8] This seems to stem from the fact that the overwhelming majority of research on Salafism has been carried out by male researchers who face difficulty gaining access to female members of the movement (e.g. Wagemakers, 2016b, p.22). This also seems to be a consequence of researchers' tendency to focus on leaders of the movement as opposed to grassroots members.[9] In addition to Inge's work mentioned above, a limited number of standalone works on Salafi women do exist, however, and give us some insight into the lives of Salafi women (De Koning, 2009; Mahmood, 2005; Nisa, 2012; Parvez, 2016). I critically engage with these works in Chapter 6.

This review of literature also finds that many works on Salafism within a particular locality, don't adequately conceptualize the role that Saudi Arabia and other transnational actors have played within Salafi communities. This thesis argues that even discussions on local Salafi communities benefit from an IR perspective that takes into consideration the larger sociohistorical realities and power dynamics of the movement. The literature also tends not to give enough attention to the complexities that the propagation of Salafism has engendered in local communities, or to the experiences of Muslims with Salafism following their initial conversion. This has meant that, on the whole, the literature has not devoted enough attention to questions of power and resistance within the study of local Salafi movements. At the same time, many of the approaches taken to studying Salafism have granted actors only limited agency. This is the case with approaches to Salafism in which certain socio-economic conditions are seen as predisposing an individual to the adoption of Salafism, and also in studies that adopt Social Movement Theory (SMT) in which Salafis are generally seen as being at the receiving end of frames that simply resonate with them. This is also the case with works that see Salafism as the result of globalization and secularizaton (Roy, 2004).

As will also become apparent in this section, theoretical approaches to contemporary Salafi movements have also been quite limited. This has even been the case in more recent

---

[8] Gauvain's work on Salafism in Egypt (2013) and Özyürek's work on Salafism in Germany (2014) are notable exceptions to this.

[9] See for example Amin's work. Though Amin is a female researcher, her focus on leaders of the movement has meant that her work has a "gender imbalance" (Amin, 2017, p. 303).

works on Salafism like the edited volume *Salafism after the Arab Awakening*. Speaking about this volume, Farquhar has argued, for example, "[t]he primary contribution of most of the chapters is empirical and they should be valued first and foremost on those terms" (2019, p. 128). Many of the works exploring Salafism in both Muslim majority and minority countries have drawn, explicitly or implicitly, on SMT for example. I review some of these works below. I then discuss other approaches to explaining the rise of Salafism, before introducing my own framework.

Resource Mobilization, Frames, and Political Opportunity Structures

Prior to 9/11, the Salafi movement received little scholarly attention. Wiktorowicz seems to have been one of the first to study the Salafi movement prior to 9/11—arguing that Salafis in Jordan, like the MB, were worthy of study as they too were a form of Islamic activism. Wiktorowicz also argued that Salafis could be understood through SMT. Wiktorowicz's work established the importance of informal social networks and the role of friends and colleagues in "conversion" to Salafism. Wiktorowicz likewise shed light on the loose and informal hierarchy that exists within Salafi networks.

Since then, many scholars working on Salafism have utilized SMT to explore all three major Salafi streams. Meijer, for example, in his chapter on Al-Jama'a al Islamiya in Egypt argues that Al-Jama'a can also be considered a social movement because "[i]t was involved in all aspects of a contentious action: building an organisation, resource mobilisation, identity formation, framing, taking advantage of opportunity structures and choosing from a repertoire of contention" (2009c, p. 191). Meleagrou-Hitchens's work on Anwar al-Awlaki likewise uses SMT, and in particular frame analysis, to explore the ways that al-Awlaki has "align[ed] pre-existing frames developed by al-Qaeda's ideology and that of the larger Salafi-jihadi movement with the perspectives and experiences of a Western, English speaking audience" (2012, p. 16). Meleagrou-Hitchens also discusses how concepts like *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* (loyalty and disavowal, or loving and hating for the sake of Allah) were used by al-Awlaki to create and cultivate a collective identity (i.e. boundary activation). Amaechi's work on Nigeria's Boko Haram also adopts SMT— shining light on how violence is not the result of ideology, but instead the "outcome of a dynamic social process" (2017, p. 56).

Scholars working on activist Salafism have likewise drawn on SMT—especially in their quest to make sense of the seemingly sudden politicization of Salafis after the Arab Spring. Within the edited volume *Salafism after the Arab Awakening*, al-Anani, Masbah, Kuschintski and Pall all implicitly or explicitly draw on SMT arguing that shifting political opportunity structures help to explain why Salafis in Egypt, Yemen, Morocco and Kuwait took the paths they did. Al-Anani, for example, alludes to how the "opportunity" that Egyptian Salafis had to advance their political ambitions and advantages in the religious sphere, following the "downfall of the Muslim Brotherhood", shaped their decisions to back the military intervention against Morsi (2017, p. 41). Masbah likewise speaks of how "the Arab Spring opened an important political opportunity for Salafis to become more moderate" (2017, p. 98).

Scholars working on Salafism in the West, like Hamid, have also drawn on SMT. In his book mentioned earlier, Hamid justifies this approach, arguing "[p]ut simply, SMT focuses on the interaction between ideology, leaders and group members by analysing social movements through the way they frame issues, and is a useful way of looking at how Islamic activists rationalise their mission and mobilise their organisations" (2016, p. 89). Hamid thus suggests that the decisions that Salafis take, like those of other Islamic actors, are the results of a cost/benefit analysis and not just theology and piety. As briefly mentioned in the previous section, Hamid relates Salafi success to the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames that Salafis use.

Some scholars have also combined SMT with other conceptual approaches. In Pall's work on Salafism in Lebanon, for example, he uses Bourdieu to explore how Salafis operate on a Sunni religious field, and argues that social capital acquired within this field can translate into other forms of capital like economic capital which in turn can facilitate Salafis' ability to reach more followers. Pall also uses framing theory to explain how certain political discourses can "attract the masses" (2018, p. 27). Framing theory is thus a key feature of discussions on Salafism around the world and has been frequently used to explain Salafism's appeal in diverse settings.

The use of SMT in the study of Salafism has had numerous benefits. Conceptualizing Salafism as a social movement has meant that Salafi activity is no longer seen as "irrational outbursts of spontaneous opposition" (Wiktorowicz, 2000, p. 220). SMT has also allowed scholars to speak of Salafis within the context of other social movements.

Indeed, as Rizvi argues, Hamid's use of SMT "aptly challenges the relegation of the study of Western Muslims to the purview of Security Studies, and explores youth religiosity through a set of questions that does not pathologize Islamic practice" (2019, p. 84). Meijer also argues that SMT allows researchers to analyse "the movement as a dynamic movement without focusing on Islam as the determinant factor. It thus avoids the pitfalls of stereotyping and essentializing that so often mars research" (2005, p. 287).

Yet at the same time, the use of SMT to analyse Salafi movements has several limitations. As Farquhar has previously argued, for example, "this kind of social movement theory in particular all too often seems to be used primarily as a source of vocabulary to describe insights that could have been delivered without it, rather than offering real explanatory leverage" (2019, p. 128). SMT's limited explanatory power is especially apparent on discussions about Salafi politicization following the Arab Spring. We have seen above how "opportunity structures" have been used to simply describe the paths taken by Salafi actors in the MENA region. Approaches using SMT have also focused the attention of scholars on leaders of the Salafi movement. Critiquing this approach, De Koning argues that it is very "top down" taking "the official doctrines, methods and identities of spokespersons and religious authorities but ignor[ing] the perspectives, ideas and practices of participants in the movements" (2010). When participants of the movement are discussed, they are often granted little agency in these studies. SMT's approach to frames, for example, places participants on the receiving end of the framing process— lacking agency and simply "assimilating frames available within the wider culture" (Gillan, 2008, p.251).

Salafi actors are also depicted as rational actors who proceed in the manner that they do after assessing costs and benefits. Yet, this too has its drawbacks. Rizvi questions, for example, whether the:

> centring of "costs and risks" over "theology and piety" merely replace essentializing depictions of Muslims (as actors impervious to historical transformation) with the assumptions of bourgeois economics? In other words, does replacing the figure of the fanatic or terrorist with that of the "rational actor" actually provide us with greater analytical clarity? (2019, p. 84).

This rational approach has also been critiqued for treating religious ideas and culture as merely being instrumental. Euben argues, for example, that "rational actor theory explains the growth of fundamentalism by reference to its intrinsic appeal, but once again such appeal is understood not in terms of the moral power of fundamentalist worldviews" (1999, p. 31). Buechler similarly argues that the resource mobilization framework

"ignor[es] the cultural and symbolic lifeworld" (1993, p. 230). This critique is especially pertinent in the study of Salafism, because, as Adraoui has argued "[t]he main appeal of Salafism, however, does not lie so much in the rejection of politics but in the cultural field" (2009, p. 340) pointing to the importance of the cultural field for the study of Salafism. SMT's "weak conception of temporality" (Gillan, 2018, p. 516) likewise hinders our understanding of the continuity and change that has occurred within the Salafi movement since its emergence four decades ago.

Scholars employing SMT have also been quite focused on the repressive nature of states vis-à-vis Salafi actors when trying to identify, and explain, challenges that Salafi movements have faced (e.g. Wiktorowicz, 2000). Yet, as Meijer has argued when speaking about the failures of Islamist groups "[i]t is not just the repressive nature of the state, which in general is too schematically regarded as an monolithic opponent by the upholders of SMT, that is at fault" (2005, p. 290). In the case of the Salafi movement, this is quite apparent in Hasan's work on the "failure of the Wahhabi campaign", one of the few works to have examined the "failures" of the Salafi movement in a particular locality. Hasan demonstrates, for example, how the "exclusive style and old-fashioned structure" of Salafi madrasas in Indonesia has limited its appeal within Indonesian villages (2010, p. 691).

SMT also doesn't provide us with the tools we need to make sense of the socio-historical realities and underlying interests involved in the propagation of Salafism. Though most analyses of Salafism acknowledge the link between Saudi *da'wa* and oil wealth, they do not give enough attention to the power dynamics at play. We are therefore in need of a more holistic frame that takes seriously the political, economic, historical, cultural, and religious aspects of Salafi movements.

Salafism as a Saudi Project

Whereas SMT approaches tend not to give enough attention to Saudi Arabia, other scholars seeking to explain the emergence and popularity of the Salafi movement have paid quite a bit of attention to the role Saudi Arabia has played in the propagation of Salafism. The vast majority of these studies, however, have not dedicated much attention to conceptualizing this link. This is especially the case with early works on Salafism, like Birt's chapter on Salafism in the UK mentioned above, that spoke of the "export of

Wahhabism abroad" (2004, p. 168) by Saudi Arabia and "petrodollar Wahhabism" (2004, p. 174). Yet, this is not to say that these works have not been nuanced in their discussions even if they have lacked the necessary conceptual tools. Birt, for example, has alluded to complex processes at work in transnational Salafi flows. Similarly, Østebø (2012) though talks about the "export" of Salafism to Bale, Ethiopia, is careful to highlight processes of "localization", or the ways that global Salafi ideas have been shaped by the particularities of the local context in which they have been introduced.

Some works addressing Saudi Arabia's role in the "rise of Salafism" have drawn on international relations (IR) theories and concepts like hegemony and soft power. Kepel has argued, for example, that after the first oil boom, "Saudi Arabia obtained unlimited means to realise its ancient ambition of hegemony over the meaning of Islam at the level of the *umma*" (2003, p. 118). The propagation of Salafism by Saudi Arabia has also been frequently considered an important form of soft power. As we saw earlier in this chapter, Al-Rasheed (2008) has spoken of Saudi Arabia's expansionist religious policy and its role in protecting the Saudi realm and promoting Saudi interests. Mandaville has likewise discussed how Saudi Arabia sought to "assert itself as a leader of the Muslim world" (2016, p. 182). This has also been the case with works on Salafism in particular localities, like in the case of Adraoui's work on Salafism in France (2020), in which he speaks of geopolitics and Saudi foreign policy. These approaches, however, could benefit from further theoretical development to allow us a more nuanced understanding of the implications of these dynamics within local communities.

Some scholars have also examined how transnational networks are important to the success of the Salafi movement. Pall and De Koning (2017), for instance, argue that Salafism constitutes a "transnational social field" made up of Salafis and institutions (such as mosques, centres, charities, and educational institutions). They point to social capital as an important form of capital and demonstrate how it allows Salafis to acquire an influential position within this transnational field. Farquhar (2017) on the other hand, while also speaks of a transnational field, proposes a more comprehensive concept, that of "transnational religious economies" to denote the flows of material capital, spiritual capital, religious migrants and social technologies within and across borders. Farquhar focuses on Saudi educational projects, and specifically on the IUM—highlighting how material capital has facilitated the exercise of power and influence abroad within the religious sphere. Yet at the same time, Farquhar stresses that IUM graduates have not

acted "merely as vectors of religious doctrine but as creative agents with their own values, interests and ambitions" (2017, p. 5). Farquhar's approach is certainly commendable for its highly nuanced approach and for the attention it gives to the relations of power at the heart of Salafi da'wa. Though this thesis differs somewhat in its conceptual approach, it benefits from, and builds on, the insights in Farquhar's work—seeking, for example, to develop a framework that takes into account both the spiritual and the material.

Globalization and the Rise of Salafism

The popularity of Salafism has likewise been linked to processes of globalization. Roy's work, for example, considers Salafism as a form of neofundamentalism that has become a main feature of post-Islamist societies, or societies where "the overpoliticization of religion by Islamism" has resulted in new forms of Islamic activism that target the society more than the state (2004, p. 3). Roy also sees neo-fundamentalism as at least partially the result of the deterritorialization of Islam. For Roy, then, Salafism is related less to Saudi Arabia and its propagation of Salafism, and more to globalization and Westernization. He argues: "[t]he success of all forms of neo-fundamentalism can be explained by the fact that, paradoxically, it vindicates the loss of cultural identity and allows a "pure" religion to be conceptualized independently of all its cultural variations and influences" (Roy, 2007, p. 131).

While there is little doubt that the rise of Salafism is related to globalization, and that certain characteristics of Salafism pass it off more easily as "pure" religion, Roy's work ignores other important realities for Muslims in Europe. Özyürek has suggested, for example that, "[t]he increased racialization and marginalization of Muslims is at least an equally, if not more important dynamic" (2014, p. 18). She argues that European Muslims try to break the association between their ethnic backgrounds and being Muslim because of the Islamophobia they increasingly face in Europe.

Roy's approach also implies that the adoption of Salafism is some sort of automatic, or mechanical process that is bound to happen due to these global developments. Özyürek speaking about Roy's approach, argues "his model attributes no agency to converts and converters" (2014, p. 18). This approach also doesn't help to explain the complexities that are involved in the adoption of Salafism, the very real challenges Salafis face when attempting to live out their lives according to Salafism, or potential departures from

Salafism following its initial adoption. I engage more with Roy's work throughout the thesis.

Salafism as "Socialization"

Although most literature on Salafism involves some form of sociological analysis, there are some works on Salafism that conceptualize Salafism as a form of "socialization." Adraoui, for example, has drawn on constructivist sociology and a Durkheimian approach to try and identify the factors behind an increased Salafi presence in France. He conceptualizes Salafism as "a religious socialisation related to the problems of the *banlieus* and the crisis of the French concepts of *laïcité* and the nation" (2009, p.369). In later work, Adraoui further develops this approach coming to understand Salafism as a process of six forms of socialization: genealogical, pyramidical, immunological, filtered, imaginary, and postmodern. "Socialization" here is a straight-forward almost mechanical process during which actors "[b]linded by their search for a true transnational Islam" adopt Salafism as a result of "a naive conception of reality" (Adraoui, 2009, p. 370). This approach thus implies that Salafism is some sort of "false consciousness" and that actors lack any agency or critical thought processes. This approach also supposes that Salafism, as Adraoui argues, is "an exclusive frame for thought and action" (2020, p. 3) again leaving little room for the contradictions that Muslims encounter as they attempt to adopt Salafism.

Amongst the issues most concerning to Adraoui is whether certain profiles are more inclined than others to embrace Salafism. To this end, Adraoui suggests four Salafi profiles: the "Re-directed Upward" Salafis (mainly the post-tablighis), the emancipated Neotraditionalist Salafis, the Post-Christian Salafis, and the Postmilitant Salafis. Amghar (2011) has likewise been concerned with the sociology of Salafi actors and sought to identify "who" the Salafis are in his book *Le Salafisme D'aujourd'hui* [*Salafism Today*]. These analyses typically point to the disadvantaged, disempowered, and disgruntled nature of Salafis. These approaches may shine some light on Salafism's social base, as well as on the potential for Salafism to act as an empowering ideology. However, the findings of these studies are of limited use in other contexts such as the UK where Salafism's social base has varied through the years, and as we will see, not been limited to those from a marginalized background.

Some scholars working on jihadi Salafis have similarly sought to uncover the socioeconomic conditions of people who join extremist groups (e.g. Gambetta and Hertog, 2016; Kinnunen, 2020; Süß and Aakhunzzada, 2019). This approach does not reign uncontested in works on radicalization, however. Roy, for example, has pointed to the limitations of such an approach and instead argued that:

> There is no clear-cut sociological profile of the radicals or anything that could link them to a given socio-economic situation. More precisely, the reasons that may push them towards violence are not specific enough, but are shared by a larger population that deals with such a situation in a very different way (2007, p. 55).

Indeed, even Gambetta and Hertog find that relative deprivation is not "an exhaustive explanation of engineers' overrepresentation" in their book *Engineers of Jihad* (2016, p. 160).

Conceptual Framework: Salafism & the Re-Working of Common Sense

As can be seen above, the literature on Salafism is characterized by a number of key shortcomings as well as by limited theoretical approaches.[10] This thesis thus proposes the adoption of a Gramscian lens in the study of contemporary Salafism—one that takes into account the role of Saudi Arabia and other transnational actors in the diffusion of Salafism, adopting and adapting Gramscian concepts to make sense of how this has all played out within local contexts. In this section, I will introduce Gramsci's concept of hegemony as well as the other Gramscian concepts that I draw on throughout this thesis. I then engage with two Gramscian bodies of literature, that are relevant to my own work, in greater detail. The first is Gramscian research within the IR discipline, and the second is Gramscian works on Islamic movements. I position my own approach vis à vis these two bodies of literature—clearly delineating how my own approach contributes to, and advances, these bodies of literature.

Hegemony, Common Sense, & Religion

Gramsci's concept of hegemony is the "unifying thread of Gramsci's prison notes" (Bates, 1975, p. 351). The basic premise of this concept is that the rule of one class or

---

[10] Farquhar has made a similar argument: "[i]t is to be hoped that, as the literature on modern Salafism continues to grow and evolve, scholars will continue to cast the net more widely for analytical tools to help them think in new ways about this complex phenomenon" (2019, p. 128).

group over the rest of society, does not depend on force alone or on material power, but that ideas also matter. Indeed, Gramsci says "[t]he supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as 'domination' [dominio] and as 'moral and intellectual leadership' [direzione]" (1971, pp. 57–58). Hence, the dominant class or group must also establish its own "moral, political, and cultural values as conventional norms of political behaviour" (Femia, 1981, p.3). This is not to say that ruling groups can simply justify their rule through "the creation and perpetuation of legitimating symbols", but that they must also try to "win the consent of subordinate groups to the existing social order" (Lears, 1985, p. 569).

This is a process that takes place within civil society. As Worth has argued "it is in the open and complex terrain of civil and social society which institutions, structures, cultures and ideologies are formed and consolidated. It is also within this sphere that identity is formed and hegemony is constructed and consented" (2011, p. 385). Hegemony, or "moral and intellectual leadership", for Gramsci is thus "objectified in, and mainly exercised, through civil society" (Femia, 1981, p. 24). Civil society is also important for groups seeking to gain power because it is the site of the war of position, a slow cultural struggle aimed at the "penetration and subversion of the complex and multiple mechanisms of ideological diffusion" such as schools, universities, publishing houses, mass media, and trade unions (Femia, 1981, p. 52). Civil society for Gramsci, is thus of great importance, as it is "dialectically where the existing hegemonic social order is maintained but also the realm of social creativity, where a new social order can emerge" (Katz, 2006, p. 335).

Gramsci has also paid a lot of attention to common sense, as discussed earlier in this chapter. These heterogenous, taken for granted beliefs do not compose a coherent system, but take "countless different forms" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 419). Indeed, as Gramsci notes "[i]ts most fundamental characteristic is that it is a conception which, even in the brain of one individual, is fragmentary, incoherent and [inconsistent], in conformity with the social and cultural position of those masses whose philosophy it is" (1971, p. 419).

Common sense, for Gramsci, is closely related to consent, and to the contradictions that come with it. As Femia argues,

> on a general and abstract plane, the "active-man-in-the-mass" expresses a great deal of agreement with, or at least passive acceptance of, the dominant conception of the world (if in a naïve, common-sensical form); but on the situational level, he

reveals not outright dissensus but nevertheless a reduced level of commitment to the "bourgeois" ethos, because it is often inappropriate to the realities of his class position (1981, p. 45).

Common sense thus helps to explain contradictory consciousness, a condition where subalterns have two theoretical consciousnesses, one associated with the dominant conception of the world "inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed" and another which is "implicit in [their] activities" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 333). The fragmented, disjointed, and uncritical character of common sense can thus be an obstacle for those seeking to mobilize against existing power relations.

Despite the fact that common sense is fragmented, however, Gramsci still deems it a powerful force, arguing, for example, "what counts is not the opinion of Tom, Dick and Harry, but that ensemble of opinions which have become collective, a social element and a social force" (1971, p.440). As Chino argues "Gramsci continuously warned that common sense should not be jettisoned as a form of eccentricity; it is a prime source for knowing what kind of worldviews are "actually active in the intellectual and moral formation of young people (Gramsci, 1985, p. 191)" (Chino, 2020, p. 184). Indeed, although Gramsci's "negative judgements on common sense" are more prevalent within his writings (Liguori, 2015, p. 91), common sense has not been depicted in wholly negative terms within Gramsci's work. Gramsci sees common sense, for example, as the "starting point" for social transformation. He argues: "A philosophy of praxis must initially adopt a polemical stance, as superseding the existing mode of thinking. It must therefore present itself as a critique of 'common sense'" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 331 as cited in Liguori, 1995, p. 105). Common sense, is therefore "part of the stakes of the struggle for hegemony: it is a basic and widespread conception of the world, which can be replaced but not eliminated" (Liguori, 1995, p. 101). Gramsci also acknowledged the existence of "good sense" or "the healthy nucleus that exists in 'common sense', the part of it which can be called 'good sense' and which deserves to be made more unitary and coherent" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 328). This good sense entails the ability "to reflect and to realise fully that whatever happens is basically rational and must be confronted as such" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 328).

Common sense is also closely related to religion according to Gramsci. He notes "religion and common sense do not coincide, but religion is composed of disjointed common sense" (Gramsci, 2011, p. 352 as cited in Liguori, 1995, p. 103). He also argues "[i]nto the common sense not only the rougher and less elaborate forms of today's existing

Catholicisms; preceding religions and preceding forms of what is actually now Catholicism, heretical movements and the scientific superstitions tied to past religions etc., flowed [into it] and are [now] components" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 419-20 as cited in Fulton, 1987, p. 204). Gramsci likewise notes "the main components of common sense are provided by religions –not only by the religion that happens to be dominant at a given time but also by previous religions, popular heretical movements, scientific concepts from the past, etc." (Gramsci, 2011, p. 333 as cited in Liguori, 2015, p. 99).

The attention that Gramsci has given to religion certainly relates to his own experiences in Sardinia where, as Murray and Worth argue, the Catholic Church was heavily involved in the reproduction of its popular culture and subaltern folklore "through its role in the fashioning of common sense" (2013, p. 737). In fact, though Gramsci viewed Catholicism as certainly subpar to socialism, he viewed it as a rival to socialism because "it is itself a form of total social praxis" (Fulton, 1987, p. 202). He also admired the Catholic Church for its "historical organization and long enduring hegemony in European society, to the extent that there are aspects of it which he sees as models for Marxist praxis" (Fulton, 1987, p. 202). Gramsci also addressed religion's "purpose as a key socio-cultural tool of the ruling classes" as well as the "potential role it could have in building consenting and alternative hegemony projects" (Murray & Worth 2013, p. 272). For Gramsci, then, religion acts not only in support of existing hegemonies, but can also contest and reconfigure hegemonic constructions.

Gramsci in International Politics

Within the realm of international relations (IR), scholars have engaged with Gramsci. Cox has pioneered what has come to be known as the neo-Gramscian approach, speaking of hegemony within a particular world order (1981, 1983, 1987). Cox examined British hegemony from 1815 to 1985, arguing that British naval power, free trade ideology, and financial institutions (the City of London), facilitated British hegemony during the nineteenth century. Cox's approach thus combines material power, ideas, and institutions in a theory of hegemony. Drawing on Gramsci, Cox stresses that hegemony is not only coercion, but subscription to a collective and legitimized ideology. One of the main benefits of this approach, as Robinson has argued is that it has taken us "beyond the limitations of realism in IR by utilising Gramscian insights and concepts to conceive of an integrated civil society and the state in international relations" (2005, p. 3).

Engagement with Gramscian theory has thus mostly been within the international political economy sub-discipline. More recently, however, some scholars have taken issue with this narrow focus and have called for a broader engagement with Gramsci in the study of international politics. Hopf, for example, has critiqued Cox's neo-Gramscian account of hegemony arguing that Cox's theory "still falls short of its Gramscian promise", because it is mainly concerned with elite constructs about political economy and does not fully incorporate "common sense" in the broad sense that Gramsci conceptualized it. Cox's theory thus fails to consider non-material ideas about religion, values, norms, and gender, for example, that are also of importance to hegemonic processes within the international sphere. Hopf likewise critiques Cox's model for its narrow theorization of international institutions and proposes attention to university education, cultural productions, media, tourism, and other forms of ideational exchange and contact. Hopf likewise critiques Cox's focus on "elite" ideas. He argues that we need to take heed of "Gramsci's warning of common sense's capacity to thwart elite projects" (2013, p. 322). Hopf thus proposes that scholars 1) place common sense at the centre of discussions on hegemony, 2) move beyond Coxian discussions that privilege the material, and 3) pay attention to the ideas held by the masses as opposed to merely those held by the elites in society.

Other scholars have gone even further, however, in critiquing standard approaches to hegemony within the international sphere. Worth, for example, has argued, in his article "Recasting Gramsci in International Politics", that there hasn't been much theoretical innovation in the development of Gramscian research within the IR discipline. He argues, for example, that we would do well to engage with Gramscian scholars outside of International Political Economy, signalling out scholars such as Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams, and Ernesto Laclau. Engaging with these scholars' accounts of hegemony would offer us, as Worth argues, "a more comprehensive understanding of how hegemony might work in the international level" (2011, p. 386).

Furthermore, Worth calls for new directions in Gramscian research, arguing that after broadening theoretical approaches to hegemony, it becomes both possible and necessary to broaden our scope of study to include discussions on nationalism, ethnicity and ethnic conflict for example. Worth moreover argues that Gramsci's work on religion "is neglected in contemporary global society", and argues that his rich writings on the role

of religion as a hegemonic agent within civil society can be useful in discussions on religion in the post-9/11 world (2011, p. 389). Gramsci is useful here, because as Worth and Murray argue, he not only focused on the significant role that Catholicism played in Italy, but also on the role of the Catholic Church in other countries and its proselytization activities.[11] Worth and Murray thus suggest that we study religious movements, like Islamic fundamentalism, because they can "provide us with one such bottom-up understanding of how consent is fashioned in order to comply within a wider hegemonic framework" (Worth & Murray, 2012, p. 737).

The theoretical approach proposed in this study can thus be seen, in part, as a response to recent calls by scholars of international relations and politics, like Hopf and Worth, for greater and broader engagement with Gramsci beyond the limits set by Neo-Gramscian Coxian ontology in the study of international politics.

Gramscian Approaches to Islamic Movements

Gramscian approaches have been previously used in the study of Islamic movements—particularly the MB. Butko, for example, has adopted a Gramscian framework to demonstrate Islamist movements' efforts to overthrow autocratic regimes and acquire economic, political, and social power (2004). Bayat (2007) has also drawn on Gramsci in his work on Islamists in Egypt and Iran, demonstrating how Egyptian Islamists have pursued a "war of position". Kandil (2011) has likewise looked at Islamists in Egypt—arguing that though Islamists successfully undermined the rulers' cultural hegemony, this brought upon heightened state repression and was not enough to seize effective control of the state's coercive power. Chalcraft (2016) has also employed an "unconventionally Gramscian" framework in his study of popular politics in the MENA region—shedding light on the histories of a variety of movements including the MB and Salafism. Tugal's book on Islamists in Turkey has moreover conceptualized Islamic mobilization as "the reconstitution of hegemony as a response to organic crises" (2009, p. 24).

Gramscian approaches have only been used in a couple of studies on Salafi movements. Merone (2020), for example, has built on Butko's analytical framework to illustrate how

---

[11] Gramsci discusses the Pan-Christian movement, its proselyting activities, and its leadership composed of "continental Europeans, Norwegians and Germans, in particular" (Gramsci, 2011b, p. 386).

the Ansar-al-Sharia (AST) in Tunisia are "revolutionary-minded" despite the fact that their discourse is rooted in Salafi and Islamist ideology (2020, p. 1). He also explored how the AST succeeded in immersing itself into marginalised social groups and providing the marginalized a frame for revolutionary transformation of the social order. Merone's approach certainly adds a new dimension to our understanding of counter-hegemonic revolutionary Salafi movements focused on the overthrow of power. The approach I propose in this thesis, while does have a few similarities with Merone's approach (e.g. examining the war of position carried out by Salafi actors), also departs from it because of its focus on the transnational dimensions of Salafism i.e. the role of Saudi Arabia and its larger bloc in attempting to achieve hegemony within the global Muslim society, as well as its focus on common sense.

Ramaioli's PhD thesis on Salafism in Jordan has also engaged with Gramsci. Ramaioli conceptualizes Salafi thinkers and scholars as "intellectuals" and develops the concept of the "social appropriation of tradition" to explore how these actors motivate social and political mobilization. Ramaioli uncovers three mechanisms through which this process of social and political mobilization occurs: diffusion, elaboration and systematization. Ramaioli's proposed approach to thinking about Salafi thinkers and scholars as intellectuals is an interesting addition to a body of literature that overwhelmingly depends on SMT for the analysis of Salafi mobilization, yet as Ramaioli himself notes,[12] it does not provide us with the tools we need to assess whether, or how, this intellectual work plays out and/or is received.

Together, these works demonstrate some of the benefits of engaging with Gramsci in the study of Islamic movements. Yet, like the works that employ a Gramscian framework in the study of international politics reviewed above, this body of literature does not pay much attention to Gramsci's concept of common sense—limiting the benefits that can be amassed from a Gramscian framework. Merone's work (2020), for example, does not once mention common sense. Similarly, though Kandil (2011) and Chalcraft (2016) both allude to common sense at various points within their analyses, common sense does not

---

[12] Ramaioli says "these three mechanisms and the process I propose describe how ideological productions may impact and influence mobilization. They do not comment on how, subsequently, a specific ideology may be received and applied to ever changing historical circumstances (2017, p. 101).

assume a key role in either of their works.[13] Of these works, perhaps Ramaioli (2017) can be said to have engaged the most with Gramsci's concept of common sense. Ramaioli suggests that intellectuals play a key role in criticizing the fragmentary and contradictory elements of common sense, making them more coherent, and transforming them into good sense. He briefly explores how al-Albani, one of the key Salafi scholars of the 20th century, in his ideological production "rearranges a discursive field—a formation of popular common sense—whereby the intended audience makes sense of such events and dynamics" (2017, p. 175). However, as discussed in the previous paragraph, Ramaioli's work is not concerned with whether, how, and to what extent these ideological productions actually influence mobilization. Furthermore, though Ramaioli speaks of common sense, his work is still very much about male Salafi leaders and does not consider Salafism's encounters with, and impact on the common sense of Muslims in the wider community. The lack of attention to common sense in these works thus prevents us from having a more nuanced understanding of Islamic movements and their impact on Muslim societies.

A Gramscian Approach to Analysing Contemporary Salafism

In this section, I begin by exploring the transnational dimensions of my conceptual framework, before turning to how Gramscian concepts can be used to study local Salafi movements and communities.

Saudi Arabia's Quest for Hegemony

In this thesis I argue that Saudi Arabia's efforts to propagate Salafism outside of its borders, are best understood as part of its quest for hegemony—or moral and intellectual leadership within global society. Indeed, after observing the power of ideologies like Nasser's Pan-Arabism during the Cold War era, Saudi Arabia seems to have realized that assuming supremacy in the regional and international sphere would not only require dominance (or the monopolization of the instruments of coercion), but also the consent of the masses. Saudi Arabia thus sought to bring about an alternative hegemonic order—one where Salafism was meant to act as a legitimating ideology.

---

[13] Chalcraft has, however, more recently explored common sense and good sense in the context of Egypt's 2011 uprising (2020).

Armed with economic power and Salafi ideology during the post-oil boom era, Saudi Arabia set off on a war of position or "moral and intellectual battles" (Fontana, 2008, p. 96) within global civil society. Focusing on educational and religious institutions, as well as the "technical instruments that create and diffuse modes of thought" (Femia, 1981, p. 26), Saudi Arabia sought social transformation through a "cultural conflict involving ideology, religion, forms of knowledge, and value systems" (Fontana, 2008, p. 93). In 1961, for example, Saudi Arabia established the IUM. As Farquhar (2017) has argued, the establishment of the IUM was undoubtedly related to Saudi Arabia's rivalry with Egypt at the height of the Cold War. Saudi Arabia, and its Western allies, hoped that the IUM would compete with Al-Azhar in Egypt as the centre of religious scholarship within the Muslim world. Saudi Arabia also sought to counter Communist expansion and Soviet atheism. In addition to the IUM, Saudi Arabia established other international institutions like the Muslim World League (MWL) and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY). These institutions began to operate within many countries in Europe like Germany, France, and the UK. Saudi Arabia also gave special attention (and funds) to the printing of Islamic literature, media (e.g. TV channels), mosques, other Islamic institutions, and groups around the world (Pew, 2010).

These institutions and activities have been a key component of Saudi Arabia's Salafi project and war of position within global civil society—which has worked to "generate, proliferate, and disseminate a given conception of the world, such that it becomes 'historically true,' which, in turn, means its transformation into the 'commonsense' of the people" (Fontana, 2008, p. 96). Indeed, as this thesis argues, Saudi Arabia's Salafi project has not only increased the number of Muslims around the world who adopt a Salafi conception of the world, but more importantly worked to make some Salafi beliefs an "iron fact of 'common sense'" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 441) in some communities around the world.

There is little doubt that Saudi Arabia's quest for hegemony was facilitated by its strong economic position in the post-oil boom era. Spending on *da'wa* activities, as Farquhar (2017) finds, increased during the post-oil boom era, with the IUM's annual budget growing by nearly five times over a-two-year period during the mid-1970s for example. This increase had a direct impact on the number of staff and students hosted by the IUM (Farquhar, 2017). Nonetheless, as other scholars have noted (e.g. Bonnefoy, 2013; Farquhar, 2017; Mandaville & Hamid, 2018; Meijer, 2009), the rise of Salafism in

different localities around the world cannot simply be seen as a direct result of "petrodollars". Additionally, as others have noted (e.g. Al-Rasheed, 2016) and as this thesis will also demonstrate, Saudi Arabia's oil wealth has in no way guaranteed it a hegemonic position globally. In fact, one of the benefits of this framework is that it helps us make sense of the role that material conditions have played in the diffusion of Salafism while being careful to avoid a deterministic and/or reductionist approach. It reminds us, as Lears has argued, that "[t]he keys to success are ideological *and* [emphasis added] economic" (1985, p. 571).

It is also important to note here that while I have been mainly speaking about Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia was certainly not the only actor driving this project. Saudi Arabia has also sought alliances with other actors over the years perhaps recognizing as Lears has argued that "[a] historical bloc may or may not become hegemonic, depending on how successfully it forms alliances with other groups or classes" (1985, p. 571). The alliances that Saudi Arabia has managed to forge, have hence been instrumental to the successes that the Salafi project has seen. For example, as we saw earlier in this section, at the height of the Cold War, Saudi Arabia had alliances with other actors like the United States and the UK (who were quite keen to see Wahhabism act as a bulwark against communism in the region). These alliances have also shifted over the years. Saudi Arabia's alliances with the US and the UK took a hit, for example, following 9/11. Saudi Arabia's transnational historical bloc has also incorporated many non-state actors within Saudi Arabia, such as private and family-run charities. Salafi institutions and actors in Kuwait, Yemen, Jordan, and Egypt, for example, have all played a role in the dissemination of Salafism. This is also the case with Salafi groups in South Asia, where the Ahl-e-Hadith has been a key ally for the Saudis, but even in Europe, where as we will see local Salafi organizations in these countries have worked to diffuse Salafi common sense.

Indeed, the construction of an alternative hegemonic order requires that the leaders of a historical bloc "develop a world view that appeals to a wide range of other groups within the society, and […] be able to claim with at least some plausibility that their particular interests are those of society at large" (Lears, 1985, p. 571). This of course has been no easy feat for Saudi Arabia and its allies globally. Indeed, even within Saudi Arabia itself, where the Saudi establishment, and in turn Salafism, became hegemonic, this process has

been ridden with contradictions. These complexities are part and parcel of hegemony, because, as Williams argues hegemony is:

> [A] realized complex of experiences, relationships, and activities, with specific and changing pressures and limits. […] it does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not all its own (1977, p. 112-3).

Buci-Glucksmann similarly argues, "[f]or Gramsci, however, the effects of hegemony are highly contradictory. The more authentically hegemonic a class really is, the more it leaves opposing classes the possibility of organizing and forming themselves into an autonomous political force" (Buci-Glucksmann, 1980, p. 57).

We have seen the contradictory effects of hegemony within Saudi Arabia—apparent, for example, in the rise of activist and jihadi Salafis. These actors have worked with many of the same ideas and practices, and benefited from many of the same resources, as state-sanctioned Salafi groups, but have directed them towards new ends. This is not surprising as Chalcraft argues:

> Hegemonic articulation, indeed, is a double-edged sword because it involves downward as well as upward delegation. While forms of adherence and loyalty are granted by subordinates in an upward direction, resources and capacities are also distributed downwards to consenting subordinates . . . which could be re-directed to new ends (Chalcraft, 2016, p. 540).

It's interesting to note, that the re-direction of "resources and capacities" by actors like the jihadis, has not only been problematic for Saudi Arabia, but for other members of the historical bloc—like Saudi Arabia's Western allies who originally encouraged the Salafi project. Yet, it is also important to note, that although both activist Salafis and jihadi Salafis have had a highly contentious relationship with the Saudi regime and other actors, they have continued to play a role in the diffusion of Salafism within Saudi Arabia and in other parts of the world—again demonstrating the highly complex and contradictory processes at play.

Local Salafism

Though the discussion thus far has been mainly about Saudi Arabia, this proposed framework is useful for the study of Muslim localities around the world in which Saudi Arabia and other transnational actors have played a role in propagating Salafism, and presenting it as an alternative hegemony to local actors. Within local contexts, Salafism becomes an alternative conception of the world that has the potential to become

hegemonic, or universal, in the same way that it has in Saudi Arabia for example. Global and local actors come together then, to diffuse Salafism through a war of position within local communities. They get organized, confront and contest alternative hegemonic conceptions, and work to disseminate Salafi common sense within civil society.

Indeed, adopting this framework to study local Salafi movements is useful because it encourages us to consider not only the Salafi communities in question, but also calls our attention to the importance of exploring 1) civil society 2) other Islamic, and non-Islamic, actors that have interacted with Salafism 3) and Muslim common sense more broadly, within a particular locality. This framework also opens our eyes to the socio-historical realities of local Salafi movements, and offers a nuanced, critical approach to exploring these power dynamics. It does not crudely imply that Salafism was some sort of Saudi "export", nor on the other hand, ignore, as other works have done, the historical conditions and context at hand. Because "hegemony emphasizes the inherent conflict involved in constructing networks of power through knowledge" (Stoddart, 2007, p. 193), this framework also moves us away from accounts of Salafism that assume a unidirectional flow of power (e.g. flows only from Saudi Arabia to other countries, or flows only from Salafi leaders to members of the movement).

Drawing on the concept of hegemony here likewise "helps us grasp how power is lived in a given context" (Crehan, 2002, p. 200), while at the same time reveals how consent involves a "complex mental state" (Lears, 1985, p. 570) or contradictory consciousness. This framework is thus useful for the study of Salafi communities, and suggests that we pay attention to the lived realities of Salafism—calling attention to the possibility of contradictions within encounters, and attempts to live out, Salafi common sense. Exploring these contradictions steers us away from accounts of "Salafization" in which actors' "motivations, goals, and activities can all be placed within this conservative Islamic framework" (Kolman, 2017, p. 202).

At the same time, however, adopting a Gramscian framework does not rid Muslims who have "adopted" Salafism of their agency. While these actors may be subjects of the Salafi project, this framework still grants them critical thought processes, and sheds light on the good sense and critical consciousness that can be found within Salafi communities. Indeed, as we will see later in this thesis, conceiving of Salafism as a Saudi project is in

line with recent developments within Salafi communities where some members have started to reconsider Salafism's position as the "Truth".

Because of its historically grounded nature, this framework also allows us to capture continuity and change within the movement, as well as trace the development of local Salafi movements through all their "molecular phases" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 194). This is especially important as contemporary Salafi movements have now been active for decades in many localities around the world. Williams's take on hegemony as a process (1977, p. 129-30), is especially useful here as it alerts us to the renewal and modification that frequently occurs in hegemonic constructions.

Adopting and Adapting Gramscian Concepts

There is little doubt that Gramsci's ideas have been used to explore diverse issues and contexts. This has spurred on conversations about the ways in which Gramsci's ideas travel. Hall, for example, has discussed the use of Gramsci's thoughts beyond their original context. He suggests, for example, that we can "'think' our problems in a Gramscian way" (1988, p.161). Morton has likewise explored how Gramsci's concepts, especially that of passive revolution, can be thought of as a travelling theory—drawing on Edward Said's idea of travelling theory (Morton, 2007, 2012). Salem has also explored Gramsci's concepts through the idea of a travelling theory, paying particular attention to the issues that arise when thinking about hegemony in the context of empire and anticolonialism (Salem, 2020). Filippini additionally discusses the transit of Gramscian theory (2021).

There is little doubt that my use of Gramsci's concept of hegemony and other related concepts, in this way, departs from the way that Gramsci originally employed these terms. It may thus be useful here to say a few words about the way that I have adapted Gramsci's concepts in this framework. One key difference, of course, relates to my use of Gramsci to explore non-class based politics. Though as mentioned earlier, there is an economic and material dimension to the story that I explore here, this story is not mainly about class. Yet, as many other scholars before me have demonstrated, there are many benefits to using Gramsci to explore non-class based dynamics. As Fontana has argued, though Gramsci "developed the concept as a means to understand and to explain the strength and the resilience of modern bourgeois society", he also "tried to capture the power dynamics

and power differences within society and to show the ways and means by which power persists and endures over time" (2008, p. 84)—making his approach useful in different contexts. Morton has also questioned "the primary role attributed by Gramsci to social classes as the agents of political change" arguing that there are a "variety of identities that form in the consciousness of individual and collective actors" (Morton, 2007, p. 211). The framework proposed in this thesis is thus what Chalcraft has called "unconventionally Gramscian" (2016, p. 29).

Another question that may arise from my use of Gramsci's concept of hegemony relates to the position that "domination" assumes within this framework. Indeed, as Lears has argued "the concept of hegemony has little meaning unless paired with the notion of domination. For Gramsci, consent and force nearly always coexist, though one or the other predominates" (1985, p. 568). In my work, domination does not feature heavily as force has not been a major component of Saudi Arabia's quest for hegemony outside of its borders. This can perhaps be explained by the fact that Saudi Arabia's historical bloc has not become hegemonic or achieved moral and intellectual leadership globally. It is also important to keep in mind that the degree to which supremacy relies on coercion vs. consent tends to vary in different hegemonic configurations within both the domestic and transnational sphere. Robinson (2005), for example, demonstrates how the US bloc "has had to resort to increasing worldwide use of direct coercion in order to maintain its supremacy" (p.8), but also concedes that "[t]o what extent (and degree) an historical bloc must rely on more direct domination or coercion as opposed to consent in securing its rule is open to debate and is more a problem of concrete historical and conjunctural analysis than of theoretical determination" (p. 8). Yet this is not to say that force has not been used at all by Saudi Arabia in its attempts to become hegemonic in the regional and global sphere. In the case of Yemen, for example, we have not only seen economic and political domination, but the explicit use of force during Saudi Arabia's recent war against the Houthis (Riedel, 2017).

Research Design & Methods

There have been several methodological approaches to studying Salafism—most of which, as discussed earlier, have focused on Salafi movements in a particular locality (usually a nation-state) taking self-identifying members of the movement as their subject of study. The approach taken in this study, is somewhat different in that it broadens the

scope of study, beyond self-identifying members of the movement, to also explore civil society and common sense more broadly. Yet, at the same time, it also narrows the geographic scope of the study, to focus only on one city. Narrowing the scope of study to one city, allows us a careful, nuanced, and historically grounded approach that is necessary for the study of historical movements. Indeed, as Gramsci has argued:

> study[ing] concretely the formation of a collective historical movement, analysing it in all its molecular phases[…]requires an extremely minute, molecular process of analysis in every detail, the documentation for which is made up of an endless quantity of books, pamphlets, review and newspaper articles, conversations and oral debates repeated countless times, and which in their gigantic aggregation represent this long labour which gives birth to a collective will with a certain degree of homogeneity – with the degree necessary and sufficient to achieve an action which is coordinated and simultaneous in the time and the geographical space in which the historical event takes place (Gramsci, 1971; 194).

This research thus takes London's Muslim community, between 1980-2020, as a case study. London serves as an especially interesting case through which to explore the Salafi project for several reasons. London is home to approximately 40% of the UK's Muslims (ONS, 2001). London's Muslim community, as will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, is also quite diverse—both ethnically and ideologically speaking. This makes London an especially interesting case for exploring projects aimed at the remaking of common sense.

London is also one of the oldest and most prominent hubs of Salafism in London. For Saudi Arabia, London has been a strategic location. Indeed, as Birt argues:

> [W]ithin the European context, Britain—and, in particular, London—now has greater strategic importance because part of the Saudi and Islamist opposition is based there, as well as much of the Arab press, which is also subject to Saudi patronage and influence; and important part of Saudi aims abroad is to counteract dissidence, as well as to propagate their vision of Islam" (Birt, 2004, p. 171)

This has upped the stakes and meant that much attention has been devoted to this particular locality. London is moreover an important capital city not just for Europe but for other parts of the world; it sits at the centre of many transnational networks frequently receiving visitors, migrants, as well as religious and political leaders who consequently affect and are affected by developments in London. London's Salafi leaders also often visit other cities in both Europe and the US. London also hosts Salafi organizations from across the Salafi spectrum, and continues to be a key hub for both quietist and activist transnational Salafi networks. This is quite different than Birmingham, for example, which although also a hub for Salafism in the UK, mostly hosts quietist Salafis.

Methods

This research draws primarily on ethnography. I conducted about 150 in-depth semi-structured interviews, and carried out participant observation in multiple Salafi and non-Salafi mosques and events in London over a period of about 20 months between 2017-2019. I have also drawn on primary sources, audio-visual material, and social media content related to Salafism and other Islamic movements in the UK.

Many of the interviews I carried out took the form of life-history interviews (Jackson & Russell, 2010; Jessee, 2018). Life-history interviews were essential in this project because of their ability to provide insight into individual and wider-level social change. They also enabled me to reconstruct British Muslim common sense form earlier periods. I decided to not only rely on interviews, but also on participant observation in this study because of the level of engagement that participant observation makes possible. Indeed, as Kapiszewski *et al.* have argued, the use of site-intensive methods "implies cultivating a deeper engagement with a locality, context, or set of informants than might occur, for instance, in a project based purely on standard one- to two-hour interviews" (Kapiszewski et al., 2015, p. 237). Participant observation allowed me much deeper insight into the beliefs and practices of my participants, for example, which is essential in a study concerned with religion, culture, and common sense. Relying on interviews would not have been enough for this because, as Miller has argued, "[m]ostly what people say is the legitimation of what they do, not the explanation or the description" (Baker & Edwards, 2012, p. 31). Complementing participant observation with interviews proved to be especially useful as it allowed me to observe certain practices, and then enquire about them during interviews, or vice versa.

Ethnographic methods can also be very useful in the study of hegemonic constructions and processes. Indeed, as Blommaert and other scholars have argued, ethnography is "potentially very well-positioned for the analysis of hegemony" (Blommaert et al., 2003, p. 4). This is because, they argue, it "allows for both the close analysis of interaction (the basic material of social relations) and the linking of interaction(s) across time and space. It permits communicative practices to be linked to the conditions of their emergence, unfolding, and decline" (Blommaert et al., 2003, p. 4). Ethnography can also be a useful tool in the study of common sense. As Crehan argues:

> For Gramsci, the task of the analyst confronted with the confusion of common sense, like that of the archaeologist confronted with the material debris of the past,

is to sort through the mass of beliefs and opinions. They need to identify the different elements that make up this mass, and trace out the links between particular assumed truths and social realities. […] understanding this process in any actual context requires empirical analysis (2016, p. 57)

A careful in-depth ethnographic approach thus allows us to identify different elements of common sense and trace the forces acting to consolidate or destroy these elements.

In the next chapter, I discuss my methodology in more detail—giving particular attention to issues of positionality and ethics, as well as challenges faced.

Thesis Outline

The thesis proceeds in a (broadly) chronological manner charting the different phases the movement has gone through over four decades (from 1980s-2020). Yet, at the same time, each chapter also has a thematic focus. Chapter 1 provides some background information on Muslims in the UK, and more specifically London's Muslim community. It also examines the broader context within which British Muslim common sense has evolved by exploring UK government policies towards Muslims and Salafis through the years. The chapter also introduces my methods in more detail, as well as the challenges of doing ethnography with Salafis, and British Muslims more generally, within London.

Chapter 2 begins by exploring the early days of Salafism in the UK. It argues that although Salafism has been present in the form of the South Asian Ahl-e-Hadith movement since the 1960s, Salafism did not begin to gain traction within London's Muslim community till the 1980s and 1990s—following concerted efforts by Saudi Arabia and other members of the transnational Salafi bloc to introduce Salafism as an alternative hegemonic conception to London's Muslim community. This chapter also introduces Jamiat Ihyaa Minhaaj al-Sunnah (JIMAS), the main Salafi organization during this period, and shines light on its relationships with other transnational Salafi actors as well as *da'wa* strategies. This chapter argues that despite the fact that London's Muslim community may have been a favourable context for the diffusion of Salafism during this period, there was nothing automatic or mechanical about this process. Salafi *du'āt* (missionaries), particularly IUM students and graduates in the West, played an important role in this process—targeting the common sense of second-generation British Muslims and converts and passing Salafism off along as "the tradition" (Williams, 1980, p. 39).

Chapter 3 sheds light on the organizational debates and disputes that the movement has faced as it became more established within London's Muslim community. I explore the reasons behind these debates and disputes and comment on their implications. I demonstrate how these disputes resulted in the emergence of three Salafi networks that have continued to be the main players within London's Salafi community.

Chapter 4 examines Salafism's interactions with other Islamic players and its attempts to assume a position of moral and intellectual leadership vis-à-vis these other players. It focuses on civil society—shining light on the war of position that has taken place in universities, religious institutions, and the media (both traditional and new forms like social media). It argues that during the 1990s, the Salafis briefly occupied a hegemonic position—having the power to define the way that Islam is validated and the "rules" of the game. Nonetheless, the chapter argues that this was short-lived and that the Salafis' position was soon after challenged by the TI movement during the 2000s.

Chapters 5 and 6 both examine the lived realities of Salafism—exploring how British Muslims' encounters with, and attempts to live out, Salafi common sense during the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s, have been, in many cases, ridden with contradictions. These contradictions stem, Chapter 5 argues, from the disjuncture that existed between the Salafi conception of the world, and the practical experiences and lived realities of my participants. Nonetheless, this state of contradictory consciousness has not precluded the development of a critical consciousness within London's Salafi communities. Indeed many British Muslims have become aware of the underlying interests and socio-historical realities behind Salafism, and altered the way they understand and practice Salafism. Chapter 6 examines the experiences of "Salafi" women more closely, also highlighting the far from straightforward relationship that women have had with Salafi gender norms. Indeed, Chapter 6 argues that through their practical experiences in Salafi communities, some women have begun to challenge several Salafi gender and parenting discourses.

Chapter 7 revisits the Salafi war of position—paying particular attention to the different ways that the movement has attempted to defend and renew itself in the face of challenges (discussed in Chapters 3-6) during the 2010s. It finds that although there have been many changes to Salafi *da'wa*—in terms of discourses propagated and methods employed, there has been more continuity than change in the "Salafism" articulated within the British Muslim community. This chapter thus shines light on continuity and change in the

movement while contributing to our understanding of Salafism's present-day position within London's Muslim community.

Finally, Chapter 8 examines the common sense of British Muslim women in three mosques of differing ideological orientations in London. It finds that Salafism has had an impact on these women's common sense understanding (and practice) of Islam. At the same time, however, the chapter highlights the limits of these processes and sheds light on segments of London's Muslim community who seem largely untouched by Salafism, and those who while may have at one point been influenced by Salafism, have now evolved in the way they understand and practice Islam. It argues that despite the challenges that the movement has faced through the years, Salafism's impact on the common sense of British Muslims in London is indeed a document of the historical effectiveness of the movement.

Together, these chapters paint a more holistic and nuanced picture of Salafism and its impact within London. This thesis thus makes a number of important contributions to the study of Salafism, as well as to our understanding of hegemonic processes more broadly. Firstly, it provides an empirical account of the different ways that Salafism has impacted civil society and the common sense of British Muslims between 1980-2020 within London's Muslim community. In doing so, it provides a nuanced and historically grounded analysis of the Salafi movement, through all its molecular phases, shedding light on its emergence, organizational dynamics, interaction with other actors, and processes of becoming. It also highlights the contradictions that have been part and parcel of encounters with, and attempts to live out, Salafism in London's Muslim community, as well as the transformations that have occurred within London's Salafi communities over the years.

Secondly, this thesis proposes a new approach to conceptualizing contemporary Salafism, one that adopts a Gramscian lens to the study of this transnational movement, and adopts and adapts Gramscian concepts to explore how the propagation of Salafism, by Saudi Arabia and other actors, has played out in different localities around the world. This proposed analytical framework allows researchers to take seriously power and politics, as well as religion and culture. It acknowledges the material dimensions of the movement but does not reduce the fashioning of consent within Salafi communities to "petrodollars". This analytical framework in one sense responds to calls for new analytical tools within

the study of Salafism, but also responds to calls within the realm of international relations and politics for greater and broader engagement with Gramscian theory. This approach thus also contributes to the development of Gramscian theory within international politics by 1) prioritizing the study of mass common sense, 2) taking non-material ideas about the world seriously, and 3) engaging with other readings of hegemony that do not typically feature in international politics. In doing so, this study also contributes to our understanding of transnational configurations of hegemony. It also demonstrates the benefits of examining civil society and the common sense of Muslims more broadly, when studying Salafism (and other Islamic movements), as opposed to simply focusing on already-formed and seemingly coherent communities and movements. Finally, this study also contributes to methodological discussions on empirical investigations of common sense (e.g. Crehan, 2016) and the usefulness of ethnography for the study hegemony (e.g. Blommaert et al., 2003).

1. Studying Salafism in London: Background & Empirical Considerations

1.1 Introduction

This chapter briefly traces the history of the UK's Muslim community, with a focus on London's Muslim community. It provides some information on the ethnic and socioeconomic make-up of the Muslim community and its shifting composition from the 1960s to the present day. It also traces Muslims' religious activity over the years and introduces the different Islamic movements active in the UK. It likewise comments on the UK government's relationship with British Muslims, and Salafi groups in particular, to shed more light on the context within which Salafi common sense has been diffused. It argues that although quietist Salafi groups were originally seen as partners in the fight against terrorism, policymakers have more recently, with the advent of David Cameron's government in 2010, started to view Salafis as "non-violent extremists" further securitizing Salafism.

The remainder of the chapter reviews my methodology in more depth—delineating the communities and spaces that I engaged with during this research. Because of the highly politicized and securitized nature of Salafism in London and other European cities, I give particular attention to issues of positionality and ethics. I also discuss the challenges of doing ethnography with Salafis and with British Muslims more generally in order to contextualise my work, but also in the hopes that this discussion is useful to other researchers working on Salafism and Islam in Muslim-minority countries.

1.2 Islam in the UK: A Brief Background

Although Muslims have been in the UK for over three centuries, until the early twentieth century, only small congregations of Muslims from South Asia existed in Cardiff, Liverpool, London, and Woking (Geaves, 1999). After the 1950s, however, the number of Muslims who migrated to the UK took on new levels. In response to demand for cheap labour and with the intention of eventually returning home, men mainly came to the industrial cities and towns in the West Midlands and Northern England seeking higher wages (Geaves, 1999). In the 1960s, tightening immigration controls as well as a sense

of loneliness seems to have also encouraged many to bring their wives and children with them to the UK. The community thus began to grow in subsequent decades as can be seen in the table below.

Figure 1: UK Muslim Population 1951-2011

Year	UK Muslim Population (estimate)
1951	21,000
1961	55,000
1971	251,000
1981	593,000
1991	989,000
2001	1,500,000
2011	2,516,000

Source: 1951-2001 Data from "Muslims in the 2001 Census of England and Wales: Gender and economic disadvantage", by C. Peach, 2006. 2011 Data from Office of National Statistics, 2011 Census.

By 1991, the number of Muslims living in the UK had certainly increased. Yet, because the census at the time did not include religion as a category, the community's exact size at the time is unknown. Estimates of the size of the Muslim community in 1991 mostly range from 750,000 to 1.5 million (See Geaves, 1999; Otterbeck & Nielsen, 2016; Peach, 1990; Peach, 2006b; Peach & Glebe, 1995). Estimates also point, as can be seen in the table below, to the dominance of Muslims from Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Indian backgrounds. Certain villages, in particular, within Mirpur and Campbellpur in Pakistan, as well as Chittagong in Bangladesh seem to have supplied the majority of these migrants.

Because so many early Muslim migrants came from villages in South Asia, early literature on the Muslim community mostly assumed that all Muslim migrants had low educational and skill levels. However, according to Werbner (2005), there was quite some variation in the educational and socio-economic characteristics of these early migrants. For example, migrants from Mirpur indeed have been generally less educated and skilled than other Pakistani and Indian Muslims. On the other hand, other notable migration cohorts, such as East Africans from an Indian origin that left East Africa following Africanization policies in the early 1970s, tended to have a higher educational and skill level.

Figure 2: The 1991 Muslim Population by Country or Region of Origin

Country/Region of Origin	Population
Pakistan	477,000
Bangladesh	163,000
India	134,000
East Africans of Indian Origin	80,000
Arab Nations	150,000
African Muslims	115,000
Turkish Cypriots/Turkey	70,000
Iran	50,000
Malaysia	30,000
Other Muslim Countries	148,000
Total	1,517,000

Source: From "Britain" by R. Geaves, 1999.

Early Religious Activity

After wives and families began to join male migrants in the UK, the migrants' likelihood of return to their home countries diminished greatly. Consequently, the UK's Muslim community witnessed greater religious activity as well as an increase in the numbers of mosques. Whereas in 1966 there were only 18 mosques, by 1985 the number of registered mosques totalled 338 (Nielsen, 1991). Geaves argues that these early increases in the number of mosques in the UK were not consequences of a religious revival as "phenomena of religion manifested themselves to reinforce ethnic or group identity" (Geaves, 1999, p. 363). There is certainly evidence for Geaves' argument as Muslims' first mosques and institutions were strongly linked to religious movements that originated within their home countries.

Gilliat-Ray (2010), for example, examining the different religious movements that emerged within the Muslim community in the UK, points to the dominance of movements of a South-Asian origin. The Deobandi movement which emerged in South Asia and was centred around an Islamic seminary in Deoband India in 1867, is one such movement. Gilliat-Ray traces its activity in the UK back to the 1960s and 1970s and notes the movement's early network of mosques and Islamic seminaries in several cities and towns in the UK. The Tablighi Jama'at (TJ), an off-shoot of the Deobandi movement known for its door to door preaching, has also been quite influential within the British Muslim community with its first recorded activity going back even further to 1945. Likewise, the

Barelvi movement, which originated in India and is known for according Prophet Muhammad superhuman qualities and characteristics, had several influential *pirs* (Sufi teachers believed to have saintly and supernatural spiritual qualities) based in the UK such as Pir Abdul Wahab Siddiqi who came to the UK in 1971. The UK Islamic Mission (UKIM), linked to the South Asian Jamaat-e-Islami founded by Mawlana Mawdudi, was similarly established in the UK in 1962 with headquarters in London. Finally, the South Asian Ahl-e-Hadith movement founded in the 1850s, briefly discussed in the Introduction, seems to also have been active in the UK as early as 1962. Other religious movements connected to the Arab world did appear in the UK as well, however, they appeared at a much later date (e.g. HT in the late 1980s with the arrival of Omar Bakri Muhammad in 1987, the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), linked to the MB, founded in 1997).

It is important to note that although Muslims' religious activities and institutions were largely linked to South Asian reform movements, by 1991, an estimated 47% of the total number of Muslims from a Pakistani and Bangladeshi background in the UK had been born in the UK compared with 53% born in South Asia (Geaves, 1991). This figure is important as it indicates the development of a sizable community of second generation Muslim migrants during this period. It also concurrently raises several questions about intergenerational dynamics within the Muslim community which repeatedly feature in this thesis.

London's Muslim Community

By 2001,[14] approximately 607,000 Muslims or nearly 40 % of the total number of Muslims lived in London—making London home to the largest number of Muslims in the UK. Within London, South Asian Muslims were less dominant, accounting for only 51.7% of the Muslim population compared with two-thirds nationally (Peach, 2006a). It is thus no surprise that by 2001, London's Muslim community was the most ethnically diverse with substantial numbers of Black Muslims (13.2%) and Middle Eastern or North

---

[14] Not much is known about the number and composition of London's Muslim community before this date.

African Muslims (approximately 5%)[15]. The table below charts Muslims in London by their ethnic origin based on 2001 census data.

Figure 3: Ethnic Composition of London's Muslim Community in 2001

Ethnic Group	Proportion of Total # of Muslims Based in London
White	**19.2**
British	5.4
Irish	0.1
Other White	13.7
Mixed	**4.7**
White and Black Caribbean	0.1
White and Black African	1.0
White and Asian	1.9
Other Mixed	1.7
South Asian	**51.7**
Indian	6.7
Pakistani	21.5
Bangladeshi	23.5
Other Asian	6.5
Black or Black British	**13.2**
Black Caribbean	0.4
Black African	12.2
Other Black	0.6
Chinese or Other Ethnic	4.8
Chinese	0.1
Other Ethnic Group	4.7
Total	**100.0**

Source: Data from "Muslims in the 2001 Census of England and Wales: Gender and economic disadvantage", by C. Peach, 2006.

In terms of the distribution of the Muslim population across London in 2001, Bangladeshi Muslims were (and continue to be) concentrated within East London boroughs. Pakistani Muslims were not as concentrated in a single borough the way Bangladeshi Muslims were, and 70% of Pakistanis in 2001 lived in outer London. Indian Muslims also had a similar spatial distribution to Pakistani Muslims with 44% of Indian Muslims living in outer London. Interestingly, the Black African Muslim community seems to have settled

---

[15] The exact number of Arab Muslims is hard to calculate from Census data as Arab was not included as a separate category on the 2001 census and as such some Arabs may have selected "White" or "Other Ethnic Group".

in Inner London (57%) thus sharing similar ethnic patterns with other non-Muslim Black and Caribbean populations (Peach, 2006a). Although there is also variation in terms of the socio-economic status of Muslims, certain indictors, such as the number of Muslims in social-rented accommodation, certainly point to the lower-socio-economic status of the Muslim community during this period. In 2001, for example, 41% of Muslims in London lived in social-rented accommodation as opposed to only 26% percent of the general population (Sellick, 2004).

Between 2001-2011, the number of Muslims in London increased by 35%. By 2011 approximately 1,012,823 Muslims lived in London forming 12.4% of London's population. The ethnic diversity of the British Muslim community has also increased over the years, with the proportion of South Asian Muslims decreasing, and the proportion of Black African and Black Muslims increasing. The most significant change has been an increase in the number of Somali Muslims in the last decade. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimates suggest that 108,000 Somali-born immigrants were resident in the UK in 2018, while Somali community affiliates in the Muslim Council of Britain estimate the population to be approximately 250,000 (Ali et al., 2015). The majority of Somalis live in England, with the largest number in London. Although British Muslims are commonly considered to be isolationist and self-segregating (Philips, 2006), there is evidence that ethnic segregation, the extent to which an ethnic group is evenly spread across neighbourhoods, has decreased within most local authority districts of England and Wales for all ethnic minority groups (Catney, 2013). There is also evidence that there is a high prevalence of deprivation amongst London's Muslim community, with 46% of the Muslim population living in the 10% most deprived local authority districts in England (Ali et al., 2015). Research also suggests that even after taking into account ethnicity, Muslims are more likely to be in poverty than members of other religions and those with no religious affiliation (MacInnes et al., 2014).

Figure 4: Distribution of Muslims in London
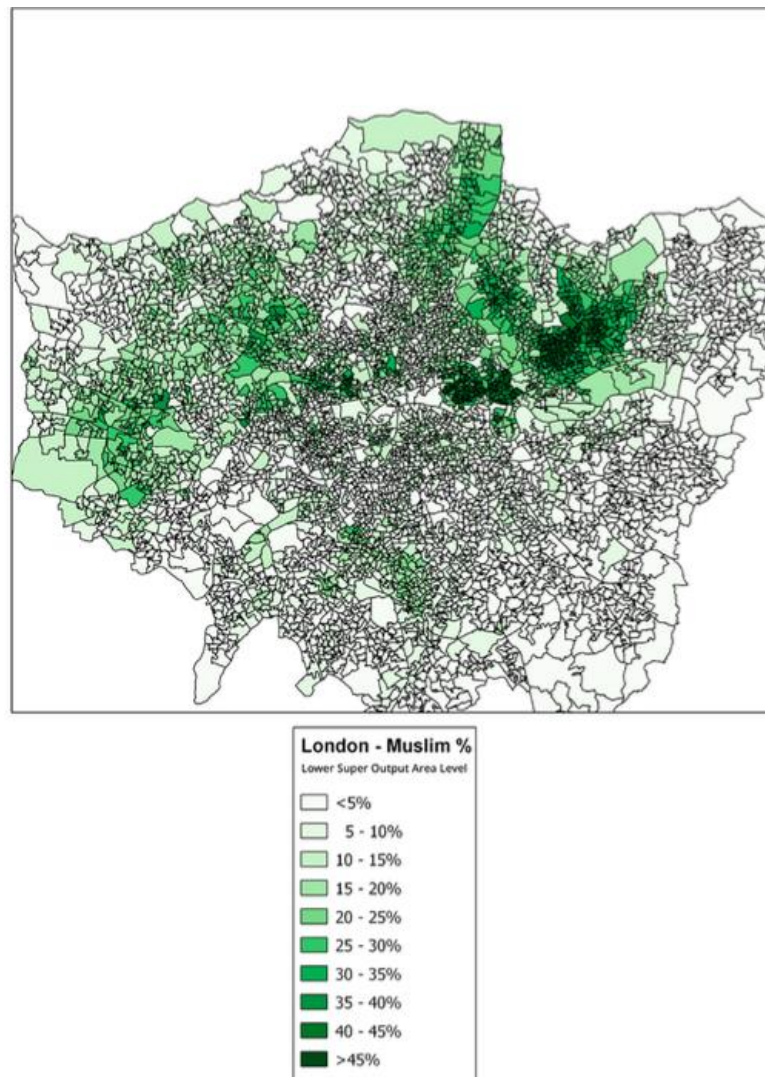
Source: From *British Muslims in Numbers*, by S. Ali et al, 2015.

London is home to the largest number of mosques within the UK (it is estimated to have more than 450 mosques and Friday prayer halls although the exact number is not known)[16] (Naqshbandi, 2021). These mosques vary in size, with some small mosques only capable of hosting 50-100 worshippers at one time, and other larger mosques capable of hosting 2000 worshippers. Though mosques are technically open to all Muslims, in reality, mosques in London tend to be managed by a committee affiliated with a particular approach to Islam or Islamic movement. The majority of mosques in London, and in the UK, have been and continue to be affiliated with South Asian Islamic movements—

---

[16] This number includes mosques and spaces used for Friday prayers.

particularly the Deobandi movement and the Barelvi movement. In fact, despite changes to the ethnic and ideological composition of the UK's Muslim community, in 2021 the Deobandis controlled about 42% of mosques in the UK and the Barelvis controlled about 28%.

The Salafi movement is the third largest Islamic movement in terms of mosque control. Estimates suggest that the number of Salafi-controlled mosques increased by 50% between 2009-2013 nationwide. By 2021, Salafis controlled approximately 8.8%, or 40 out of 453, mosques and Friday prayer spaces within London. As will become clear throughout the thesis, this increase is most likely related to the number of new (relatively small) Salafi mosques being established, and not due to large mosques in London becoming Salafi.

British Muslims, *Da'wa*, and the State

Prior to 9/11, there were few limits on the *da'wa* (preaching) activities of British Muslims. Indeed, even radical preachers were largely left alone by the state. Birt, for example, explains that there was "a gentlemen's agreement between known radicals and the British secret services, by which the former were allowed to preach radical rhetoric as long as they were not deemed to have direct involvement in terrorist activities" (2004, p. 173). This agreement was rendered obsolete, however, following the 9/11 attacks of 2001. The 9/11 attacks, along with the London bombings in 2005, had a major impact on the British state's relationship with its Muslim minority. Archer argues "the British state identified certain interpretations of Islam as an important component of the terrorist violence, and thus security became the central theme in relations between the state and Muslim Britons" (2009, p.329).

Seeking to better understand, and prevent, the causes behind terrorism, the British state thus began to engage with its Muslim community with security threats in mind. Based on an interview with a senior Metropolitan Police counter-terrorism officer, Archer argues that the British government faced challenges when seeking community leaders to engage with, as most British imams (leaders of mosques) had little knowledge of Al-Qaeda, and that those who did have some experience with jihadism were British Salafis who were at the time deemed not to be worthy of much engagement as they did not seem to represent "mainstream" Muslims. Yet, by 2007, Prevent, a component of the UK's counter-

terrorism policy, began to engage with some quietist Salafis. The Strategy to Reach, Empower, and Educate Teenagers (STREET), an organization based in Brixton, South London became one of the recipients of Prevent funds. Run by a quietist Salafi leader, Abdul Haqq Baker, STREET was supported by Prevent in the hopes that it, armed with religious knowledge and "street cred", could counter extremism especially in disadvantaged areas (Barclay, 2011).

These sorts of partnerships did not continue for long and things began to change when David Cameron became the Conservative Prime Minister in 2010 and the UK hardened its stance against "extremism". In 2010, for example Theresa May, home secretary at the time, banned Salafi preacher Zakir Naik from entering the UK for his "unacceptable behaviour" and controversial comments related to Osama Bin Laden and terrorism ("Radical Muslim", 2010). Another key Salafi figure, Bilal Philips was also banned from entering the UK in 2010, initially for a period of three years, but the ban has remained in place since.[17] In a speech in 2011 at the Munich Security Conference, for example, Cameron declared: "instead of ignoring this extremist ideology, we – as governments and as societies – have got to confront it, in all its forms". The new Prevent strategy was based on Cameron's "muscular liberalism", and indicated a clear change in strategy (O-Toole et al., 2016). The new Prevent strategy stipulated for example:

> First, we will respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat from those who promote it. In doing so, we must be clear: the ideology of extremism and terrorism is the problem; legitimate religious belief emphatically is not. But we will not work with extremist organisations that oppose our values of universal human rights, equality before the law, democracy and full participation in our society. If organisations do not accept these fundamental values, we will not work with them and we will not fund them (2011, p. 3).

In addition, the new Prevent strategy vowed to "[challenge] extremist (and non-violent) ideas that are also part of a terrorist ideology" (2011, p. 6). Though in the Prevent strategy there was no explicit mention of Salafi groups, following this new Prevent strategy, the government cut ties with several Salafi (and Islamist) groups that were now regarded as being problematic. This was the case with Baker's organization STREET. According to an article on The Telegraph, in 2011, STREET would no longer receive prevent money "in the first step towards switching funding away from strains of Islam with which the government disagrees". Organizations like STREET were thus no longer considered the key to preventing radicalization and terrorism in the UK, but were labelled "non-violent extremists". As Hamid (2017) has argued, the government's search and promotion of

---

[17] Interview with Bilal Philips. Zoom interview. 27/10/2018.

"Moderate Muslims" or Muslims who are "keen to adopt government narratives", "reinforce[s] a narrative which suggests a raging "Battle for British Islam" taking place between those who promote a form of Islam in sync with "British values" and "non-violent extremists" who provide the mood music for violent radicalization". Quietist Salafis have since entered into a tense relationship with the state—often objecting to their "non-violent extremist" label. In a paper on the Salafi website, Salafimanhaj.com, for example, the author challenges the validity of the "non-violent extremist" label, arguing that it is "loaded with highly negative connotations" and is the "root cause that lead to the justification and implementation of new government policy that impinges on our civil liberties" (Abu Amina, 2015, p. 1).

Furthermore, in 2018, an independent body, the Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE), was set up to better understand "extremism" and to provide policy recommendations. Referring to the CCE, Meleagrou-Hitchens (2018) suggests that although the Commission does not specifically refer to Salafi and Islamist groups as groups at odds with what they deem to be "core, shared values", Sarah Khan, the current commissioner of the CCE, has been openly critical of both Salafi and Islamist groups. Meleagrou-Hitchens gives the example of a statement released by the CCE in October 2018 in which Khan warns against Haitham al-Haddad, an activist Salafi preacher based in the UK. She argues that al-Haddad represents a form of non-violent Islamic extremism. She argues:

> Islamist extremism is not just manifested as terrorism or violence. Haitham al-Haddad's views are misogynistic, racist and homophobic. […] As a society, we must adopt a consistent and zero tolerance approach to all those who advocate non-violent extremism and that is why my first task as Commissioner is to produce a wide-ranging study into extremism as the first step in helping us all to do more to challenge extremism ("Commision for Countering", 2018).

Indeed, as Meleagrou-Hitchens explains "in Khan's and the commission's view, terrorism and violence are merely the tip of the iceberg of a much wider threat to British society posed by Salafi and Islamist views" (2018, p. 24). Several activist Salafis have thus also been at odds with the UK government in recent years. Dr. Salman Butt, for example, was deemed an extremist speaker in a Downing Street press release (Gayle, 2019). In the press release, outlining "specific policies to stop extremists radicalising students on campuses", Butt was labelled as a speaker who was "on record as expressing views contrary to British values" by the Home Office's Extremism Analysis Unit. Butt was thus consequently banned from speaking at universities. In 2019, however, following

a claim brought forth by Butt, the Court of Appeal ruled that the government's Prevent duty guidance to universities is unlawful (Gayle, 2019).

There has certainly been a shift in the state's relationship with Salafis and British Muslims more generally through the years. Yet, as will become clear throughout this thesis, the implications of these shifts, have been far from straightforward.

1.3 Ethnography in Salafi & Non-Salafi Spaces

As discussed previously, the decision to explore civil society and the common sense of British Muslims in London more broadly, has led me to carry out fieldwork in both Salafi and non-Salafi spaces. Though the distinction between Salafi and non-Salafi spaces is never clear cut, I classify mosques here mainly according to the affiliation of the mosque's management. This is of course an imperfect definition as even mosques that are managed by individuals associated with other Islamic movements may have congregants that associate with Salafism, and non-Salafi mosques may be visited by individuals that do not associate with Salafism. Yet on the whole, this definition is useful in distinguishing between mosques, run by and according to Salafi principles, and those that aren't.

In terms of Salafi mosques and events in London, I regularly attended mosques and events associated with Salafi Publications (SP) (a quietist Salafi group) throughout my fieldwork period—especially Markaz us-Sunnah in Alperton and Salafi Da'wah Tooting. I also attended the annual SP Conference in Birmingham that draws Salafis from London and other areas of the country. I likewise spent approximately six months visiting the quietist Brixton Mosque and attending events and classes—especially those hosted for Muslim women by Imam Umar on Wednesdays and Fridays. In addition, I attended Mad Ting in the Masjid classes (hosted mainly by Da'wah Man on Sundays) in Masjid An-Noor, Acton for a few months. Though, as I will explain later in this section, I carried out interviews with activist Salafis in London, I did not partake in any participant observation with this network, as this network does not tend to be mosque-based in the same way that quietest Salafi networks are.

In terms of non-Salafi spaces, I carried out fieldwork with three non-Salafi communities—spending approximately six months with each community. I mainly

visited these mosques on Friday, attended the Friday prayer, and spent the remainder of the afternoon socializing with the women and/or partaking in study circles or circles of remembrance (where women would make *duʿāʾ* [supplication] collectively for example)—though I also occasionally attended classes or events hosted on other days of the week. Each of the mosques I visited (Wembley Central Mosque (WCM), Harrow Central Mosque (HCM), and Finsbury Park Mosque (FPM)) is run by a management committee associated with a different Islamic movement—as will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 8 of this thesis. These mosques were selected as "diverse" cases (Seawright & Gerring, 2008) so as to reflect a diverse segment of London's Muslim community. These mosques were also chosen as they were large mosques, with a capacity of approximately 2000 people, and tend to act as community mosques—drawing members of the community as opposed to members of a particular Islamic movement. Beyond ideological affiliation, size, and community make-up, I did not have any other selection criteria—but mainly stumbled across (and managed to find a way into) these mosques as I was familiarizing myself with London's largest mosques during the exploratory phase of my fieldwork.

I also conducted in-depth interviews with about 150 participants, making sure to interview a) Salafi leaders and participants of the movement b) British Muslims who joined Salafi circles between 1980-2010, but may no longer associate with the movement and/or attend Salafi circles regularly c) leaders of other Islamic movements in London and d) everyday[18] British Muslims who attend non-Salafi mosques (as well as imams and members of the management within these mosques). Interviews were held in mosques, local cafes, and sometimes the homes of my participants. Some interviews were also held on the phone, or via Skype, Zoom, or FaceTime either at the request of my participants, or when participants were located outside of the UK. Indeed, though this research is mainly concerned with London's Muslim community, due to the transnational nature of Salafism, interviews were also held with individuals who are, or have been at some point, closely connected to London's Muslim community but do not reside in London. This is the case with key Salafi leaders like Bilal Philips and Yasir Qadhi for example, who have had a great impact on London's Muslim community but currently reside in Qatar, and the

---

[18] There has been quite a lot of discussion on the term "everyday Muslim" (see Fadil & Fernando, 2015; Schielke, 2009). Here I use the term "everyday Muslim" to refer to Muslims who do not explicitly and/or consciously adhere to one of the main Islamic movements. This is not meant to reflect their level of commitment or piety, but their position in relation to ideological movements.

United States, respectively. In addition, though my research was again mainly focused on London, I did carry out a few interviews with Salafis who live outside of London e.g. Birmingham, Newcastle, and the Midlands. These interviews were useful not only because these individuals had at one point or another lived, or worked, in London, but also because they provided me with insight into the dynamics of other UK Muslim communities to help me better understand the larger context.

The number of interviews that I held was not predetermined, though I did of course have certain goals like conducting fieldwork within each of the major Salafi networks in the UK, as well as interviewing leaders of each of the main Islamic movements in the UK that have interacted with Salafism (e.g. Barelvi, Deobandi, TI, HT). Within non-Salafi mosques, I found that after about 20 interviews (on average) within each mosque, I had a good understanding of the dynamics of each community, and that after carrying out interviews in all three mosques I had reached a certain "saturation" (see Guest et al., 2006).

The gender dynamics of London's Muslim community have undoubtedly impacted the direction my fieldwork took. Gender mixing is a concern in most Muslim communities and networks in London to varying degrees. This has meant that, for one, I only ever carried out participant observation within the women's section of mosques. Because I recruited many of interviewees, particularly everyday Muslims, while I was carrying out participant observation, this meant that I had an especially difficult time also interviewing everyday Muslim men. Thus, my exploration of everyday Muslim common sense is indeed mainly an exploration of British Muslim women's common sense. I comment on this and its implications in greater detail in Chapter 8.

I was thankfully able to interview both male and female Salafis, though in terms of Salafi men, my interviews were somewhat skewed towards older male Salafis and Salafi leaders—again due to difficulties accessing younger male Salafis. In terms of the dynamics of my interviews with males, I often let my interviewees propose how they would like to be interviewed. In most cases, men had no problem meeting me alone in local cafes, or within the mosque or Islamic centre. Some seemed to prefer phone interviews (though this could also be for a number of reasons like ease & time). I only had one situation where a Salafi speaker asked me to bring someone along to our interview so we would not be alone (despite the fact that we were meant to meet at a local

café). I was thus able to navigate around these gender restrictions and gain insight into the lived realities of both males and females. Indeed, because of my identity as a woman, I was in a better position than most male researchers who have great difficulty accessing female communities. Yet at the same time, because of my Muslim identity, I was not treated as a "third gender" and granted access to male and female spaces[19] as some Western female researchers have been in other Muslim contexts in the Middle East (see Schwedler, 2006) .

The length of my interviews varied greatly. Most of my interviews with Salafi leaders lasted several hours—with three interviews lasting almost five hours each. In some cases, my interviews occurred over several days; in fact one of my participants preferred to speak in one-hour blocs over several weeks. The majority of my interviews with other members of the Salafi movement also lasted an hour or more. This was also the case with my interviews with leaders of other Islamic movements. The length of my interviews with everyday British Muslim women in non-Salafi mosques varied widely with some lasting more than an hour, and a few others only about twenty minutes.

The overwhelming majority of my interviews were conducted in English—with many of my participants frequently drawing on Arabic words and phrases, including Qur'anic phrases. In a few cases, where participants were from an Arab background, they preferred to conduct the interview in Arabic. In one case, I had to conduct an interview in bits of Arabic, English, and French because one of my participants from an Algerian background had recently moved to the UK from France. In two cases, when interviewing older Somali women, I had to rely on a member of the mosque congregation to informally help me translate certain phrases that my participants could not understand in English and/or Arabic.

I transcribed all my interviews myself, and translated where necessary—which was no small feat given how much material I had gathered. What made the process manageable, however, was how spaced out my interviews were. This meant that I could stay on top of transcribing. I would try to type up my field notes and transcribe my interviews right after I completed an interview/or participant observation. I found NVivo to be a great place to store all my transcripts. I also used NVivo to (manually) code my transcripts by theme

_____

[19] To clarify, I was never refused access to the male side of the mosque, I just never attempted to gain access aware of gender norms.

and case (e.g. Salafi network, non-Salafi mosque etc). I also found NVivo useful for keeping track of and analysing my participants' data (e.g. age, socioeconomic background, ethnic background, relationship to Salafism and date of entry to Salafi circles).

In addition to these formal interviews, I also had many informal conversations while carrying out my fieldwork. In the next section, I discuss my ethnography in more detail commenting on challenges involved in doing fieldwork in both Salafi and non-Salafi spaces.

Positionality

Before I discuss my ethnography in more depth, and the challenges I faced during fieldwork, I would like to say a few words on my positionality. It is necessary here to clarify my own position within London's Muslim community and how I relate to my participants and to Salafism more generally, as it has no doubt impacted my access to, and experiences with, this community. As an Egyptian Muslim woman who had only lived in London for a few years prior to beginning this study, I was no expert on, nor had any real experience within London's Muslim community. I did not know much about the diverse Islamic movements that operated within London—especially those connected to South Asia. I had only visited a few British mosques before—mainly for *'Id* prayers. While this lack of familiarity with the British Muslim context certainly made gaining access a challenge, it also had its advantages. I was able to appear somewhat "neutral" to my participants because I was not associated with any religious networks in London. I'm also sure that it helped me notice certain subtleties during my research that someone more accustomed to this context would not have noticed.

The fact that I do not belong to any Islamic networks in London does not, however, mean that my participants were not interested in my own personal approach to and understanding of Islam. I was frequently asked questions like "what are you?", "what do you believe", "are you Salafi?", and finally "what do you think about Salafism?". These were difficult questions for me to answer, because of the sensitivity of the topic and my concerns about maintaining transparency while not putting off my participants. Indeed, other researchers working on Salafism have previously raised this question. Ramaioli asks "given how difficult it is to arrange some meetings, are we ready to jeopardize our

interlocutor's willingness to talk to us by openly contesting his beliefs, oftentimes the very object of our investigation?" (2018, p. 126). Ramaioli's answer, one that he doesn't necessarily recommend, has been to "gloss over [his] stances on religion and politics" (2018, p. 126). In my case, I chose to allude to the diverse influences that I myself have been subjected to in Egypt but also in Saudi Arabia where I grew up—clarifying that though I may identify or sympathise with a few elements of Salafism, I depart with others, and certainly do not adopt Salafism wholesale. I was also keen to stress that I did not set off on this research driven by any polemical considerations, i.e. the main purpose behind this research was neither to prove, nor disprove, any theological tenets of Salafism. I also made clear that I had no intention of "throwing Salafis under the bus" a concern many of my participants, Salafi and non-Salafi, had due to the highly politicized and securitized nature of research on Salafism and Islam in general.

I have to admit that I started off this research with some naïve conception that complete neutrality was both possible and desirable. Though I did not intend on writing a glowing account of "Salafism and its benefits", I did not fully foresee the difficult decisions that I would have to make about what to include and/or exclude from my research. As most existing research on Salafism has been concerned with how and why the movement has succeeded, or why and how Muslims have been drawn to Salafism, I did not expect the messy realities that I encountered. When I first encountered women who had come to Salafism in previous decades, but had since reconsidered elements of Salafism, for example, I originally decided that I would not delve too deep into the challenges that women have faced while attempting to live out their lives according to Salafi principles. I initially refused, for example, to comment on the martial problems that Salafi women had experienced, or the decisions of some women to remove the niqab (full face veil)—worrying that I would be contributing to negative perceptions of Salafism/Islam more generally and Salafi women/Muslim women more specifically. Proceeding in this way would have meant engaging in some form of "ethnographic refusal" (Ortner, 1995). Yet, I later came to feel that such an approach would, in this particular instance, be misguided. I realised that being silent on these complexities would leave orientalist depictions of Muslim women who had once been "oppressed" by Islam, but had since "seen the light", as the only accounts out there of Muslim women who had resisted Salafism in part or in whole. By taking part in the conversation, and putting forth certain concepts that can be used to make sense of the far from straightforward relationship that women (and men) have had with Salafism, I could help shape this conversation. Yet this has also meant that

I have had to at least partially come to peace with the fact that, as Trouillot has argued "[o]nce launched, the concepts we work with take on a life of their own. They follow trajectories that we cannot always predict or correct[…] there is no guarantee that the final meaning will be ours" (2002, p. 112).

Challenges

When I set off to do this research, I did not know any British Salafis, or have any contacts within the Salafi community. It was thus quite challenging to get started. I knew that I wanted to conduct interviews with Salafis from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and different Salafi networks. I also wanted to interview both leaders and movement members, as well as Salafis who had come to Salafism back in the 1980s and those who have joined Salafi circles quite recently. I thus had to use multiple strategies to arrange interviews. In some cases, I reached out to Salafi leaders via email and through their personal social media pages (especially Facebook). This strategy was useful for male Salafi leaders who are already well known and quite active online. Once I had made contact with some Salafi leaders in this way, I was then able to ask for the contact information of other Salafi leaders and members of that particular Salafi network. Each person on average would put me in touch with one other person.[20] Snowballing was especially important in the case of movement leaders and participants who had come to Salafism in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, but had since either disassociated from the movement or stopped being very active—as there simply would not have been another way to identify these members. The majority of Salafi women that I interviewed were women that I came across while conducting participant observation in Salafi mosques. By the end of my fieldwork, I felt that I had managed to interview the majority of well-known Salafi leaders.[21]

Gaining the trust of my participants was certainly no easy feat. As Pall and Adraoui have noted:

> Salafis are difficult to approach and interview, not to say observe during a longer period of fieldwork. Understandably, being characterized in the media as

---

[20] In one case, one of my participants put me in touch with about six other participants.

[21] The exception to this is without a doubt Abu Muntasir—a key leader of the movement and founder of JIMAS. Though I reached out to him several times, I never received a reply. I thus had to rely a lot on his "second hand man" Abu Aaliyah. I also drew on videos of Abu Muntasir on YouTube in which he has spoken about his own journey.

terrorists, and being subject to harassment by security services, they are often reluctant to speak to anyone who intends to get information about them (2018, p. 135).

Indeed, researchers working on Salafism have noted the difficulties they faced recruiting participants. Baz, for example, speaks about how she initially set off to interview Salafi converts about their conversion experiences, but then changed her research focus after coming to feel that "individuals may hesitate to participate or may withdraw in the course of the study" (Baz, 2017, p. 7). This was certainly one of the main concerns I had during the course of this research. I found that prior to agreeing to participate in my study, the vast majority of my participants—both movement leaders and members would ask me several questions. In addition to asking questions about my own approach to Islam, my interviewees would ask me why I had chosen this particular topic. Leaders of the movement who had an awareness of academia would also ask me particular questions about my supervisor and funding. In fact, there was a lot of interest in my PhD experience, and while I at first thought it was solely stemming from suspicion about my research, I began to realise that many Salafi leaders either had postgraduate degrees and doctorates, or were interested in obtaining them. This was quite interesting for me as I had assumed that Salafis would be mostly disparaging of Western academia.

This is not to say that my participants had no concerns about my research or how it was going to be used, however. Indeed, my requests for interviews were at times ignored or rebuffed. It was challenging figuring out the right balance between persistence and badgering; I did not want to pressure my participants to join, but I also came to find that many unanswered emails and phone calls were simply a symptom of busy schedules. There is no doubt that as I went along, it became easier to gain the trust of my interviewees. Simply stating some of the names of the Salafi leaders that I had interviewed helped for example. My participants seemed to also ask each other about me. One of my interviewees asked another one of my interviewees, before agreeing to participate in this study, whether I was "pro" or "against" Salafism, another asked if I was "sincere". Indeed, my identity as a Muslim was not in any way a guarantee to my participants that they could trust me. Muslim researchers have previously produced polemical works against Salafis. For example, around the same time that I was completing my fieldwork, Nahouza's book (2020) *Wahhabism and the Rise of the New Salafists: Theology, Power and Sunni Islam* was coming out, and some of my participants who had gotten copies were quite upset with the book—deeming it a polemical work against

Salafis. In fact, one of my participants, Abdulhaq Al-Ashanti, published a 56-page critical review of the book on the website Salafimanhaj.com (Al-Ashanti, 2019).

Another challenge that I faced, when interviewing Salafis, relates to the Salafi label itself. Indeed, as I have demonstrated elsewhere, the Salafi label has come to be associated with a "harsh" type of Islam, and hence rejected by some Salafis in some networks (Dawood, 2020). I also faced challenges interviewing activist Salafis who refuse the label. I found it particularly amusing, that when I interviewed two trustees of Al-Muntada Al-Islami in Parsons Green, they both feigned confusion when asked about the Salafi movement. One trustee said that he may have heard something about Salafism back in the 1990s. This may be due to the secrecy that surrounds Al-Muntada (discussed in greater detail in the next chapter), but also probably relates to my participants' concerns about being pigeonholed in a context where the stakes are quite high. This certainly added another level of complication to my interviews.

Once the interview began, I found that it was often an enjoyable experience for many of my participants. This was especially the case with leaders and members of the movement who had joined Salafi circles years ago and enjoyed reminiscing about their experiences and evolution through the years. One of my participants referred to our interview as "cathartic". Some of my participants were also happy to be participating in this research seeing it as a means to correct some of the misperceptions out there about Salafism, e.g. the role played by Saudi funding.

There is no doubt here, that my identity as Muslim (non-Salafi) woman also brought about some challenges. Though I did not encounter any pressure to "convert" to Salafism, a few times I felt pressure to act or think a certain way—particularly within SP circles. When praying with women in Markaz Daar us-Sunnah for example, one of the women "corrected" my prayer technique. In my interviews with key leaders of the movement, I at times felt pressure to interpret things a certain way. Some leaders expected me to abandon the Salafi typology (quietists, activists, jihadis) and see their approach to Salafism as the one and only Salafism. I was told, for example, that as a Muslim, I could go into the books of the Salaf myself, conduct proper research, and come to the right conclusion. I also got questions about my intention—was I attending these classes as a Muslim for my own *dīn* (religion), or was I only attending them for my research? Gaining the trust of female Salafis was also quite challenging. In the case of Brixton Mosque, for

example, I attended for two months before I was really able to broach the subject of interviews with some of the mosque's attendees. The fact that researchers had previously attended Brixton Mosque did not exactly make my job easier—as there were concerns by my participants that they had been "used" by researchers previously. Here, however, my identity as a Muslim woman, a wife, and a mother, did seem to make some difference as I was more relatable to the women than previous researchers.

My identity as a Muslim researcher did not always facilitate things however. In some cases, I felt that Salafi leaders would have been more willing to speak to Western researchers—viewing them as a more effective instrument through which to correct misconceptions about Islam. Some of my participants also seemed to think that as a Muslim, who supposedly already had knowledge about Islam, there was no need for me to be speaking to male leaders. I remember one of my female participants, for example, being confused about why I would want to speak to Abu Khadeejah (of SP). She seemed to think that it was OK for Anabel Inge, for example, to have done so as a non-Muslim woman who had no prior knowledge about Islam, but for me, as a Muslim woman, there was no necessity, or *ḥāja*. This was also the reaction that most of my female participants had when I asked if I could speak with their brothers, fathers, or husbands. This dynamic certainly complicated my access to male participants.

Conducting ethnography in non-Salafi spaces was without a doubt easier. Within non-Salafi communities, I again sought to speak with women of different ages and ethnic backgrounds. Because I had direct access to my participants, I did not have to rely on snowballing, but was able to approach them directly. British Muslim women were on the whole quite happy to speak with me about their own personal journeys with Islam through the years. Indeed, in a few instances, my presence was met with much interest and a few women volunteered unasked to contribute to the study. A few women were happy to find that a Muslim woman was doing a PhD and wished me well. Yet, ethnography within these spaces also had its own challenges. Some of the women in the mosque, especially older women, were wary of participating—even with the reassurances around anonymity. I also found myself caught within intra-Muslim conflict within WCM. During the course of my fieldwork, I was accused of being a *jāsūs* (spy) by one of the female congregants of the mosque. Though I initially thought she was accusing me of being a spy for some government entity, I was surprised to find that she was accusing me of being a spy for members of the mosque committee whom she (and others) were at odds with. This of

course caused some issues while I was attending the mosque, and was only somewhat solved by the Imam of the mosque speaking to the woman and vouching for me.

The above mentioned incident occurred quite early on in my fieldwork and alerted me to the importance of paying attention to the more subtle inner-workings of London's Muslim community, as opposed to focusing solely on the securitization of the community and overstating its impact. Indeed, though there is no doubt that following 9/11 and 7/7 the UK's Muslim community has become increasingly securitized, in my own fieldwork the impact of state-Muslim relations and UK government policies did not feature as heavily as I initially expected going into the field. This may be related to my own positionality as a Muslim researcher. It is possible that my participants did not feel the need to stress the impact that these larger trends have had—taking for granted that I too was aware of their impact. Yet, it is also possible that my ability to gain my participants' trust allowed them to speak more freely about intra-Muslim politics, for example, without being worried about "airing their dirty laundry".

Ethical Considerations

There are always ethical considerations when carrying out ethnography, particularly within a community that has been the subject of much negative attention. Throughout the research process, I was especially attuned to these ethical considerations. Because my research was not interested in processes of radicalization or jihadi Salafism, and was conducted with quietist and activist Salafis, the risk of participating in this research was quite low for my participants. I also took comfort in the fact that so much about the Salafi movement and Salafi views were widely available on websites, social media, and YouTube.

I paid particular attention to anonymity and data security. I was always clear that I was conducting academic research when meeting people for the first time during participant observation and of course when reaching out to interviewees. Written consent (based on LSE's informed consent template) was obtained before interviews, and informed my participants about my research (as well as about my university and funding), how their information will be used (e.g. academic publications) and stored. I also gave my participants the option of anonymity, and asked whether or not they would be OK with me recording the interview. In a few cases, I relied on an oral informed consent process

particularly with some of my older participants in non-Salafi mosques who were not comfortable with signing the form—happy to give consent but uncomfortable with singing their names. I also sometimes relied on oral consent for phone interviews. The vast majority of my participants were OK with me recording their interviews, especially after I stressed that I would not let anyone else listen to the recording—not even my own supervisor.

The majority of my participants chose to be anonymous. This was certainly the case with Muslim women in Salafi and non-Salafi mosques. This was also the case with male members of the movement, and even in some cases male leaders of the movement who wanted to be anonymous so they could speak freely. The main concern, for some of my participants, was not how they would appear to the academic community, or even to other interested parties that may read my work (e.g. government entities), but how they would appear to other members of the Muslim community. Many of participants wanted to be able to critique the movement, without upsetting any other members of the community. Anonymizing members of the movement and British Muslims in non-Salafi communities was quite easy, the more difficult part was of course finding a way to anonymize very well-known individuals. In a few instances of particular sensitivity, or where a quote or anecdote would identify one of my participants, I have followed the practice of other researchers by omitting a pseudonym for that particular quote or anecdote. In one particular instance, I created two pseudonyms for the same person, a practice also known as "ring-fencing" (Saunders et al., 2015, p. 622).

Many of my participants had advance notice about my research and interview request. This was not always possible, however, with participants that I met randomly within the mosque. Yet, because I would frequently visit the same mosque multiple times, and usually saw these women week after week, I felt comfortable knowing that they had plenty of opportunity to withdraw. Indeed, I did have two participants withdraw, about a week after their interview. One participant who withdrew did not share her reasons for doing so, while another explained that she preferred not to have her story captured within my work even if she was going to be anonymized.

Indeed, one of my main concerns throughout my PhD was that my participants would withdraw. This was especially a concern with leaders of the movement who, although had consented to participating in my research, had requested that I share any quotes that

I would use from their interview, prior to use. This request was certainly related to the fact that many of my participants had been previously quoted out of context, or misquoted altogether, by researchers and the media. Indeed, one Salafi leader jokingly warned me that if I were to misquote him, he would come after me in court (and win) as he had done before with *The Telegraph*.

This was also a worry because I was concerned that, after publishing an article on intra-Salafi politics, the critical stance I had taken in my article may have upset some of my participants. In the end, when the time came for reviewing the quotes that I chose to use with leaders of the Salafi movement (and other Islamic movements), I was pleasantly surprised to find that I did not face any major issues. All of the leaders I contacted with quotes approved their use though in some cases choose to add some more context to their quotes.

During participant observation, I was also very conscious of ethical considerations. Though in most cases, researchers carrying out participant observation attempt to blend in as much as possible with their participants, I made it a point to dress in the way that I normally would as a veiled Muslim woman (with the exception of wearing a prayer skirt when in the mosque to cover my jeans or trousers). I thus did not wear a black ʿabāya (a full-length over-garment worn typically worn by some women in Saudi Arabia)*, or jilbāb* (a loose outer-garment that conceals everything but the hands and face) when attending any mosques or interviews. This was a conscious decision as I wanted to be fully transparent about who I was. In fact, I made a point to stand out in the mosque, by carrying around a bright red LSE folder with me everywhere I went and during my interviews in the mosque to call attention to the fact that I was indeed there as a researcher. During events and classes, I only ever recorded if I had explicit permission from the event organizers. This was not much of an issue as the majority of Islamic events, classes, conferences, and sermons are made available online.

1.4 Primary sources, audio-visual material, and social media

I also relied on primary sources, audio-visual materials, websites, and social media throughout the course of this research. Prior to embarking on my fieldwork, for example, I explored the websites and social media pages of the different Islamic networks, organizations, and mosques in London. This allowed me to map out the scene, and

introduced me to the different Islamic actors in London. I found Salafi websites very useful, especially websites associated with SP and Islam21C. I also found the social media pages of individual Salafis, and of the new generation of "social media Salafis" like Da'wah Man and Abu Taymiyyah to be full of material. These websites and social media pages often included informative articles about each networks' understanding of Salafism, and gave me insight into how they related to other Salafi and non-Salafi Islamic actors. I also found the large body of audio-visual material available on YouTube, Salafi websites, and other social media pages to be very useful. Often, though I had attended a class or event, I would use the recording that was uploaded online for example. Because the Salafi community has also been very keen on keeping a record of its history, key historical speeches made by Salafis over the years have also been preserved online. I was thus able to use much of this historical data to complement, and triangulate, my participants' accounts of historical events.

I also drew on Salafi literature and other publications like pamphlets throughout the course of my research. Because of the large quantity of Salafi publications in English, I let the fieldwork guide my choice of literature. I thus gave attention to the publications that were frequently mentioned by my participants (e.g. books by Bilal Philips that were frequently mentioned by Salafis who came to Salafism in the 1980s and 1990s). I also collected material at some of the Salafi circles and conferences I attended. I was also given literature and pamphlets at Salafi stalls and mosques. I only found some of this literature relevant, as much of it was on the subject of Islam and its stance against terrorism however.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided some background information on Islam in the UK and London's Muslim community. It has commented on the shifting ethnic make-up of London's Muslim community and the high prevalence of deprivation within the Muslim community. This chapter has likewise introduced the different Islamic movements active in London, and shared some data on mosques. Special attention was also given to the UK government's approach to its Muslim population—particularly its Salafi community through the years. Because of the highly politicized and securitized nature of Muslim communities in the UK, I discussed issues of positionality and ethics. I also discussed my methodology in more depth, sharing my experiences carrying out ethnography in Salafi

and non-Salafi spaces in London and speaking about the challenges I faced and the strategies I used to overcome these challenges. In the next chapter, I focus on the early days of Salafism in London examining the movement's attempts to gain traction and consent within London's Muslim community during the 1980s and 1990s.

2. The Emergence of British Salafism

2.1 Introduction: A Silent, Loving Coup

When Surkheel Sharif (later to be known as Abu Aaliyah) and his friends were 16 years old, they began attending an Islamic circle at their local mosque in Leytonstone, East London in an effort to connect with their faith. These circles were led by an elderly Bengali man, Aziz al-Rahman. Though they appreciated al-Rahman's efforts, Abu Aaliyah explains "given the fact that he wasn't a qualified scholar, not very articulate, maybe 20 years older than us, so totally out of sync with our ways, as well as slightly accented […] we weren't able to take [his classes] seriously even if we wanted to". The young men nevertheless continued reluctantly attending these classes, on and off, for about two years. Things began to change, however, in the summer of 1982, when a university student named Manwar Ali (later to be known as Abu Muntasir) was invited to lead the Sunday circle while al-Rahman was away. Abu Aaliyah recalled this moment to me 36 years later:

> We'd seen him come in, a man with Mongolian features. He looked a bit like Genhis Khan, and he had a turban. His beard was very wispy, and he looked a bit serious, and he came in with a briefcase, all these kinds of oddities. We were all giggling at this time, we thought he's going to be some Asian saying some funny things in a very accented way, within two seconds when he opened his mouth, almost the Queen's English came out. And the strangest thing, he had this translation of the Qur'an, the Yusuf Ali translation, and he would speak, he would just say "and God says" or "the Qur'an says".

For Abu Aaliyah and his friends, who were used to religion being the domain of first generation South Asian migrants, Abu Muntasir's clearly articulated English lesson came as a shock. His repeated references to the Qur'an also captured the young men's attention. "We didn't even know as Muslims you could open the Qur'an and read passages. We just thought that's something the imam [leader of the mosque] does on a Friday", Abu Aaliyah explained. The young men were likewise mesmerized by Abu Muntasir's charismatic demeanour and commanding presence. Six weeks later, they informed al-Rahman, upon his return, that they wanted Abu Muntasir to continue leading the circle. "It was like a silent, loving coup", Abu Aaliyah recalls. Indeed, this silent, loving coup was just the beginning of a movement that was to soon sweep through London as well as other parts of the UK.

In this chapter I explore the emergence of Salafism in the UK with a focus on London. I argue that although Salafism has been present in the form of the South Asian Ahl-e-Hadith movement since the 1960s, 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 within London's Muslim community. I introduce Jamiat Ihyaa Minhaaj al-Sunnah (JIMAS) the main local Salafi organization that emerged during this period, and examine its relationships with other members of the transnational Salafi bloc, as well as efforts to disseminate Salafi common sense. I explore the stories of the men and women who gravitated towards Salafi networks in London during the 80s and 90s, shining light on the movement's social base and identifying the factors that enabled Salafism to gain traction and consent amongst second generation Muslims and converts during this period. I argue that this was not a straightforward or automatic process, but one that required significant ideological work—the results of which were not known in advance and, as we will see in later chapters, certainly not guaranteed for life.

2.2 Origins of Salafism in the UK

The South Asian Ahl-e-Hadith movement can be seen as the first incidence of Salafi activity in the UK (Amin, 2017; Amin & Majothi, 2021). Within the UK, its origins can be traced to the *da'wa* activities of Shaykh Fazal Karim Asim who migrated to the UK from Pakistan in 1962 and began working as a factory worker in Birmingham. With a background in Islamic studies, Shaykh Fazal Karim Asim began to deliver sermons in a UK Islamic Mission (UKIM) mosque linked to the Jamaat-e-Islami before leaving and going on to establish the first Ahl-e-Hadith mosque in the UK (Amin, 2017; Gilliat-Ray, 2010). On the whole, the Ahl-e-Hadith movement, in comparison to other South Asian Islamic movements such as UKIM, seems to have been a bit slow establishing its own network in the 1960s. Azami, for example, recounts "while other religious groups appeared to be organizing themselves, the Ahl-e-Hadith seemed to be invisible and away from the limelight. Many of them tried to hide their religious identity as they were very much in a minority with regard to other Muslim religious groups" (2000, p. 17). The movement also generally lacked English speaking scholars and speakers—limiting its impact amongst the new generation of South Asian Muslims and Muslims from other backgrounds.

In the 1970s, however, Saudi Arabia's *daʿwa* activities within the UK took off. A *daʿwa* delegation from the IUM, which included Shaykh al-Albani, arrived in the UK and met with Asim. Two IUM graduates were also sent by Shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Baz, a major Saudi Salafi scholar who was to go on to become the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia in 1993, to strengthen the Ahl-e-Hadith *daʿwa* in Birmingham in 1975, at the request of Asim (Azami, 2000). Another IUM graduate, Muhammad Abdul Karim Saqib, also moved to the UK and joined them in November 1975. The Ahl-e-Hadith was thus a key ally for Saudi Arabia, and with the help and financial assistance of Saudi Arabia, played an important role in introducing Salafism as an alternative hegemonic conception or a new moral and practical approach to life which could potentially become hegemonic, or universal, in the UK in the same way that it had in Saudi Arabia for example. Indeed, by disseminating Salafism in the UK, Saudi Arabia and its allies were in effect introducing a new conception of the world within London's Muslim community.

Saudi Arabia's transnational *daʿwa* activities continued to expand throughout the 1980s, particularly following the 1979 Iranian Revolution which exacerbated geostrategic differences between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The revolution's anti-monarchical and anti-imperial ideology threatened Saudi Arabia and actually contributed to a Shi'a uprising in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province in 1979. These events provided a further impetus for Saudi Arabia's hegemonic project, bringing about a renewed emphasis on religious discourse in the public sphere within Saudi Arabia, and increased spending on religious projects in Saudi Arabia and beyond (Al-Rasheed, 2002; Farquhar, 2017). For example, the Muslim World League (MWL), a non-governmental organization founded in 1962 mostly funded by the Saudi government, set up its office in London in 1982. According to the assistant director, who studied at the IUM between 1979-1982, in the "good old days" (i.e. prior to 9/11) the MWL cooperated with World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), another Saudi funded international organization, in the publication and distribution of literature on Islam. They also provided funding for the establishment of Islamic institutions in the UK such as mosques. In addition, the MWL facilitated the recruitment of IUM students by hosting recruiters and writing letters of recommendation for prospective students.

The Emergence of JIMAS

Abu Muntasir, a second generation British Muslim from a South Asian background, first

started exploring Islam and preaching "Qur'an and Sunna" in the 1980s during his university years. He had connections to Saqib, the IUM graduate and Ahl-e-Hadith member regarded as a visionary by some members of the Ahl-e-Hadith movement for his early educational and publishing activities as well as attention to the youth. Abu Muntasir was also supported by another Ahl-e-Hadith figure (and IUM graduate), Shaykh Suhaib Hasan. After Abu Muntasir's Sunday circles in Leytonstone were banned by the Hanafi-committee of the mosque for its anti-*madhhab* approach, Suhaib Hasan welcomed Abu Muntasir and the youth to Masjid Tawhid, an Ahl-e-Hadith mosque in East London. Usama Hasan, Suhaib Hasan's son, recounts:

> Mum and dad were worried about the next generation growing up in a Western environment and they worried about how we would react as teenagers. […] For them, Abu Muntasir was a God send, charismatic, very devout, teaching people to be devout Muslims, [and to] study the Qur'an and Sunna [traditions and practices of the Prophet].

Similarly, due to Abu Muntasir's close connection with Saqib, the youth participated in Harakat Islah al-Shabab al-Muslimin (HISAM), Movement to Reform the Muslim Youth, an organization Saqib had founded. They soon broke away from it, however, because they felt restricted by Saqib's more reserved approach, and were "ready to reach out and engage". They also began to see HISAM as "wishy washy" after reading classical books like those by Ibn Taymiyyah.[22] Recognizing the importance of a local Salafi organization for the dissemination of "Qur'an and Sunna", the young British Muslims set out to establish JIMAS. Indeed, JIMAS served many of the same purposes that Gramsci set out for the "Modern Prince". It worked to transform theory into practice, and functioned "as an umbrella organisation coordinating a national movement" (Butko, 2004, p. 50).

Founded in 1984, JIMAS had no formal membership, and members often described it as a "loose organization"[23] or an "organic movement".[24] Abu Muntasir became the leader (ʾamīr) of the organization and Abu Aaliyah became his right-hand man as well as a prominent speaker within the movement. Although both from an Asian background, they were soon joined by three other speakers from other ethnic backgrounds Abdul-Kareem McDowell (known as Abu Sufyaan) and Abdul Haqq Baker, both converts from an Afro-Caribbean background, as well Abdurraheem Green, a White convert. A short while later, two female speakers, Uzma and Haniya (both from Asian backgrounds), joined the

---

[22] Interview with Abu Aaliyah. London. 29/08/2018.
[23] Interview with Abu Khadeejah. Telephone interview. 09/10/2018.
[24] Interview with Haniya. Telephone interview. 03/10/2018.

JIMAS circuit of speakers. Other well-known speakers and leaders of the movement such as Usama Hasan and Abu Khadeejah, also from Asian backgrounds, were younger than their counterparts and consequently joined the movement a few years later. It is perhaps interesting to note that despite Salafism's Middle Eastern link, there initially weren't any British Muslim Salafi leaders from an Arab background. This changed in the 2000s, however, when Shaykh Haitham al-Haddad, of Palestinian origin, joined the UK Salafi scene.

Working to disseminate a Salafi conception of the world, JIMAS soon developed links with Salafi scholars and preachers around the world, and was incorporated into the transnational Salafi historical bloc consisting of a diverse group of state and non-state actors in the Middle East (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Yemen, Jordan, Egypt), South Asia, and the West (e.g. the US, Australia). Yet, at the same time, members of JIMAS were very conscious of their relationship with, and independence vis-à-vis, the larger transnational bloc. For example, although offered funding on a few occasions, the leaders of JIMAS refused offers of funding because they didn't want to compromise at some point in the future (as had the Ahl-e-Hadith movement that has received much funding from the Saudi government). They wanted to remain in control of the shape and direction their *da'wa* took. "We didn't want our hands tied", explained Abu Aaliyah. Hence, members of JIMAS, and particularly Abu Muntasir, would donate "out of their pockets". This is not to say that JIMAS didn't benefit at all from Saudi funding; they often relied, for example, on free Islamic literature from the MWL and other institutions-related to Saudi Arabia for *da'wa* purposes. JIMAS's *da'wa* also indirectly benefited from Saudi-funded scholarly visits (which were very frequent during this period), as well as scholarships for study at the IUM. I comment further on the role that Saudi funding did, and did not play, in Chapters 3 and 8.

Early Salafi Mobilization

Abu Muntasir's charismatic demeanour, apparent sincerity and passion, as well as simple call to "Qur'an and Sunna" very quickly attracted young British Muslims (and non-Muslims) from different backgrounds. In the early days, Abu Aaliyah recalls that usually when someone heard Abu Muntasir preach for the first time, about seven out of ten times, they would decide to begin attending his circles regularly. The Sunday circle at Masjid Tawhid thus continued to grow (reaching about 50 to 80 attendees). After becoming

quickly committed to the message of "Qur'an and Sunna", the youth in East London began to mobilize others around it. They thus became key actors within, if not the main drivers of, the Salafi war of position, or cultural struggle, within London. Indeed, Salafi mobilization mainly operated within the realm of civil society, with actors seeking to "penetrate and subvert […] the complex and multiple mechanisms of ideological diffusion" (Femia, 1981 p. 52) within London's Muslim community. They used educational, community, and religious institutions, traditional and new media, as well as publishing houses to diffuse Salafi common sense—a set of everyday practices, beliefs, values, and behaviours linked to Salafism.

The youth would visit youth clubs, for example, seeking out new members. They moulded the techniques they used to the context they were operating in. Abu Aaliyah recalls trying to pull others to Abu Muntasir's circles by saying: "Just listen to him one time. Just come to one circle, [if] you like it you stay, [if] you don't, no problem. If it really annoys you, we'll buy you a donner kebab at the end!". Dressed in turbans, Abu Aaliyah and his friends also once got a group of young Muslim men, who were originally reluctant to attend Abu Muntasir's talks, to attend after challenging them, and beating them, at games of table tennis and football. Members of JIMAS also attended conferences run by other Islamic movements such as HT in order to try and canvass members.

The *da'wa* was not just restricted to Muslim youth or families, however, but also engaged with the wider society. Street *da'wa*, which involves setting up tables displaying Salafi literature on high streets and interacting with members of the public with the intent of proselytization, became one of the main repertoires of mobilization. Mazin, for example, a member of the Brixton Mosque at the time, would stand at the *da'wa* tables in Leicester Square every Friday night from 12am to 6am to "*give da'wa* [proselytize] to all the clubbers coming out the nightclub about the evil of alcohol, and the evil of the West, and the evil of music, and the evil of all these things". He'd also frequently spend his weekends on the high streets of London giving out books and literature to members of the public. Other members of the movement, like Green, would go to Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park where they would engage in debates with the intent of bringing non-Muslims to Islam, and more specifically to Salafism.

JIMAS speakers would regularly host talks and circles at colleges and universities which were "wide open for *da ʿwa*" in the 1980s and 1990s.[25] Leaders and rank and file members of the movement, while studying at colleges and universities, also often became influential within Islamic societies (ISOCs) and many went on to became leaders of ISOCs via elections or nominations by other ISOC members. Usama Hasan, for instance, who studied at King's College, Imperial College, and Cambridge University was ISOC president at all three during the late 80s and early 90s.

Young women associated with the movement also played a big role in university *da ʿwa* with several going on to become "head sister" in ISOCs. Although Salafism is usually known for its "patriarchal" approach to gender, in the early days of the movement, a few young women were actually quite visible in the *da ʿwa*, giving talks to audiences consisting of both males and females. Haniya, for instance, recalls that this was an effective form of *da ʿwa* as her talks often attracted non-Muslims as well—particularly when she would speak about topics like "women in Islam" at universities such as the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). This did not last long though as questions about the permissibility of women giving talks to mixed audiences began to circulate amongst the young Salafi activists. Dawood Burbank, a friend of Abu Muntasir who was studying at the IUM at the time, was tasked with asking scholars in Medina about this. He returned to the UK with a *fatwa* (religious ruling) from Saudi Arabia dictating that women should only be giving talks to mixed audiences if no men are available to impart this knowledge.[26] This ruling is tied to a larger set of Salafi gender norms, discussed in Chapter 6 in greater detail, which assumes that men are ontologically more suited for leadership for example. Most Salafi lectures have since been overwhelmingly delivered by men, with women only able to deliver lectures to female-only audiences.

In addition to university *da ʿwa*, JIMAS members also attempted to give talks and hold circles in mosques. However, besides mosques that were affiliated with Salafism such as Al-Muntada al-Islami in West London and Brixton in South London (discussed in Section 2.4), few mosques would allow JIMAS members to host circles after learning of their anti-*madhhab* approach. Members of JIMAS would thus host circles in their homes. Green, for example, had one of the largest circles on Wednesday evenings in South

---

[25] Interview with Abu Usamah al-Thahabi. Telephone interview. 13/11/2018.
[26] Interview with Uzma. London. 23/09/2018.

London that several of my participants used to attend. Uzma, who regularly attended this circle, recalls:

> When we started, people would come from all over London. […] There were people sitting on the stairs, on the passage, and Masha'Allah [what God has willed] he would feed everyone, he would cook for those circles. And they were led by himself, Abu Aaliyah and Abu Muntasir. […] It was just a buzz.

As the movement grew, other members of the Salafi community also hosted circles in their homes.

JIMAS's national conferences, often at Leicester University, attracted youth from all over the country. Hosting major Salafi speakers and scholars from different Salafi communities around the world, these conferences while only attracted about 100 people when they first began, grew to draw thousands[27] of people by the mid-90s. In addition to these conferences, key members of JIMAS would spend their weekends driving up and down the country to different places within London and the UK. Abu Aaliyah, for example, recounts a typical weekend spent doing *da'wa*:

> Saturday morning it would be a Middlesbrough circle before *ẓuhr* [noon prayer]. Then Bradford after *ẓuhr*, then Leeds at *'aṣr* [afternoon prayers], then Birmingham at night. Then we'd come back Sunday morning, for the original circle at Francis Road, the Ahl-e-Hadith Masjid, at 11 o'clock in the morning. Then from there we might split up. I might go to Southall. Abu Muntasir would go to Luton or vice versa. […] Brixton came in on the scene as well. So we would do all that, and that went on for five years as well. Every weekend without a break, no Christmas holidays, no nothing.

The movement thus quickly reached different communities in, and outside of, London due to the intense *da'wa* efforts of the 80s and 90s.

2.3 JIMAS's Transnational Links & Contradictory *Da'wa*

As can be seen in the accounts of the movement's earliest days, JIMAS's first members and speakers were either young Muslims who lacked any religious educational training or were converts who had recently come to Islam. Much learning and experimentation thus took place within JIMAS. Indeed, as Chalcraft argues, organization can be "a site of learning: a place where the educator can be educated" (2021, p. 24).

---

[27] Estimates from members of the movement at the time range from 2000-5000 attendees. Interview with Abu Aaliyah. London. 29/08/2018. Interview with Usama Hasan. London. 30/08/2018.

In the early days of the movement Abu Muntasir would simply photocopy, using his own money, pages of books he had (including translated MB literature)[28] and hand them out to those attending his circles for example. Other key members of the movement, like Abdul Haqq Baker, also started hosting Salafi circles in South London with little knowledge of Islam, let alone, Salafism. Baker recalls, "a few years into being a Muslim. I was asked [by a scholar from the Middle East]: can you do some circles in your areas, and I said I'm not a teacher; I don't have the knowledge. And he answered: 'just read.' And we started reading from the authentic texts…learning about *tawḥīd*, monotheism".

Members of JIMAS soon after became acquainted with al-Albani's Salafism in which they found a more systemized expression of Salafism. Dawood Burbank, a White convert and student at the IUM at the time, played a key role in bringing back al-Albani's books to the UK and translating them. Abu Aaliyah, for instance, was especially attracted to al-Albani's books because of their style. He explained:

> They were quoting left, right, and centre every scholar, even scholars that disagreed with the concept of Salafism! And referencing hadiths [report of the words and deeds of Prophet Muhammad] [as] authentic/not authentic, [using] footnotes. So you felt that the footnote must be really serious.

Abu Aaliyah, Abu Muntasir, and other key speakers within the movement thus started to depend more on these translations for their lectures. Between 1989-1990, Usama Hasan also translated al-Albani's *The Prophet's Prayer Described.* Because of a generous donation by Hasan's brother-in-law's father in Malaysia, 40,000 copies of this translation were published in 1993—20,000 copies were printed for Malaysia and South East Asia, and another 20,000 for the West. UK Salafi circles thus also played a role in the dissemination of English-Salafi literature beyond the UK.

Al-Albani's Salafism was also articulated within the UK with the help of IUM alumna, who not only became key speakers within Salafi communities but also authored influential publications. Bilal Philips, for example, who wrote several seminal English-language Salafi books, explained that he began to write books in the 1980s out of "necessity" as there weren't any suitable Islamic books available at the time. Salafi publishing houses and bookstores also soon appeared in the UK to help disseminate these books. Al-Hidaaya, in particular, was set up in 1993 and played a big role in the publication and distribution of books by al-Albani and other Salafi scholars. Al-Albani's

---

[28] MB literature was popular with members of the Ahl-e-Hadith, many of whom Abu Muntasir had a close relationship with early on.

condemnation of "blind following" and his anti-*madhhab* approach (which also aligned with the Ahl-e-Hadith's anti-*taqlīd* approach) thus became one of the key messages of Salafi *daʿwa* at the time.

Abu Sufyaan, another key member within JIMAS, also travelled to Jordan to meet with al-Albani in Jordan. As Wagemakers (2016b) details, in the 80s and 90s, al-Albani spent his time in Jordan teaching through informal meetings and phone calls with Salafis. Abu Sufyaan tapped into these informal networks and brought back to London al-Albani's "Question and Answer" cassettes. Al-Albani's cassette where he discusses the necessity of calling oneself "Salafi" popularized the Salafi label, and led many to start calling themselves "Salafi"—a label that was soon to become very contested.

Nevertheless, al-Albani's growing influence within Salafi communities in the UK did not preclude the articulation of other approaches to Salafism. The influence of scholars associated with the Saudi religious establishment like Shaykh ʿAbd al-ʿAziz ibn Baz and Shaykh Muhammad ibn ʿUthaymin could also be felt within the UK's Salafi community. Baker, for example, explained to me that he was left confused when the opinions of al-Albani, ibn Baz, and ibn ʿUthaymin did not coincide about matters like the niqab (the full face veil) or about where a person should place his/her hands after coming out of the bowing stage in the prayer for example. JIMAS also had links to the Kashmir jihadi group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). Abu Muntasir himself attended jihadi training camps along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and spent time fighting against communist forces in Afghanistan in 1990 (Bowen 2014). Similarly, Usama Hasan, visited a jihadi training camp in Afghanistan between 1990-1991 (Hasan, 2017). Indeed, JIMAS sent over fifty fighters to Bosnia (Bowen, 2014). In the early 1990s, Abdullah el-Faisal, a Jamaican convert who was a graduate of Imam Muhammad ibn Saud University in Saudi Arabia, also began to disseminate a Salafi jihadi current in South London in which the UK was deemed to be a Land of War (*Dār ul Ḥarb)*.

Yet, during this early period, the community seems to have been largely unaware of the contradictory nature of these diverse influences. Perhaps with the exception of the very apparent extremist jihadi discourses of preachers like Abdullah el-Faisal (who was expelled from Brixton Mosque by 1993), my participants described the *daʿwa* then as one

that had "a collective understanding"[29] and several explained that, at the time, they "didn't know there were different types of *Salafiyya*".[30] British Salafism therefore may have been presented to British Muslims as a self-evident, coherent, and unified system, but it was certainly composed of diverse, fragmented, and contradictory discourses. Indeed, as Hennessy argues, adopting Gramsci's "critical approach to ideology", helps us see ideology not as "a monolithic determining force but rather an articulated ensemble of contested discourses which comes to count as 'the way it is'" (1993, p. 76). Salafism in the UK was thus neither a simple continuation of Ahl-e-Hadith discourses, nor an exported version of Saudi Wahhabism. It was not just al-Albani's "quietist" Salafism, but also, as we saw earlier, sometimes drew on translated Ikhwani literature. It spoke out against *khurūj* (rebellion or revolution against the ruler even if he/she is unjust or corrupt) but also at times romanticized jihad in conflict zones like Bosnia and Afghanistan. Salafi discourses were thus not enunciated from just one "centre" but instead from a plurality of sites and by a multiplicity of actors belonging to the transnational historical bloc.

It was only after intra-Salafi contestation began in the mid-1990s, and perhaps also only in hindsight, that some of my participants began to recognize the presence of these divergent ideological elements within the "Salafism" of the 1980s and early 1990s. My participants recalled how these contradictions would often come to light during JIMAS's conferences. For example, in one awkward situation, some of al-Albani's students were on stage at the same time as AbdulAziz Bahaziq, a Saudi national of Indian ancestry who gained prominence as a foreign fighter in Bosnia. Yet although Bahaziq was not actually pushing for jihad at the conference, tension ensued after Shaykh Ali Hassan al-Halabi (one of al-Albani's students from Jordan) made a statement. Abdullah who was attending this conference recalls: "I remember this statement: 'It's better to spend a penny sending someone to heaven, than it is to spend a penny putting them towards their death and destruction'". Similarly, in another JIMAS conference, a Saudi scholar who had been invited to speak at the conference abruptly walked off the stage when Abu Muntasir started his talk by quoting a famous slogan of the early MB: "Allah is our Lord, the Prophet peace be upon him is our leader, Islam is our constitution, and martyrdom is our way".[31] The next chapter will explore how these different articulations manifested themselves in London during the 1990s and 2000s.

---

[29] Interview with Hafiz. 25/09/2018.
[30] Interview with Haniya. Telephone interview. 28/10/2018.
[31] Interview with Abu Aaliyah. London. 29/08/2018.

2.4 Beyond JIMAS

Although it would be hard to deny the pivotal role JIMAS played in the propagation of Salafism, JIMAS did not have sole control over Salafi *daʿwa*. Indeed, by the mid-1990s, there were clear hubs of Salafism around the country in Luton, Bradford, Leeds, Birmingham, Manchester, and East and South London which although certainly had strong connections to JIMAS, should be seen in their own light. In Brixton, for example, an "Islamic Renaissance" that began in the 1970s, led many from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds to reject Christianity for its links to colonialism and oppression, and to embrace Islam. In fact, prominent members of the early Brixton Mosque community, even before it moved to its current location on Gresham Road in Brixton, were West African and Afro-Caribbean converts (including two IUM graduates) (Inge, 2016). Prior to the 1990s, however, Brixton Mosque was not a strictly Salafi mosque. Members of the community also had links to Sufism as well as black religious movements that originated in African American communities in the US like Nation of Islam and Ansaru Allah. Therefore, according to Abdul-Karim, whose father and uncle established Brixton Mosque along with others in the community, a split in the community occurred when Salafism started to become the dominant approach in the Brixton community. Of the six Muslim families from a Jamaican background that lived on Abdul Kareem's street, for example, half remained Sufi while the other half became Salafi. The dynamics within the community changed, and several who felt that an "Arabized" Islam had encroached upon their community chose to move away.

By 1992, Brixton Mosque stopped tolerating other expressions of Islam and became exclusively Salafi at the request of Salafi youth who had become quite dominant within the mosque (Baker, 2011). Baker, who was one of JIMAS's main speakers, became the chairman of the Mosque in 1994, and strengthened the mosque's links with the Jordanian Salafi community. Brixton Mosque thus frequently held large conferences in the 1990s where Jordanian (as well as Saudi) scholars were hosted. Baker reminiscing about the strength of the Salafi *daʿwa* in the 90s recalled how both the mosque and even the hall hired from the school next door would be "packed" during these conferences.

Al-Muntada al-Islami, which was established in 1986 in Parson's Green, was also a key Salafi community during the 1990s. It was affiliated with the Sururi movement, one of the two main *jam'āt*, or networks, in the Sahwa movement of the 1980s and 1990s which

fused the political consciousness of the MB with Wahhabi theology (Lacroix, 2011). One Salafi involved in Al-Muntada since its early days explained that several, though certainly not all, imams (leaders of the prayer/mosque) at Al-Muntada had "a good relationship with Muhammad Surur" during the 1990s. Yet while Al-Muntada became the *jam'ā's* principal think tank (Lacroix 2011), it was described as a "secretive place" by my participants, that was not very open about this affiliation. Indeed, when I asked one of Al-Muntada's trustees, who helped set it up, about Al-Muntada's connection to Salafism and Sururism, he denied any connection to either of these movements and only described the mosque's approach as "Qur'an and Sunna". Perhaps this is not too surprising given, as Lacroix states, that "none of [the *jam'ā's*] known leaders has ever publicly acknowledged their existence" (2011, p. 63). The trustee did, nonetheless, highlight Al-Muntada's non-Shia and non-Sufi orientation: "The centre has always been rock hard on the Qur'an and Sunna and nothing else really. Shi'ism, Sufism, not really. […] It doesn't mean we didn't have dialogue with people. […] The thing is, they have their ways, and we have ours".

Prior to the intra-Salafi contestation that began in the UK in the mid-1990s, Al-Muntada's Sururi connection was not apparent to most of my interviewees. Instead, Al-Muntada was simply seen as a Salafi mosque on "Qur'an and Sunna". This is probably related to the "secrecy" mentioned above, but also to the fact that Al-Muntada hosted several popular (non-Sururi) Salafi speakers in the 1990s such as Bilal Philips. As the trustee recalled:

> In the earlier days, we were like a magnet for drawing in people from other parts of the UK. We had families from Hertfordshire coming on a Saturday, [and from] all parts of London. We were like a hub. We had some very inspiring shaykhs [scholars] […] I refer to those days as the golden era, right about the 90s up till 2000.

Al-Muntada also played a significant role in translating and publishing "authentic" literature, as well as producing *Al-Bayan* and *Al Jumuah* magazines. While *Al-Bayan* was a Sururi magazine that featured the writings of ideologues and thinkers related to the *jam'ā* (Lacroix, 2011), *Al Jumuah* was much less so and consequently seemed to have been more widely read. One of my (non-Sururi) participants who used to write *Al Jumuah*, for example, claimed that she chose to contribute to *Al Jumuah* because it was "non-partisan" and was only "there to spread authentic knowledge". Al-Muntada also established a primary school in 1989 and went on to establish a secondary school. It also became a key player in the Islamic charity sector—carrying out much charity work outside of the UK.[32]

---

[32] The schools are no longer operating, and Al-Muntada's charity activities have ceased.

Indeed these organizations and communities are evidence that it was not only JIMAS that experienced "success" during this period, but that a generally favourable context is also likely to have facilitated the diffusion of Salafism. Salafi speakers' and scholars' visits from other Salafi communities were possible, for example, due to the UK's relatively welcoming environment in 80s, 90s, and first half of the 2000s. Abu Usamah al-Thahabi, an African American who went on to become the imam of Brixton Mosque, recalls choosing to come to the UK (as opposed to going back to the US after attending the IUM) because it was "extremely tolerant" at the time. Moreover, due to London's geographic location and position as a global city, London's Muslim community is connected to several transnational networks that facilitated these diverse influences. Bilal Philips, for example, would frequently pass by London on his way back home from the IUM to the United States. Overseas scholars were also drawn to London not only because of its symbolic significance as the capital city (e.g. they would often give talks in Regent's Park Mosque), but for more profane reasons as well. They would ask members of the movement in London to take them to Oxford Street to shop for their wives, for example, or even to visit Hyde Park following lectures.

The 1980s and 1990s were also important years for the formation of British Muslim identity during which a large number of second generation Muslims came of age. By 1991, an estimated 47% of the total number of Muslims originally from Pakistan and Bangladesh had been born in the UK compared with 53% born in South Asia (Geaves, 1999). As Hamid argues, during this period, second-generation Muslims who were "coming to terms with [their] religion, ethnic cultures and position within British society" (2016, p. 8). A few of my participants also reported dealing with racism during this period. This was the case with Umm Ibrahim, for example, who was sometimes called a Paki growing up. Usama Hasan likewise spoke to me about how "a lot of British society, including the police and the army, [were] telling you [people from a minority background] 'you're not British'".

Several events during the 1980s and 1990s also had a major impact on the identity formation of British Muslims. For example, Salman Rushdie's controversial book *The Satanic Verses* was published in the UK in 1988. The Salman Rushdie issue led to the formation of British Muslim organizations like the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs (UKACIA) and provoked protests by various Muslim groups (Bowen, 2014, p.

90). Indeed, Hamid argues "though most people in Muslim communities did not read the book, the incident politicized them and it became a 'wake-up call' for many young people" (2016, p. 8). As briefly mentioned earlier, several wars in the Muslim World like the Gulf War and the wars in Bosnia and Chechnya, also took place in the 1990s capturing the attention of young British Muslims and prompting them to consider what these events, and their religion, meant to them.

2.5 Salafism's Social Base

Salafism's social base was not confined to Muslims from any particular ethnic or socio-economic background. In fact, as we will see throughout this thesis, the composition of the movement has continued to evolve through the years going onto incorporate people from a variety of backgrounds. When Abu Muntasir first started preaching "Qur'an and Sunna" in the early 1980s, for example, his *daʿwa* mainly attracted second-generation Muslim migrants from a South Asian background. Abu Aaliyah, he himself from a South Asian background, recalls that Salafi *daʿwa* at the start was unfortunately "a bit Asiany". It was only when members of the Brixton community like Baker joined the *daʿwa* that the movement began to encompass large numbers of Afro-Caribbean converts. Although to a smaller degree, the movement also included some White converts and converts from a mixed background. The gender make-up of the movement also shifted through the years. For example, when JIMAS first came together, men outnumbered women, but anecdotal evidence suggests that women currently outnumber men in some Salafi circles. In terms of socio-economic background, accounts from the movement's participants, suggest that many members of JIMAS, especially males based in East London and in Brixton, were of a "rough" background (e.g. had experimented with drugs and/or engaged in street fighting) and had low levels of educational attainment. Yet, as this section, which is based on my interviews with approximately 40 men and women that came to Salafism in the 1980s and 1990s, will show, the appeal of this movement was certainly not limited to this particular demographic and many university students were drawn to Salafism. Claims about the low socio-economic background of Salafis (vis-à-vis those belonging to other movements) also need to be considered in reference to the generally disadvantaged position of British Muslims and people of Afro-Caribbean descent in the UK.

While it is difficult to establish the precise representability of my sample[33] as no data exists about the composition of the Salafi movement, let alone the composition of the movement back in the 1980s and 1990s, my sample captures a large diversity of experiences with Salafism. Admittedly, it is somewhat biased towards males as only one-third of my interviewees were female, yet as the movement was composed of more men than women during its early days this may not be a gross over-representation. In terms of ethnic background, approximately half of my interviewees were from a South Asian background, 20% from an Afro-Caribbean background, 15% from a mixed-background (e.g. White-Asian, White-Caribbean), 10% from a White background, with the remaining 5% from other backgrounds (e.g. East African from an Indian origin, Arab). My interviewees from a South Asian background were all second generation migrants, as were the majority of interviewees from Afro-Caribbean and mixed backgrounds. The socio-economic background of my participants varied quite a bit. A couple interviewees had attended private schools growing up, while several others had grown up on a council estate; the majority of interviewees seemed to sit somewhere in the middle though. Similarly, some of my interviewees grew up in areas of high ethnic diversity, while others grew up in areas where they were very much a minority.

In terms of religious background, the majority of my interviewees were born to Muslim families although about a third were converts. Of these converts, about half were from an Afro-Caribbean or African background, a quarter were White, and the other quarter were from a Mixed-background. Most converts had been born into Christian families and only a couple converts reported exploring other religions such as Buddhism prior to conversion. Several though, especially within the Brixton Mosque community, had joined Nation of Islam and Ansaru Allah, or at least attended a couple meetings, prior to converting to Islam and/or becoming Salafi. Participation in these movements, as well as the relatively high number of converts from an Afro-Caribbean background in my sample, is indeed indicative of, and in line with, stories from members of the community about the "Islamic Renaissance" that began in the 1970s and 1980s in Afro-Caribbean communities in South London, which I will discuss in greater detail in the next chapter.

The converts I interviewed started exploring Islam in their youth i.e. as teenagers or when they were in their early twenties. Converts were introduced to Islam through friends at

---

[33] Here I am referring only to my interviews with 40 men and women that came to Salafism in the 1980s and 1990s, and not my interviewees in general.

school, neighbours, or cousins and extended family members providing further evidence of the importance of social ties for the diffusion of Islam (Köse, 1996; van Nieuwkerk, 2009; Özyürek, 2015; Erin, 2016), and other religions (Snow & Philips, 1980). I found that the majority of converts came to Islam first and then were later drawn into Salafi networks. Converts were inspired to explore Islam for a variety of reasons. Several started exploring Islam after coming across Muslim rituals like the five daily prayers, ablution (*wuḍū*), or even Muslim burial rituals. Nusayba, who converted to Islam in 1999 for example, first became interested in Islam after hearing about Muslim burial practices when her friend's father passed away. She remembers finding Muslim burial practices very peculiar: "Why do you have to wash the body? If somebody's dead what's the point?" After her friend explained why Muslims wash bodies and spoke to her about "souls", Nusayba says: "A light bulb just went. It was like: 'tell me more, tell me more'". Hafiz, from an Irish background, also started exploring Islam after witnessing his friend undergo a spiritual transformation upon joining Murabitun, the Sufi movement founded by Abdelqadir as-Sufi. Other converts were inspired by the good manners and kindness of Muslims they encountered. Umm Sarah, a White convert, first researched Islam after "being made to feel so welcome" by her especially generous and hospitable Nubian neighbours. On the other hand, though, less positive ideas about Muslims could also be found amongst converts prior to conversion. Umm Jamal, a member of the Brixton Mosque community, for example, recalls researching Islam after being shocked that a relative was considering becoming Muslim.

After conversion, my interviewees eventually found their way into Salafi circles via different routes. Nusayba explored mosques associated with different Islamic religious movements, before finally attending Brixton Mosque. Umm Sarah, married a non-Salafi Muslim man after conversion, yet found herself seeking more clarification about certain practices in Islam and thinking: "Where is the Sunna in our lives?" which led her to start listening to Salafi lectures. Others had friends who encouraged them, following conversion, to start attending Salafi classes in people's homes or in mosques. Salafi organizations linked to Saudi Arabia also played a role in bringing converts to Salafism. Green, for example, first came across Salafism by chance after going on *ḥajj* (pilgrimage) with Al-Muntada. He recalls: "They started talking about the *'aqīda* [creedal] point of "where is Allah". By the time they finished I was literally convinced that I wasn't, that I hadn't even been a Muslim, I wasn't even sure that my *ḥajj* was valid".

A few converts had been introduced to Islam through members of the Salafi *daʿwa*, however, and as such their initial understandings of Islam were very much coloured by Salafism. This is the case with Abdulhaq Al-Ashanti, who is currently based in South London and runs the Salafi *daʿwa* website Salafimanhaj.com. Al-Ashanti learned about Islam through his cousins who had converted via Salafi street *daʿwa* in Oxford. Abdul Latif, part of the Brixton Mosque community, similarly converted to Islam and started attending Brixton Mosque in 1997 after a Somali friend gave him Bilal Philip's book *Fundamentals of Tawhid* to read. Adam, a white convert who came to Islam in the 1990s, was also given a short book by Bilal Philips titled *Is There a True Religion?* by a classmate at school. A short while later, he was invited to attend a circle on Saturday afternoons at someone's house where he would go on to study Muhammad ibn Abd Al-Wahhab's *Kitab al-Tawhid*.

As for those who were born into Muslim families, Islam was practiced in different ways and to varying degrees in their childhood homes. Some came from "non-practicing" families such as Samir who describes his family as a "very lay, middle-class, Indian family" where members never prayed or fasted for example. Similarly, Abu Khadeejah explains "I came from a Muslim home. I celebrated *ʿId* with my family. We weren't very religious but we recognized that we were rooted in Islam". Those who had "practicing" parents, were connected (again to varying degrees) to different religious movements. For example, Umm Ibrahim, explained that her mother's version of Islam was "quite Sufi" and recalled Thursdays at her house where her mother would host gatherings in which attendees would read *sūra Yāʾ-Sīn* a number of times and make *duʿāʾ* (supplications). Indeed, a couple interviewees reported growing up in Barelvi families. On the other hand, though, a small number of interviewees also grew up in Ahl-e-Hadith families (as was the case with Usama Hasan for example) while others had parents who had become influenced by the Ahl-e-Hadith since migrating to the UK. This is the case with Amr's father who was of Syrian origin, but regularly attended Suhaib Hasan's circles at Regent's Park mosque in the 1980s. Interestingly, three of my interviewees came from "mixed" families where one parent was Ahl-e-Hadith and the other was Barelvi for example, but they reported that this wasn't a source of conflict in their family. Of those in more "practicing" homes, some reported regularly praying prior to becoming Salafi, others didn't pray the 5-daily prayers but had a "consciousness to [sometimes] pray",[34] and yet

---

[34] Interview with Maliha. Telephone interview. 12/11/2018.

others would only pray ʿId prayers and/or *al-jumuʿa* (Friday congregational prayers). Regardless of the Islam that was practiced in my interviewees' home, several interviewees made sure to stress to me that it was never a "harsh", "dogmatic", or "partisan" Islam.

In fact, when my interviewees started exploring Islam for themselves as teenagers, they did so out of their own volition and rarely following encouragement from their parents. This re-exploration of Islam usually took place during college and university years. Most joined ISOCs, either on their own or along with friends and siblings, where they came across Salafi *daʿwa* for the first time. Jamila explains: "The Islamic society in college was Salafi run [...] the fundamentals were given by [my parents], but this is actually where I started reading for myself what it meant to pray, how to fast".

Many of my interviewees who joined ISOCs encountered various Islamic groups like HT and YM (the youth wing of UKIM, associated with the South Asian Jamaat-e-Islami movement), prior to becoming Salafi. In fact, Uzma, who was a key speaker for JIMAS in its early days, gave talks on both YM and JIMAS platforms (before being asked by Abu Muntasir to choose between the two). Samir, was also drawn to HT at first and even became an HT activist for two and half years during his time at Imperial College, before eventually coming to believe that there were "many things wrong with the *ʿaqīda* and methodology of HT". Interestingly, I found that even interviewees from an Asian background attended Nation of Islam meetings prior to, or during their early years of, becoming Salafi. The popularity of these groups is certainly evidence of the larger Islamic revival that was underway during this period.

Yet although several initially interacted with other non-Salafi groups prior to becoming Salafi, they soon after (with the exception of two participants) started exclusively attending Salafi events. JIMAS conferences, in particular, seem to have played a key part in their incorporation into Salafi *daʿwa*. Abu Aisha, for instance, wanted to get more involved in Salafi *daʿwa* after leaving a JIMAS conference where he was on a "spiritual high" for three days. Following talks at universities and JIMAS conferences, most of my interviewees then went on to attend more regular Salafi circles in people's homes and mosques in their local areas. Indeed, the pace at which the Salafi *daʿwa* grew was no doubt related to the JIMAS's ability to quickly meet the demand, it had created, in different parts of London. For example, when Uzma asked Abu Muntasir how to get

involved in the *da'wa* after attending her first JIMAS conference, he responded right away. She recalls:

> He said: "look, we can come. We can start study circles in your area". I remember to this day, he arrived one evening at my house, with the whole volume of Sahih Bukhari, Muslim, and I don't know what else. I was just stunned, speechless. I thought you know, this is just an amazing Muslim.

I have thus far been speaking of converts and "born" Muslims separately, yet they were very much part of the same community. In fact, just as "born" Muslims played a role in converts' exploration of Salafism, converts also had an, albeit less direct, impact on "born" Muslims' transitions to Salafism. Maliha, for instance, after seeing Salafi converts at university practicing thought to herself: "OK one of us is mad, because I'm running towards a life that they're allowed, that's sinful for me, and they're running towards the guidance that Allah has already given me". Another one of my interviewees also recalled re-examining Islam after being embarrassed when she didn't know the answers to questions that Salafi converts within the Brixton community would ask her about Islam.

Similarly, although I only conducted fieldwork within Salafi networks in the UK, I found evidence of active Salafi networks in other countries as well. Indeed, two of my participants became interested in Salafism after coming across Salafi circles while studying abroad in Canada. Perhaps ironically, another one of my interviewees, who travelled to Egypt to learn Arabic and attend Al-Azhar, first encountered Salafism in Cairo. After becoming Salafi, a few of my interviewees also travelled to and lived in Egypt in an attempt to learn Arabic. Once there, several became involved in Salafi circles in Egypt—particularly those centred around Shaykh Usamah Al-Qusi (an Egyptian Salafi preacher). These examples are again indicative of a global Salafi revival during this time and of the interconnectedness of these different transnational Salafi networks.

2.6 Traction and Consent

In the section above, I explored who my participants were, how they first came across Salafism, and what (or who) initially drew them to explore Salafi circles. Yet this does little to actually explain how and why Salafism was articulated to this particular social base in the 80s and 90s. Indeed, simply encountering Salafism does not, in any way, guarantee its adoption. In this section I thus carefully and critically explore my participants' conversion narratives highlighting the significant ideological work at play

during the 1980s and 1990s that enabled Salafism to gain traction and consent amongst second generation Muslims and converts during this period.

When it first emerged, Salafi *da'wa* was a new, almost revolutionary approach to Islam that my participants had never come across the likes of before. In comparison to existing mosques and religious communities that were organized around older men from South Asian religious movements, Salafi *da'wa* was youthful and invigorating. Its leaders were charismatic, English-speaking, relatable, and approachable. When speaking of early Salafi *da'wa* my participants often described it as "new", "dynamic", "a revelation", "a breath of fresh air", and "quite a buzz". I found that for Abu Tayib, who had gotten himself kicked out of both the Deobandi and Barelvi mosques in Newcastle at the time for asking too many questions, Salafi *da'wa* was such a "breath of fresh air" that it was worth a five hour drive down from Newcastle to London so he could attend Bilal Philip's classes in Al-Muntada as "there was nothing up North".

Indeed, one of the most oft-repeated claims in the literature about Salafism is that it appealed to second-generation Muslims who never felt connected to their parents' version of Islam. When speaking about Salafism's appeal in the UK, Hamid argues:

> Muslims tired of what they saw as "cultural Islam" found in the Salafi perspective an approach to religious commitment which seemed to be intellectually rigorous, evidence-based, and stripped of the perceived corruptions of the folkloric religion of the Barelwis, or the "wishy washy" alternatives offered by rival Islamic tendencies such as Young Muslims or Hizb ut-Tahrir" (Hamid, 2008, p. 10).

This particular explanation for Salafism's appeal is also shared by Salafi leaders. When asked why he thought Salafism was so successful in the 1990s, Abu Usamah, for instance, argued "young people were naturally tired of that cultural Islam, growing up in the West, and the culture [of the] Pakistani homeland, and Indians, Afghanistans [Afghans], Arabs, Somalians [Somalis]". This was also an important component of my interviewees' conversion narratives. For example, recalling the first time she attended a Salafi circle, Maliha said: "an Arab translated for us, and that did a huge favour for me because that got rid of all the culture. Islam wasn't a culture anymore; it was just truth". Similarly, Farhana, explained "I liked that they [the Salafis] were not following some cultural folkloric Islam because I understood the danger of *bida'h* [a reprehensible innovation]".

Yet while second-generation migrants were undoubtedly less connected to ethnic expressions of Islam than first generation migrants were, upon a closer look, I found that some of my interviewees were not simply "naturally tired" of the way Islam was practiced

in their homes. Jamila, for example, whose mother wore the *dupatta* (a loose shawl traditionally worn across both shoulders and around the head by women from a South Asian background) and practiced "cultural Islam" only really started to question her mother's version of Islam once she met others in college practicing differently. Her friends then explained to her that this, based on the "evidence", was the right way to dress. Even Farhana and Maliha's conversion narratives above, that allude to "getting rid" of culture, need to be carefully considered as these narratives are reconstructions of conversion experiences (see Beckford, 1978; Taylor, 1976) that entail the internalization of certain aspects of Salafi ideology. For example, Farhana, as can be seen in the quote above, explains that she was attracted to Salafism because she understood the "danger of *bida'h*" taking for granted that this understanding of *bida'h* was one she had prior to coming across Salafi discourses.

Indeed, there was nothing automatic or mechanical about the "unity" that was created between Salafism and this particular social base. Significant ideological work was required to pass Salafism off to British Muslims as the only valid approach to Islam. Salafi *duʿāt* (missionaries), particularly IUM students and graduates in the West, played an important role in this process—targeting the common sense of second-generation British Muslims and converts and passing Salafism off along as "the tradition". This process involved the transmission of what Williams has referred to as a "selective tradition" or

> that which, within the terms of an effective dominant culture, is always passed off as "the tradition", "the significant past". But always the selectivity is the point; the way in which from a whole possible area of past and present, certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded (1980, p. 39).

For the Salafis, this selective tradition has involved privileging the understanding and practices of those they consider *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* (the pious ancestors), and pushing aside the understanding and practices of other Islamic traditions.

Salafi preachers thus played a key role in passing off this selective tradition as "the tradition" to British Muslims. Abu Tayib recalls how an IUM graduate explained to him "you've got to go back to the scholars themselves, because they are the ones who are going to guide you to knowing what is Islam and what's not, what is the Sunna and what is not" before going on to introduce him to Salafi scholars. Similarly, Hadia who was studying for a degree in mathematics at King's College when she came across Salafism, found it "logical" after members of the *daʿwa* explained to her that "if you want to

understand the true essence of something, you need to go to the root of it, because things change along the way and people reinterpret things". She thus began to feel that Salafism "made perfect sense".

Aware of both the Salafism that they represented and the existing culture of second-generation Muslims, Salafi *duʿāt* worked to align the messages of this selective tradition with second generation British Muslims' and converts' ideas about the general importance of knowledge, evidence, and logic for example. In interviews with some of the earliest and most prominent members of the *daʿwa* in the West I found that they were indeed quite conscious of the ideological work they were involved in. Bilal Philips, for instance, claimed that second generation Muslims had been "exposed to Western modern education, which requires critical thinking, causes people to ask why? You know, why should we do that? What is the proof for this?" He thus claims to have taken the material which he had studied at the IUM and simplified it for the students to "a level they could easily grasp and understand" and at the same time presented it in his publications "in a very logical way, a modern thinking way".

This approach seems to have not only persuaded British Muslims and converts that approaches to Islam should be judged by the degree to which they are "logical", but also that Salafism was indeed the only "logical" approach to Islam. Abdul Latif, a convert from a mixed background, for example told me that when he read Bilal Philip's *Fundamentals of Tawhid* for the first time he found it appealing because it was "rational" and "based on evidence":

> It is a comparative book; it addresses other faiths, Christianity, Judaism, and practices which are superstitious practices, like "touch wood". […] It doesn't just mention evidence, but it also does it in a very common sense rational way. […] It all makes perfect sense.

Samir who was also studying for a degree at Imperial College when he came across Salafism, explained to me that as someone who likes "rigor", "logic", and "orderliness", the Salafis were "coming with proofs" and "focusing on knowledge in Islam" which "made absolute sense".

Salafi narratives about knowledge, logic, and evidence were especially appealing to converts concerned about following the "right" type of Islam. Green, for example, explained that although he first explored Sufism with Shaykh Nazim, the Turkish-Cypriot Sufi shaykh, he preferred Salafism as it was "strongly based and evidenced in the Qur'an

and Sunna". Umar Jamaykee, similarly explained that although he had come across the TJ after converting to Islam, he was drawn to Salafism because of its basis on "the sources" and its "connection to the *ulamā'* [scholars]". The diffusion of Salafi common sense was thus facilitated by the *daʿwa*'s "claims to religious certainty" and "its seemingly limitless ability to cite scripture to back these up" (Haykel, 2009, p. 37).

Salafism certainly had a deep-reaching impact on my participants' lives. Indeed, as Weiler argues, "common sense popular ideology or practical ideologies are those that, as Hall (1980, p. 173) says 'make the conditions of life intelligible to the masses—which exercise a practical and material force by organizing their actions'" (Kenway, 2001, p. 55). Ideologies such as these are also active in "selecting and organizing and interpreting" human experience (Williams, 1980, p. 39). This impact is quite clear in the case of Mazin who became Salafi during his mid-twenties after having a mental breakdown in the mid-1990s. Mazin recalls how Salafism re-organized his life. He explains:

> It offered an entire community and life which was so important at that time for me […] There was a social life, there was a hierarchal structure, there were community activities. Everything was in this clique of people. It wasn't just: this is the way to pray. This was [also] fun, this was sport, this was socializing, this was community, this was ideology, this was education, this was everything, all tied up in one neat package.

The Salafi movement also undertook significant identity work with several of my participants developing a heightened Islamic identity after joining Salafi circles. Most also enjoyed the strong sense of community and feelings of "brotherhood" and "sisterhood" that Salafism provided.

Certain characteristics inherent to Salafism have also worked to facilitate its transmission in British Muslim communities. For example, Salafism was quite empowering for its participants. Narratives on the "saved sect", stemming from a particular interpretation of a hadith[35] were widespread and powerful. Many of my participants mentioned this hadith to me, and explained that they very much believed that they, the Salafis, were the only ones who belonged to this "saved sect". Hafiz recalls:

> We were taught that we were the superstars. We were the saviours. We were the ones who came to fix problems. So when I'm in a *masjid* [mosque], without exaggerating, I would be assessing everybody and everything all the time. I would be like some mini police force, going into the *masjid*. I'd be looking at the length

---

[35] The Prophet is recorded to have said: "My Ummah will split into seventy-three sects, all of whom will be in Hell except one group." They said: Who are they, O Messenger of Allah? He said: "(Those who follow) that which I and my companions follow" (Jami` at-Tirmidhi, 40:2641)

of people's trousers,[36] I'd be checking to see how people pray, I'd be watching how they made *wudu* [ablution], and I'd be listening to the words that they'd be saying.

Similarly, one of my female participants when describing why she participated in the *Daʿwa* explains: "I know I was sincere in wanting to bring young people to Islam. Because I could see the difference it had made in my life, and I wanted it for everybody else" but there were also elements of "egotism", "showing off", and "arrogance". Indeed, as Özyürek argues, "Salafi puritanism […] is attractive to both converts and born Muslims who did not necessarily grow up as practicing Muslims since it […] makes them feel superior to—all other Muslims" (2015, p. 130).

Because it was a new movement, participants also quickly gained prominent leadership positions. This was particularly the case, as we saw earlier, with leaders of the movement who would simply read "authentic texts" during study circles. Yet even rank and file members enjoyed authoritative positions within their communities. Akhtar, for example, very soon after becoming Salafi was asked to become the *khaṭīb* (person who delivers sermons) for Friday prayers in a prayer room next to his workplace. Akhtar would also informally proselytize on short trips back home to Pakistan. He recalls "I went to Pakistan and I gave all of these handfuls of hadith, and few Qur'anic *āyāt* [verses], and I think people were inspired". This quick rise to the top was facilitated by Salafism's approach to textual interpretation that "emphasizes a direct interface with the texts of Revelation" (Haykel, 2009, p. 36) and works to allow members to quickly become authority figures within the movement.

The fact that Salafi *daʿwa* was mainly carried out in English, and was not based around one particular ethnic group also made the Salafi community a much more diverse, inclusive, and welcoming environment for those willing to adopt its practices. One of my participants, from a South Asian background, for example, remembers the first time she saw Wraith Deen Mohammed, the African American Muslim founder of the American Society of Muslims, at a JIMAS conference, she said "we'd never seen a Black Muslim before, so that was something really dynamic". The diversity of the Salafi community vis-à-vis the more insular Muslim communities based around ethnicity also drew converts to Salafi circles. When asked if he explored other approaches to Islam before becoming Salafi, Hafiz, a convert from an Irish background, explained that in the 1990s, besides the

---

[36] Here Hafiz is referring to some Salafis' understanding (of a hadith) that men must keep their trousers from reaching below their ankles.

Salafi community, there were few Islamic communities not based around ethnicity, "you're not going to go and become a Pakistani person!" he joked. Another convert, Nusabya likewise explained that she was drawn to the Salafi community because she didn't quite fit in anywhere else. "I had no other version of Islam. I had seen other Muslims, but no real sense of belonging to other Muslims", she explains. For converts who were often confused about the *madhāhib* (which tend to be associated with particular regions of the world), the anti-*madhhab* approach was also appealing as it freed them from having to tie themselves to a particular *madhhab* (and its associated ethnic community). Abdulhaq Al-Ashanti, of Ghanaian origin recalls being confused about the *madhāhib*:

> I wasn't sure should I be Hanafi? Malaki? […] I was thinking the Hanafi thing was associated with certain geographical locations in the world, so I thought ok, Malaki, that's an interesting *madhhab*, associated with Africa, so I looked at that as well, but then when I was studying them, I sort of thought, yeah OK, yeah it's still a restrictive thing. There could be a hadith for example [that the jurist has not taken into consideration], which could also be utilized in *fiqh* [Islamic jurisprudence] as well, why not?

Al-Ashanti thus preferred al-Albani's approach to *fiqh* that drew directly on hadith. Indeed, Salafism largely appeared as a globalized, "de-territorialised", and decultured Islamic identity (Roy, 2004, 2006) to its adherents. Yet as we will see in Chapter 5, this too was, to a certain extent, the result of ideological construction and many of those who initially viewed Salafism in this light, have since doubted the de-cultured nature of Salafism—instead coming to see it, for example, as a product of Saudi cultural and religious imperialism.

2.7 Conclusion

There is little doubt that London during the 1980s and 1990s provided a favourable context for Salafi activism. This period was also important for the formation of British Muslim identity, with several events in the Muslim world prompting Muslims, especially second-generation British Muslims, to consider what these events and their faith meant to them. Many of these same events, such as the 1979 Iranian revolution, also drove Saudi Arabia, and its allies, to propagate Salafism with a renewed vigour—leading to increased *daʿwa* activities within London. Yet, it is important to note that the success of the Salafi movement during this period also cannot simply be seen as a result of Saudi funding. Indeed, the account presented of JIMAS offers a useful corrective to sensationalist accounts of the role that Saudi funding played in Salafi movements around the world, and

shows the importance of not taking the material for granted as the only key to success. As we will continue to see throughout this thesis, Saudi funding is not, as Haykel (2009), Bonnefoy (2011), Farquhar (2017) and others have argued, a sufficient explanation for the proliferation of Salafi modes of religiosity.

In this chapter, we also saw how certain characteristics of Salafism have worked, as other scholars such as Haykel (2009) have noted, to facilitate its diffusion within London's Muslim community. Salafism's narratives on the "saved sect" have been empowering, its approach to textual interpretation has allowed members to quickly become authority figures within the movement, and its ability to cite scripture to back up its claims to religious authority has also played a role in spreading Salafi common sense. Yet, again, as this chapter has shown, the diffusion of Salafism cannot be taken for granted as the result of some "mechanical" process. The ideological work performed by Salafi *duʿāt*, during this period, was also critical in articulating Salafism to second generation British Muslims and converts. Salafi *duʿāt* targeted the common sense of British Muslims and converts and sought to re-work their conceptions of the world—attempting to pass off Salafism as *the* tradition. The *daʿwa*'s narratives about logic and rationality were also quite powerful, as was its articulation of Salafism as a de-cultured and globalized Islam. This ideological work thus brought forth "a new culture, a new moral life, and a new way of seeing reality" (Gramsci, 1975, p. 2192 as cited in Boelhower, 1981, p. 582). As we will see later in this thesis, this ideological work has been an ongoing process—one that has been critical to the success of the Salafi project.

Similarly, members of JIMAS not only moulded their *daʿwa* techniques to the context they knew so well, but also used JIMAS as a site of learning and experimentation. This chapter emphasized the diverse transnational influences that could be found within JIMAS, and highlighted the often-times contradictory influences of Ahl-e-Hadith scholars, the Saudi religious establishment, al-Albani and his Jordanian students, MB texts, and even some individuals connected to a more jihadi-leaning approach. Indeed, in the next chapter, we will see how organizational debates and disputes in Salafi communities were amplified by transnational debates over what Salafism really is.

3. Organizational Dilemmas and Disputes within Salafi Circles

3.1 Introduction

> "[In 1994] we were still attending the JIMAS conferences but it dwindled to a very few in number. […] It just had lost that taste. There was a lot of infighting".[37]

> "In 1995, we had kind of split. People had lost great confidence in Abu Muntasir as a person, and by and large his alignment with Shaykh Safar al-Hawali […], and Shaykh Ali al-Tamimi, was the nail in the coffin".[38]

> -Members of JIMAS recalling their split in the mid-90s.

In the previous chapter we saw how Abu Muntasir, Abu Aaliyah, and other young British Muslims, recognizing the importance of a local Salafi organization for the dissemination of "Qur'an and Sunna", established JIMAS in 1984. As the movement grew, however, and debates raged within the larger transnational Salafi bloc about the "true" meaning of *Salafiyya,* the young activists found themselves at odds over how to best organize the *daʿwa* [religious mission] as well as over the direction that the *daʿwa* should take. These concerns and conflicts culminated in the break-up of JIMAS in 1995. Organizational dilemmas and disputes within the British Salafi community did not end there, however, but actually became more prominent following the break-up of JIMAS.

Literature on Salafism has frequently alluded to intra-Salafi contestation within communities in Algeria (Boukhars and Wehrey, 2019), Ethiopia (Østebø, 2012), Syria (Pierret, 2017), and Nigeria (Thurston, 2016) and many other countries around the world. Few works, however, have looked into the organizational dimensions of the movement in depth. One notable exception, is Pall's work on the Salafi movement in Kuwait, in which he compares the movement's organizational structure with that of the MB. He argues that Salafis' personal loyalties are stronger than their loyalties to the organization which has led to the "dysfunction of the institutional structure of al-Jamaʿa al-Salafiyya" (2020, p. 29). Another notable exception is Wagemakers' work on intra-quietist

---

[37] Interview with Akhtar. Telephone interview. 14/11/2018.
[38] Interview with Abu Aaliyah. London. 29/08/2018.

contestation in Jordan in which he discusses Salafis' informal scholarly hierarchy and attitudes towards formal organizations (2016b). Adopting an organizational lens, as we will see, helps to uncover the internal dynamics of the Salafi movement, and also moves us away from Salafi exceptionalism—or the view that these organizational debates and disputes are in any way specific to Salafis.

Indeed, disputes around leadership, decision-making, and organizational structure are not unique to the Salafi movement. The TJ movement, for example, has recently experienced an internal schism over issues of succession. Following the death of Maulana Zubair-ul-Hasan ibn Inamul-Hasan Kandhalwi, one of the TJ's spiritual leaders, in 2014, members of the movement disagreed over whether the great-grandson of TJ's founder should be the movement's sole leader, or whether a global *shūrā* (council) should instead be formed (Timol, 2019). Movements as diverse as the Chicago Dyke March (Ghaziani and Fine, 2008) and the anti-nuclear power movement (Downey, 1986) have also struggled with organizational issues. Gramsci himself, was preoccupied with "the classical question of organization, covering a much broader series of features than just the traditional requirements of decision making and coordination that characterized the communist parties of his time" (Filippini, 2016, p. 52). For him, organization was "indispensable to distinguish and establish the independence of the subaltern social group, and to express, make concrete in practice, and diffuse the collective will" (Chalcraft, 2021, p. 24).

In this chapter, I examine the different ways that Salafis have organized since the movement's emergence in the 1980s. I begin by exploring the early attempts of young British Muslims to come together under JIMAS—shedding light on the types of issues they encountered and the debates that arose. I argue that local dilemmas about decision making and leadership were amplified by debates within the transnational Salafi bloc about what Salafism is and who can and cannot be considered a Salafi. I then examine organizational disputes within quietist Salafi communities following the breakup of JIMAS, and argue that intra-quietist contestation has had more to do with Salafis' quest for purity and concerns about partisanship than the informal hierarchal structure in Salafi circles. I also comment on the implications of these organizational debates and disputes, demonstrating how these processes of contestation have led to the emergence of three distinct Salafi networks in the UK that continued to grow and develop in London during the 2000s.

3.2 ʾ*Amīr* or *Shūrā* ? Loyalty or Critique?

When JIMAS was first established, Abu Muntasir became the ʾ*amīr*, or leader. Usama Hasan recalls:

> JIMAS was essentially a one-man band. Abu Muntasir was the founder and mover and very charismatic […] he actually used to call himself the ʾ*amīr*. It was agreed too, we wanted to follow the *Sunna* you see, whatever the ʾ*amīr* said, you'd follow. So it was an obedience thing.

Members of the movement, were thus originally keen to obey the ʾ*amīr*—deeming it an obligation as per hadiths (reports of the words and deeds of Prophet Muhammad) speaking about the importance of obedience to the ʾ*amīr*. Yet, problems soon arose because, as Hasan explains, "not everyone agreed with the ʾ*amīr's* decision". After learning about the Islamic principle of *shūrā* or consultation, the young British Muslims decided to form a *shūrā* (council) that was composed of a small number of British Muslims closest to Abu Muntasir. Yet this brought about further debates about whether or not Abu Muntasir had to act in accordance with the *shūrā*, i.e. whether or not the *shūrā* was binding on the ʾ*amīr*.

As the movement grew to incorporate thousands, the young British Muslims faced additional organizational dilemmas. There were questions about the size of the *shūrā* for example, with some members arguing for a larger *shūrā* to reflect the growth of the movement. Yet attempts at broadening the *shūrā*, evoked further discussion about who should be invited to participate in the *shūrā*. The young British Muslims were also at odds about how decisions should be made within the *shūrā*. They even, at one point, experimented with voting. Hasan recalls:

> One of the *shūrā* meetings, we actually did voting, which was very much against the Salafi spirit who used to be antidemocracy and all that. We didn't call it voting, we called it the writing of names. We invited about 50 or 60, the top activists, and we wrote down [names] on a piece of paper.

Despite these attempts at a representative and inclusive organization, JIMAS suffered from leadership issues. Abu Muntasir, for example, came under fire by members of the movement for his "dictator-like" leadership. Hasan recalls for example: "We used to call him a dictator". Referring to Abu Muntasir, Abu Khadeejah also claimed: "If you didn't agree with him, he would just basically isolate you and marginalize you and basically get the word out that this man is no longer part of JIMAS". Other members of JIMAS also argued that years of being in-charge of JIMAS had taken its toll on Abu Muntasir, who over the years had struggled to maintain his good character.

These organizational dilemmas and leadership issues coincided with, and were amplified by, the arrival of debates originating in the Middle East, over what exactly Salafism is. During the Gulf War, scholars supporting the Saudi state began to warn against scholars of the Sahwa movement, such as Salman al-'Awda and Safar al-Hawali, who had critiqued the Saudi government for allowing American troops on Saudi soil. The Sahwa shaykhs (scholars) were likened to the MB and accused of only being Salafi in *'aqīda* (creed) and not in *manhaj* (methodology or practical implications of creed) (Lacroix, 2011). This had ramifications in the UK for those who associated with the Sahwa shaykhs. Shakeel Begg, a graduate of IUM who grew up in South London recalls "we never had that 'what type of Muslim are you?'. That came 1990. It really kicked off after the Gulf War. You know, these kinds of divisions and names and so on". Similarly, Samir who had regularly attended Al-Muntada during the early 1990s explained that had it not been for certain *'ulamā'* in Saudi Arabia and Jordan who began speaking about Sururism and its dangers, he would not have realized that Al-Muntada was Sururi. Abu Aaliyah also recalled how al-Albani's Jordanian students, like Shaykh Ali Hasan al-Halabi and Salim al-Hilali would advise him and other members of JIMAS, during their UK visits, to avoid these politically charged approaches to Salafism.

Yet, although UK-based Salafis became well-acquainted with these discussions, warnings about the dangers of Sururism were only heeded by some. Abu Muntasir, for example, was at the time increasingly being drawn to this politically charged version of Salafism. At the same time, other members of JIMAS, like Abu Aaliyah and Abdul Haqq Baker were starting to feel uncomfortable with the direction that Abu Muntasir was moving in. Abu Khadeejah, who was to go on and become a major player within the UK Salafi scene, also began to take issue with Abu Muntasir's leadership. He recalls telling Abu Muntasir: "We wanted Salafi *da'wa*, the implementation of Qur'an and Sunna, and you're talking like Syed Qutb, you're talking like those that the scholars have refuted, you're talking like a radical basically". Abdullah also recalled how the direction that Abu Muntasir was headed in, led him and his friends to "very quickly" break away from JIMAS. Salafi communities in Luton, Brixton, and Birmingham thus broke away from JIMAS, stopped attending Al-Muntada, and resumed a largely quietist approach to Salafism.

Abu Muntasir did not back track at that point, however, and even invited Ali al-Tamimi, an American Salafi preacher who had been influenced by the works of the Sahwa

shaykhs,[39] to the UK. Al-Tamimi addressed the Salafis in the UK in an attempt to unite them behind Abu Muntasir, yet his lecture "A Word of Advice to the Salafis in the UK" (Sulafi1407, 2009) was largely disregarded. Indeed, though there were several attempts at uniting the Salafis in the UK at this point, none actually worked. Akhtar recalls: "[There were] so many midnight meetings, where scholars would come from abroad with the intention of trying to unite the *da'wa* […] everybody would agree, and then they would disappear and then everything would just go back to the way it was".

3.3 Organization in Quietist Circles: Seeking Purity and Shunning Partisanship

In 1994 the leaders of the Sahwa movement in Saudi Arabia, al-'Awda and al-Hawali, were imprisoned by the Saudi state. The Saudi regime also began more passionately promoting more quietist articulations of Salafism—particularly the ultra-loyalist[40] Salafism of preachers like Rabi' al-Madkhali and Muhammad Aman al-Jami that emphasized strict obedience to rulers and vehement opposition to the MB (Lacroix, 2011). Meanwhile, in the UK, the communities that had split from JIMAS were becoming more acquainted with what exactly Salafism was according to these quietist and loyalist articulations. Abu Khadeejah recalls:

> Bilal Davis Abu Hakim, who was in Medina University 1994, […] he was directly narrating to me the understanding of the Qur'an and Sunna from the scholars of Medina and Riyadh in Saudi Arabia: Ibn 'Uthaymin, Ibn Baz, Shaykh Rabi' bin Hadi, and some of the other scholars of that era.

Al-Albani's students in Jordan also continued to guide the youth. During a visit to London, for example, they suggested to the young British Muslims that they needed to think about how they could take the *da'wa* forward following the JIMAS split. Although quietist Salafis in London did not establish another Salafi umbrella organization following the break-up of JIMAS, by 1996, Abu Khadeejah (based in Birmingham), and other members of the Salafi *da'wa* like Abu Iyaad and Faisal Malik did indeed establish a "post-JIMAS" *da'wa* organization, the Organization of Associated Salafi Islamic

---

[39] Ali al-Tamimi also later become a controversial figure whose *da'wa* reportedly "turned into a call to militancy" (Heffelfinger, 2001, p. 103).

[40] While many quietist Salafis are "loyal", in that they support their rulers, I refer to other quietist Salafis, like Rabi' al-Madkhali, that actively propagate loyalty to the regime, and particularly to the Saudi regime, as ultra-loyalists. For these ultra-loyalists, or "propagandists" according to Wagemakers (2017), "support for the rulers almost becomes an article of faith" (p. 16).

Societies (OASIS) (Abdul-Wahid, 2013). OASIS hosted its first conference in 1996 attracting approximately 2000 attendees.

At this point in time, when OASIS was first founded, it was originally inclusive of many of the UK's senior Salafi figures like Suhaib Hasan and Abu Usamah. By the end of 1996, however, OASIS was dissolved and Salafi Publications (SP) was set up in its place as a publishing house "for the purpose of spreading Da'wah Salafiyyah". Explaining the rationale behind this decision, Abu Khadeejah argues that: "[b]y the Autumn/Winter of 1996, we had realised that it was probably wiser not to have an organisation that attempts to gather the students and callers under one banner, and thus replicate the mistakes of JIMAS". Indeed, as we will see later in this chapter, SP has not incorporated all British Salafis, or even all quietist British Salafis.

Disagreements within, and between, other members of the Salafi transnational bloc were to soon contribute to additional disputes within the UK's Salafi community. In Kuwait, for example, Shaykh Abdul Rahman Abdul Khaliq, then leader of Jamaiat Ihya at-Turath al-Islami (the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society, or the RIHS), the umbrella organization of Kuwaiti Salafis, came under fire during the 1990s for his activism as well as for arguing that there is a fourth component to *tawḥīd*, *tawḥīd al-hakimiyy*a or oneness of the governance (Pall, 2014). Abdullah al-Sabt, Khaliq's former pupil, accused him of covertly calling for revolt against the emir in Kuwait. Quietist shaykhs like al-Madkhali and Shaykh Muqbil (of Yemen) also refuted Khaliq and warned against him. This inspired some in UK circles, like SP, to start warning against RIHS and its deviant ideas within the UK. Abu Khuzaimah, who was associated with SP at the time, recalls: "there was a need to clarify [the idea of *tawḥīd al-hakimiyy*a], because there were many becoming jihadis and *takifris* [excommunicators] based on those ideas".[41] Members of SP also felt that there was a need to counter RIHS's influence as it was actively funding and promoting conferences in the UK, as well as disseminating literature through a bookshop in London associated with it at the time called The House of Knowledge. SP thus adamantly argued that anyone who believed in *tawḥīd al-hakimiyy*a was deviating from the path of *Salafiyya*. This meant that Abu Usamah, for example, who had once attended

---

[41] This idea that jihad and *takifir* are the natural end points of politically oriented or activist Salafism is commonly propagated by quietist Salafis.

the first OASIS conference in the UK, was soon after cast aside by Abu Khadeejah because of his purported links to RIHS. [42]

The issue of obedience to the ruler was at the heart of these first disputes. For Middle Eastern countries, and their rulers, there was certainly a lot at stake. Nonetheless, political issues were not the only source of disagreement in Salafi communities. Quietist Salafi scholars and networks may not have disagreed on matters related to obedience of the ruler, but they did disagree on other theological issues such as matters of faith and unbelief for example (Wagemakers, 2016b). These disagreements turned into conflicts, following the "theological power vacuum" (Hegghammer, 2010, p. 83) that was created after the deaths of major contemporary Salafi scholars like ibn Baz, 'Uthaymin, and al-Albani between 1999-2001. Imam Umar of Brixton recalls: "In the late 90s, early 2000, the many people that we used to look to, the main *shyūkh* [scholars], who had held everything together, they passed away". These shaykhs' successors did not have the same level of charisma or legitimacy needed to unite Salafis behind them. This brought about conflict in different quietist Salafi communities around the world like Jordan (Wagemakers, 2016b). Intra-quietist contestation was not just confined to local communities, however, but also took on transnational dimensions. For instance, Jordan's al-Halabi fell out of favour with some *shyūkh* in Saudi, and was criticized by the Saudi Permanent Council for Knowledge Studies and Fatwas (*Al Lajna al-Da'ima li-l Buhuth al-llmiyya wa-l-ifta'*) for supposedly having *Murji'a* type ideas about faith (where acts are not considered a part of, or have an impact on, faith) (Wagemakers, 2016b, p. 129). Al-Halabi was also later critiqued by some Medina *shyūkh* like al-Madkhali.

These intra-Salafi struggles had repercussions for Salafi communities in the UK who had close connections with both al-Halabi and other Jordanian scholars, as well as al-Madkhali and other scholars in Medina. British Salafis were confused about who to follow after they began to hear critiques from Dawood Burbank, a British student who was based in Medina, of al-Halabi. British Salafis were also drawn into these disputes, however, due to the actions of the scholars themselves who also vied for influence (vis à

---

[42] Indeed, even after Abdul Rahman Abdul Khaliq was ousted from RIHS in Kuwait, SP has continued to warn against and refuse cooperation with RIHS as it argues that even Abdullah al-Sabt (the leader of RIHS following Abdul Khaliq) has "brought his own brand of partisanship and in-fighting into the Jam'iyyah" (Abdul-Wahid, 2013).

vis each other) over the UK Salafi community. Akhtar, associated with Brixton Mosque at the time, recalls being frustrated by the actions of the scholars during this period:

> The scholars, may Allah have mercy on me for saying this, they really did not help at all. If anything they added more fuel to the fire, especially the Saudi scholars and the Jordanian scholars, it was almost like they were enjoying what was happening, and instead of putting some sense into our head, they were actually making things worse, they were putting one brother against another brother, one group against another group.

Indeed, in 1999, an effort to unite the Brixton community (which was becoming closer to the Jordanian *shyūkh*) with the Birmingham community (which was becoming more closely associated with the Medina shaykhs) failed because of tensions between scholars associated with each community. A well-known scholar Abul-Hassan al-Misri (also sometimes referred to as Abul-Hassan al-Ma'rabi), who had close relationships with al-Halabi, came to the UK in attempt to unite the UK Salafis but was unable to get the Birmingham community on board. Al-Ashanti who was at Brixton at the time recalls:

> [Abul-Hassan al-Misri] he had a reputation for being able to bring warring factions together, so he came to the UK to try and bring Salafis together and that sort of went pear shaped. […] He was already being criticized before he even came. He did draft an agreement between Brixton, Luton, and Birmingham [SP], and some people were not happy with it.

Al-Misri's agreement was thus rejected by SP and its associated scholars. Shaykh 'Ubaid Ibn Abdillāh Al-Jābirī, a Saudi scholar associated with SP, for example, argued that the agreement was "a call to a form of *taḥazub* (partisanship) clothed as Salafiyya". More specifically, Al-Jābirī claimed that the agreement "binds the Salafis in Britain to the two Shaykhs Ali al-Halabi and Salim al-Hilaalee" making them the "reference point for the affairs of Salafiyyah" ("Repelling the Marauding Menace" n.d.). Al-Jābirī's main qualm with this agreement, then, seems to have been the weight it gave these Jordanian scholars vis à vis other Salafi scholars. The relationship between al-Halabi and al-Madkhali continued to deteriorate during the 2000s, as did the relationship between Brixton Mosque and SP. By the mid-2000s, al-Madkhali had refuted al-Halabi, deeming him "from the lowliest of Ahlul-Bid'ah" (Abdul-Wahid, 2017). Al-Halabi likewise began to critique al-Madkhali accusing him of being an extremist when it comes to critiquing other Salafis (Arabic Muslim, 2013).

By 2002, the UK's quietist Salafi community thus split into two opposing camps, with Brixton and Luton Islamic Centre on one side, and SP on the other. Following this split, the SP network became even more closely aligned with al-Madkhali and his ultra-loyalist articulation of Salafism. Though members of SP refuse the "Madkhali" label—arguing

that they only follow God (and not al-Madkhali), members of the network came to give al-Madkhali a privileged position within their network. Abu Khuzaimah who was associated with SP for more than 10 years and still holds al-Madkhali in high regard, argued "Shaykh Rabi' did a lot of things for Saudi Arabia, that other shaykhs did not do...Shaykh Rabi' at that time, he started to see the issue of Syed Qutb, and Mawlana Mawdudi creep into the Arab lands, so he started to write about it". In fact, al-Madkhali is a prolific writer and has published many books that have been translated, by SP and other Salafi publishers, to English. Al-Madkhali also gained influence within UK Salafi circles because of his position within the Department of Sunna at the Faculty of Hadith in IUM—where many UK Salafis have studied. His influence, as Meijer has argued, has been greater outside of Saudi Arabia—which perhaps isn't too surprising given that over 80% of IUM students have been international students. For his followers, al-Madkhali is also considered a scholar of great authority because al-Albani deemed him "*ḥāmil rāyat al-jarḥ wa-l-taʿdīl fī hādhal-ʿaṣr*", or the carrier of the flag of knowledge of *Jarḥ wat-Taʿdīl* (a method used to evaluate whether a hadith is strong or weak) (Meijer, 2011, p. 380).

SP's close association to al-Madkhali has meant that they too, like al-Madkhali, attack other scholars and organizations deemed to be "*off the manhaj*". As Meijer argues, transnational Salafi communities associated with al-Madkhali "participate in the fictitious discourse of slander [against opponents of al-Madkhali] and are mobilised to purify their ranks and confirm their allegiance to Rabīʿ al-Madkhalī by asserting his credentials and their loyalty to Salafism" (2011, p. 388). SP has thus, following in al-Madkhali's footsteps, issued many refutations against politically oriented approaches to Salafism, as well as problematic groups abroad such as al-Qaeda and ISIS. SP has also issued refutations against other rival quietist Salafis who have at point or another claimed the Salafi label or been deemed Salafi by others such as Brixton Mosque.

It is important to note that the SP-Brixton split has not been the end of disputes within the UK's quietist Salafi community. SP itself became the subject of refutations in the late 2000s. Within Yemen, a student of Shaykh Muqbil, Yahya al-Hajuri, turned on al-Madkhali[43] and refuted him for spreading *ḥizbīyya* (partisanship) and *bidaʿh* (a reprehensible innovation) (Rougier, 2020). This again had repercussions in the UK. After

---

[43] Al-Madkhali had originally supported Al-Hajuri's leadership in Yemen following Muqbil's death.

years of visiting and being involved in UK Salafi communities, al-Hajuri and his students began to speak ill of al-Madkhali, and consequently, of SP. As Samar who used to attend Masjid us Sunnah in Cranford (affiliated with SP) recalls: "but then the *fitna* [discord] got really bad […] Blood brothers wouldn't say *salām* [a greeting meaning peace]. People that were in Dammaj, started refuting Spubs [SP], that was huge*"*. By 2010, those associated with al-Hajuri in London established their own mosque, Masjid Al Imam Muqbil. This mosque is especially small and can only host about 50 worshippers (Naqshbandi, 2021). Jamaykee explains: "[those] who came back from Yemen, the students of Shaykh Muqbil and Shaykh Yahya, their involvement with the outside world is still very narrow. They are here, but they don't really mix well with others". Indeed, only a couple of my interviewees mentioned this mosque and/or community to me during interviews—evidence of the small weight that this network carries.

This intra-Salafi contestation has thus produced three main Salafi networks in the UK 1) the politically oriented network, 2) the ultra-loyalist network, and 3) the quietist yet not quite ultra-loyalist network. The first network, during the 2000s, was composed of Al-Muntada, and as we will see later in this chapter, other organisations like Muslim Research and Development Forum (MRDF) and Islam21C. The second network was composed of organizations such as SP, and the third organizations such as Brixton Mosque and Luton Islamic Centre. Although the organizational make-up of the Salafi community in the UK has mostly remained the same since 2010, as we will see in Chapter 7, intra-Salafi contestation has continued and the SP network, in particular, has witnessed further disputes during the 2010s.

Disputes within Salafi communities are often traced to the lack of a central authority within Salafism, and Islam more generally. Horst has argued, for example, when discussing the Salafi movement in Germany because "the form of Islamic authority to decide disputes is not stipulated in the scriptures", "internal disagreement is bound to occur" (Horst, 2013, p.66). Wagemakers, has also contrasted Islam to Roman Catholicism, pointing to the absence of a "single centre of global religious authority" in Islam and the very informal hierarchy that exists amongst Salafi scholars (2016b, p. 159). Meijer has likewise spoken about "the lack of an official hierarchy in Islam and the alternative ways authority is constructed" (2011, p. 376). Yet, the absence of comparable intra-Salafi conflicts within activist Salafi communities, that also have a similar

hierarchal structure, suggest that something else is at play within quietist Salafi communities.

For example, in their quest for purity, quietist Salafis tend to focus on seemingly minor details—an approach that, as we have seen, tends to lead to disagreements with other Salafis. Salafi values, and concerns about the dangers of *ḥizbīyya* also help to explain the organizational dynamics of the Salafi movement. Pall and De Koning have argued, for example, that "formal institutions are often regarded as harmful religious innovations (*bidaʿ*) which lead Muslims away from the true path. They [Salafis] commonly refer to this as *ḥizbīyya* (partisanship), where the individual becomes loyal to the organisation instead of God" (2017, p. 83). Quietist Salafis are thus usually concerned that creating, or belonging to, formal Salafi organizations will lead them prioritize the "organization" over the "truth".

This explains why Abu Khadeejah, when speaking about SP, is so keen to emphasize that SP is not some formal organization but a "loose alliance". He claims: "so it's basically remained like a loose alliance, that's why it's called Al-Maktabah As-Salafiyyah. It's not like JIMAS, which is Jam'iyyah Ihyā Minhāj As-Sunnah. *Jam'iyyah,* which is a society of individuals, whereas Salafi Publication was a *Maktabah* [library]". Salafis' fears of *ḥizbiyya* also partially explain why they have been cautious about establishing another Salafi national umbrella organization. Abu Tayib explains "if you had an overarching organization of Salafis, it would fall into *ḥizbiyya* or fall into like a *jama'a* [society], which would contradict the very foundation *Salafiyya* is built upon, it has to be evidence based not blind following".

This wariness of factionalism, or the possibility that groups would have more loyalty to their faction as opposed to the cause, is certainly not unique to Salafism. Gramsci has argued, for example, that within a party, "there should not exist organized groups within it which take on the character of factions" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 158). Indeed, as Chalcraft argues, "Gramsci carried on a sharp critique of organizations that became co-opted and/or bureaucratized, acting as ends in themselves, as 'bankers of men in a monopoly situation' like the Turin trade unions" (Chalcraft, 2021, p. 25). Yet, while for other parties and organizations, the solution is "collaboration of all tendencies through participation in the leading bodies" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 158), for Salafis, who do not believe in the existence of several tendencies but of only one Truth, this is not an option. Al-Halabi and al-Albani,

for example, deem organizations permissible but only if they are "ideologically sound" and "[do] not create divisions" (Wagemakers, 2016b, p. 138). This leaves Salafis caught in a Catch 22, where unifying Salafis (of differing tendencies) in some umbrella organization is frowned upon, but also where "splitting the ranks of Ahlus-Sunnah" (See Abdul-Wahid, 2016) is deemed impermissible.

Quietist Salafi circles have also suffered from leadership problems akin to those in communist parties during Gramsci's time where "the leaders not only did not enjoy the trust of the led, but had ended up by representing diverse interests dictated in the main by their own privileged position" (Filippini, 2016, p. 53). Abu Khadeejah's leadership, for example, has been the subject of critique. Commenting on the split that has happened between SP and Brixton, one of my participants argued for example: "I don't think it's a methodological difference, it was a personal difference. It was about being leader. […] These people [SP] just wanted power and wealth". Similarly, Abdullah also speaking about the Birmingham-Brixton split argues: "I think there were some personal issues". In fact, Abu Khadeejah has also been the subject of many of the same critiques that he himself has directed at Abu Muntasir during the time of JIMAS's split. Some British Salafis have argued, for example, that Abu Khadeejah's main concern is "control" of the *daʿwa*. One of my participants argued "he limits the information you can get and who you can get it from. And if you cut off all the other people, there's only you that [others] can take the knowledge from".

As we will see in Chapter 5, these organizational disputes have posed challenges for the movement. Intra-Salafi contestation has in some cases made it more difficult for the movement to retain its members. Some Salafis began to question, for example, the supposedly "organic" nature of this movement after witnessing these disputes and coming to feel that some Salafi leaders were representing their own interests as opposed to staying true to Salafism. Other Salafis also began to take issue with the amount of time, energy, and attention devoted to these organizational struggles, while other issues of greater importance within the Muslim community were being ignored. Yet, in the short run, as we will see in the coming sections of this chapter, these organizational challenges do not seem to have quelled Salafi *daʿwa*. Even in the midst of all this intra-Salafi contestation during the 2000s, all three Salafi networks continued to be active, and in some cases even grew. This intra-Salafi contestation has likewise motivated some Salafis to action— encouraging them to join SP in order to defend Salafism vis-à-vis the "innovators" and

"extremists" who also claim the Salafi label. This organizational set up has also, as we will see later in this chapter, allowed networks to pursue their own agendas—diversifying the movement and allowing it to reach new audiences. This has especially been the case with the activist Salafis who were able to reach out to a large number of young British Muslims using new discourses and methods after breaking away from quietist Salafis.

3.4 Brixton's Islamic Renaissance

During the 2000s, Brixton Mosque largely continued on the same path that it began in the 1990s. It maintained its links with many of al-Albani's students in Jordan—even those who were refuted by al-Madkhali like al-Halabi. It also continued to have good relationships with other scholars refuted by al-Madkhali like al-Misri and Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Maghraoui in Morocco. Justifying this approach, which Brixton has repeatedly been critiqued for, Imam Umar Jamaykee argued: "[The battle between the scholars has] been going on for 15 years. […] So Brixton, the line that we took, with discussion with many of the scholars, is that we're not going to get involved". He explained that although many Salafis in the UK had in the early 2000s decided to align themselves with al-Madkhali, he questioned the need of any community to "go back to one individual". Others, who are part of this larger network, like Abu Usamah (former Imam at Brixton), have also expressed their dissatisfaction with those who align themselves with Al-Madkhali. Abu Usamah argued: "even now, Salafi people are fools, you have those people who believe *Salafiyya* is the sole property of Rabiʿ al-Madkhali, whatever he says and does, you have to follow that, and I've never seen this as something that Salafi people were on".

During the 2000s, Brixton and SP's ideological orientations remained quite similar. In fact, some British Salafis (particularly those associated with more politically oriented approaches to Salafism), refer to Brixton as Semi-Madkhali or Madkhali-lite, arguing that Brixton's approach has the quietist-loyalist element, but isn't quite as aligned to al-Madkhali. Brixton has certainly propagated quietist discourses through the years. Imam Umar explained that, at Brixton, they have never "encouraged" voting or political engagement. This is of course not surprising given the network's close connection to Jordan's quietist scholars who have been, as Wagemakers argued, "domesticated" by the state (2016b, p. 119). Brixton's approach to *fiqh* [Islamic jurisprudence] has also been inspired by al-Albani.

Even though it was in the midst of disputes with SP, the 2000s were a particularly active time for Brixton Mosque. 9/11 and 7/7, despite being a tense time for Salafi *da'wa*, provided members of the *da'wa* with an opportunity to reach out to non-Muslims to correct misconceptions about Islam. Brixton Mosque thus continued to welcome scores of young British Muslims and new converts particularly from African and Afro-Caribbean backgrounds. Al-Ashanti recalled: "We were still doing our *da'wa*, explaining that this [9/11] is different from Islam, so it was actually an excellent opportunity. A lot of people became Muslim at that time actually". Umm Jamal, also in Brixton at the time, reported that the number of classes and *da'wa* activities hosted at Brixton Mosque did not decrease in the aftermath of 9/11, and "if anything there were more classes for new Muslims".

Indeed, many of the participants that still attend Brixton Mosque today, first started attending Brixton between 2004-2008. Both my male and female participants reminisced about the high level of energy and activity within Brixton during this period. Abdul-Karim recalled: "So when I started practicing in 2004, young Black men, started to come to Islam, but it wasn't prolific until 2005, when there was just this boom from people in the area, taking their *shahada* [Islamic oath] and accepting Islam". Brixton's street *da'wa*, debates at Speaker's Corner, and *da'wa* activities for college and university students were in full throttle. Yet, while the number of new Muslims can certainly be traced to Brixton's *da'wa*, there seems to have been a more general Islamic renaissance amongst the Black community. Rap and hip hop played a role in exposing members of the Brixton community to Islam, and shaping their identities, as has been the case in African American communities (e.g. Turner, 2006) and other marginalized communities in Europe (e.g. Özyürek, 2015). Ibrahim, who comes from a Rastafarian background, was one of the people who converted to Islam during this period. He recalls "it was like a wave of confidence, people openly saying this is Islam, before then I hadn't known what a Muslim was".

Many of those who started attending Brixton Mosque at the time were then exposed to Salafism. Karima, who was attending a university in London in the mid-2000s, although had attended the Nigerian mosque with her parents growing up, began to learn about "authentic" Islam after being encouraged to visit Brixton Mosque by a friend at university. She recalls: "I started learning about Islam through being encouraged [to] do

actions, and make sure that they are authentic and make sure they go back to the Qur'an and Sunna, and I was coming to classes here [in Brixton Mosque]". Likewise, Umm Somayah, for example, from an Algerian background, who chose to attend Brixton Mosque because of its ethnic diversity and welcoming environment, also learned about the correct "*manhaj*" while at Brixton. She explains "I understood by *aḥādith* [hadiths], what we should follow is the Qur'an, obviously, the Sunna of the Prophet *ṣalla Allāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam* [Blessings of God and Peace Be Upon Him] and his companions".

It is also important to note that although Umm Somayah and Karima both started attending Brixton while studying at university, Brixton also attracted individuals from other backgrounds during this period. Al-Ashanti, who was part of Brixton Mosque's administration at the time, spoke of how between 2005-2011, for example, Brixton was working with and mentoring Muslim prisoners. Following their release, some of these prisoners, seeking help in rebuilding their lives, would then go back to Brixton Mosque. During that same period, several gangs in the area also adopted Islam. Brixton thus largely continued to draw newcomers for much of the 2000s.

3.5 Salafi Publications: Birmingham & Beyond

The 2000s also saw SP, a new player on the scene, flourish into an extensive Salafi network to be reckoned with. By 2002, SP had split from the quietist Salafi communities of Brixton and Luton. It had also split from Green Lane Mosque—going on to establish its own Salafi mosque in Small Heath, Birmingham. SP's influence was not limited to Birmingham however. Indeed, by 2010, SP had two mosques affiliated with it in London—one in Cranford and the other in Shepherd's Bush. Although SP did quickly grow into a strong organization with arms all over the country, when recounting SP's establishment to me, Abu Khadeejah was very careful to stress that SP is not some sort of formal organization aiming to "control" other mosques. He argues "we're not like Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith from India and Pakistan in the 1970s. They set up a society called Jamiat Ahl-el-Hadith. So they had a mosque that they controlled from a central point, which is Green Lane Mosque in Birmingham". Instead, Abu Khadeejah claims to have simply encouraged people in other cities to "open up another mosque and follow the same principles which we are following". Although he admits that a hierarchy does exist within SP, he argues that this hierarchy "works by way of superiority in knowledge and practice

and *taqwā* [God consciousness]" which means that "it's not about an organization anymore, it's about Godly qualities". Abu Khadeejah's insistence that SP is about "Godly qualities" and not control, relates of course to the Salafi-wariness of formal organizations discussed above, but is also likely to stem from Abu Khadeejah's concerns about SP's image as critics of SP have often likened it to a "cult".

Indeed, it would be hard to deny the centralized nature of the SP network that began to develop in the 2000s. While other SP mosques have developed around the country, Birmingham, remains the centre of this network. Likewise, while SP has several leaders, Abu Khadeejah has continued to be the main personality behind SP. His leadership has also been key to the success of SP. He is a hands-on leader, who though based in Birmingham, continues to have quite a strong hold over the London movement through regular visits to SP affiliated mosques during the weekends and regular communication with SP members in London. He is also regarded as a highly intelligent and learned individual. Even critics of SP, will often concede that Abu Khadeejah is a charismatic, well-spoken, and intelligent individual. For example, one of my participants who went to university with Abu Khadeejah, though critical of SP, argued: "[Abu Khadeejah] was brilliant even when I was at university, he taught himself Arabic, he was very, very intelligent".

SP has been instrumental in spreading an ultra-loyalist articulation of Salafism on behalf of scholars like al-Madkhali, but there is no doubt that SP has also benefited from affiliating themselves with these scholars. SP relies on these scholars, and particularly al-Madkhali for refutations against UK-based competitors. Al-Madkhali has, according to SP, issued a refutation against Abdul Haqq Baker, for example. Al-Madkhali is quoted saying: "It appears that ʿAbdul-Haqq [Baker] and those with him are upon the methodology of Abū al-Hasan and his false principles". These scholars have also issued statements in which they recommend SP. On a page on Abu Khadeejah's website, for example, addressing the "Permissibility of Asking the People to Aid in the Building of a Masjid" Abu Khadeejah quotes a statement by Muqbil in 1998, in which he says:

> Our Brothers for the sake of Allaah, the Salafees, the brothers at the 'Salafi Bookstore and the Islamic Centre' in the city of Birmingham in Britain are mentioned with righteousness and love for the Sunnah […] I hope that our brothers from Ahl us-Sunnah agree to co-operate with them financially and spiritually for they are deserving of that (Abdul-Wahid, 2014).

By imploring Salafis to co-operate financially with SP, Shaykh Muqbil has certainly done them a great service. Indeed, SP's success is at least partially linked to its ability to raise funds—allowing it to distribute much Salafi literature, run Salafi schools, host many Salafi classes and conferences, operate a large network of websites, run bookstores, as well as purchase and rent several mosques through the years. SP's success is often assumed to be the result of foreign, particularly Saudi government, funding. Yet, Abu Khadeejah explained that SP has depended on community donations. He argued: "With respect to ourselves, there's not a penny that we've received from any government, not from the UK government and not from any Middle Eastern government, and certainly not from Saudi Arabia". Reports detailing Saudi government spending on mosques in the UK seem to corroborate this. For example, a report presented at a conference at IUM in 2002, detailed that Saudi funding has overwhelmingly been aimed at Deobandi mosques in the UK—as well as a few Ahl-e-Hadith mosques (e.g. Green Lane Mosque in Birmingham and Masjid Tawhid in London) (Hasan, 2002). It is quite possible that the Saudi government has shied away from supporting Salafi mosques in fear of any bad publicity. Yet, this of course does not preclude donations from non-state actors in the Gulf, indeed SP frequently thanks its "generous brothers and sisters in the Gulf" for their donations.[44] SP's financial success is also linked to its successful publishing activities.[45]

3.6 Activist Salafis & the West

The majority of this chapter has thus far been focused on the UK's quietist Salafi networks, yet politically oriented Salafism did not disappear from the UK Salafi scene following the JIMAS split. In addition to Al-Muntada, new organizations like Islam21C and AlMaghrib began to appear and make headway in the UK—and especially in London during the 2000s.

As we saw earlier in this chapter, many Salafis began to distance themselves from Al-Muntada upon learning of its Sururi roots. Yet, all was not lost for Al-Muntada, as by the early 2000s, it offered a job to Shaykh Haitham al-Haddad—a Palestinian born in Saudi

[44] A tweet by an account linked to the SP mosque Masjid Sunna Aston reads: "After news of the appeal reached brother & sisters in Kuwait & the gulf, we have received a hugely generous donation of £103,092.78!!!" (Masjid Sunna Aston, 2019).
[45] In 2014, for example, SP reported a total bookstore and publications income of £262,740 This is the total amount raised during the 18 months period preceding 30th September 2014 (Charity Commission, 2019).

Arabia who had studied with well-known Salafi shaykhs—most notably Ibn Baz. Al-Haddad had witnessed the debates over Salafism in Saudi Arabia—during what he calls "the peak of the Sahwa". He recalls:

> I was listening of course to the debate, of course, as a young person, I was not really very happy that the American troops are coming and fighting Iraq. And you know, why couldn't Saudi Arabia solve the issue with Iraq? And is it just a simple agenda, that Americans are simply helping Saudis against the Iraqis? Or there is a bigger agenda to destroy Iraq and to create problems in the area?

During the same period that the Sahwa was losing ground and many of its members were imprisoned, al-Haddad began to contemplate leaving Saudi Arabia. He recalls: "I realized because I was not Saudi, that my future in *daʿwa* and as a scholar, as I wanted to be, is limited in Saudi Arabia". Al-Haddad, although states that he never met Surur nor read much of his work, was happy to join Al-Muntada as he saw in it an opportunity to have an impact.

Al-Haddad arrived in London in 2001—quickly becoming a key speaker and authority figure within this network. Throughout his five-year stint at Al-Muntada he introduced many British Muslims to Salafism. Hadia, from a South Asian background, who was attending university in London during the early 2000s, recalls visiting Al-Muntada for Friday prayers and *tarāwīḥ* (Ramadan prayers), and coming across al-Haddad there. She says "I think that was my first time going to an official talk that was more on that side of things—Salafi". Because al-Haddad became quite involved in discussions relating specifically to Muslims in a Muslim-minority setting, several British Muslims were drawn to his lectures. Al-Haddad became a key point of reference for some Salafis on topics like the niqab (full face veil) and Islamophobia (particularly in the wake of 9/11). His attention to these matters, as well as his position as the only UK-based Salafi "scholar", meant that young British Muslims concerned with authenticity and knowledge in a Western context were drawn to him.

Al-Haddad also played a key role in the politicization of British Salafism, not only by speaking up about (and in some cases against) the issues concerning UK Muslims, but by encouraging Muslims to vote in UK elections. Al-Haddad was the first Salafi scholar to issue a *fatwa* (religious ruling) in 2003 that deemed it permissible for British Muslims to vote in UK elections. He explained that although back in Saudi Arabia he had studied "the classical way that democracy is against Islam" a few years after living in the UK he changed his views and began to be "pro voting and the democratic process [within the UK context]". In an article published on the Islam21C website, he explains [v]oting itself

is not obligatory or recommended according to Islamic law, rather the aim behind it is to achieve the greatest benefit for Muslims or avoiding evil" (2006). This *fatwa* was, and still is, quite contentious, however, given that democracy is seen by many Salafis as rule by the majority as opposed to rule by God. Yet, while some Salafis may have disagreed with al-Haddad's *fatwa*, several others welcomed it. Farhana for example, explains that al-Haddad helped people understand that: "one of your roles is *al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-n-nahy ʿani-l-munkar*. It's to forbid negative and promote the positive/the good. […] So when you're casting your vote, that's your intention". Al-Haddad has thus encouraged British Muslims to vote for the candidate or party that would be least harmful to the UK's Muslim population.

Al-Haddad's discourse has also departed from typical Salafi discourses that encourage *hijra* [religious migration] to Muslim countries (so that Muslims can escape the land of *shirk* [polytheism]) and instead encouraged Muslim youth to think about ways to be productive in the UK. After spending five years with Al-Muntada, al-Haddad left to set up the Muslim Research and Development Forum (MRDF) in an attempt to realize his goal of "home-grown" scholars and imams (Islamic leaders). He recalls: "I found that the discourse of so many *dāʿīs* [*duʿāt,* missionaries] who come from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, from the Middle East, [and] Morocco is not the best discourse to be delivered for [a] UK audience". This idea of local scholars contrasted with the prevalent view in quietist Salafi circles that there are no scholars based in the UK (or the West in general) and no need for them either—an opinion which became the point of further contention between al-Haddad's network and other UK Salafis.

Several young British Muslims were drawn to studying and working with al-Haddad in the 2000s—going on to play important roles in his various organizations. Asif Uddin, who learned about al-Haddad from some of his friends, explains:

> I've been involved since MRDF's inception. […] The main part of MRDF, what it represents […] is how to contextualize Islam in the 21 century in the West. We're finding that Islam is being put down a lot, how do we hold onto the principles of Islam without putting them down in an environment we live in?

Similarly, Dr. Salman Butt, who also learned about al-Haddad from friends, was to go on and play a key role in the development of the Islam21C website. Islam21C, as Butt argues, "follows the same type of world view and thinking and values of MRDF, in terms of orthodoxy, in terms of a consensus inclined, in terms of a hereafter centricity, religious pride and confidence, and pushing for *tarbiya*, cultivation, of the Muslim masses". Yet,

Islam21C also publishes news articles and opinion pieces that are quite "political". Butt explains: "Over the years, [Islam21C] it just became a bigger entity in and of itself. […] It's a separate organization because we needed independence just so we can talk about things that maybe a charity can't talk about, and political campaigning, that kind of stuff". As such, the development of Islam21C was both a consequence of, and cause for, the further politicization of UK Salafism.

Al-Haddad was not the only one who was influenced by the Sahwa while studying in Saudi Arabia. Shakeel Begg, who was born in Kenya but moved to the UK at the age of seven, also witnessed the debates taking place in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War when he was studying at IUM. In fact, Begg recalls already being drawn to an activism-centred approach to Islam prior to traveling to Medina. He explains:

> I think initially I always had this sense of feeling for the oppressed, without Islam. […] A lot of my friends were actually Afro-Caribbean, in my primary, but secondary school mainly, so their struggles, and the struggles of the slave trade, so thinking about them, thinking about the Native Americans, thinking about the Palestinians, even though I wasn't religiously orientated, that kind of resonated with me. That kind of led me to look into faith.

It is during his time in Saudi Arabia that Begg began to align with the Sahwa shaykhs. He recalls: "there was a big push to say [in Saudi], look, you can't go against the rulers, rulers have to be obeyed and followed. […] That, I found problematic". He thus began to listen to, and take inspiration from, al-'Awda and al-Hawali. Upon his return from IUM, Begg became imam of Lewisham Mosque and began, like al-Haddad, to focus on Muslim engagement in the UK. He explains how he used to encourage young Muslims to engage "look you're in this environment, this is part of the system. Benefit society, benefit yourself, look after the rights of Muslims, of minorities!" Begg has since the 2000s engaged in activities, quite atypical for those returning from IUM, like inter-faith, community councils, and even gang-mediation. Indeed, as one of my participants who looks up to Begg explains:

> [Imam Begg] He's been working for the last 20 years locally, and he managed to make an impact in the South East. He's got respect from the Metropolitan Police, from the churches, the hospitals, because he managed to unite the community. Not just Muslims, the wider community. Interfaith, community work, so even any social issues, if its Black History Month, if its youth crime, drugs, mental health. He's involved in it.

Around the same time that actors like al-Haddad and Begg were exploring an activist type Salafism in the UK, IUM returnees in other Western countries like the US and Australia were also establishing their own local Salafi-inspired organizations. In 2002, Muhammad

Alshareef founded AlMaghrib Institute in the US while a few years later, in 2005, Tawfique Chowdhury founded AlKauthar Institute in Australia. Yasir Qadhi, who became the face of AlMaghrib after returning from IUM, explains:

> I essentially taught basically Najdi theology, ibn Abd al-Wahhab's understanding of Islam, in a very modern format, interactive format. I Americanized Wahhabi theology, and people loved it, and [they also loved it] when I talked about aspects of Wahhabi theology that were relevant to America.

AlMaghrib also began hosting seminars in the UK, in fact, for AlMaghrib, the UK became, according to Qadhi, a "very important market".

As Farhana, affiliated with this network, explained to me: "In the early days, people used to say, this is not like a course, it's like a movie poster, and these *shyūkh* are these Brad Pitts. And I remember telling my friend, I'd rather my daughter went to this than a Brad Pitt movie". Yet, it is important to note that this Americanized movie-poster type Salafism was also deemed inauthentic by some. As one of my participants Ikraam explained:

> The idea of celebrity shaykhs, which is an American thing. It's just part of the culture, we're very resistant to that, as a British people, but also as Muslims as well, because we're still very much, if you're big, are you really doing it for the sake of Allah? […] We associate that with inauthenticity.

AlKauthar Institute also became a key player in the UK during the 2000s—hosting courses for students in the UK that were again aimed at not only imparting Islamic knowledge but "facilitating every student in civic action" ("What Course", n.d.). Though it appealed to many of the same people as AlMaghrib, a few of my older participants seemed to prefer AlKauthar. Zareena, for example, though listened to both AlMaghrib and AlKauthar lectures, preferred AlKauthar's style, deeming it more rigorous.

This section has examined a variety of different actors that can be said to very loosely compose a network. Yet, it is important to note that although these actors share many similarities and often cooperate with each other, their exact ideological orientation varies. Although certainly more engaged than quietist Salafis, the leaders, and members, of these networks vary in the extent to which they are politically active. For example, though Al-Muntada is known for Sururism, this is not to say that all imams at Al-Muntada affiliate with this movement or even advocate political participation. One of the imams that I spoke to at Al-Muntada, for example, said to me in frustration: "If you came here you'd be called a Sururi, but I'm not upon it". This imam actually takes a very cautious approach when it comes to "politics", explaining that he "never talks about politics publicly". In addition, he doesn't advocate political participation, the way that al-Haddad does for example, as he believes that it is unlikely for Muslims to be able to change the

establishment. On voting, he argues: "It's not something you absolutely have to do, or something that you should ignore completely. I think you should understand where you are and if it's necessary to get involved". The diversity within Al-Muntada is no exception, as I have found that even those who affiliate with Islam21C, for example, differ in their approach. Indeed, as Asif Uddin, of Islam21C, explains "there's lots of differences, and nuances, in the way that people like to engage in politics" citing letter-writing campaigns, working in local councils, signing petitions, voting, and even running for office. This loose network did, nonetheless, introduce an activist-centred Salafism to London during the 2000s—going on to become, as we will see in Chapter 7, even more politically oriented in the 2010's.

3.7 Conclusion

When young British Muslims came together to follow and disseminate "Qur'an and Sunna", they were faced with several dilemmas, typical of any new movement, over how to best organize the *daʿwa*. Questions around decision-making and leadership, in particular, evoked much debate within the movement. These debates were amplified, however, by the arrival of arguments within the larger transnational Salafi bloc over what exactly constituted Salafism, and who could and could not be considered a Salafi. Following the JIMAS split in 1995, conflicts within quietist Salafi circles raged on—again driven, at least in part, by disputes within transnational quietist Salafi networks. These disputes, I have argued, have had less to do with the authority structure within Salafi networks, and more to do with quietists' quest for purity and concerns over partisanship and factionalism.

These organizational debates and disputes have led to the emergence of three distinct Salafi networks, that diverge particularly on matters related to *manhaj*, but share many other Salafi principles. The first of these networks, the politically oriented network was composed of those who were drawn to the politically charged approach of transnational Salafi scholars like al-'Awda but also local Salafi leaders like al-Haddad. The second network, the ultra-loyalist network was mostly composed of SP, and had very close connections to ultra-loyalist scholars such as al-Madkhali in Medina. The third network, the quietist yet not quite ultra-loyalist network, became closer to, and largely followed the Salafism of al-Albani's students in Jordan.

These organizational challenges and disputes, as we have seen in this chapter, have thus not quelled Salafi *da'wa*. Indeed, each of these Salafi networks grew, and developed, during the 2000s. SP, for example, flourished into a strong organization with mosques and centres around the country. Brixton Mosque, though did not develop into a nation-wide network in the same way as SP, came to incorporate a large number of British Muslims and converts, particularly from a Black background, into its *da'wa*. Finally, the activist Salafis came to form a diffuse but significant network of mosques and organizations, mainly due to the efforts of al-Haddad. In the next chapter, I demonstrate how JIMAS and the three networks that grew out of this intra-Salafi contestation, have been the main players of the Salafi war of position, and have worked to organize consent and diffuse Salafi common sense within London's Muslim community. Indeed, as we will see, Salafism was neither diffused by a sole leader, nor the centralized, directive will of a single organization. Instead the "collective will" was "made concrete" by three overlapping and sometimes competing networks, which have continued to change and develop over time.

4. The Salafi War of Position

4.1 Introduction

In 1994, Abdur-Rahman ibn Yusuf Mangera, a twenty-year old Darul Uloom graduate, returned to his home in London after spending the last four years studying at a largely-isolated Deobandi seminary in Bury, the UK. Yet, soon after his return, Mangera began to realise that things in London were not as he had left them. He began to hear, for example, that several members of his community had adopted Salafism during his absence. He recalls: "You'd hear: 'Oh, he's become Salafi.' What does that mean? 'Oh, he's rejecting everything'". For Mangera, and many others in the Deobandi community, this was the first time that they had come across the word Salafi. "There was a lot of confusion going on", Mangera recalls. Certainly, in the few years that Mangera had been away, the Salafi movement had taken off—launching polemics against other approaches to Islam, and posing an unprecedented challenge to existing Muslim actors in the UK like the Deobandis and Barelvis.

It is perhaps little surprise that the Deobandi and Barelvi movements, South Asian Hanafi movements which have characteristically been dominant amongst the British Muslim community since the 1960s, have been the subject of Salafi critiques. Indeed, as Butko argues "it is only by demonstrating to society in general that its conception of the world is superior to the 'common sense' view of the current hegemon that such a force can 'win over' the masses to the counter-hegemon's" (2004, p. 57). Salafis have also, in some instances, come face to face with, and worked to invalidate, other Islamic movements such as HT, YM, and the MB, when vying for influence within key Islamic institutions in the UK like mosques and university ISOCs. The Salafi war of position has thus involved "an intense labour of criticism, […] diffusion of culture and the spread of ideas (Gramsci, 1977, p. 12, as cited in Sassoon, 1980). This "labour of criticism" has also, as we have seen in previous chapters, been related to "[a] deeply rooted sectarianism, marked by a desire to "purify" Islam of what [Salafis] see as heterodox accretions such as "innovations" (*bidaʻ*) or polytheism (*shirk*), especially Shiism and Sufism" (Wehrey and Boukhars, 2019, p. 7).

The relationship between Sufis and Salafis, in particular, has been the subject of much discussion. Within public discourse on radicalization and extremism, for example, Salafis and Sufis are often pitted against each other as polar opposites, with Salafis usually associated with violence, and Sufis depicted as peace-loving. The literature has also mostly focused on the differences and conflicts between Salafis and Sufis (e.g. Brown, 2011; Knysh, 2007; Ridgeon, 2015). Yet, more recently, some scholars such as Hamid (2016), Thurston (2016), and Fouad (2020) have started to explore the more subtle aspects of the relationship between Salafis and Sufis in different contexts. They have suggested, for example, that Salafis and Sufis may influence each other and that, as Fouad has argued, they may not exist in "a solely antagonistic relationship in contemporary Sunni Islam" (2020, p. 1).

In this chapter, I too move beyond the framing of intra-Muslim contestation as one of simply antagonism. I examine the ideological struggle that has taken place between Salafis and Sufis, but also between Salafis and other Islamic movements. I thus explore the Salafi war of position in more depth, paying particular attention to the dynamics of this contestation, as well as to the debates that raged between Salafis and other Islamic actors within London's Muslim community between the 1980s-2000s. I argue that Salafism not only challenged the authority of other Islamic actors in the UK, but also in many cases set the terms of the debate. Indeed, I find that during the 1990s, the Salafis though certainly not dominant in terms of numbers, had the power to define how Islam was verified and validated within London's Muslim community. This is especially apparent when one notes, for example, how groups like the Deobandis and Barelvis found themselves using textual evidence in arguments against the Salafis. At the same time, however, I argue that Salafi successes have not gone unchallenged as during the 2000s, the TI movement began to grain traction and challenged the Salafis' moral and intellectual leadership.

4.2 The War of Position in British Universities

As discussed in previous chapters, Salafis have worked to construct a "new moral and intellectual order" (Gramsci, 1957, p.7) via a war of position, or struggle within and against the different apparatuses of civil society. Within this war of position, university campuses have been a key site of contestation—particularly during the 1990s. Indeed, universities during this period provided a favourable setting for all types of student

activism. Yahya Nisbet, an HT activist at the time and currently HT's media spokesman, recalls: "There was a lot of public debate in the universities, debates with secularists. [We were] debating with atheists, debating with socialists, with everybody. […] And it was before there was a lot of scaremongering, so most people were willing to have a debate". University ISOCs, in particular, were the subject of much contestation with different Sunni and Shiite groups vying for influence. Usama Hasan recalls "it became a battle for control. Literally, we would celebrate when an ISOC was taken over by Salafis".

By the end of the 1990s, the Salafis and HT were the two most influential Islamic groups at many British universities, such as the University of Westminster. Thinking back to her university years, for example, Maliha explained "you really were in two groups, you were either in JIMAS or HT". HT was thus, without a doubt, a major concern for the Salafis during this period. Haniya, one of the first female Salafi speakers, recalls: "As much as the Salafi movement was apolitical, they [HT] were fully at the other end of the spectrum […] so there was this war of ideas going on as well". Indeed, for the majority of Salafis at the time who had adopted a quietist approach to Salafism, HT's explicitly political goal of re-establishing the Islamic Caliphate, was problematic at the least. As Mazin recalls:

> Hizb ut-Tahrir, we considered them as absolute deviants! These guys were completely crazy, for a start! They didn't even have beards, a lot of them. And they wore Western clothes, and they didn't know what they were practicing. And ideologically it was a deviant belief that they were on. They were trying to do politics, and *Salafiyya* wasn't about politics.

Many Salafis thus ardently warned against HT's deviant political ideology. Bilal Philips, who was one of the most influential Salafi leaders in the West at the time, recalls: "I warned people of some of the ideas which they [HT] had […] their idea was just Islamic state or nothing. Whereas I tried to encourage people to develop those communities, to develop the components necessary of community, schools, and to live together".

Salafis also warned against HT, during this period, because of HT's supposed relationship with Shia Muslims. Nisbet, associated with HT, explains:

> It's very well known that HT sent a delegation in 1970s to Ayatollah Khomeini to you know, negotiate with him and stuff. This is a constitution we've written. Perhaps you should adopt this. He rejected it. But we used to get this accusation in the 1990s saying: "oh you people are friends with the Shia, how could you?!"

Indeed, although HT's origins are Sunni, and the majority of its members are Sunni Muslims (Karagiannis and McCauley, 2006), the Salafis used the incident mentioned above to critique HT. For example, Abu Khadeejah argued, during our interview, "people who were with the Shia and were pro- Khomeini were mixing freely with HT, and they

were basically feeding off each other because their goal was a political goal". British Salafi attitudes towards the Shia, during this period, largely stemmed from Saudi Arabia's rivalry with Iran and the fact that "[m]any of the tracts and sermons produced during this period underscored the sectarian and especially anti-Shia tenets of Wahhabism" (Wehrey and Boukhars, 2019, p. 10).

Another major point of contention between HT and the Salafis was "punishment in the grave".[46] Samir recalls "a big controversy in the early to mid-90s was that Hizb ut-Tahrir do not have a 100% belief in punishment of the grave, *'adhāb al-qabr* '". Members of HT, were in doubt about, and in some cases denied, punishment in the grave—arguing that hadiths (reports of the words and deeds of Prophet Muhammad) that discuss punishment in the grave are *aḥādith āḥad*[47] and as such cannot be quoted as evidence in creedal matters. For Salafis, this was a grave mistake as differentiating between *aḥādith āḥad* and *aḥādith mtūātr* in matters of *aqīda* (creed) was considered to be a *bida'h* (a reprehensible innovation). HT's adoption of this theological position led the Salafis to accuse HT of '*Itizāl* (referring to the Mu'tazilites, a theological group known for holding reason ('*aql*) above scripture and other sources of religious knowledge ("Mu'tazila", n.d.)).

While the Salafis tend to openly speak out against HT, HT's leaders tend to approach the subject of Salafism more carefully. Nisbet, for example, explained that because HT's focus is on politics, and not the *madhāhib*, the Salafis have never been HT's competitors. He argued "in terms of competition, in terms of the people who concern us, it's the other politicians, so in all Muslim countries, and in Britain, it'd be other politicians". However, the reality is of course somewhat different. When pressed, Nisbet conceded that Salafi quietism, for example, could be an "obstacle" for HT. Similarly, Samir thinking back to the years when he was an active member of HT, recalls "I'd be thinking about arguments, almost day and night, […] against these Wahhabis".

Indeed, although HT would have preferred to focus on politics, and not *madhāhib* and '*aqīda*, it nonetheless found itself having to discuss matters like punishment in the grave, in response to the Salafi offense. Nisbet explains "individuals felt that we're being

---

[46] The idea that erring Muslims could be punished or purified in the grave before the Day of Judgement.
[47] Hadiths are often classified as either *aḥādith āḥad* or *aḥādith mtūātr*. A hadith *mtūātr* is one that has been reported by a significant number of narrators, whereas a hadith that does not fulfil this condition is regarded as a hadith *āḥad* ("What is Hadith?", n.d.).

challenged on campus, everywhere in the [universities], and we need to respond. To respond on the same level, by discussing the academic details of what somebody had raised with you". It is important to note that Salafis were also, at the peak of this Salafi-HT contestation during the 1990s, impacted by HT. Hasan recalling intra-Muslim contestation during the 1990s, for example, argued: "There's give and take, all of these movements affect each other". Hasan, for example, first learned about the *khilāfa*, or caliphate, from HT. He explains "HT actually convinced us for a long time that *khilāfa* was *wājib* [obligatory]". Yet, as will become apparent later in this chapter, this "give and take" certainly did not take place on a level playing field and due to the successes of the Salafi war of position, the Salafis came to exercise "moral and intellectual" leadership during the 1990s within London's Muslim community.

4.3 Deobandi and Barelvi Responses to the Rise of Salafism

Although, as we have seen above, many university ISOCs in the UK during the 1990s were largely dominated by the Salafis and HT, most other Muslim institutions in the UK, i.e. mosques and seminaries, continued to be controlled by Deobandi and Barelvi groups throughout the 1990s and 2000s. British Muslims from a South Asian background also continued to be overwhelmingly affiliated, at times only very loosely and even unconsciously, with these movements. The Deobandi and Barelvi movements were thus the subject of much Salafi attention, and bore the brunt of many attacks by Salafis in the UK. The Salafis have critiqued both movements for their *madhabism* (as both movements follow the Hanafi *madhhab*), links to Sufism,[48] as well as their "deviant" *Maturidi 'aqīda* (the creed most popular amongst Hanafis). Members of both groups have also been accused of following a "cultural" Islam ridden with many innovations accumulated over the years.

Because the Barelvis tend to believe that Prophet Muhammad has superhuman qualities and characteristics (is *Hazir-o-Nazir*, or omnipresent and omnipotent), that salvation is dependent on the intercession of the Prophet Muhammad and one's *pir* (or Sufi teacher), and that deceased saints have intercessory powers between God and humankind (see Sanyal, 1996), they have been the subject of Salafi polemics. In fact, as Geaves recalls "[t]he original Salafi attack was not directed at the West but at fellow-Muslims, especially

---

[48] The Deobandis are linked to the Chishti Sufi order, while the Barelvis have links to the Qadiri Sufi order (Naeem, 2009).

those belonging to Sufi tariqas (orders), who were seen to have destroyed the world of Islam from within by introducing non-Islamic innovation" (2006, p. 146). Shaykh Farid who has witnessed his fair share of Barelvi-Salafi conflicts while being an imam (leader of the mosque) at a Barelvi mosque, spoke to me about the issues of contention between members of the two movements. At the top of the list are controversial issues like the *mawlid* (celebrating the Prophet's birthday) and the 15th of Sha'baan (a night regarded by many in the Muslim world as a special night, but deemed a *bid'a* by Salafis). Salafis would also frequently contest other practices at the Barelvi mosque like congregational *du'ā'* (supplication) after prayers, *dhikr* of *ahl al-bayt* (remembrance and mention of the family/descendants of the Prophet), and *na'ats* (the recitation of devotional poetry). Worshippers at the mosque would also often be called out for the use of prayer beads (often deemed an innovation by Salafis), as well as for dress or outer appearance-related matters (like men's beards which did not abide by Salafi standards). Finally, he also noted how the word *'aqīda* was frequently propagated by Salafis within the mosque to challenge the authority of non-Salafi individuals and practices.

The Deobandis' relationship with the Salafis has been more complicated however. As Hamid has argued, this is because the Deobandis tend to share some elements of the Salafi critique of the Barelvis. For example, both the Salafis and Deobandis tend to call out the Barelvis for their fixation on the metaphysical and spiritual qualities of the Prophet Muhammad as well as shrine culture and associated rites (Hamid, 2016). On the issue of *fiqh* [Islamic jurisprudence], the Deobandis and Salafis tend to disagree, however, as the Deobandis are grounded in the Hanafi school, though even this is complicated as ad-Duha, a graduate of Darul Uloom, has explained that some Deobandis tend to have an approach to *fiqh* that is similar to the Salafis.[49] The TJ has also been subject to Salafi critiques with their missionary activity (e.g. door to door preaching style and preaching missions that tend to last 10 days, 40 days, or even one year) deemed a *bida'h* by Salafis.

Before we delve deeper into the nature of these interactions, it is important to note that the Deobandi and Barelvi movements are, in and of themselves, diverse movements. Bowen speaking about Deobandi Islam, for example, explains that "because of its size, it

---

[49] This subsection of Deobandis are referred to as Mamati Deobandis. For example, Ramsey explains "[t]he Mamati, like the Salafs, hold that it is sinful to seek intercession from those who are no longer alive. They regard such belief as tantamount to polytheism (*shirk*)" (2017, p. 109).

is a school of thought which incorporates a diverse range of views, practice and sub-groups" (2014, p. 11). This is also the case with the Barelvi movement which, according to Geaves (1996), is fragmented and contains "a wide-ranging diversity of belief and practice" (p. 172). It is important to note that leaders' associations with these movements can also be quite complicated. Some of the leaders that I speak about below, for example, while may have studied at the Darul Uloom in Bury, do not exactly see themselves as "Deobandi". Shaykh Shams ad-Duha, who has graduated from Darul Uloom in Bury (and now runs Ebrahim College in East London) explained:

> Strictly speaking, my educational background is Deobandi. I'm a Deobandi seminarian but I don't think that at all reflects who I am. […] I consider myself to be somebody who remains connected to the Deoband tradition by *isnād* [chains of scholarly authority] because all of my hadiths, the chains go through Deoband, through the *mashaykh* [scholars] of India […] Ideologically, I'm much more of a pluralist.

Nonetheless, the individuals referenced below provide a useful indication of how segments of the Deobandi and Barelvi movements have interacted with the Salafi movement.

"Going Back to the Books"

The emergence and initial success of the Salafi movement came as a surprise to both the Deobandis and Barelvis who were caught off guard by the content of Salafi discourse as well as the passion and strength with which the Salafis propagated this discourse. Indeed, as can be seen in the example of Mangera at the beginning of this chapter, Salafism's entry onto the scene caused much confusion and mayhem in these communities. For example, members of these communities were suddenly being told by Salafis that they were not "following Qur'an and Sunna" but instead "following a man—Abu Hanifa." This was deeply unsettling for many who had either never heard of the word *madhhab* or barely understood the concept or its purpose in Islam. Moreover, scholars and imams associated with these movements, although more adept in the Islamic sciences than their congregation, were initially unprepared for these types of attacks. Mangera, now himself a Deobandi imam, argues:

> Because we've never had this issue before, the community, the imams weren't prepared, so the discourse wasn't there […] this was a failure on our part. […] A lot of imams did not take up the challenge, what they started doing was saying: "don't think about that, ignore that, that's not our way." That's not sufficient when people are thinking, especially in the modern world.

In time, however, community leaders began to recognize the extent of the Salafi threat and the need to properly engage with it—particularly on the publishing front. Mangera, for example, was asked by one of his teachers to write 10 articles for the English-language Darul Uloom magazine. These 10 articles were meant to discuss prayer in response to al-Albani's prayer book that had been translated into English by Usama Hasan and widely disseminated in 1994. Mangera took up the challenge. He recalls "so then I just started writing, I took up several issues, the issue of *āmīn* [saying *āmīn* following the recitation of al-Fatiha after the imam during congregational prayer], the issue of *qirā'ah khalf al-imam* [Qur'an recitation during the congregational prayer], and a few others". He explains how he tried to "substantiate the [Hanafi] method of the prayer because a lot of confusion was being created against it." Though Mangera's 10 articles were never actually published in the Darul Uloom magazine, he compiled them into a book titled *Fiqh al Imam: Key Proofs in Ḥanafī Fiqh: On Taqlīd and the Ḥanafī Interpretation of the Prophetic Statement "Pray as You Have Observed Me Pray (Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī)"* which sold 1000 copies in the first three months after it was amateurly published, for the first time, in 1995. Mangera became one of the main challengers of the Salafi narrative, going onto argue that the Salafis though claim to follow "Qur'an and Sunna" had in essence created a fifth *madhhab*—a position he still holds today. He explains "it's not an honest call to go back to Qur'an and Sunna, its go back to Qur'an and Sunna through our [Salafi] scholars, that's really what it is, so it's just a modern fifth *madhhab*". Mangera has since established White Thread Press in 2004, and White Thread Institute in 2017 in East London; he has also visited various universities over the years challenging Salafi concepts and ideas in some of his lectures.

Riyadh ul-Haq, another graduate of the Darul Uloom seminary in Bury, also similarly dedicated much of his early Islamic activism to defending his community against Salafi attacks. In particular, he challenged the Salafi anti-*taqlīd*, anti-Hanafi narrative. Ul-Haq became a very vocal opponent of the Salafis in the late 1990s and early 2000s and was often called into Deobandi mosques to defend the Hanafi *madhhab* in the face of Salafi critiques.[50] Ul-Haq, like Mangera, also published a book, in direct response to al-Albani's prayer book, titled *The Salah of a Believer in The Qur'an and Sunna*. Others, including Muhammad ibn Adam al-Kawthari and Muhammad Yusuf Danka, have also engaged in these Deobandi-Salafi debates. Indeed, Croydon Mosque's website is still used by its

---

[50] Interview with Shams ad-Duha. London. 26/06/2019.

imam, Danka, to refute popular Salafi *fiqh* positions such as the need to stand feet to feet in prayer, as opposed to shoulder to shoulder (Danka, 2008).

As can be seen in the examples above, the initial Deobandi-reaction to the Salafis was one primarily concerned with defending the Hanafi *madhhab* (and particularly its approach to prayer). Nonetheless, as the Salafis began to delve deeper into matters of *aqīda*, the Deobandis (and Barelvis) again found themselves ill-prepared. Mangera remembers the moment when he realized in the late 1990s that he needed to pay greater attention to matters of *'aqīda* in the debate against the Salafis. He recalls:

> I just found out that what I was working on in terms of the *fiqh*, was actually minor, because then I went to study in Syria, in 1998, that's when I realized: "there is a bigger problem because they have *'aqīda* issues as well". […] That's where I started working on a commentary of Imam Abu Hanifa's *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, an *'aqīda* text.

Though the Deobandis may have at first been caught off guard by the Salafi approach (to both *fiqh* and *'aqīda*), they soon realized that they only stood a chance if they too spoke about "Qur'an and Sunna". Many Deobandis thus found themselves having to "go back to the books" to substantiate their *fatāwā* (religious rulings) in a way more akin to the Salafis. As ad-Duha, a graduate of Darul Uloom in Bury, explains, this is because Hanafi muftis tend to substantiate their *fatāwā* from a Deobandi *fatwa* test, but aren't "as fluid at substantiating that position and connecting the rationale of that *fatwa* test, to say the Qur'an or the Sunna, especially where the opinion heavily relies on *ra'y* [rational discretion]". Mangera thus began to present "key proofs" and ul-Haq began to discuss Hanafi prayer according to the "Qur'an and Sunna". Several Deobandis thus began to say "this is what the Qur'an said, this is what the hadith said, and this is how the Hanafi scholars understood it".[51] Deobandis also had to rethink their approach to theology or *'aqīda*—as we saw with Mangera above. This was especially the case because Deobandi seminaries in the UK generally do not give as much attention to matters of theology. Ad-Duha explained:

> Generally, Deobandi seminaries, in my view, they are weak in theology especially in the UK, they're from the *kalām* tradition, they're *Māturīdīya*, and therefore even when they are strong, they're studying old Maturidi texts. […] So suddenly you're like, if I still stick to the *kalām* tradition, how do I defend it in the face of the Salafi onslaught?

Deobandis have therefore tended not to respond as well to theological matters as they have to jurisprudential matters.

---

[51] Interview with Shams ad-Duha. London. 26/06/2019.

As for the Barelvis, though they also engaged in polemics with the Salafis, and warned against the "Wahhabis" in their mosques, their efforts to counter Salafi narratives have not been as coherent. As Geaves argues, shaykhs (scholars) associated with the Barelvi movement continued to promote ethnic allegiances as opposed to "a British-based Islam with its roots in the universal teachings of the Qur'an and Sunna" (2006, p. 148). The Barelvis published some anti-Salafi texts like *Sirat Ahl us-Sunnah: Exposing the beliefs of the deviant sects* and *Decisive Decision: A brief study of the Dispute between Wahabis/Deobandis and Sunnis in the Indian Subcontinent* though they were certainly less organized and active on the publishing front than the Deobandis in the UK. In addition, as a former imam at a Barelvi mosque explained, the Barelvis have not been as successful at establishing organizations and educational institutions. He argued "the Sufis care about Sufism. They think it is equal to celebrating the *mawlid*, but they don't care about education. They don't care about the coming generations".

As for other non-Barelvi Sufi networks, there have been some limited attempts at countering Salafi influence. A transnational Sufi network connected to the Naqshbandi tariqa, led by Canadian-Pakistani Muhammad Hisham Kabbani, for example, has actively contested Salafi discourses. In 1998, Kabbani published a 7-volume book, *Encyclopedia of Islamic Doctrine*, which covers topics like the Ash'arite creed, intercession, and *tazkiyat-al-nafs* (purification). In his quest to counter Salafi influence, it is interesting to note that, Kabbani has, like the Deobandi scholars mentioned above, also relied on direct material from the Qur'an and hadith. Speaking about Kabbani's Encyclopedia, Fouad argues "Giving {sic} the status of the shaykh in Sufi thought, it seems odd that Shaykh Nazim is rarely mentioned, and the bulk of the "Encylopedia" is made of Qur'anic verses, hadiths, and the opinions of medieval authorities" (2020, p. 16). Although Kabbani set off to make a claim about the authority and knowledge of the shaykh (vis-à-vis the books and science of hadith), he relies on "material which has been authenticated by exactly these sciences" (Fouad 2020, p. 16). Nonetheless, Kabbani's efforts have not been very successful and, as Geaves argues, his "attempts to create a *Milad* movement [encourage the *milad*] in Britain have [been] met with antagonism" (2006, p. 152). Indeed, Kabbani's efforts are again evidence of how, especially during this period, the Salafis were able to set the terms of the debate, and as Thurston has also found in the case of Nigeria "the final currency of debate [became] textual proofs and evidence" (2016, p. 163).

4.4 The Emergence of the TI Movement & Attempts to Reclaim "Traditional" Islam

The Salafi attack on Sufism did not go completely unchallenged, however, owing in large part to the emergence of the TI movement in the mid-1990s. This transnational Anglo-American network, led by converts like American Hamza Yusuf, the British Abdal Hakim Murad, and the American Nuh Keller first became active in the UK around 1995 (Hamid, 2016). The basic paradigm propounded by this movement, as Mathiesen (2013) argues, centres on three main discursive fields: *fiqh (*adhering to one of the four schools of Sunni law*), aqīda (*classical theology), and *taṣawwuf* (Sufism).

At first glance, the term Traditional Islam seems somewhat ironic, given that the movement is primarily led by converts to Islam in the West. Indeed, here, Traditional does not refer to customs or cultural practices associated with Muslim communities, but instead, as Mathiesen (2013) argues, Traditional "comprises what is considered authentically rooted in revelation, has crystallised under the banners of scholarly consensus (*ijmāʿ*), and been passed on as Islamic knowledge (*ʿilm naqlī*) in chains of scholarly authority (*isnād*)" (p. 194). The term traditional Islam has been used by researchers like Geaves (2006), Mathiesen (2013) and Hamid (2016). Geaves explains:

> I have used the term "traditional Islam" throughout the chapter to distinguish a brand of Islam that acknowledges 1400 years of tradition as authoritative alongside the teachings of Qur'an and Sunna and recognizes the contribution of Sufi spirituality, the legal interpretations of the *ulamā'* and the four schools of law. This label of traditional Islam operates in opposition to neo-orthodoxies that deny the above and assert that Muslims have degenerated since the time of the first three generations (2006, p. 157)

Others like Sedgwick (2020), Quisay (2019), and Birt (2017) however, have chosen instead to refer to the movement as "neo-traditionalist". Birt argues, for example, "I would also term it as "neo-traditionalist", given its very modern self-awareness that traditional Islam has been displaced and that its restoration as a more powerful orthodoxy is no forgone conclusion" (Birt, 2017).

While Birt's point is well-taken, I have chosen to follow Geaves', Mathiesen's, and Hamid's lead in using "Traditional Islam" as the term is of significance for members of this movement as it distinguishes them, for example, from the Salafis and signals that it

is *their* approach to Islam that is *the* "traditional Islam" while Salafism is the *bidaʻh*. For example, Murad speaking about the *madhāhib* argues:

> Let me talk about the understanding that traditional Islam has had, and here we are talking, not about a kind of new-fangled Islam, that trusts our own fallible time bound prejudices to interpret the Qur'an and hadith, but that is based on the accumulated wisdom and reflection and discussion over centuries of thousands of transformed souls (Islam on Demand, 2012).

Likewise, though members of this community do not shy away from discussing and promoting Sufism, they usually prefer to speak of "traditional Islam"—avoiding the loaded Sufi label. Some are wary, for example, of being associated with certain practices, like dancing and chanting, in some Sufi communities (like the Barelvi community). I found this to be the case with Namira Nahouza, for example, who has taught at Murad's Cambridge Muslim College. When discussing her approach to Islam, Nahouza is careful to distinguish between "Sufism" and "real Sufism". She argues:

> Real Sufism which is about purifying yourself, striving to be the best Muslim, learning the obligatory knowledge, and implementing it and on top of that, adding some Sunnas [traditions and practices of the Islamic prophet] and *dhikr* [remembrance], and following the path of a shaykh, that's supposed to be good. The issue we're having is that in the name of Sufism, a lot of practices have been added, again, which any normal Muslim would be against.

The TI movement also does not see itself as a sect. For instance, Yusuf has previously suggested that calling oneself anything but Muslim is problematic—quoting Imam Malik's statement that any group that calls itself a name "other than Muslims" is engaging in innovation (Islam Rewards, 2016).

Since its early days, the TI movement has been engaged in reclaiming "traditional" Islam from the Salafis and diffusing their own common sense. Members of the TI community recognized the need to clarify the stances and positions cast into doubt by the Salafis, while still appealing to "tradition" and "orthodoxy". One of the main priorities for the TI movement, for example, has been the defence of the *madhāhib*. Murad has argued that not only is anti-*madhhabism* an incorrect approach, but is also a form of backbiting—a grave sin likened to flesh-eating in Islam (Islam on Demand, 2012). He has also argued that the Salafis' decision to "bypass the tradition" is a form of "implicit *shirk*" (Islam on Demand, 2012).

Members of this movement have gone to great lengths to clarify the meaning of concepts frequently used by the Salafis like *bidaʻh*. Yusuf, for example, has argued that although *bidaʻ* [reprehensible innovations] are a very serious issue in Islam, valid differences of opinions shouldn't be deemed a *bidaʻh* (Islam On Demand, 2011). The *mawlid*, which is

often deemed a *bida'h* by the Salafis, is frequently defended by the TI movement. Ibrahim Osi Efa associated with this movement in the UK, has argued "there is no doubt whatsoever" that the *mawlid* is permissible claiming that "the *ulamā*" have said that it is. He also challenges those who claim otherwise to "bring [their] evidence if [they're] telling the truth" (Maturidi333, 2012). Implicitly addressing the Salafis, Osi Efa also cites Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim, scholars that the Salafis deem authoritative, arguing that they too deemed the *mawlid* permissible. The TI movement has thus drawn on evidence and orthodoxy when contesting Salafi positions and ideas.

An important part of the TI network's activism has also been the promotion of the Ash'arite and Maturidi theologies (Hamid, 2016)—two creeds that Salafis generally consider to be deviant. Yusuf, for example, has without explicitly referencing the Salafis, mocked those who suggest that the Ash'arite and Maturidi are not acceptable creeds, suggesting that this position absurdly suggests that "for 1000 years the *umma* [larger community of Muslims] was in darkness, enveloped in the stupidity of misguided scholars" (Maturidi333, 2010). Nahouza, affiliated with this community, has also been actively involved in the fight against Salafi creed. She explained to me that she believes that Salafism is "the greatest threat at the moment" because it is restricting people from benefiting from having a "proper explanation of Islamic creed". In fact, it is mainly for this reason, that Nahouza decided to research Salafism and Salafi creed for her PhD thesis. In the book based on her thesis, *Wahhabism and the Rise of the New Salafists: Theology, Power and Sunni Islam*, she argues that the Wahhabi movement has opposed "traditional Islamic scholarship" on the interpretation of the Qur'an and hadith. Nahouza's book is thus, as Haykel has argued, "a polemic against the Salafis and Wahhabis" (2020, p. 506). Other members of the movement have also been involved in similar debates, where they, for example, challenge Salafis to find a hadith that doesn't have an Ash'arite or a Maturidi in its chain of narration.

The TI movement has also been involved in producing and disseminating its own critiques of Salafism. Some members of the TI movement, for example, have argued that Salafism is directly or indirectly responsible for terrorism. In the aftermath of 9/11, Murad published an article titled "Recapturing Islam from the Terrorists" on Q-News (a magazine promoting TI views). Murad has also contributed to mainstream media reports about Salafism. In an article titled "Wahhabism: A deadly scripture" Murad is quoted saying that Salafism has had a negative impact on British Muslim communities and has

"made the public style of discourse and preaching more confrontational. [. . .] Salafis anathematise their opponents and their opponents internalise the violence of that language. It has soured the atmosphere considerably".[52] Other members of this community have also been quick to point out that terrorists reference the same scholars as quietist Salafis. During my interview with Nahouza, for example, she made it a point to remind me that terrorists often refer to the same sources as quietist Salafis. She similarly doubted the idea that quietest Salafism is at all a useful antidote for terrorism",[53] arguing that it promotes "confusion" because it gives "the platform to people who in the background are working against the *real* [emphasis added] traditional Islam".

Salafism has also come under fire for the purported negative impact that it has had on the Muslim community. For example, members of the TI movement often argue that Salafis are putting Muslims, as well as potential converts, off of Islam. One shaykh affiliated with the TI movement in London, spoke to me about the impact Salafis have had on definitions of *ḥarām*, or the impermissible. He argued that although what constitutes *ḥarām* is "actually quite small", the Salafis have "broadened the circle of the *ḥarām*" and "restricted the circle of the halal [permissible]". This "overly restrictive" approach to the religion, he argued, has dissuaded many new converts from adopting Islam. He likewise critiqued the Salafis for unnecessarily introducing "harshness" into the religion, arguing "the words of love have disappeared although they are the basis of our religion".

These critiques, and more generally the TI movement's success amongst British Muslims, have had an impact on Salafi circles. In his article on British Salafism, Hamid argues that this trend has "in effect appropriated some of the authority from the Salafi scholars, resulting in a reduction of some of the aura of knowledgeability from British Salafis" (Hamid, 2008, p.11). The network's concerted efforts to defend *madhabism*, the Ash'arite and Maturidi creeds, and Sufism have been quite successful. Indeed, these scholars managed to clarify some of the positions also held by other movements in the UK, like the Deobandis and Barelvis, in a way that they themselves never managed to.

---

[52] It must be noted that Murad was careful to clarify that "if most terrorists are salafis, most salafis are not terrorists" in this article.
[53] This idea is central to quietist Salafi thought. Communities like SP and Brixton Mosque often see themselves as bulwarks against extremism and violence.

The impact of the TI movement has been definitely felt within Salafi circles. Bilal Philips, for instance, when speaking of Yusuf, acknowledged that he is a "competitor" because:

> He is openly connected to the Sufi approach, while connecting it to learning. You know, he's got Zaytuna University College {sic}, so he does have a respect for scholarship etc. And there's an attraction I think because of his background, university graduate, and able to express current issues, in an attractive way; his presentation is very good.

For SP, for example, the threat posed by "Hamza Yusuf" and the TI movement is evident in the 116 different times that members of the SP-associated forum *SalafiTalk.com* have inquired about or discussed Yusuf over the years. One member of the forum, for example, asked in 2004 if "anyone for sure knows if he [Hamza Yusuf] inclines/adheres to sufism". She says "When I was a new Muslimah, I used to listen to some of his tapes, ages ago. Then someone told me he is not of Ahl us Sunnah and that he is a sufi in disguise" (Umm Idris, 2004). Farhana, loosely affiliated with Islam21C, similarly remembers the confusion that unfolded within Salafi circles when Yusuf first appeared on the scene. She recounts how he had a big influence because "he was like this guy, this White guy, who went to the desert, and he's like talking about seeking knowledge, glorious scholarly past, tradition, and at one point, everyone thought he was Salafi, everybody was like: isn't he Salafi?".

The Salafi movement's reaction to the rise of the TI movement also suggests that the Salafis were quite conscious of the threat posed to them by the TI movement. Salafi groups in the UK issued several refutations against scholars of the TI movement. On the website, Salafi Manhaj run by AbdulHaq Al-Ashanti and others, for example, Murad is given as an example of a "Sufi poodle" who is supposedly in partnership with the neocons and accused of being "largely out of touch with the Muslim youth in the UK" ("Does Saudi Arabia", p. 26). SP, have also spoken out against Yusuf at various points. This has also meant that scholars associated with this movement in the Middle East (e.g. Yusuf's teachers), have also been the subject of SP's refutations. Abu Khadeejah, in a tweet, spoke out against Habib Ali Jifri calling him "an extreme Sufi, caller to the worship of graves - & the 'sheikh' of Hamza Yusuf, the innovator".

Salafi attempts to discredit the TI movement have only been somewhat successful. Indeed, as we will see in the next chapter, the emergence of the TI network has been one of the main forces that contributed to the contradictions experienced by many British Salafis. Nonetheless, the TI movement has suffered from several limitations that have prevented it from having the same type of impact on the British Muslim community that

the Salafis have had. For example, the TI movement has come under fire multiple times since 9/11 for a series of controversial positions such as Yusuf's decision to consider the 9/11 firefighters as martyrs. Similarly, many in the British Muslim community have disapproved of Yusuf's meeting with George Bush in the wake of 9/11. The broader UK Sufi movement has also been plagued by problems of credibility and authenticity in the post-7/7 era. When speaking about the Sufis several of my participants were quick to point out that Sufis in the UK are funded by the British government. Indeed, Radical Middle Way, an initiative founded in the wake of 7/7 largely failed to have a major impact in the British Muslim community because it was perceived as being endorsed by the British Government. More recently, following the Arab Spring and other developments in the Middle East, Yusuf has again come under fire for not speaking out enough against Middle Eastern governments and for agreeing to be the United Arab Emirates' peace ambassador for example (e.g. see al-Azami, 2018).

Within the UK, the TI movement has not given much attention to the building and/or controlling of institutions in the same way that other movements (i.e. the Salafis, Deobandis, Barelvis) have. Largely happy to attend and pray within mosques associated with other *madhhab*-based Islamic movements, the TI movement is, as Mathiesen explains, a movement that is "discreet and usually speaks with a lowered voice" (2013, p. 191). The TI movement's approach to knowledge and learning has also limited the type of impact it has had on the British Muslim community. Mohamed Ghilan, a student of knowledge associated with the transnational TI movement, speaking more generally about the movement's approach to education, explained to me that it tends to be based on the concept that "knowledge does not come to you, you come to it "*al-ʿilm yʾtā wa la yatī*", referring to Imam Malik's response to Harun al-Rashid's request for private lessons. As such, several of the scholars associated with this movement, such as Murabit Muhammad Hajj (the son in law of the late scholar Murabit al-Hajj from Mauritania), for example, have only recently started to travel and visit the UK. Instead, the TI movement has largely encouraged Western students of knowledge to travel to study abroad (Grewal, 2013). The TI movement's online presence also pales in comparison to the Salafi online presence. Although there are thousands of Yusuf's recordings online, this is a recent phenomenon. Ghilan argues that this is because members of this movement "value context". He explained:

> What I say to you in a setting, involves a context and a general social political context that I'm speaking in, so you can't take a statement in 1995 in 2018 and assume it is going to be exactly the same or that it even means the same thing […]

Islam, is not meant to be, traditionally speaking, […] a codified religion in that way. It's an organic living tradition, the only things that we have that should be preserved are the primary sources, the Qur'an and the Sunna, and all of the tools that we use to interpret these things, then you're supposed to live with your time.

This is also the case with the classical educational institutions connected to the TI movement in the Middle East. In the case of Al-Azhar, for example, although the university had started recording sessions well before the Arab Spring, it was only in August of 2011 that Al-Azhar started its own YouTube channel and began uploading lots of material online.

A comparison of the educational institutions founded by each movement in the West also reveals similar dynamics and demonstrates the importance of educational institutes to the success of the Salafi war of position. Graduates of IUM have founded global institutes like AlMaghrib and AlKauthar that have hosted seminars in more than 40 cities worldwide. On the other hand, Yusuf's Zaytuna College is based in California and tends to only accept less than 20 students to its bachelor's programme each year ("How to", n.d.). Finally, although perhaps ironically, since it is mostly led by converts to Islam, the TI movement's impact has been restricted by its approach (or lack thereof) to giving *daʿwa* to non-Muslims. Within the UK, organizations affiliated with Salafism have instead been overwhelmingly involved in giving *daʿwa* to non-Muslims as we saw in Chapter 2 and we will see in Chapter 7 as well.

4.5 Conclusion

Since its emergence, the British Salafi movement has set off to challenge other Islamic movements in the UK. Embarking on a war of position within civil society, it worked to spread Salafi common sense through universities, publishing houses, educational institutes, mosques, as well as traditional and new media. This war of position has also involved, as we have seen in this chapter, efforts to discredit other Islamic movements. Salafis have thus launched polemics against most other Islamic movements in the UK, most of whom found themselves grappling to come to terms with the emergence of Salafism. This was especially the case with the Deobandis and Barelvis who struggled to maintain their already fragile authority amongst second and third-generation British Muslims.

Indeed, at the peak of the Salafi movement's activity in the 1990s, Salafism arguably had a hegemonic position vis-à-vis other Islamic movements. Though the Salafis remained a minority within London's Muslim community, they were nonetheless able to formulate the standards with which Islam was validated and verified as a faith. Members of other Islamic movements in the UK, for example, were forced to engage more deeply and explicitly with the Islamic sources—having to return to the Qur'an and Sunna to substantiate their *fatāwā* for example. Movements as diverse as HT and the Deobandis also found themselves having to discuss the finer points of *'aqīda*. Evidence and authenticity also became the new standards with which Islamic movements' authority and legitimacy were assessed. This, as Crehan has argued "is one aspect of what hegemony means in practice; the power to determine the structuring rules within which struggles are to be fought" (2002, p. 204). Although the Salafi movement may no longer be dominant in the same way as it was during this period, as will become apparent later in this thesis, several of these standards continue to be of relevance within London's Muslim community today.

This chapter thus contributes to our understanding of the contestation that has taken place between Salafi groups and other Islamic movements in the UK. It challenges accounts of intra-Muslim contestation that presents Islamic movements as existing only in opposition to each other, and instead argues like Thurston (2016), Hamid (2016), and Fouad (2020), that this contestation has had a major impact on the shape and direction that these movements have taken through the years. Indeed, as Mouffe has argued, based on Gramsci's thoughts on ideology, ideological struggle "does not consist of the confrontation between two already elaborated, closed-world views" (1979, p. 193-4). Instead, ideologies, and consequently movements, are transformed as a result of the battle between rival ideas and principles.

This chapter also contributes to our understanding of the impact of organization on the diffusion of common sense. In the beginning of this chapter, for example, we saw how the Salafis, under JIMAS, worked together to disseminate Salafi common sense during the early 1990s. Yet, as we also saw in this chapter, the Salafi war of position has continued even after JIMAS split. Quietist Salafis associated with Brixton Mosque and SP have also launched polemics against other Islamic actors. The activist Salafis, however, are notably missing from much of this story. This is because, as we will see in coming chapters, many that belong to this network have gradually become less concerned

with explicitly critiquing other Islamic approaches, desiring to have a bigger impact beyond Salafi circles.

Finally, it is also important to note that although this chapter has been mostly concerned with the impact of this contestation on other Islamic movements, there is no doubt that the Salafi movement has also, itself, been impacted by its ideological struggle with other Islamic movements. We saw, for example, how the Salafi war of position faced considerable set-backs following the rise of the TI movement. In fact, we will see in the next chapter, where I explore the lived experiences of British Salafis who came to Salafism during the 1980s-2000s, how the TI movement has contributed to the emergence of contradictions amongst some British Muslims as they tried to live their lives according to a Salafi conception of the world.

5. Rethinking Lived Salafism: Contradictions within London's Salafi Communities

5.1 Introduction

> It sounds good. In practice, it was like, OK, you're refuting my teacher Bilal Philips who I learnt my *Salafiyya* from. You're refuting Abu Usamah. You're refuting Shaykh Suhaib Hassan, who was here while you were in your nappies teaching *Salafiyya* who was sent by Shaykh Bin Baz himself, right? You're refuting all these giants in the *Daʿwa* [religious mission], and you're like a kid compared to them, and this doesn't make sense.
>
> -Abu Tayib discussing his experience with refutations within SP circles.

Originally drawn to Salafism for the simplicity, clarity, and certainty that it promised adherents, many British Muslims and converts, who came to Salafism in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s in London, have found the reality of Salafism to be quite different. As they delved deeper into Salafism, and attempted to live their lives as good Salafi Muslims, they experienced many contradictions. They have also, in some cases, gone on to reassess their understanding of Salafism. Some have simply altered their understanding of only a few Salafi principles, while others have undergone significant transformations in the way that they understand and practice Islam more generally.

Yet, as we will see in the section below, the literature on British Salafism, and Salafism more generally, has not explored these contradictions and transformations in much depth. Understanding these contradictions and transformations is important not only because they shed light on the making (un-making and re-making) of Muslim subjectivities, but also because of what they tell us about the nature of Salafism and other such hegemonic discourses more generally. Indeed, accounts of Salafism's unadulterated growth, even in the 1990s—the "peak" of Salafism in the UK, are cast into question when one embarks on a deeper and more critical exploration of Salafi experiences.

In this chapter, I move beyond incomplete accounts of Salafism's seemingly straight-forward adoption in Muslim communities. I begin by critically engaging with the literature on lived Salafism. I then cast another look at the experiences of those who gravitated towards Salafism in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s in London, focusing on their

encounters with and attempts to live out Salafi common sense. I argue that many of my participants experienced a contradictory state of consciousness after repeatedly experiencing a gap between what things were meant to be like in theory and practice according to Salafi discourses, and their lived realities. I shed light on the practical experiences that have contributed to this contradictory consciousness and outline the elements of Salafi discourse that have been contested as a result of these developments in Salafi communities. I also argue that some British Muslims have developed a critical consciousness—or an awareness of the underlying interests and socio-historical realities behind Salafi *daʿwa*, and thus no longer see Salafism as "True" Islam. Yet, at the same time, I argue that these contradictions and transformations have not resulted in a complete rejection of, or departure from, Salafism, but have actually in many cases led to the validation and confirmation of some elements of Salafi common sense.

5.2 Contradictions and Transformations in the Literature

Discussions on conversion to Salafism have often assumed that the adoption of Salafism is a straightforward process. Speaking about the British context for example, Hamid has argued: "When younger Muslims and converts become convinced, adopting a Salafi identity becomes a straightforward process of exchanging and rerouting religious symbols and acquiring membership of a de-ethnicised supranational identity" (2016, p. 59). A few anthropologists have, nonetheless, while exploring lived Salafism or the actual experiences of Salafis (as opposed to Salafi discourses or prescribed beliefs and practices), noted that Salafis often experience contradictions in their day to day lives. De Koning, for example, has suggested that Salafis often experience a sense of failure in daily life that results because of the "tensions between Salafi doctrines and everyday reality" (2017, p. 50). These failures, he argues, are "an important constituent element of lived Salafism" that act to motivate Salafis for the further pursuit of perfection (2017, p. 51). Inge, has similarly acknowledged that not all Salafis' beliefs and behaviours are "as black and white, inflexible, or coherent as Salafi texts and pulpit preachings often suggest" highlighting how processes of "compromise, adaptation, and intermingling" take place within lived Salafism. Drawing on McGuire's (2008) work on lived religion, Inge argues that everyday lived religion for her participants "is not necessarily *logically* coherent—but it is practically coherent, in that it makes sense in the context of an individual's everyday life" (2016, p. 239). Schielke has similarly explored the contradictory outcomes that Salafism has had for some young Egyptians during the month

of Ramadan—arguing that attempts to embody Salafism can lead to "fragmentation and contradictions in young people's lives" because "people can only search for faults in themselves" since "religion stands totally beyond critique" (2009, p. 34).

Yet, while these accounts do shine some light on the disjuncture that exists between Salafi discourses and everyday reality, they do not fully capture the significance of these contradictions—neither in terms of their impact on those that experience them, nor in terms of the way that Salafism has come to be understood and practiced within Muslim communities. Indeed, though in some cases these contradictions can act to motivate Salafis for the further pursuit of perfection as De Koning has found, appear practically coherent to Salafis as Inge has demonstrated, and/or bring about ambivalence as Schielke has suggested, these contradictions can also often dissuade Muslims from continuing to strive for perfection along Salafi ideals. This has been the case with many British Muslims in London, as we will see below, who after repeatedly experiencing contradictions, have come to find Salafism to be neither logically coherent, nor practically coherent. For these British Muslims, Salafism has not fulfilled the "logic" of lived religion;[54] it has neither "worked", nor made sense in their everyday lives.

In speaking about Salafism and its impact within communities around the world, however, accounts in the literature and in public discourse have so often assumed that Salafism has an almost permanent transformative impact on its adherents. In public discourse, these shifts have been overwhelmingly disregarded with most news articles still attributing statements made in the 1990s, for example, to Salafi leaders who have since evolved.[55] But even in the literature, little attention has been given to transformations of this nature. Schielke has notably examined the "short-lived" trajectories of three Salafi activists in Egypt—arguing that the study of activist lives must not only focus on accounts of pious commitment (2014). Thurston has likewise briefly explored the trajectory of two Salafi activists, suggesting that a "Post-Salafi current" is emerging, one composed of "Muslim scholars who seem to find Salafi theology and activism too narrow when it comes to confronting complex social and political arenas,

---

[54] McGuire argues that lived religion "needs to make sense in one's everyday life, and it needs to be effective, to "work" (2008, p. 15).
[55] For example, one news story titled "Muslim preacher 'who advocated dying while fighting jihad' given platform at London university", speaks of statements that Abduraheem Green has made in the past despite the fact that he has since significantly altered his views on many of these issues (Chandler and de Peyer, 2016).

and especially in terms of interacting with Sufis" (2018). Basing his analysis on the trajectories of the Malian Shaykh Dicko, and Yasir Qadhi in the US, he suggests that these shifts have to do "above all, with politics" (Thurston, 2018). Hamid (2016) has also recounted, though without shining much light on why that is the case, how some British Salafi figures no longer "define themselves as Salafi any more" (p. 141). Özyürek (2015) has likewise briefly mentioned that some German converts "moved on to less strict interpretations of Islam" after originally being drawn to Salafism following conversion (p. 118). Within the publications of the TI movement, discussed in Chapter 4, there has also been some attention given to departures from Salafism. Murad (n.d), for example, has coined the term "Salafi burnout" referring to how Salafis often lose steam "some seven to ten years later" after adopting Salafism. This burnout,[56] he argues, is due to an erroneous approach to Islam which treats Islam like "a manual of rules" instead of a "package of social, intellectual and spiritual technology whose purpose is to cleanse the human heart" (n.d).

These discussions, as can be seen above, have often been based on the experiences of a few Salafi activists or on anecdotal accounts. In the remainder of this chapter, I thus draw on the experiences of 40 men and women that came to Salafism in the 1980s and 1990s (whose conversion experiences I've discussed in Chapter 2), as well as the experiences of an additional 15 men and women who came to Salafism in the 2000s shedding more light on why, how, and with what effect these contradictions and transformations have occurred.

5.3 Contradictory Consciousness in London's Salafi Communities

At the same time that my participants were going through seemingly straightforward, all-encompassing, and linear processes of "becoming" Salafi, many had reservations and doubts about Salafism. I found that Nusayba, for instance, although continued to attend Salafi circles during her university years because she "had no other version of Islam", had an "instinct" that "something's not right" with Salafism from the start. Similarly, Akhtar, although believed at the time that he was practicing the "right version of Islam", "never believed really deeply inside" that they, the Salafis, were the only people who

---

[56] Hamid has likewise, spoken about Salafi burnout, where "individuals suffered a dramatic loss of faith and religious practice" (Hamid, 2008, p.11).

were practicing Islam correctly. Yosra, also despite quitting her university studies more than twenty years ago because she "believed" members of JIMAS who told her that free-mixing at universities was impermissible, was also not "100% sure" at the time that to go to university would have really been *ḥarām* (impermissible). Abdurraheem Green was likewise sceptical of certain elements of Salafi discourse (particularly those more closely tied to Saudi Salafism). He recalled:

> This whole thing about women not driving, I never understood that, I thought that was ridiculous. Then I thought maybe in Saudi Arabia, it's not ridiculous. But when a scholar came and said: no, you sisters you can't drive. It's like: get out, sorry mate, sorry, this is not your land. Don't give your *fatwas* [*fatāwā*, religious rulings] here. This is what I said in my head, you know? These are things that I understood even then.

In fact, a few of my participants remembered key moments in which they found themselves questioning the very practices they were trying to implement at the time. Mazin wasn't sure, for example, whether his practice of keeping his trousers short (in line with a hadith that some Salafis interpret to mean that men's clothing should not extend beyond their ankles) was necessary. He recalled:

> I remember my mum saying to me, so many times […]: do you really think God cares about the length of your trousers? […] The logical side of me was thinking: yeah it doesn't make sense. But the other side of me would say: no, there's a hadith that's what's beneath the trousers is in the hellfire.

Mazin originally attributed his feelings of discomfort and doubt to his "Western upbringing" and thus kept trying to shed his Western upbringing in an effort to find a "pure Islam". Similarly, Akhtar remembered feeling uncomfortable with the "harshness" of Salafism while witnessing an incident in Brixton Mosque in 1997, during which a man was "thrown out" of the mosque for using a *tasbīḥ* (prayer beads which are considered by some Salafis to be a *bida'h* (a reprehensible innovation)). He recalled thinking to himself "man, that's crazy, it's crazy, the guy has come to the mosque to remember Allah and he's sitting there making *dhikr* [remembrance] of Allah and he's thrown out of the mosque".

As can be seen clearly in Mazin's account, in which he speaks of two sides, or two kinds of consciousness, "the logical" and "the other", many of my participants experienced a split in consciousness as they were attempting to adhere to the Salafi conception of the world. Indeed, contradictory consciousness can result, as Gramsci has argued, when a "group has, for reasons of submission and intellectual subordination, adopted a conception which is not its own but is borrowed from another group" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 327). By contradictory consciousness I mean the existence of two "theoretical

consciousnesses" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 333)—one "logically affirmed as an intellectual choice" or "uncritically absorbed" associated with Salafism, and the other which emerged from my participants' experiences and life-activities.

The development of contradictory consciousness here is possible because, according to Gramsci, embedded within the "common sense" that informs individuals' world views, exists "good sense". This good sense allows individuals to "[regain] the upper hand after the emotion stirred up by exciting words, discover the deficiencies and superficiality of what they heard and thus became habitually distrustful" (Gramsci, 1975, p. 1889, as cited in Liguori, 2015, p. 109). My participants' good sense, which has emerged from their practical experiences, has meant that while my participants were seemingly convinced that Salafism is "the Truth" and trying to live out their lives according to the Salafi conception of the world, they were concurrently having doubts about the validity and/or necessity of Salafi beliefs and practices. This inconsistency between my participants' thoughts and actions should not be understood as an act of dishonesty or hypocrisy, but as a result of the gap between how things and persons are supposed to be in practice and in theory according to Salafi discourses, and how things and persons actually were in reality for my participants.

Indeed, as young British Muslims began to apply Salafism, many began to experience, and become aware of, this gap. Several British students of knowledge who had completed their studies at the IUM, for example, began to face challenges after returning to the UK and attempting to put the "Salafi project" into action. For example, Imam Begg of Lewisham Mosque, who studied at the IUM during the Gulf War and was influenced by Sahwa scholars like Shaykh Salman al-ʿAwda and Shaykh Safar al-Hawali, came to question the validity of the anti-Ashʿarite element of Sahwa Salafism.[57] He began to wonder if such sectarianism was suitable for the Western context, particularly within a large mosque that engages with "lots of youngsters" and "many many new Muslims". This was also the case with Haitham al-Haddad who explained that although he had doubts about certain aspects of his studies back in Saudi, after coming to the UK and "mix[ing] with many so called *Ashʿarīs* [Ashʿarites] and Sufis", he began to more fiercely question Salafi discourses about the Ashʿarites and Sufis.

---

[57] Safar al-Hawali, for example, has denounced the "deviations" of the Sufis and Ashʿarites (Lacroix, 2011, p. 215).

British Salafis who had learned about Salafism in the UK and travelled to Saudi Arabia to live out the "Salafi dream", also experienced contradictions. Rabiya, for example, who regularly attended SP mosques during the 2000s, embarked on *hijra* (religious migration)[58] to Saudi Arabia in 2007 with her husband in an effort to fulfil her Islamic obligation and live in line with her "true identity". Yet, after two and a half years in the Gulf, she began to question her approach to Islam. Sharing this deeply unsettling experience with me, she explained:

> I had this expectation from Saudi Arabia as a child where my mother and father were like, "Mecca, Medina, *umrā*, the Prophet". Saudi was the place where the people all follow Islam, people all pray their *ṣalah* [prayers], people don't drink alcohol and speak to women and this is the land of *tawḥīd*. […] What I was exposed to, I was just shocked. I was like what is this? I had this expectation and it didn't meet my expectation and it was just like what's going on? And it really upset me.

Rabiya was quite shocked to discover that many people in Saudi Arabia, while may dress in modest attire and appear to be devout Muslims, do not themselves adhere to Salafi ideals but instead engage in sinful behaviours like drinking alcohol. Indeed, for Rabiya, the gap between how things and people were supposed to be in Saudi Arabia, according to Salafi discourses, and how things and people really were was just too large to go unnoticed. Some of my participants from African and Afro-Caribbean backgrounds were also shocked when they experienced racism in Saudi Arabia, and other Arab countries, wondering how this could be given discourses that romanticize *hijra* to Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. In other cases, discourses about *hijra* to Saudi Arabia proved impractical following my participants' discovery that Saudi Arabia does not grant citizenship to migrants and continues to operate a *kafāla* (sponsorship) system.

Yet, even those who never travelled to make *hijra* or study, also experienced contradictions when applying Salafism during their day to day lives. Maliha, for example, began to re-consider Salafi discourses about the impermissibility of completing the Qur'an on behalf of the deceased*,* when mourning the death of a member of her community. She recalled: "Somebody recently died, and we went back to their house, and nobody was reading [the Qur'an], and everybody was chatting. So I'm like I can actually see how the reading of Qur'an came about". The everyday, mundane life-activities associated with growing up and becoming parents also led my participants to question the

---

[58] Some Salafis living in the West believe that *hijra*, or migration to a Muslim country is a religious obligation.

practicality of Salafi discourses. Green when reflecting about his own evolution as a Salafi, laughed as he said, "I tell you what, what's changed me is having eight daughters!" In fact, many of my participants found that Salafi discourses were no longer able to fully speak to their day to day lived experiences—particularly after becoming parents. This was especially the case with Salafi discourses around gender which will be explored in depth in the next chapter.

Similarly, although my participants came from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, as discussed earlier in this thesis, neighbourhood deprivation, educational and health disadvantages, unemployment, and housing challenges are realities for many British Muslims. Yet, Salafi *daʿwa* (with the exception of the MRDF/Islam21C network) seems to have been largely removed from these realities. As one of my participants argued, for example, Salafi *daʿwa* had "no real practical connection with the life of the community", after being so focused only on giving *daʿwa*, the realities of "having to pay the bills" and "needing a job", "sort of slapped them [many Salafis] in the face". Likewise, when explaining why he thinks there aren't as many young men in Brixton interested in attending the IUM (as there was back in the 2000s), Abdul-Karim explained "I think a lot of people look at it like, I can be a student of knowledge and come back to this place here, or I can work and make money, and get my family out of this place". Similarly, Yasmin, who once dreamed of travelling to Saudi Arabia to seek knowledge, is now considering travelling to the Gulf for financial and career reasons. She explained: "a lot of my friends are abroad at the moment, and they're mainly in the UAE, and from what they say, it's a better quality of life, better pay, so sometimes I think, why am I here? Struggling to make ends meet most of the time. And you're in an Islamic environment".

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, British Muslims have also found themselves subject to policies seeking to control, and silence them, through PREVENT for example. Speaking about these politics, al-Haddad has argued:

> It is apparent that by limiting the freedom of active Muslims and posing threats to them, the policy makers of today are sending a strong message to the whole Muslim community, that they have only one opportunity to live in the UK: assimilation. In other words, if Muslims want to live in the UK, they must adopt a version of Islām that will never dare defy the "British values" of whoever happens to be in power to define or interpret them (2014).

Yet, quietist Salafi networks in the UK have not actively contested the policies governing British Muslims—instead encouraging British Muslims to make *hijra* to Muslim countries to escape these realities. In addition, Salafis, who are usually very visibly

"Muslim", have also had to deal with increasing levels of Islamophobia (Marsh, 2018). These realities have caused some British Muslims to reconsider Salafi polemics against other Muslims. Another one of my participants, for example, who used to associate with SP, began to question these discourses after realizing "that when the non-Muslims are dealing with Muslims, they're not really looking at the different groups, they just see Muslims, they don't see Salafis, and Sufis, and Tablighis, they see Muslims". He thus began to feel that British Muslims should be more concerned with government policies affecting Muslims, and not with intra-Muslim debates.

Intra-Salafi conflicts have also been troubling for some British Muslims. Abu Tayib, for example, as we saw in the beginning of this chapter, began to question the purpose of refutations after realizing that they were even being heralded against senior Salafi scholars. After experiencing the negative impact of refutations on relationships within the community, Samar also began to believe that "there are bigger issues: people's *īmān* [faith] is decreasing, people are actually not practicing anymore, people's hijabs are coming off". Samar explained that this was a largely collective realization, with at least half of her community coming to question these discourses. Haniya, likewise took a step back from the Salafi movement when she found that it "all became about individuals within the movement, and one person refuting the other on really miniscule points". She then began to feel like the movement "no longer served a purpose". Indeed, intra-Salafi conflicts, discussed in Chapter 3, though largely male-led, have also had a major impact on, and been of great concern for, Salafi women as well.

Many of my interviewees also found the "intensity" of Salafism to be problematic. Hafiz, for example, who had previously acted as if he was part of "some mini police force", recalls "it was endless, it was so tiring even thinking about it now makes me exhausted". Yasmin, who now only occasionally attends Brixton Mosque, similarly compared her attempts at applying Salafism to "running a marathon". She explained: "I think sometimes you're doing things so much, you get overwhelmed. It's like running a marathon, and then you just crash". This "crashing" out of Salafism is what has come to be known as "Salafi burnout" discussed earlier in this chapter. Umm Ibrahim, also spoke of how the "*daʿwa* ultimately failed" because of its unrealistic expectations about how much of "Salafism" could be applied in such a short time and with such intensity. She now believes that:

> Islam cannot be taken all in one go, it can't be digested like that, if it was like that,

Allah would have given us the Qur'an all in one night you know, and this is what people fail to understand. You cannot take all the laws of *sharī'a* [Islamic law] and put them on yourself, completely.

Perhaps this is why the rise of the TI movement, discussed in the previous chapter, had a particularly big impact on my participants' consciousness. Indeed, as Chalcraft argues "consciousness can be made double, by knowledge of the siren song of a Utopian alternative" (2021, p. 13). The TI movement was also built on knowledge, had claims to traditional authority, and promised a spiritual reawakening for hearts which had been supposedly left hardened due to Salafism's lack of focus on *iḥsān* or spiritual excellence. As we saw in Chapter 4, Salafi leaders and scholars certainly recognized the danger of the TI movement and worked to delegitimize it. Nonetheless, for many of my participants, the TI movement's tunes of a Utopian alternative were just too alluring.

This was the case with Abu Aaliyah, for example, who began to feel spiritually unsatisfied with Salafism. So desperate to find spiritual fulfilment within Salafism, he travelled to Saudi Arabia to see if it was only the UK's Salafi *da'wa* that was failing to address spiritual matters. Excited to be finally attending a class about Ibn Qayim's book on *dhikr* taught by Shaykh Saleh al-Fawzan, Abu Aaliyah recalls: "The commentary he gave, was literally no different than if he was giving commentary on any other *'aqīda* book or *Kitab al-Tawhid*, no difference at all". After coming to feel that this was a limitation of Salafism more generally, Abu Aaliyah began to gravitate more towards the TI movement.

Uzma also started to feel dissatisfied after almost two decades trying to live according to the Salafi conception of the world. She recalls: "At one point, I realized I'm doing all of this, but my heart feels absolutely dead, there is no emotion, no feeling, no connection with Allah in my heart". Yet her experiences alone were not enough to make her wonder if this was a failure on Salafism's part. She recalls: "I didn't immediately think: 'oh it must be the way I'm following'. I just kept thinking: 'it's me, there's something wrong with me'". It was upon listening to Hamza Yusuf's talks that Uzma began to feel that the problem lay within Salafism. Recalling the first time she listened to Yusuf's tapes, she says "once I'd tasted that, I said I want more of this".

Similarly, Akhtar who had resisted listening to Yusuf for so long because he was worried he'd "become Ash'ari overnight", shared with me how unsettling listening to Yusuf for the first time was for him. He recalls: "I was crying, and I said this can't be good, how

can I be listening to this man? And he having such an effect on me? And *walāhi* [I swear] I had never cried as a Salafi. Something touched me, because he was very emotional with his lecture". Nabil also began to ponder if Salafism had all the tools required to find spiritual fulfilment. He recalled:

> The way you practice anything is very, very intense, especially if you weren't practicing before, you go from not praying to suddenly praying all five and the *sunnan* [sunna], and I swear, I feel, especially a lot of the focus is on the worship rather than spirituality...so fine, fair enough, I started to practice more, but then you still want that little thing that the movement hasn't really got, it's got one or two [shaykhs or scholars] that focus on that.

Several of my interviewees thus found that Salafism, although had promised to provide believers with all the tools needed for redemption, did not live up to this promise.

Jamila, another one of my interviewees, started to question Salafism's approach to Sufism, not because she was lacking or seeking spiritual fulfilment, but because of the discrepancy between her experiences being married to someone affiliated with the TI movement and Salafi discourses about Sufism. She recalls: "What I did see when I got married was that the actual differences were very little. […] There was no major conflict, there was no thunderbolt or lightening. We prayed together, fasted together. *Al-ḥamdu li-llah* [thank God] there was nothing". This was also the case the first time she listened to Yusuf with her husband. Although she was expecting Yusuf to commit "some sort of *bidaʿh*" or say something that's "contravening the Qur'an or the Sunna", she was surprised to find that, at least in the talks she listened to, this was not the case. Another one of my participants, Umm Sarah, also decided to explore Sufism after doing her own research about Ibn Taymiyyah's views on Sufism. She recalls:

> Ibn Taymiyyah is somebody that is always quoted by the Salafis, so I thought, OK let me look at what Ibn Taymiyyah says about Sufism. There, he deals with it. He's clearly been misquoted! I wonder how many other things have been mistranslated and published? I wonder what else is missing from the story?

This was the case with a couple of my other participants who also found a discrepancy between Ibn Taymiyyah's original writings on Sufism and contemporary Salafi discourses.

Some "Salafis" thus seem to have gravitated towards a more devotional and mystical approach to Islam after years of being so focused on strictly adhering to correct ritual practice. Yet, this is not to say that all Salafis have lacked spiritual connections within the movement. One of my participants, who had experienced difficulties in her marriage, stressed that perhaps unlike other Salafis she's always had an "emotional connection with

God". She explained: "I had that even though I was Salafi, and I think it was because when I got married, what I went through I had to have a spiritual connection". This is a reminder that there is of course room for varied experiences within Salafism. It is also evidence that simplistic explanations for the contradictions and transformations experienced by my participants are not sufficient.

5.4 Critical Consciousness and the "Saudi Project"

As can be seen in the examples above, many of my participants came to question, reconsider, and contest particular elements of Salafi discourses. Salafism's approach to *fiqh* [Islamic jurisprudence] was one of the first elements of Salafi discourse to be re-examined and contested. Al-Albani's anti-*madhāhib* approach was challenged by Abu Aaliyah, for example, who grew to believe that:

> "True" Salafism, the true way of Ibn Taymiyyah was that *taqlīd* is not prohibited. Rather *taqlīd*, following the qualified opinion of the scholar without knowing his *dalīl* [evidence], was actually by scholarly consensus, part of the religion for those who could not do *ijtihād* [independent reasoning].

Other Salafis also began to lose faith in al-Albani's approach to *fiqh*. This was the case with Abdul Haqq Baker, for example, who somewhat bitterly spoke to me about how "a particular narrative" about the *madhāhib* was given, in the 1990s, to the Salafis. Even Umar Jamaykee, the Imam of Brixton Mosque which continues to have close links to al-Albani's students, admitted to me that his "views on some things that Shaykh al-Albani held" have "changed over the years". Similarly, Umm Jamal, who attends Brixton Mosque, likewise joked about how although she used to be "an al-Albani groupie" this is no longer the case.

As we saw earlier in this chapter, Salafi *ʿaqīda*, particularly its anti-Ashʿarite component, has also been challenged to varying degrees. Bilal Philips, for example, who as we saw in Chapter 1 played a major role in disseminating Salafi *ʿaqīda* in the UK, referring to the Ashʿarites, explained:

> I consider them to be part *of ahl al-sunna wa-l jamaʿa*, [59] they made their *ijtihād*, they ended up with a position which still I don't agree with. It's not that I've changed, in terms of whether this is correct or incorrect, but you know, it is a product of their own *ijtihād*, and it's not something, which would take them out of the folds of *ahl al-sunna wa-l jamaʿa*.

---

[59] *Ahl al- sunna wa- l-jamaʿa* here refers to the community of Muslims who are considered faithful to the original beliefs and practices of the Prophet and his Companions and will thus be saved from hellfire.

Similarly, Samir who as we saw in Chapter 2 was originally attracted to Salafism in the 1990s because of its approach to ʿaqīda, no longer believes that those who follow an Ashʿarite creed, are "deviated or are heretical". Instead, he thinks "they are excused, they've done their best, they haven't picked the right ʿaqīda" but are still considered "orthodox". Other key members of Salafi daʿwa during the 1990s and 2000s have more drastically changed their approach to ʿaqīda. Yasir Qadi, for example, who as we saw in Chapter 3, played a major role in spreading Ibn Taymiyyan ʿaqīda (creed) within London's Muslim community now thinks that "there's a human element even to Salafism, even to Atharism,[60] that is not necessarily divine" and thus believes that "there's nothing wrong per se with other interpretations of Islam".

The quietest element of some Salafi networks has also been seriously reconsidered by many of my participants. Ishaq for example, who is a member of the Brixton Mosque community, explained to me that he no longer identifies with Salafi anti-MB narratives. He argued:

> We critique the Ikhwan [the MB] for being political, but then we don't dislike it when they do things that benefit us. So, for example, our kids can wear hijab at school, and that could be because the Ikhwan lobbied for that and fought for that […] The Salafi community has been especially inactive in this regard. I'm not saying that politics should come before Islam, but we need to engage.

In fact, Ishaq voted in the 2015 UK general election for the first time. I also found that Samar, who generally follows a SP-type Salafism, is starting to consider voting in UK elections as she has come to feel that "every vote counts". Similarly, Abdullah who also used to be affiliated with SP, shared with me his recent realization that:

> Even in Saudi, when they give fatāwā [religious rulings], it's for their nation, what fits with their national interest and culture. It's got nothing to do with somebody in England. […] In terms of politics specifically, and your relationship with the state, it doesn't apply outside.

Indeed, Abdullah now not only sometimes votes in UK elections, but even stated that he met with Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the Labour Party[61] between 2015-2020, the day before we met for our interview.

---

[60] Athari is a scholarly Islamic movement of the 8th century that later became, according to Aaron Spevack, a term that refers to "theologians, often though not always followers of the Ḥanbali school of law, who in theory reject using rational proofs in theology, opting instead to reference only the Qur'an and ḥadith for their theological positions" (Spevack, 2016, p. 537.)

[61] A majority of British Muslims tend to vote for the Labour Party. For example, in the 2015 General Election 64% of British Muslims voted for the Labour Party ("Power of the Muslim Vote", 2017).

The understanding that there are limits to the applicability of certain Salafi *fatāwā*, such as those forbidding political participation, has also been accompanied by shifts in my interviewees' perceptions of religious authority. The first shift has been a recognition that Salafism, or Islam more generally, should actually be about going back to the early generations of scholars instead of "blind following" contemporary scholars such as Ibn Baz or Ibn 'Uthaymin. While a few of my participants, came to believe that they were "blind following" these shaykhs more than 15 years ago, others have only more recently come to believe this. One of my interviewees who attends Al-Muntada and has been Salafi for over 20 years, for example, experienced a "light bulb moment", two years ago, during which he realized that "being a Salafi, doesn't mean you're quoting from *mutakhirīn* [later scholars] and leaving out the *Salaf* themselves". Jamila, likewise explained "now oddly enough, I consider the Salafi version to be the new innovation as it were, and now I consider there to be an older tradition of Islam". While attending a class in Brixton Mosque, I was also surprised to find Imam Umar quizzing his students about the first names of the four great Imams of Islamic Jurisprudence as well as the first names of contemporary Salafi scholars. When he found that his students had difficulties remembering the names of the four great Imams, and not the names of contemporary Salafi scholars, he remarked that this simple exercise shows how much weight is given to contemporary scholars versus historical scholars.[62] This is certainly indicative of Imam Umar's own transformation.

The second related shift in perceptions of religious authority, is the recognition that there are scholars and students of knowledge, outside of Saudi Arabia (and the Middle East more generally), that can be points of reference for Salafi communities in the West. Abu Tayib, for instance, though only listened to Saudi or Arab scholars, is now taking knowledge from Salafi scholars in South Asia (e.g. Pakistan and India) and Africa (e.g. Mauritania). He has also started to recognize the importance of local students of knowledge as "a scholar that never left his village in Yemen [for example] is never going to understand the nuances that we have to live with in the UK". Baker, although still recognizes the importance of overseas scholars, also now thinks there's "a diminishing in the requirement of scholars to come over as much". Other Salafis, particularly those who gravitated towards an activist-oriented Islam, have also changed their understanding of

---

[62] Field notes 10/07/2019.

who exactly can be considered a "scholar"—arguing that there can be scholars based in the West, and more specifically, that al-Haddad should be considered a scholar.

What was most striking, though, was the number of interviewees who lost faith in Salafism's articulation of itself as "true Islam". Indeed, as we saw in Chapter 2, one of the major successes of the Salafi movement was its ability to persuade second-generation Muslims and converts, that this was "pure Islam", devoid of culture. Yet many have come to believe that Salafi culture is actually Saudi or Arab culture. Ishaq, for instance, explained:

> Because we were converts, we used to shed our existing culture and adopt Saudi culture thinking it was Islamic culture. But there's nothing that makes the *ghutra* [rectangular headdress] Islamic for example. There's Islam, and there's Saudi culture. […] It was only when we grew, and matured, and gained our own knowledge that we started to realize this was Saudi culture and not in any way more Islamic then other ways of dressing according to the Sunna.

Similarly, Green, now only wears thobes (ankle-length long-sleeved garment commonly worn in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries) when visiting Arab countries like Qatar or the UAE, after coming to believe that "the Sunna is to dress the way your people dress" (as opposed to wearing a thobe to distinguish oneself from non-believers). Nabil, who was wearing jeans and trainers when we met for our interview, also came to believe a few years ago that "Islam didn't come to eradicate culture".

This process of disarticulating Saudi culture from Salafism, or Islam more generally, has been especially contentious in Brixton. Ibrahim, for example, spoke of "pressure" from the older generation of Salafis to adopt Saudi dress. Dressed in a Moroccan *jalābiyya* (loose fitting traditional garment) on the day I met him, he explained that after wearing Saudi thobes for some time he now prefers to wear Moroccan thobes. Abdul-Karim also spoke of how he now wears a baseball hat with his thobe, after doing his own research and discovering that "there's nothing to stipulate that the baseball hat is *ḥarām*". Abdul-Karim explains: "We started to keep our culture […] so we started to find our own way of being trendy with our Islamic identity". While this contestation seems to be a superficial element of Salafism, it is actually quite poignant because it is essentially contestation about what the ideal Muslim looks like, and who he or she is. It also relates to bigger concerns within this community, which is composed of a large number of Muslims from African or Afro-Caribbean backgrounds, about Arabization of the community as discussed in Chapter 2.

The principle of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* (loyalty and disavowal, or loving and hating for the sake of Allah) has thus also been contested over the years. Although the vast majority of "Salafis" have never used this principle to encourage or justify terrorist or violent acts, the principle has been often used to emphasize the difference between Salafis and the "non-believers". Several of my interviewees, though, have since questioned the "black and white", us vs. them, or believers vs. non-believers element of Salafi discourse as can be seen in the comments about dress above. Several have also doubted its applicability to everyday life. Umm Ibrahim, for instance, recalled how in her early days of Salafism she was encouraged to "work for the *umma* [larger community of Muslims]" but that this particular element of Salafi discourse did not sit well with her life-activities. She explained:

> I kept thinking, where is this *umma*? Where is it? I don't know this *umma*…I know society, that's what I know. I know people, I know neighbours, I know Muslims and I know non-Muslims. I want my kids to be part of the fabric of society, I want them to be of benefit to humanity, regardless of if they're Muslim or non-Muslim.

Umm Ibrahim also no longer thinks that Saudi shaykhs are the "most knowledge" arguing that they didn't know enough about the *'urf,* or customs, of British society.

These critical thought processes, and accompanying shifts and transformations in Salafi communities, have thus mainly revolved around, and contested, the position that Saudi Arabia has historically held within contemporary Salafi discourse. Whether its contesting religious authority, dress, political participation, or even *'aqīda*, many of my interviewees came to believe that these elements were all part of a "Saudi" project. Abu Aaliyah, for example, discovered that "the *da'wa* is attached to Saudi political expediency and not religion in itself", after a decrease in Saudi *da'wa* materials following the reinstatement of Saudi relations with Iran. Green likewise came to believe that what he and others were following "was really just Wahhabism". Salafi discourses, for many of my participants, thus no longer "appeared objectified, as unquestioned givens cut off from the socio-historical processes and interests through which they had evolved" (Giroux, 1983, p. 25).

These realizations, as we saw above, have been the result of practical experience. Indeed, as Perry argues:

> For Gramsci, this process [the development of critical consciousness, particularly class consciousness] was not a purely intellectual procedure; it was tied to practical experience. Practical activity and experience of the world shaped conscious development through the friction between the two sides of contradictory consciousness" (2002, p. 76).

My participants have thus drawn on good sense to critique the Salafi conception of the world. This good sense has allowed them to move beyond simply living out these contradictions, and enabled them to examine, and critically analyse the social relations and power structures in which Salafi discourses are embedded.

Salafi communities in the UK also experienced other significant changes during this period that contributed to the development of critical consciousness. They were subjected to intense scrutiny, for example, following 9/11 and 7/7 that forced them to take a step back and reflect on their approach to Islam. Mazin explains that though they never attached themselves in any way to "that extreme ideology", following 9/11, the community "just came under so much examination from outside" which led many to "assess, and rethink things". Abdulhaq Al-Ashanti, although claims to have not really changed much in his understanding of Salafism over the years, likewise spoke of how this scrutiny has encouraged critical thought processes within the community. He said: "it sort-of keeps us on our toes. It's good to have these things posed to make us think". It is important to note here that I am not suggesting that Salafis reconsidered Salafism because they saw a connection between their Salafism and the violence of Salafi-jihadis, but that being asked to repeatedly defend their approach to Islam in post-9/11 and 7/7 London encouraged introspection.

The past couple of decades, as we've witnessed above, have also witnessed an increase in the number of British Salafis travelling to study overseas within different Muslim communities and universities. A greater number of British Salafis also went on to learn Arabic both abroad and at local institutions in the UK. No doubt, in any context travelling and learning a new language are activities known for opening the eyes and mind. Yet, in the case of the Salafi movement, which has historically been very closely tied to scholars abroad who act as gatekeepers of "true" knowledge, these activities have been especially powerful and transformative. For Abu Aaliyah, for instance, this newly attained ability to read and translate Arabic sources meant he could independently explore Islamic sources and literature—without having to rely just on a limited and pre-selected set of translated sources and literature made available through existing transnational networks.

5.5 Post-Salafism: New Conceptions of the World?

> We all came in, and came out, almost in the same time, but completely unbeknown to each other. We were all in our own journeys, and you know, just unbeknown to each other, we were having the same thoughts, same discussions with ourselves, the same confusions, and slowly slowly we all ended up where we are today *Al-ḥamdu li-llah*.
>
> -Akhtar recalling his family and friends' entry "into", and "out of", Salafism.

Contradictions have been part and parcel of many British Muslims' experiences with Salafism from the start. Yet, it is only with time, and with practical experience, that my participants have become more conscious of, and willing to discuss, these contradictions. The exact nature and time frame of this journey has varied from participant to participant, with some of my participants becoming more conscious of these contradictions only after a period of five years, and others spending 10-20 years before being able to critically engage with Salafi discourses. In fact, this is a journey that is still ongoing for most of my participants. Baker, for example, who still identifies as Salafi, had assumed prayer beads were a *bida'h* until just two days prior to our interview when a friend presented him with "new evidence" to the contrary. Adam, who also still identifies as Salafi, likewise admitted he was constantly thinking about his decision not to invite speakers from a Deobandi or Ashʿarite background to his events. He explained: "I constantly think about this, is it correct to think like this? Is it too divisive?"

Similarly, although by the end of the 1990s, and 2000s, many of those who had come to Salafism in earlier years had lost faith in, or at least seriously reconsidered, many aspects of Salafi discourse, this has not usually entailed a wholesale departure from Salafism. For example, although Abu Tayib, changed his perspective on the importance of refutations vis à vis other Salafis, he proudly shared with me that he is still very much an "Albanist" referring to al-Albani's approach to *fiqh*. Usama Hasan, for example, though considers himself "Post-Salafi" or "Salafi-Sufi", is still very critical of *madhāhib*, believes in Muhammad Abd El Wahab's understanding of *tawḥīd el 'ibada* [oneness of worship], and doesn't believe in celebrating the Prophet's birthday. Likewise, Mazin, though now listens to Hamza Yusuf, still hasn't been able to adopt a *madhhab*. He explains:

> I cannot attach myself to a *madhhab* at the moment because of this latent Salafi brainwashing about *madhhabs* [*madhāhib*], although I believe absolutely in my heart that to be attached to a *madhhab* is correct […] but there's little part of me, that says: "it's alright, I can just read the hadith and look at the Qur'an".

Moreover, Jamila although now attends TI circles, has still retained Salafi "scepticism". She explains: "The idea of *baraka* [spiritual blessing], do something for *baraka*, if somebody said it to my husband, perhaps he'd just accept it, whereas with me […] I won't necessarily delve into all the practices that people do".

Some of my participants thus seem to be still caught in this state of contradictory consciousness, "wavering between the old and the new, when he [or she] has lost faith in the old, and has not yet come down in favour of the new" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 338 as cited in Chalcraft, 2021). Indeed, contradictory consciousness can at times "not permit of any action, any decision or any choice" and may produce "a condition of moral and political passivity" (1971, p. 333). This condition of passivity helps to explain why some of my participants have continued to identify with Salafism and have not sought out another conception of the world even after experiencing several contradictions within Salafism and becoming "disillusioned" with it. For example, one of my participants, when asked if he had attempted to explore other versions of Islam, responded, by saying: "You know what…I should be doing more". Another blamed his inactivity on "laziness".

There is also evidence of an emerging post-Salafi trend (Amin, 2017; Thurston, 2018) within London's Muslim community. Several of the earliest and most prominent Salafi activists in the UK now publicly critique Salafism. Abu Aaliyah, for example, founded Al Jawziyah Institute where he no longer calls to Salafism, but to "*īmān* [faith], Islam, *ʾiḥsān* [spiritual excellence]". He describes his institute and blog as attempts to "make up" for the previous role he had in propagating Salafism. Uzma likewise hosts circles now that no longer call to Salafism, but instead seek to move people away from their Salafi understandings. In the same way, Akhtar who still gives *khuṭab* (sermons) warns against Salafism. He explains: "I don't mention Salafism by name, but I will say to them [the congregation], there are some brothers that will tell you a hadith about 71 sects and 72 sects, and 73 sects, and all of them being in the fire except for one". Critiques of Salafism, by those who originally played a large role in its propagation, have thus become quite prevalent in post-Salafi circles.

Yet, even this post-Salafi trend has not entailed a complete departure from Salafism. Some of these individuals have also, as we have seen earlier, continue to believe in, and draw on elements of Salafi common sense about "blind following", "evidence", and "innovations" when thinking critically about, and critiquing, Salafism. Some have drawn on the principle of "blind following", for example, to critique the unquestionable authority granted to contemporary Salafi sheiks. Others have used the principle of innovation to critique Salafism and argue that actually, it is the Salafi conception of the world that is the "innovation". A process of sublation, where some elements of Salafi common sense have remained and others have been discarded, has thus taken place. Salafism has not been completely destroyed in the process, but has been mediated. Indeed, that which is sublated, according to Hegel is "mediated; it is something non-existent but as a result that has proceeded from a being; it still has in itself, therefore, the determinateness from which it derives" (2010, p. 81).

Finally, it is also important to note that not all Salafis within these circles have experienced sharp contradictions, or are rethinking their Salafism in the same way. A few of my participants claimed that their understanding of Salafism has largely been the same since they "became" Salafi. This is the case with Karima, for example, who suggested that she probably hasn't altered the way she practices Islam because she is a "creature of habit". In Chapter 7, we will revisit the experiences of those who joined Salafi circles in the 1980s-2000s, and are still heavily involved in the propagation of Salafism.

5.6 Conclusion

Most accounts of Salafism, as alluded to in the introduction of this thesis, focus on how Salafism has managed to gain traction and consent within Muslim communities. In this chapter, however, I delve deeper into Salafi communities in London and argue that this consent has been partial, incomplete, and ridden with contradictions. I argue that in many cases, British Muslims have experienced contradictions as they attempted to live their lives according to a Salafi conception of the world. I shed light on the state of contradictory consciousness that some of my participants experienced, and demonstrate how after experiencing these contradictions, some British Muslims have come to question articulations of Salafism as "True Islam" free from culture, as the "tradition" vis à vis bida'h, and as "evidence-based" as opposed to "blind following".

This chapter also suggests that we need to rethink lived Salafism. The critical approach adopted demonstrates why it is not enough to think about lived Salafism as the difference between Salafis' experiences and Salafi discourses. Instead, we need to take into consideration the underlying interests and socio-historical conditions structuring the communities we study. This is especially important because, as we have seen in this chapter, within Salafi communities, many British Muslims have gained a critical awareness of Salafism and its relationship to the power politics of Saudi Arabia. This chapter thus contributes to our understanding of how hegemonic common sense, and power more generally, is lived.

This chapter also contributes to our understanding of "post-Salafism" within Salafi communities. It finds that existing explanations in the literature for these developments can only partially explain the transformations that my participants experienced. For example, politics (and more specifically political participation and relationships with, and to, the state) as Thurston (2018) has suggested, may help to explain the transformations of Salafi scholars and activists, seeking to advance the position of Muslims in the West, such as al-Haddad and Begg. Politics can also partially explain the transformation of Salafis who have found the "quietist" element of networks like Brixton Mosque and SP too restrictive, and now believe that political participation and engagement is important in a context like the UK. Similarly, though we have seen how Salafi attentiveness to everyday social conduct and correct ritual worship has been exhausting for many of my participants, the concept of Salafi burnout is also an insufficient explanation as not all of those who experienced contradictions have experienced "hardened" hearts or lacked a spiritual connection within Salafism. The concept of "burnout" also does not capture the critical thought processes that have very much been a part of these complex transformations.

There is certainly much at play here. We have seen, for example, how refutations have been problematic for British Muslims who joined the daʿwa in search of clarity, but instead found confusion and conflict. Several Salafis have also come to doubt the "organic" nature, and larger purpose, of the Salafi movement after witnessing, and getting caught up in, organizational disputes. We have also seen how my participants' experiences with racism in Arab countries, travels outside of the UK, and encounters with other conceptions of the world (such as Sufism) have all had an unsettling impact on members of the community. The realities of life in London, for British Muslims, have

also undoubtedly complicated the articulation of Salafi common sense. Islamophobia, intense scrutiny following 9/11, UK government policies aimed at the assimilation of British Muslims, as well as British Muslims' everyday struggles to pay bills for example, have frequently resulted in tensions and contradictions. Indeed, for many of my participants, Salafism has not proven useful when "tested against the practical requirement of the age" (Perry, 2002, p. 77). It has been unable to "respond to the demands of a complex organic period of history" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 341).

Yet, as this chapter has argued, post-Salafism has not included a complete rejection of Salafism in its entirety, but has involved a process of sublation where some elements of Salafi common sense have remained intact. This chapter thus contributes to our understanding of Salafism's impact on the common sense of British Muslims. We see here how, despite these processes of contention within Salafi communities, Salafism has continued to shape British Muslims' common sense. Indeed, as Hegel argues, "that which is sublated is thus something at the same time preserved, something that has lost its immediacy but has not come to nothing for that" (2010, p. 82).

The next chapter continues to explore my participants' contradictory experiences and transformations while paying special attention to the experiences of Salafi women. This special attention is warranted for a number of reasons. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, for example, women are rarely included in larger accounts of Salafism, and works that do examine Salafi women, do not give much attention to contradictions and/or transformations. Women have also had their own distinct experiences with Salafism and with Salafi gender discourses. Exploring these lived experiences is also important, as will become apparent in the next chapter, because of the crucial role that women (are meant to) play in sustaining and advancing Salafi communities.

6. Between "Compliance" and "Resistance": The Lived Realities of Salafi Women

6.1 Introduction

> I think I did believe in the role of the woman, and I think I sort of believed that when I got married and became a wife, that I would somehow morph into this person. Although really, there was nothing in my life to indicate that I would be like that. It [Salafi *daʿwa*] was very, it was talking about a topic that was just, it wasn't real life; it was something mythical. We were just told, I just assumed that I'd be a good wife, and it'd be a natural progression. I didn't question that I wouldn't be able to do it.

> - Jamila, in her 40s, speaking about her experiences "becoming" the ideal Salafi woman.

In this chapter, I explore the experiences of 23 of my female participants, who came to Salafism in the 1980s-2000s, in more depth. I focus on their perceptions of, and attempts to, adhere to Salafi gender norms over the years. I argue that, like other Salafi discourses discussed in the previous chapter, Salafi gender discourses have also at times been contested within Salafi communities. Indeed, for some women, Salafi gender discourses have never been fully authoritative—again pointing to the limits of "conversion" and hegemonic discourses like Salafism. I also suggest that in many cases, even when women have attempted to at least partially adhere to Salafi gender norms, they experienced several contradictions. I argue that these experiences have, along with the experiences discussed in the previous chapter, contributed to the development of contradictory consciousness—a state in which some "Salafi" women have started to question, rethink, and resist some Salafi gender norms and practices.

I stress that by resistance here, I am not suggesting a simplistic standoff between "secular" and "religious" or "non-Salafi" and "Salafi" but a complex renegotiation that has taken place within the scope of the Islamic tradition and even in some cases within the realm of Salafism. Indeed, I demonstrate how some women, in the process of reimagining and reinterpreting what it means to be a good Muslim woman, wife, and mother, have drawn on elements of Salafi common sense. Finally, I consider the impact of these processes, arguing that although these women's conscious (and unconscious) departures from Salafi

gender discourses do not compose a collective movement, they have still had a disruptive impact on the reproduction of Salafism.

6.2 Salafi Women in the Literature

Muslim women have been the subject of much attention. Questions about their rights, freedom, and agency have been at the centre of highly politicized conversations by researchers, the media, and policy makers. This has especially been the case with Salafi women who are often accused of either being "forced", or at least "deluded", into adopting such a "patriarchal" approach to Islam. Within the literature, there have been a couple of approaches taken to understanding women's participation in Salafi movements as well as other gender-traditional religions.[63] Burke (2012), for example, documents four of the most commonly used approaches to understanding women's agency in gender-traditional religions: resistance, empowerment, instrumental, and compliance. In resistance approaches, for example, women do not passively accept male dominated religious institutions and religious practices, but instead challenge them (often in favour of Western/liberal discourses). Empowerment approaches suggest that women can use religion to empower themselves, while instrumental approaches highlight the non-religious benefits that may result from participation in these movements. The compliant agency approach suggests that women do indeed practice agency even if they are not attempting to challenge religious institutions. More recently, a fifth approach, that of "critical pious agency" has argued that women can engage critically with religious texts, and that "feminist" subjectivities and "pious" subjectivities need not be at odds with one another (Rinaldo, 2014).

Works that have examined women's participation in Salafi movements have most frequently, implicitly or explicitly, adopted a compliant agency approach, however. Perhaps it was Saba Mahmood's seminal work, *Politics of Piety*, that inspired this trend within the literature. In *Politics of Piety*, Mahmood critiques the way liberal assumptions have become naturalized in feminist scholarship and scholars' insistence on searching for moments of resistance to patriarchy "even in instances when an explicit feminist agency is difficult to locate" (2005, p. 8). Instead, Mahmood focuses on how the pious women in

---

[63] "Gender-traditional" is a term Burke (2012) uses to refer to some sects in Islam, Catholicism, Judaism, and Mormonism that "promote strict gender relationships based on male headship and women's submission" (p. 122).

her study are practicing agency via their inhabitation of Islamic norms as opposed to in resistance to them. Most works that have followed on Salafi women have pursued a similar approach setting out to demonstrate that Salafi women have willingly gravitated towards Salafism consequently avoiding any discussions on resistance. For instance, in her work, *The Making of a Salafi Woman*, Inge explores the conversion narratives of twenty-three young British women. She finds that her participants are seeking a life of commitment to Salafi values and norms. Indeed, with exception of one woman, Inge's participants never "overtly challenge Salafi principles" (2016, p. 173), and even when faced with challenges applying Salafism, "only a minority seemed prepared to obey the spirit rather than the letter of the law" (2016, p. 173). This is also the case with Nisa's account of Salafi women in Indonesia, for example, in which women are conceptualized as "dedicated actors of ultra-conservatism" (2012).

A certain sensitivity around questions of resistance in women's Salafi communities, and women's piety movements more generally, seems to have developed within the literature. This can be seen in Parvez's article on women's study circles in a working class Salafi community outside of Lyon in France, in which she is careful to stress: "I do not argue here that Islamic education and prayer among reformist women constitute a pedagogy of the oppressed or of resistance, because they do not directly aim for social transformation per se or a Western liberal vision of empowerment or social justice" (2016, p. 27). Even Schielke, who has critiqued Mahmood's focus on committed Salafi actors (as opposed to everyday Muslims), still agrees with departures from questions of resistance and claims that studies should not be focused on finding "moments of resistance and subversion in the women's piety movement" because this "may distract our attention from the power of authoritative religious discourses which the women of the piety movement, *firmly convinced* [my emphasis] of their Truth, attempt to realize in their life" (2009, p. 36).[64]

Yet, while I certainly applaud the move away from thinking of agency as only possible in cases of resistance to Islamic norms in favour of Western and/or liberal norms, there are still limitations to this approach. For one, it is built on the assumption that these discourses are in their entirety authoritative to women in piety movements, and that these

---

[64] Schielke's later work, *Egypt in the Future Tense* (2015), does explore the experiences of one woman who after a brief encounter with Salafism critiques Salafi understandings of Salafi gender norms and returns to her earlier understanding of Islam; yet in this work as well, Schielke does not address "resistance".

women will always be fully and firmly convinced that these discourses are the "Truth". Indeed, though some scholars working on Islam and gender have alluded to the "complexity of women's subjectivities in their engagement with Islamic movements" (Hafez, 2011, p. 8) and have warned against "totalizing notions of the cultivation of virtue" (Soares and Otayek, 2007, p. 18), the literature still depicts Salafi women in this manner. This is the case in Kolman's work on Salafi women in Tunisia where she notes:

> The one thing that stands out about these Tunisian female Salafis, from all strands, is that their religious and political identity as well as their ideology is based on a strict interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sunna. Therefore, it is unsurprising that their motivations, goals, and activities can *all* [emphasis added] be placed within this conservative Islamic framework (2017, p. 202).

Adopting this approach runs the risk of further essentializing Muslim women and overemphasizing the role Salafism (and Islam more broadly) plays in these women's lives, hereby leading us to fall into some of the same traps that these scholars initially set out to avoid. Taking the power of authoritative religious discourses for granted even when researching women who have "willingly" gravitated towards Salafi communities may thus obscure our understanding of the complex relationship that these women have with such discourses. Furthermore, this approach usually ignores the very important power dynamics, or socio-historical realities that, as we have seen in earlier chapters, work to structure life in Salafi communities. Indeed Bangstad, speaking about Mahmood's work, has made a similar point where she argues: "Mahmood's description of modern varieties of Salafism in Egypt is dehistoricized and decontextualized in omitting, for instance, the historical and contemporary role played by Saudi funding of Salafi publications and infrastructure" (2011, p. 30).

This compliant approach to women's participation in piety movements also does little to help us understand the experiences of women beyond their initial "conversion" to Salafism. We have already seen, in the previous chapter, how many men and women who joined Salafi communities in previous decades have since witnessed transformations in their understanding of Islam. However, a compliant agency approach only really helps us understand women's willingness to conform to Salafi norms, or what Schielke calls the "success stories of piety" (2009, p. 36). Literature that implicitly or explicitly adopts this approach hence fails to explore the messier aspects of women's experiences with Salafism. For example, scholars have not given enough attention to cases where women have not always been able to resolve the problems or contradictions they encounter in Salafi communities. Scholars' avoidance of these tricky issues leaves us without the

conceptual tools we need to be able to combat sensationalized and orientalist mainstream representations of women who have now supposedly "seen the light" and "rid themselves from the oppressive structures of 'radical Islam'" (e.g. De Feo, 2019; Gall, 2017).

At the same time, we must be wary of simplistic "resistance" frameworks that often stem from researchers' determination to counter existing essentialist discourses about "submissive Muslim women". Bayat (2013), has argued, for example, that many poststructuralist writers often end up "replac[ing] their subject" and "fall[ing] into the trap of essentialism in reverse—by reading too much into ordinary behaviours, interpreting them as necessarily conscious or contentious acts of defiance" (p.45). As we will see later in this chapter, I thus distinguish between women's conscious acts of resistance and unintentional departures from Salafism.

6.3 Salafi Gender Norms

The ideal Muslimah, according to Salafi discourses, is an obedient wife and dedicated mother responsible for the education and upbringing of the next generation of Salafis. There is a big focus on marriage within the movement,[65] with both men and women encouraged to marry as soon as possible after having found a suitable Salafi spouse. When assessing a prospective spouse's suitability, Salafis are encouraged to above all else ensure that he/she has the right *'aqīda* (creed). Haniya, speaking about marriage discourses during the time of JIMAS recalled: "the thing that was stressed was race should not matter, financial background didn't matter, unless their *'aqīda* is good, that's all that should matter". The hadith (report of the words and deeds of Prophet Muhammad) "There is no obedience to the creation wherein there is disobedience of the creator"[66] is also often used to justify (if not encourage) young women and men to refuse non-Salafi spouses arranged for them by their parents as is often the case in some South Asian communities

---

[65] Because Salafi conceptions of the ideal Muslimah have not changed much in the last few decades, I do not limit myself to data from the earlier days of the movement, but also draw on notes from my participant-observation in Salafi circles, interviews with Salafi leaders, and data collected from recently published Salafi sources. I do limit myself, however, to the networks that grew out of JIMAS i.e. I exclude networks like that of Daʿwah Man which have only become influential in the past 5 years or so (these will be discussed in Chapter 7).

[66] This hadith is often interpreted to mean that a Muslim should not obey anyone they are usually advised to obey (e.g. mother, father) if in doing so they would be disobeying God ("There is no", 2017).

for example. Discussions on the importance of *'aqīda*, as opposed to race, have also frequently featured in the context of inter-racial marriages within London's increasingly diverse Muslim community.

Within Salafi communities, conceptions of the ideal woman are very closely related to conceptions of the ideal wife. Salafi norms for the ideal Muslimah emphasize a wife's complete devotion, submission, and obedience to her husband.[67] Women in Salafi circles are also encouraged to accept a husband's decision to be polygamous. Indeed, questions about polygamy factor frequently in Salafi circles. In a question and answer session at a SP conference that I attended, for example, Shaykh Salim Bamahriz (a Somali scholar based in Saudi Arabia) encouraged women to accept polygamy and to see its many benefits in response to one woman's question about feelings of jealousy in polygamous marriages.[68]

Women and men are also understood, within Salafi communities, to have ontological differences that make men more suited for leadership and work outside of the home, and women more suited for nurturing and educating. While working outside the house is not outlawed according to most Salafi discourses (as long as it takes place amongst women and fulfils other requirements),[69] women are certainly encouraged to primarily focus on the upbringing of their children. Abu Khadeejah, of SP, explains for example:

> One thing that we do have amongst Salafis is this very strong idea that women are builders of the next generation, they are teachers, they are educators, they can translate, they can raise their children, and look after their families, and those are all important, not just important, but actually necessary roles within our community.

In fact, there is a big push within Salafi communities for women to home-school their children despite it being a big undertaking (see Shavit, 2017). As one of my participants, Umm Ibrahim explained, home-schooling is seen in Salafi circles in the UK as the only way to really "preserve [children's] *dīn* [religion] and protect them from society" (particularly in cases where sending children to Salafi schools is not possible).[70]

---

[67] This is on the condition that a woman's husband has commanded her to "do good". She cannot obey him, for example, if he asks her to commit a sinful deed.

[68] Field Notes, July 26th, 2018.

[69] See for example Shaykh Ibn Baz's Fatwa (DaarusSunnah, 2013).

[70] Though no data exists on home-schooling practices within Salafi communities in London, Shavit (2017) has found that within the SP community in Birmingham, 100 children were home-schooled while 400 attended a Salafi school.

Women are thus considered crucial for the success of the *da'wa* [religious mission]. Umm Ibrahim, argued that in comparison to men, women tend to have a larger effect on their households. She argued "men have been going to the mosque for decades, but *give da'wa* [proselytize] to a woman, and within six months the whole house is upon the *dīn*". Abu Khadeejah also similarly thinks of women as the "conduits" of Salafism. He explained:

> There is no future for Salafi *da'wa* or any *da'wa* really without a conduit. There needs to be people who are practicing the *da'wa* for the *da'wa* to move on. So how is the *da'wa* practiced? Its practiced by individual families. And the family unit makes up the community which in turn makes up the society.

An ideal Muslimah is also one who conforms to Salafi standards of modesty. According to most Salafi discourses, the *jilbāb* (a loose outer-garment that conceals everything but the hands and face), is considered obligatory. Wearing the niqab (the full face veil) is also recommended within Salafi communities, though as mentioned earlier, contemporary Salafi scholars have held different opinions about whether or not the niqab is obligatory. There is no doubt, that within Europe, the niqab is highly controversial. Though wearing the niqab is not banned in public in the UK as it is in neighbouring France (Brems & Chaibm, 2013), it is still the subject of much debate. Women who wear niqab are accused of clashing with "British values". Indeed, the UK's current prime minister, Boris Johnson, has previously likened women who wear niqab to "letterboxes" and "bank robbers" (Johnson, 2018). Women who wear niqab have also at times been victims of Islamophobic acts. Despite these challenges, however, Salafi discourses still consider the *jilbāb* obligatory and recommend the niqab.

Salafi conceptions of modesty extend beyond dress and also dictate that a woman should "not be loud", should practice "shyness", and should not "flirt" with men like some dis-believing women do (Lahmami, 2016). Women are encouraged to conform to Salafism's strict gender segregation practices and avoid any unnecessary mingling with men or what is usually referred to as free-mixing. Discussions about free-mixing continue to feature most prominently today in conversations about women's education and employment (though not exclusively so, the dangers of free-mixing are mentioned in discussions about men and children's educational choices as well). This is not to say that university attendance is explicitly forbidden by Salafi leaders in UK communities,[71] however, but that it is often discouraged by those in Salafi circles as, according to a *fatwa* (religious

---

[71] In fact, Abu Khadeejah's wife was studying for a PhD at the time of my interview with him, and all of al-Haddad's daughters have attended university.

ruling) by Shaykh Ibn Baz, for example, free-mixing is understood to bring about "much evil and corruption" ("Free Mixing", 2010).

Women are also encouraged to seek Islamic knowledge though rarely hold authority within the movement. For example, within SP, women have been mainly limited to supportive roles within the organization. When asked if there are any female speakers affiliated with SP, Abu Khadeejah explained "we don't have that, and we've never really had a need for it." Abu Khadeejah's answer did not surprise me as during the course of my fieldwork, I only ever came across talks and lectures by male speakers. Though I did come across a female teacher who affiliates with SP and hosts classes within her home, she was referred to as *khāla* (auntie), and the authority she had amongst my participants could not be compared to the authority given to male leaders of the movement. The activist MRDF/Islam21C network, associated with al-Haddad, also does not depart too much from this model. Although perhaps because this network is less centralized, I have come across one woman who associates with this network who has reached the level of *ustādha* and gives talks online and in women's events.[72]

Although the extent to which these norms and practices are closely adhered to may vary across the different Salafi networks in the UK, Salafi discourses on gender are generally similar across the different Salafi networks. All three Salafi networks have also paid particular attention to women. They have made sure that their mosques are accessible and welcoming to female worshippers and children for example. According to the Muslims in Britain mosque database, 95% of Salafi mosques in the UK have a women's section while only 49% of Deobandi mosques, for example, have facilities for women (2021). The majority of Salafi organizations have also dedicated sections of their websites to women.

Salafi publishers, like SP, have likewise translated and published many books and pamphlets aimed especially at women like *Attributes of the Righteous Wife* and *Supporting the Rights of the Believing Women*. Gender norms are also discussed in Salafi classes, lectures, and conferences. For example, the women's network "Shagara Tayeba" used to host an annual women's conference that revolved around different themes like the Ideal Muslimah. Similarly, the theme of Salafi Publication's annual winter conference

---

[72] This woman's father is also a shaykh in the UK, which perhaps, along with her scholarship, partially explains her authoritative position within the community.

(for both men and women) in 2018, for example, was "Establishing an Islamic Home and Setting a Fine Example for the Youth". By drawing on the examples of the Prophet's wives and his female companions, in addition to hadiths and verses from the Qur'an, contemporary Salafi scholars and Salafi leaders attempt to provide evidence for these discourses. Online forums, like Salafi Talk (associated with SP), also often feature discussions about "How to be a Righteous Wife", "are women allowed to work in islam??" and "advice on teaching children". More recently, social media (e.g. Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Telegram, and WhatsApp) has also been an important channel for the dissemination of these gender norms. Friends, siblings, relatives, and even acquaintances in the mosque also play a big role in the diffusion of these ideas. In fact, though the adoption of these norms in Salafi communities is understood be an individual, voluntary process, free of coercion, there is certainly social pressure to conform to these norms within the community as we will see in subsequent sections.

It is also interesting to note that Salafi leaders, although aware that these norms stand in sharp contrast to more liberal gender norms in the UK, are not at all apologetic about their propagation. Al-Haddad, for example, specifically spoke to me about how "proud" he was of the gender norms that he has continued to hold over the years. He boasted: "Although I was criticized by media, I'm proud to say this, the priority for women is their families, their children. I'm against women, except in certain circumstances of course, to dedicate their lives to their careers, yeah?" Similarly, Abu Khadeejah argues:

> You know, one thing the Salafis have never done, is respond to the pulls and pushes of society, all of a sudden we have this affirmative action for women. Just because society is looking at us now, and the local councils are looking at us, non-Muslims are looking at us, let's just throw a few women, you know, on the camera, or behind some microphones, just to satisfy the whims of our critics. We are what we are, you know?

In fact, Salafi leaders often juxtapose Salafi practices with the practices of liberals, feminists, the West, and/or non-Muslims. Al-Haddad, for example, when speaking to me about why he still holds traditional gender norms, explained: "I believe that women in the West, some not all, […], are oppressed". Similarly, when arguing in favour of "responsible polygamy", the editors of the website "Salafi Manhaj" for instance, portray it as a case of "good family practices" in contrast to the "immoral and indecent sexual behaviour (in the name of liberalism and freedom)" (2014). This is also the case with Abu Khadeejah, who, when arguing for "arranged marriages" in favour of "love marriages", also claims that love marriages lead to high divorce rates because "questioning and vetting rarely take place in modern Western societies" (Abdul-Wahid, 2018a).

6.4 Problematizing Authority & Adherence: Women's Early Encounters with Gender Norms

Many young women first encountered Salafism during their college and university years, and thus learned about Salafi gender discourses at the same time that they were making important life decisions regarding their education, careers, and future life-partners. And while, as we saw in previous chapters, many young women did indeed take into consideration Salafi discourses when making these decisions, I argue that this did not always entail a comprehensive belief in, or adoption of, all Salafi gender norms. I also argue that, women's adherence to, or noncompliance with, these norms cannot, and should not, be understood solely with reference to the influence of Salafism. Salafism does not operate in a vacuum—even when it comes to the lives of so-called "Salafi" women.

I found, for example, that Salma though believed in the importance of modesty and was happy to begin wearing the niqab, was never persuaded by Salafi discourses that discouraged young people from attending "mixed" universities. She explains:

> I always wanted to go to university, it's something that I always wanted to do. I just didn't believe the argument they gave me, I thought how do you have female doctors […] and midwifes? How do you have female anything if you don't allow women to go?

Similarly, Jamila, who began wearing the *jilbāb* after joining Salafi circles, recalled: "I don't think I ever considered not going to university, because I didn't see a conflict [with Islam]. My parents had led us to believe in education, education, education". Salma and Jamila's preconceived ideas about the value of university education, thus worked to limit the influence of Salafi discourses about the dangers of "mixed" university settings.

Salafi gender norms have also interacted with other factors like class. When asked why they chose to work despite coming across Salafi discourses that encouraged women to stay at home, both Hamida and Maliha alluded to their socioeconomic circumstances. Maliha explained "I had to do what was practical for my life. My mum and dad both worked, it's not like my mum and dad encouraged me to stay at home…nobody was saying to us: 'stay at home, we'll support you'". Hamida also alluded to the difficulties she encountered growing up in a single-parent family and spoke of how, despite the pressure she was facing from her Salafi brother to quit her job and stay at home, she

continued to work because she wanted to buy a car to be able to drive her aging mother around.

Hamida was also, for similar reasons, never fully convinced of Salafi discourses about marriage and the ideal Muslim wife. Though she believed in Salafi *'aqīda*, she chose not to seek a Salafi spouse. She explains: "I actively chose not to marry a Salafi. The ideal Muslimah, from a Salafi point of view, was somebody who never went out, didn't really have a life, [had] a husband and children, and studied Qur'an. It just seemed to me quite a closed off life". Thus, Hamida consciously went against Salafi discourses that deem a prospective spouse only suitable if he holds the right *'aqīda*. Similarly, Maliha recalled: "there were certain aspects that I didn't admire about *Da'wa Salafiyya*, because I had a friend who was in Streatham and her husband had three wives, and she had a bazillion children, maybe 6-8 children. So I wasn't admiring of it". Indeed, when Maliha first met the man who she would go on to marry she said to him: "I want to work, I want to study, I need to keep my car".

It's also important to note that women's adherence to certain Salafi norms cannot simply be traced to the influence of Salafism. Several of the women who chose to become stay-at-home mothers, for example, seem to have already valued this role prior to "becoming Salafi". Hadia, for example, held certain ideas about motherhood even prior to coming across Salafism in university. She spoke about how, perhaps because her mother had stopped working after having kids, she thought it was normal for mothers to stay at home and dedicate all their time to raising their children. She laughed recalling:

> When I was at school, it was a very academic school. […] I remember telling [my tutor]: 'I'm not going to work. I'll go to university, but I'll just get married to someone who is wealthy.' […] Even though I was joking, believe it or not, I think there was a very small element of thinking, that actually once I get married, whether it was to someone who is wealthy or not, my primary role was just going to have kids and look after them.

This was also the case with Yosra, for example, who chose to homeschool her children. She explained "I loved the idea of having my children with me 24/7. I think I get that from my mum because she was like that as well. She loved having us around even though I was a spoiled brat". Indeed, though Yosra attended a private school and Hadia was at a very academic school, they both decided, and could afford to, become stay-at-home mothers. Similarly, Jamila's reasons for not working after marriage were not exclusively linked to Salafi discourses. She recalls:

> At university I did start to question why I was studying. I did begin to feel like: "but what's the point, where is this taking me?" I felt very dissatisfied. I think part of that was because there definitely was an idea of what is an ideal Muslimah. And I studied biology in university, and I just started thinking: :I don't know where this is linking into that". But I think that was only a small part of it, the main part was bad career advice. We only knew certain professions and we didn't realise there's a big world out there.

Assuming that women's lives in Salafi communities are exclusively governed by Salafi discourses, or that all life decisions can or should be traced to belief or disbelief in Salafi discourses, thus overemphasizes the role that these discourses actually play in women's lives. Indeed, as we have seen above, profane matters like bad career advice, inherited norms and values, class and family circumstances have all interacted with Salafism. It is interesting to note here that class, for example, has not interacted with Salafism in a predictable way. Whereas in other parts of the thesis (Chapter 3 and 7) and in the literature (e.g. Adraoui, 2020; Merone, 2020; Özyürek, 2015), Salafism works to mobilize men and women from disadvantaged backgrounds, we see here how Maliha and Hamida's need to work, for example, has actually limited the impact of Salafi discourses relating to marriage and employment. In the next section, I will continue to explore women's relationships with Salafi gender discourses beyond the initial "conversion" phase.

6.5 Rethinking, Resisting, Renegotiating

As previously discussed, most literature on Salafi women tends to focus on conversion processes, positive experiences, and good outcomes. And while, as I explained earlier, I do take issue with this approach, I would like to clarify here that I do not mean to suggest that these positive experiences do not at all exist. I found, for example, that six of the women I interviewed, who have been Salafi for 10-20 years, seem to still find Salafi gender discourses to be authoritative. This does not mean that they did not evolve at all in their thinking, but that contestation has not been a result of their interactions with Salafi gender norms. Karima, for example, who has attended Brixton Mosque for more than 15 years, spoke of the positive impact that Salafi discourses about motherhood have had on her life. She explained to me that they have prevented her from being considered "just a housewife". She explains: "it gave me a purpose. I felt I was honoured, and doing a good job, and not just wasting away at home, especially because maybe I went to university, and I wasn't using it [my degree], because I was with my children". Umm Jamal, who has been going to Brixton Mosque for more than 20 years, likewise spoke positively to me about her experiences applying Salafi gender norms. She asserted that gender roles

have never been a point of contestation in her marriage. Describing the division of household tasks between her and her husband, she said "if I made the dinner, he did the dishes. And if he cooked the dinner, I washed the dishes". She similarly argued that Salafi discourses that encourage a woman to stay-at-home and avoid "free-mixing" have not been difficult for her to conform to. She explained "I worked in a school, now I work in a *masjid* [mosque], I have a side business of my own, I make blankets, I make jewellery, I do whatever to get an extra income for myself". She also spoke to me about Salafi women in her community who have succeeded as authors or businesswomen and still managed to conform to Salafi gender norms. She argued:

> They're out there doing their thing, and it hasn't stopped them from being good mothers, it hasn't stopped them from being good wives, it hasn't stopped them getting a meal on the table for their husbands, it hasn't stopped them from looking after their children, and home-schooling.

Umm Somayah, who has been in Salafi circles for more than 15 years, also explained to me that she still believes in Salafi gender norms because they are, most importantly, supported by evidence from the Qur'an and Sunna.

For many in Salafi communities though, attempts to apply Salafi gender norms have not gone as smoothly. Indeed, many women have experienced contradictions as they tried to become the ideal Salafi woman—coming to find that Salafi gender discourses did not sit well with their lived realities. These experiences, like the experiences discussed in the previous chapter, have also contributed to contradictory consciousness. Within this state, as we will see, Salafi women grew to have doubts about many Salafi gender norms as well as the position of women in Salafi communities more generally. Tapping into the good sense that emerged out of their experiences in Salafi communities, some of these women have since consciously resisted Salafi gender norms.

I found that several of my participants experienced contradictions as they tried to conform to Salafi discourses about the ideal Muslim wife. Many of my participants felt as though they had not been prepared for the challenges that met them after marriage. Haniya spoke of how many women in the community had been "left rudderless" because they had not been given much guidance on how to practically apply Salafi marriage norms. I found this to be the case with Jamila, for example, who as we saw in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, had assumed that she would have no troubles transitioning into the role of the "ideal Salafi wife". Yet, for several of my participants, transitioning into the role of the submissive wife was especially challenging because of how empowered they had

initially felt as young single women within Salafi *da ʿwa*. Indeed, Jamila felt as though she had belonged to a community of "very strong women" during her university years. She recalled "the women I was around were very strong women, these are women who were wearing niqab at uni[versity], challenging left right and centre, some of them working. There were women studying to be doctors, we were all in professional fields". Following marriage, however, many of these women were expected to conform to a very different set of norms and practices. Another one of my participants, for example, was frustrated when, right after graduating from university and getting married to a young Salafi man she met at university, she discovered that he expected her to stay-at-home. She explained: "before I got married, my parents had given me a car. I was driving around, doing my own thing, to and from uni[versity], going to talks in different places, I was doing all that". After marriage, however, she was surprised to find that her husband did not support her plans to do a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) though he knew of her plans prior to their marriage. It is thus perhaps little surprise that many of my participants mentioned marital conflicts, and three of my participants had been divorced. Certainly, the community's divorce rate[73] featured in my discussions with my participants. Nusayba, for example, claimed:

> I think especially when it came to marriages as well, people really never knew the depth of what it was to be a wife or husband, with lots of kids in their young twenties, to fulfil the Sunna, but they knew nothing, absolutely nothing, and those marriages didn't hold, there were so many marriages that failed.

The everyday pressures of marriage and motherhood that women tend to face, like the unequal distribution of household tasks and childrearing responsibilities, have also eventually led some of my participants to re-think and resist Salafi norms and practices. For example, several women complained to me about husbands who don't help enough around the house or don't play a large enough role in their children's lives. After many years of trying to be "good Salafi wives" and practicing patience, however, a few of my participants reached a point where they are no longer willing to do so. Maliha, for example, explained that after reaching the age of 40, "things became a lot clearer" to her. She argued: "Now, I'm actively not being it [the ideal Salafi wife]. So for example, before I had an expectation of myself, that when my husband comes in, the food is cooked. Now I've changed it, because I've thought actually, it's not my role".

---

[73] As some Salafis have argued, however, the divorce rate in Salafi communities while may be considerable, might not be any higher than other communities (Inge, 2016).

Similarly, Salma explained that because she previously thought that obedience to her husband was important, she used to push herself to conform to his expectations of an ideal wife. However, she has now decided that she will no longer continue to do so. She explained:

> I think he knows now that I'm not going to be that person. So he can either accept it, or fight me on it. I've done it, and I don't want to do it anymore […] I'm going to do what I want to do, because for twenty years I haven't. Not to say that I've had a really horrible path, or I've been downtrodden, oppressed, not that, it's just that I did all the looking after, and the tendering, now I can do my own thing. The kids are older now, they don't need me as much. They're more independent.

As can be seen in both these examples, Maliha and Salma have made a conscious decision not to comply with Salafi gender norms.

Sticking to Salafism's strict gender segregation norms has also been particularly challenging for several of my participants. Umm Sarah, who was pressured by other Salafi women to try and stay-at-home (although her own husband was not a Salafi and did not encourage her to do so), explains that she quickly felt like she was "going to go crazy". In fact, I found that in a few cases, women who had taken into consideration Salafi discourses warning against free-mixing when making decisions about education and employment for example, have now, about a decade later, taken steps to reverse these earlier decisions. Rabiya, for example, although is currently married and has a young daughter has started attending university. She explained "I've started going to university now. When I was growing up and at college time, everyone was like you can't go to university, there's men there. You can't free mix, and I accepted that, and I didn't go". Yet, she now believes that it is possible for Muslim women to "still preserve their hijab, and their identity, and still get far".

For some of these women, these experiences, in addition to the experiences discussed in the previous chapter, have culminated in not just a rethinking of isolated Salafi principles, but of the subaltern position of women in Salafi communities. Umm Ibrahim, for example, has had conversations with female friends during which they collectively reflected on their experiences within Salafi communities. She explains:

> I was saying [to my friends] I think it was the men that limited our ability to think and be more. It wasn't us. Because the brothers were there, whatever they said, we would take. Whatever they told us our role was, we took it on, and although we were trying to free ourselves from blind following, it's almost like we went from one type of blind following, to another, but in a different form.

Umm Ibrahim's good sense, which has emerged out of her practical experiences within London's Salafi community, has thus led her to think critically about and resist Salafi

gender norms. This process has again involved the use of Salafi common sense in a critical way. Umm Ibrahim, as we can see in the quote above, has drawn on the concept of "blind following", for example, to contest the position of women in Salafi communities. Indeed we can see here, like we did in the previous chapter, Salafism being "subjected to a critical interrogation via its own thought processes and practical activity" (Giroux, 2001, p. 153).

Several of the women I spoke to have likewise regretted not "questioning" the narratives that were circulating at the time and/or simply relying on translations and interpretations of Islam linked to men from Saudi Arabia. Indeed, for these women, this process has also been accompanied with a rethinking of other Salafi discourses like those discussed in the previous chapter on Salafism being a "pure" Islam void of any culture. Umm Ibrahim now believes that one cannot simply speak of "Qur'an and Sunna" but must also consider the *'urf*, or customs, of a place. A couple of my participants also spoke of their attempts to re-discover what Islam "actually" says about gender roles. Salma began to realize, for example, that Salafi discourses that referred to *Al-Salaf al-ṣāleḥ* (the pious ancestors) only presented one side of the story. Thinking back on Salafi classes, Salma explains:

> Khadija *(radiyya Allahu 'anha* [God be pleased with her]), she was a businesswoman, but that wasn't the emphasis. The emphasis was the wife that she was, how much she supported the Rasoul [messenger] *ṣalla Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* [Blessings of God and Peace Be Upon Him]. […] And even with Asiyah *(radiyya Allahu 'anha*), again it was more about her generosity, not necessarily on her scholarship, not necessarily on her amazing mind or anything, and the fact that she was a feisty person, she wasn't a submissive wife that said "yes sir and no sir".

Similarly, Yosra, who quit university over worries about free-mixing, also spoke of how although she was taught that the ideal Muslim woman was only a wife and mother, now believes that "the ideal Muslim woman can still go to university and be a wife and a mother". Some of these women have thus begun to trace Salafi gender discourses to the agents and conditions that produced them—no longer taking them for granted as givens, or as the "Truth".

As with the transformations discussed in the previous chapter, this process of contesting some Salafi gender norms has rarely included a complete refusal of all Salafi gender norms. This does suggest, as Lears has argued that subjects can "identify with the dominant culture-often for sound reasons-even as they…[seek] to challenge it" (1985, p. 576). In fact, regardless of how and to what extent my participants contested Salafi gender norms, I found that this process was always within the confines of Islam and in many

cases Salafism. Participants who, as we saw in the previous chapter, gravitated to other approaches of Islam like Sufism, were not any more critical of Salafi gender norms than those who still identify as Salafi. This is evidence that this resistance stems not from another conception of the world, but from my participants' experiences and resulting good sense.

This contestation has also not resulted in a complete rejection of veiling. In cases where women have decided to remove their niqab and/or *jilbāb,* they have decided to still dress modestly and wear the hijab. This was the case with Rabiya, for example, who after living in Saudi Arabia for a few years and becoming disillusioned with Salafism, returned to London and decided to remove her niqab and wear the hijab instead. I also found it interesting that not all those who stopped wearing the niqab regretted their earlier decisions to wear it or had ill-feelings towards it. For example, Yosra who wore the niqab for 10-15 years, explains:

> When the attacks happened here [7/7] […] that's when I decided to take off my niqab, because at that point I could see fear in the eyes of the people in this country. […] To be honest, I loved my niqab, I loved wearing [it], like I said, it made me feel a stronger Muslim. I'm not going to say better, but definitely stronger in my faith, closer to God.

In fact, Yosra still wears the niqab in certain circumstances, like when she is delivering marriage seminars. She explains "I would feel very uncomfortable standing in front of men, talking about some of the issues that we have to talk about in a marriage seminar". Farhana similarly selectively wears the niqab when she is giving talks that will eventually be uploaded to YouTube for example.

I would also like to make clear here that while in some of the cases above, women's resistance has been directed at husbands who continue to hold Salafi perceptions of the ideal Salafi woman, this has not always been the case. In fact, some men have also reconsidered Salafi gender norms. Baker, for example, argued that when he first came to Salafism, he had not been given the full picture in regards to narrations about women. Commenting on narrations that a woman shouldn't leave her house unless "necessary", he argued that there is more than one way that the word "necessary" can be interpreted. He explained:

> Now looking at the world as it is today, we are social creatures, we like to socialize, visit friends. Could it be a case of life/death to shut off a women who was a social who had a social relationship with friends, and working and everything, and you suddenly say to her you've got to stay home, and you cannot go out unless it's a necessity? That will invariably create mental health issues, for

some women, if not most of them. I would argue this is a case of necessity especially in the society that we live in today and I've seen examples of it.

Green has also similarly reconsidered Salafi gender discourses. He explains that being a father, and seeing the way his wife parents his children, has especially changed his understanding of gender roles. He recalled:

> My wife, may Allah bless her, although she is a niqabi, she'll happily stay in the house and not leave it, but she has never allowed things with my boys that I don't do with my girls...whatever my boys do, the girls do, whether its skiing, biking, whether its swimming.

In fact, Abdurraheem Green who was perhaps one of the biggest proponents of early marriage in Salafi communities, explained that he wouldn't encourage his own daughters to marry at a young age as he doesn't want them to eventually feel dissatisfied later on in their lives.

At the same time, it is important to note that for some women, departures from Salafi gender norms have not been accompanied by a critical approach to Salafi gender norms. After experiencing anxiety and depression, as a result of staying at home and attempting to conform to Salafi norms, for example, Samar no longer conforms to Salafi discourses that discourage women from going out unless "necessary". She explains "I just feel like the society that we live in, that's not really possible for a lot of us, and I don't think it's healthy". Yet, at the same time, she claims not to be contesting what "Qur'an and Sunna" says arguing that she believes the Qur'an and Sunna to be "clear cut". This was also the case with another one of my participants Yasmin, for example, who spoke to me about her experience as an unmarried woman in a community that puts so much emphasis on marriage and motherhood. Yasmin spoke about how she is no longer that concerned with marriage. She explained:

> I'm not married, so when people say oh, you should be aiming to get married, aiming to have children, if those things are not destined, as much as people can try, it might not be destined, but as Muslims we can try our best to do the actions that Allah has commanded, like the prayer and things like that.

Yasmin is now looking at her career, as a means through which she can achieve God's pleasure. She explained: "Right now, I'm in the environmental side of science, so my intention is, when I'm in the lab, I'm doing something to help the environment". Yet, during our conversation, Yasmin never once contested Salafi gender norms. Indeed, her attempt to find other ways to be a good Muslim woman has been more of a "coping" mechanism than an active or conscious act of resistance. It's important to keep in mind, however, that the line between these conscious and unconscious departures from Salafism can be quite thin. We may find in a few years, for instance, that Yasmin and Samar's

repeated failed attempts to square Salafi theory with practice may eventually lead them to question the very validity of the Salafi gender discourses that they have been trying to implement for more than a decade.

6.6 Parenting & The Next Generation

Salafi women (and men) have also faced several challenges applying Salafi discourses about parenting and children's education. Several of my participants have reconsidered the generally "strict" parenting style that, though may not be explicitly recommended in Salafi discourses, implicitly emerges from parents' attempts to conform to Salafi teachings. Yosra, for example, who now has four grown up children, recalls being originally quite strict with her children. She explains: "Salafism makes you think that the stricter you are, the more religious you are". Umm Sarah likewise regretted being so strict with her children arguing that it negatively impacted their relationship with Islam. She explained that although this is no longer her parenting technique, her children still recall those days and often joke "Oh, you and your Salafi days!". Similarly, Maliha shared how she had purposefully brought up her kids without "a huge amount of Islam". Recalling her own experiences as a young adult who chose to explore Islam on her own accord, she says "when I came in, it was my choice to pray, it was my choice to read Qur'an, it was my choice to sit in circles […] it doesn't mean so much if they don't want to do it". Amira also explained that she has "mellowed out" after having children and has thus adopted a different parenting strategy than the one she originally intended to pursue. She explained that her children "don't even know about Salafism" as she sees Salafism as characteristic of the time that she grew up in, preferring instead that her children explore Islam on their own "when it comes to their time".

In some cases, women have chosen to depart from Salafi narratives about the importance of home-schooling and/or sending their children to a Salafi school. Umm Ibrahim recalls being criticized by other Salafis in her community for sending her kids to a state school where kids would be "singing songs", "listening to music", and might even be "taught by homosexual teachers". Yet, she was not persuaded by this approach, she argued: "So what if a homosexual teacher teaches my child? Is he not able to teach? Is he going to perform an act of sodomy, then yes maybe, but how is homosexuality going to affect my child?"

Women's wishes for their children, were also in a few cases, quite different from Salafi conceptions of the ideal Muslim or Muslimah. Umm Ibrahim argued: "when you become a mother you realize you want them [your children] to function in society, you want them to be part of something, you want them to be educated, and you want them to be successful and you want them to work". Rabiya, speaking about her daughter, similarly explained:

> [I hope] that she has good manners, is respectful. I imagine for her to wear hijab, I imagine for her to pray, I hope *In Shā' Allah* [God willing]. I still want her to be academic, and have aspirations, and to be a woman that chooses what she would like, she's not just going to let a man decide. […] I want her to have a free sort of mind, to be able to make right decisions. I want for her to be a doctor, I want for her to be a lawyer, I don't care if it's a men's environment. Let her be the best women Islamically that she can be in that environment. *Allahu al musta'an* [God is our Refuge].

I also found that even in cases where my participants have not consciously sought to challenge Salafi discourses, the difficulties associated with parenting have led many to alter their understanding of how important it is that their children turn out "Salafi". Umm Jamal explained for example, that although she would like her children to be Salafi, she is happy as long as they're Muslim and "not doing like crazy *bida'h* [a reprehensible innovation]". She explained, "one of my children is not Salafi. He just prays five times a day, and he fasts Ramadan. Other than that, that's him, he looks like a hipster, but he's Muslim. But at the end of the day that's between him and Allah isn't it?" Similarly, Abdullah, one of my participants whose children attend school in Saudi Arabia, explained to me that this has not in any way guaranteed that they are Salafi. Yet, although he admits that he'd like to teach them about Salafism, he's says "I'm now more concerned with them having some basic morals at this stage, you know, do they bother to pray? Do they even have faith? Stop lying, stop swearing! These are more fundamental concerns to be honest, and everything else will come in time". Hence, even seemingly "compliant" Salafis have been unable to fully comply with Salafi parenting discourses.

6.7 Conclusion

Salafi networks have clearly paid a lot of attention to women over the years in the hopes of creating a committed community of Salafi women (and families) living perfectly in accordance with Salafi norms. Yet, contrary to most accounts of Salafi women, this chapter has found that women in Salafi communities have had a far from straightforward relationship with Salafi gender discourses and norms. Many women in their quest to become the "ideal Salafi woman", have experienced a gap between how things were

meant to be in theory and in practice according to Salafism, and their lived experiences. These experiences and contradictions, in addition to those discussed in the previous chapter, have meant that Salafi women frequently experience contradictory consciousness where moments of "compliance" and "resistance" exist in an unsteady state. The accounts in this chapter thus urge us to rethink the way that we approach the question of Muslim women and how they relate to, and embody, Salafi discourses. It is clear that simplistic accounts of either "compliance" or "resistance" cannot capture the complex ways that Salafism is lived. These accounts also provide us with a much more complicated picture of Muslim women in Europe who sit at the centre of debates on citizenship, radicalization, and "British values".

The life-histories approach taken in this chapter moreover demonstrates the importance of a long-term approach to discussions on the "making" of Salafi women by highlighting how women can at one point identify with certain elements of Salafism, but at a later point in their lives find these same elements, or other elements, to be impractical or problematic. This again suggests that while Salafism (or certain Salafi discourses) may work to empower women at one point in their lives (as we saw in the case of Karima and Jamila for example), it can stop having this same impact at other points in their lives. Yet, what is important for us to keep in mind, is that even in cases where women have found elements of Salafism to be problematic, they themselves have come to this understanding on their own. Following their failure to square their practical experiences with Salafi discourses, they have cast another look at Salafism, and using their good sense, have critically examined Salafi gender discourses. This process, as we have seen above, has in some cases involved a critical application of Salafi common sense such as ideas about the dangers of blind following. These women have thus not needed "saving" nor completely abandoned Salafism and/or Islam. They have not come to view Salafism and/or Islam as an oppressive ideology as is commonly suggested in sensationalist accounts of women's departure from Salafi communities, and they themselves have found new ways to move forward within the realm of Islam. This chapter thus, like the previous one, sheds light on how Salafism has been contested, but also, in another sense, further confirms the impact Salafi common sense had on British Muslims during the past couple of decades. Indeed, these processes have confirmed, and not invalidated, certain elements of Salafi common sense.

Finally, the experiences explored in this chapter likewise remind us that there is room for varied experiences within Salafism by highlighting how resistance has been a conscious decision on the part of some women, but not others. While there have clearly been instances of resistance within Salafi communities, these moments of resistance have not constituted a collective movement where women have come together to rethink Salafi norms. Nonetheless, given how important women are to the success of the Salafi project, especially in the long run, women's conscious and unconscious departures from Salafi gender (and parenting) discourses indicate cracks and fissures in the Salafi project. Indeed, as both Bayat (1997) and Scott (1989), have shown, even everyday acts of resistance by individuals who are not necessarily consciously or intentionally resisting, can have "cumulative" (Bayat, 1997, p.58) or "aggregate" (Scott, 1989, p. 34) consequences. Indeed, these cumulative effects seem to have become apparent to some Salafi leaders who, as we will see in the next chapter, have noticed women's disenchantment in Salafi communities and tried to pay even more attention to women.

7. Revisiting the Salafi War of Position: Continuity & Change in Salafi *Daʿwa*

7.1 Introduction

Much has changed since Salafism first began to gain traction within London's Muslim community in the 1980s. Globally, the transnational Salafi bloc has undergone several changes. Following 9/11, for example, Saudi Arabia took steps to produce a "reformed" Islam through new banking regulations, curriculum adjustments, and the media (Ismail, 2008). Saudi funding for religious causes abroad decreased[74] and visits by Saudi scholars have also become less frequent in the post-9/11 and 7/7 worlds. More recently, following the rise of the Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman (MBS) in Saudi Arabia, seemingly superficial discussions about reforming Islam have taken place and limits to the power of the clergy have been introduced.[75] At the same time, however, MBS has also sought to create a subservient clergy, promoting some loyal figures while targeting and imprisoning critical scholars like Salman al-'Awda (Lacroix, 2019).

Nationally, the UK's policies towards Salafi groups have also hardened (as discussed in Chapter 1). Popular Salafi preachers like Bilal Philips and Dr. Zakir Naik were banned in 2010 from entering the UK (Baynes, 2010). British Universities are no longer wide open for *daʿwa* [preaching activities] as they were during the 1980s and 1990s, but instead are governed through Prevent (Scott-Baumann, 2017). British Muslim preachers can no longer easily lecture at universities, but often face several hurdles before they are sometimes, but certainly not always, given permission to speak. In fact, several Salafi speakers, like Dr. Salman Butt of Islam21C, have been banned from speaking at UK universities.

Locally, several dynamics within London's Muslim community have also shifted. Salafism is no longer a new revolutionary approach to Islam, but one that in many communities has come to be identified with "harshness". Salafi scholars, preachers, and

---

[74] Interview with the Assistant Director of MWL. London. 25/01/2019.

[75] Within the UK, there haven't been any major changes to the *daʿwa* of organizations linked to Saudi Arabia such as the MWL (whose assistant director claimed, for example, to have always been following "moderate" Islam).

leaders are no longer united under an umbrella organization, but often operate in competition with one another. Indeed, we have seen in previous chapters the challenges that the Salafi movement has faced in recent years ranging from organizational conflicts to the rise of alternative approaches to Islam like the TI movement. We've also seen how many Salafi discourses have been subjected to much contestation and critique from within Salafi circles.

Despite these developments and challenges, the Salafi war of position has continued within London's Muslim community. The exact shape, direction, and effectiveness of this war of position, however, has shifted considerably over the years. Literature on Salafism has not adequately explored these shifts, owing in part to the Social Movement Theory approach, frequently adopted in works on Salafism, that tends to offer a snapshot of the Salafi movement in a particular place and time. When the movement's evolution has been discussed, the literature has tended to focus on large political processes and shifts such as those following 9/11 (e.g. Bhatt, 2013; Hamid, 2016; Meleagrou-Hitchens, 2018), shifting relationships vis-à-vis the state (e.g. Wagemakers, 2016b), and political participation following the Arab Spring (e.g. Al-Anani & Malik, 2013; Bonnefoy & Kuschnitizki, 2015; Lacroix & Shalata, 2016). Yet, as this chapter will demonstrate, a careful in-depth approach unveils many other perhaps seemingly subtle, but important shifts that have occurred in Salafi *da'wa* over the years.

This chapter is based on participant observation carried out between 2017-2019 in Salafi networks as well as interviews with leaders and participants (mainly women) who belong to these networks. It revisits each of the major Salafi networks in London and explores the different ways these networks have been impacted by, and/or responded to, recent developments. It finds that SP has, for the most part, continued to disseminate the same Salafi discourses since its establishment in the mid-1990s—appealing to many new "Salafis" but also losing many along the way. On the other hand, it finds that Brixton Mosque is no longer a leading player in the Salafi war of position. As for the activist Salafis, the chapter demonstrates how the critical consciousness that developed amongst this network's leaders has led to reform and renewal within the network and more effective dissemination of Salafi common sense within London's Muslim community. The chapter also recounts the rise of a new generation of Salafi *du'āt* (missionaries) working mainly, though not exclusively, to disseminate Salafism through social media channels.

I argue that the majority of shifts we see in this chapter, are less a result of, or in reaction to, political changes at the transnational and national level, and more a result of local level processes of contestation and transformations in London's Muslim community that we have seen in prior chapters. I also argue that these shifts have in effect pushed Salafi networks in London even further apart in terms of cooperation and ideological approach, and meant that they, with the exception of SP, operate more autonomously from Saudi Arabia and other members of the transnational Salafi bloc in the Middle East. Finally I argue that although there have been significant changes to Salafi *da'wa*—in terms of discourses and methods employed, there has been more continuity than change in the Salafism articulated within the British Muslim community.

7.2 Loud & Clear: The Resilience of Salafi Publications

Although SP has faced many challenges, as discussed previously, it has managed to maintain its *da'wa*—if not carry it out with more fervour than before. The negative publicity that SP receives seems to drive it forward and give it more of a reason to engage in concerted *da'wa* efforts. SP leaders never adopt an apologetic tone, but speak authoritatively, with much confidence. They rarely discuss the challenges they face, and unlike the other Salafis I spoke to, did not engage in any critical self-reflection during my interviews with them. Instead, interviews often alluded to the growing success of SP over the years. Abu Khadeejah, for example, claimed:

> Year after year, Salafi Publications grew and grew and grew, up until now in the West, in terms of knowledge, it is probably the most powerful knowledge house of Salafism in terms of publications, books, speakers, conferences, and even in terms of entities such as mosques.

He also compared SP to JIMAS arguing:

> Now looking at Salafi publications today, and JIMAS in 1988, JIMAS in terms of its size and its publications, compared to SP now, I'd say JIMAS was probably about 10 percent of what Salafi Publications is today in terms of its strength in *da'wa*, publications and outreach. Even 10 percent is probably exaggerating.

Dr. Abdulilah Lahmami also spoke of how SP, is now in a better position than it was back in the 1990s. He argued: "nowadays the Salafi *da'wa* has a clear voice, and it is a louder voice, and it is a strong voice because it has the backing of evidence and *dalīl*".

Although universities are no longer a major site of articulation for SP (and other Salafis), SP continues to speak in a "loud voice" which can be heard online, in the multiple mosques it establishes, via its powerful publishing house and bookstore, through its

increasingly organized street *daʿwa*, and in the many classes and events held by the movement across the country. It also has a large network of around 40 associated websites, and various social media avenues. In particular, SP's publishing empire has also been at the centre of its success. Even members of Brixton who are usually critical of SP, often order books from SP and concede that SP's publishing house has been beneficial for the community.

Perhaps SP has been able to maintain its *daʿwa* efforts because key leaders of the movement, like Abu Khadeejah and Abu Iyaad, who co-founded SP, have actually remained at the helm of the organization. Abu Khadeejah's authority within the movement has continued to grow through the years and has managed to somehow make up for the increasingly infrequent visits by scholars abroad. In fact, several of my participants in Markaz as-Sunnah in Alperton referred to him as "the most knowledgeable Salafi in the UK". Umm Abdulrahman even claimed that Abu Khadeejah should now be considered a scholar, but because he is modest, he still refers to himself as a student of knowledge.

SP has remained closely connected to its larger transnational network, and particularly Shaykh Rabi' al-Madkhali. For example, following a disagreement in 2018 between Shaykh Muhammad ibn Hādi (an important scholar within SP's larger transnational network) and al-Madkhali (Abdul-Wahid, 2018b), SP distanced itself from ibn Hādi and aligned itself even more closely with al-Madkhali. SP has not undergone much ideological evolution (a fact SP's leaders are very proud of), though seems to have become more focused on purifying *ʿaqīda* (creed) over the years, and less concerned with discrediting *taqlīd* of the *madhāhib* (following a *madhhab* exclusively and uncritically). SP's resilience is also likely to be related to the favourable position its larger ultra-loyalist transnational network finds itself, vis-à-vis the activist Salafi network that has more recently been targeted by MBS.

Though SP's success is usually traced to its vast online presence, I was surprised to find that most of the women I interviewed learned of SP through personal contacts. Faduma for example, visited Masjid Dar us Sunnah (associated with SP) in Shepherd's Bush when it was first founded in 2010 because many of her friends started to go there. She recalls "it was a new mosque that everyone was talking about and everyone was going to". Similarly, Kismet started attending an SP circle with her friend. Of the women I spoke

to, several had also learned about, and later adopted, Salafism through male figures in their lives e.g. brothers, boyfriends, fiancés, or husbands. This was the case with both Fawzia and Naima, for example, whose husbands started to gravitate towards Salafism soon after they had gotten married. This was also the case with Faiza whose brother started to share with her Abu Khadeejah's lectures and soon after removed all non-Salafi books from their home library.

Yet, it is important to note that this process has not always resulted in the automatic adoption of Salafism. One of my participants, Naima, for example, though attends SP conferences with her husband, has chosen not to adopt his understanding of Islam. Indeed, I found her to be very critical of SP. She explained: "You know this whole *Salafiyya* thing, I don't really have any knowledge, and I can't really speak, but what I've learnt from my husband, doesn't make sense to me. […] Everyone is just blind following".[76] Indeed, she is particularly uncomfortable with the implications of the SP-type Salafism on herself and other women. She argued:

> [Men,] they can be out all day and night, and it's not going to affect them what *Salafiyya* says. But it will affect us as women, if you're studying, as soon as your husband comes to you: "don't go to university", […] That's making your life difficult but they're doing whatever the hell they want.

The availability of Salafi literature online seems to have also facilitated my participants' entry into SP circles. For instance, while at university, and even before exploring Islam in depth, or beginning to attend any Salafi mosques or circles, Kismet was already familiar with the most popular Salafi shaykhs (scholars). When I asked how she knew about Ibn Baz, she responded: "Because it was just, everybody knows, he was just one of those shaykhs, like Shaykh Salih al-Fawzan, Shaykh 'Uthaymin. […] I just learned them from browsing online and seeing these are the scholars that are known. And Shaykh al-Albani". There is no doubt that being acquainted with these shaykhs prior to joining SP circles meant that Kismet was more familiar with the very shaykhs that SP frequently refers to. This has also been the case in Sweden, where Pall and De Koning have found that many young people were familiar with Salafi ideas "long before having any personal contact with Salafi shaykhs" due to the mediatisation of Salafism" (2017, p. 89).

---

[76] We see here how Salafi common sense about blind following is again being used to contest particular Salafi discourses.

Perhaps this mediatisation also explains why some transitions from non-Salafi to Salafi have not been that drastic for those who are already familiar with Salafi ideas prior to "conversion". Soaad for example, recalls:

> The only thing that changed was mostly who I listened to […] because I was already very religious when I became Salafi. […] I used to wear *jilbābs* [loose outer-garments that conceal everything but the hands and face] before, but I didn't strictly wear *jilbābs* […], then I found out there's actually rules, and the Muslim women's dress is actually *jilbāb*. […] Now, I'd never not wear this [the *jilbāb*].

This was also the case with Kismet, for example, who had already begun to wear the niqab prior to joining SP circles and had stopped celebrating birthdays because she believed they were a "statement of *shirk* [associating partners with God]" because Shaykh Ibn Baz had said they were "not part of the *dīn* [religion]". Yet, again, it is important to note that this mediatisation doesn't always lead to the adoption of Salafism in its entirety. I found that Naima, for example, though had watched Islam Channel for years, and was already quite familiar with some Salafi ideas, particularly those related to the impermissibility of celebrating the Prophet's birthday and birthdays in general, has not adopted an SP-type Salafism.

SP's online presence has also facilitated the diffusion of an SP-type Salafism. Soaad's experience below, for example, is illustrative of the way that repeated exposure to SP's refutations of other Salafi and non-Salafi actors, can over time, have a subconscious impact on which speakers British Muslims listen to and deem authoritative. She explains:

> I remember before I became Salafi, I would see a refutation of someone, I didn't want to listen to that refutation. But at the same time, the more I saw things popping up on my feed, a refutation of this person […] in the back of my mind, it was kind of registering. The first time I saw it, it was like one, the second time it was like two, third time three, and then gradually I felt like I'd rather be safe.

Soaad was not the only person affiliated with SP who used the word "safe" to explain his/her decision to exclusively listen to SP's speakers. Several of my participants didn't want to risk potentially listening to speakers or taking knowledge from sources that SP had identified as deviant. Indeed, the "clarity" and "certainty" that we saw drawing participants to Salafism in Chapter 2 during the 1980s and 1990s, continues to draw British youth to SP. When explaining why she has now decided to only listen to SP speakers, Kismet explained:

> I know that these people that are here, are all united upon each other, or are all upon the Salafi *manhaj* [methodology], and I'm just going to stick to that, because there's no point of going here and there […] and then be confused again. We pray 17 times in our *ṣalah* [prayers] to ask Allah [God] to guide us to the straight path.

SP certainly recognizes British Muslims' desire for certainty and continues to emphasize that clarity is part and parcel of the *dīn*. For example, one of the conferences I attended in 2019 was organized around the hadith (report of the words and deeds of Prophet Muhammad) "I have left you upon clarity, its night is like its day, no one deviates from it except that he is destroyed". This conference, like many other SP conferences, spent a considerable amount of time attacking other "Salafis" and approaches to Islam. Refutations are thus portrayed as an essential tool through which believers can navigate the muddy waters of confusion. Soaad, who I met at this conference, argued:

> *Al-ḥamdu li-llah* [thank God] that there are people to refute, […] that's one of the reasons you find that there is absolute trust of these *daʿīs* and scholars, because of the instruments that are put into place, if you mess up once, no one is going to keep quiet about it. Listen, there's fact, and there's if you want to follow it or not. It's absolutely clear, you cannot deny that.

Soaad's statement is an especially powerful reminder of the clarity that some British Muslims are seeking. Similarly, Faiza spoke about how refutations are especially important for "new" Muslims like her who are faced with lots of conflicting information.

The certainty and structure promised by SP seems to make it particularly appealing to young people with family problems and/or those who have mental and emotional health issues. Indeed, I found that several of the women that I spoke to in SP circles came from broken homes with three growing up without their fathers at home. In other cases, women didn't have issues at home, but did report dealing with depression for example. This was the case with Fawzia who had experienced depression and anxiety prior to exploring Islam/Salafism. She recalled:

> I was depressed, and I had a lot of anxiety, there was one time, […] I got on the bus, […] and a group of boys, Black boys to be precise, and they're like, oh what do you rate her? 2 out of 10. They were literally, in front of me, what do you rate her? 2/10. And then there was another lighter girl, she had really revealing clothes on, she had a bigger bum, and then they're like she's an 8 out of 10, and I was there, and I went home, and I just started crying […] it really did break my heart.

This experience led Fawzia to re-think her life. She recalls thinking "there has to be more to life. Why is it that I'm being degraded like this?" This is also similar to the experiences of Kismet who also reported dealing with depression. Speaking to me about issues at school and the social anxieties she experienced, she recalled:

> I just wanted some direction, because at school, I didn't have a lot of friends. […] I did have friends but my interests weren't coinciding. So people are very materialistic, I don't know if you know, but in school, some children had iPhones, and we were in year 10, and there was always this competition who had the best hair, or weave, or who had the best clothes.

Yet, this was not the case with other women I spoke to who had gravitated towards SP recently. It is also important to recognize that many of these issues like family problems, depression, and anxiety are becoming increasingly widespread within the British Muslim community and more generally within London. Finally, seeking solace or refuge within religion is a practice that is certainly not just limited to those gravitating towards SP, other Salafi circles, or even Islam. Previous research has found that adolescent youth from a minority background are more likely to be depressed and to turn to religion for social support for example (Petts and Jolliff, 2008).

As can be seen in both the examples above, SP has made inroads within the Black Muslim and Afro-Caribbean communities. Four of the women that I spoke to, who had recently joined SP circles, were from a Nigerian background, while one was a convert from an Afro-Caribbean background. While my sample is certainly not representative of the precise dynamics of the larger SP-community, it is in line with other literature about the number of Salafis currently in London from African and Afro-Caribbean backgrounds (Hamid, 2016; Inge, 2016). We saw in Fawzia's example above how her experiences of colourism in the Black community contributed to her search for answers within Islam. Although the women I spoke to came from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, we can also see in Kismet's quote above, how Salafism can appeal to people from marginalized communities as we saw in Chapter 3, and in the works of other scholars like Özyürek (2015), Merone (2020), Adraoui (2020).

SP has thus managed to maintain some relevance within the British Muslim community. Yet, this is still of a limited nature. Though no data exists on the number of SP Salafis, or Salafis more generally, SP continues to still only draw a minority of British Muslims. SP only has five mosques and centers associated with it in London: Masjid Daar us Sunnah in Shepherd's Bush, Masjid us Sunnah in Cranford, Masjid Abdul Aziz Bin Baz in Stratford, Markaz us-Sunnah in Alperton, and Salafi Dawah Tooting (which hosts prayers and events in community centres but is yet to establish its own mosque). These mosques and centres, although very active, are quite small and do not usually act as local mosques for the surrounding community—suggesting that, for the most part, their influence on the local community is also likely to be quite small. Indeed, though London remains a very important and strategic location for SP, there is certainly a discrepancy between SP's influence on the ground here in London and what one would expect given its dominance within the online sphere. In addition, though British Muslim youth are still attending SP

classes and events, the relatively young profile of its members, suggests that while SP is good at attracting new members, it may not be very good at retaining them. Although I did come across a few women who have been attending SP conferences for over a decade, the majority of women I saw were in their early twenties. This suggests that, as critics of the movement often suggest, SP may have a revolving door, with some newcomers going in, but many others leaving.

7.3 Salafism 2.0: The Decline of Brixton Mosque & the Emergence of a New Generation of Salafi Actors

Though Brixton Mosque used to play a major role in the Salafi war of position during the 1990s, this is no longer the case. While attending classes and events in Brixton, for example, I did not encounter the "crowded halls" (at least on the women's side of the mosque) that I had heard were characteristic of the 90s and 2000s. The women's classes that I attended, hosted by Imam Umar, were also only ever attended by 10-20 women on average. Attendance is of course an imperfect marker here, as Imam Umar, for example, has suggested that although the number of attendees has decreased over the years at classes and events, this may be due to the availability of most sermons and talks on the internet. Yet, in comparison to other conferences I attended, like those of SP in London for example, attendance was still significantly lower. Brixton Mosque's female attendees were also on average older than Salafis in other networks—suggesting that youth are not really being drawn to Brixton Mosque in the same manner as before (and in the same way that they are to other Salafi networks like that of SP and Daʿwah Man). In fact, Abdul-Karim who has been attending the mosque for about 15 years, explained that currently the age profile of male attendees is between 29-39, and argued that Brixton Mosque is no longer "a youth club" like it was back in the 1990s and early 2000s. Classes held for beginners at Brixton Mosque, based on Shaykh Ibn Baz's *Important Lessons for Every Muslim,* are also not attracting many "new" Muslims.

Perhaps this is not too surprising given that so many of Brixton's key figures, like Abu Aaliyah and Baker, have as we saw earlier in this thesis, reassessed their understanding of Islam and limited their involvement in Salafi *daʿwa*. Brixton has also been a key victim of intra-Salafi conflicts, with some youth leaving Brixton Mosque for Dar-us-Sunnah (an SP mosque) in Shepherd's Bush instead. Within Brixton and the larger non-SP quietist community in the UK, SP is therefore often blamed for the decline of Salafi *daʿwa*. Abu

Usamah, former imam at both Brixton and Green Lane Mosque, for instance, told me that although he's not "a conspiracy theorist" he believes that the rise of SP (and the larger transnational network connected to al-Madkhali) is the result of external intervention by the U.S. and the CIA.

Many of the leaders associated with Brixton Mosque have thus often been too occupied with defending themselves against claims by SP, not giving enough attention to *da'wa*. Abdulhaq Al-Ashanti, for example, acknowledged that Brixton doesn't really have a "*da'wa* strategy". Abdul-Karim also regretfully explained "in terms of going out and being pro-active, we don't have that drive unfortunately". In fact, besides some local *da'wa* initiatives like hosting a Ramadan Tent (and occasionally *da'wa* tables) in Brixton, there are few *da'wa* activities currently going on in the community.

Brixton Mosque has thus not expanded its network. It has maintained its links with Masjid Ghurba in Luton and has cooperated with some small mosques and centers in London like Croydon ICT in South London and Madinah College in Brixton. As for its former links with Green Lane Mosque in Birmingham, these links have dissolved as Green Lane Mosque itself has also evolved in its approach to Salafism—often inviting speakers that members of Brixton do not really consider to be Salafi (e.g. AlMaghrib & AlKauthar speakers). Members of Brixton thus now only occasionally attend Green Lane Mosque's winter conferences that often feature Salafi scholars from the Middle East. Brixton still has its own connections with scholars abroad in Jordan (mainly the students of al-Albani), Kuwait, Saudi Arabia (students of Ibn Baz and Ibn 'Uthaymin or others), Egypt, Morocco, and Algeria. Yet, these links are not as strong as they were before as scholars do not visit Brixton (and other Salafi circles in the UK) as frequently as they used to. Brixton Mosque has also not taken advantage of communication technologies like the internet and particularly social media to advance its position. In the heat of the battle between Brixton Mosque and SP (between 2001-2003), for example, Brixton Mosque didn't have a website or any form of media set up to counter SP's influence. Umar Jamaykee admits that, even today, the mosque website is "somewhat poorly managed".[77]

Brixton Mosque's defensive approach to *da'wa* has likewise meant that it has not taken too many steps to renew itself in the face of challenges facing Salafism in London. This

---

[77] Interview with Umar Jamaykee. London. 21/02/2019.

has led to much dissatisfaction within the community—particularly from the younger generation. Ibrahim, for example, regrets Brixton Mosque's lack of vision and believes that some of the older generation of Salafi leaders need to "hang up the towel". Abdul-Karim is similarly frustrated with Brixton's conservative approach and unwillingness to think outside the box. He spoke to me about his work as a youth worker, and how his attempts to host a documentary about youth issues in Brixton, for example, were met with quite a lot of push-back. Indeed, he argues that this push-back to new ideas and approaches is the reason why Brixton has "missed a lot of the younger generation". Yet, this feeling of dissatisfaction within Brixton is certainly not just limited to the younger generation. Abu Aisha, who has been attending Brixton Mosque since the days of JIMAS, passionately spoke to me about Brixton Mosque's failure to renew itself and maintain relevance.

> Brixton is virtually dead, no conferences, unless somebody comes. But locally, where are your brothers? Speakers? Imams? The individuals have no vision, the imam may have become qualified, gone abroad to learn, but they brought the same garbage from there to here, the habit of just going through books and reading books. But that country [Saudi Arabia], we don't live in that country. […] You need to now make it relevant. And this is the problem.

Indeed, Brixton Mosque seems to have failed to maintain an organic link with older British Salafis who have, as we saw in Chapter 5 and 6, experienced contradictory consciousness. It has also failed to build new links with young British Muslims within London.

It is important to note that Brixton's wider network has not been completely paralyzed, however, as a few actors associated with this network have attempted to revamp Salafi *da'wa*. A notable example is Madinah College, an institute that offers Arabic and Islamic studies classes founded in 2016 by an IUM graduate and member of the Brixton community. The founder of Madinah College explains that he chose to establish a college, instead of a mosque, because he didn't want his institute to be associated with a particular ethnic or ideological orientation—hoping to attract students from all over London. Madinah College's approach has been somewhat successful as it actually managed to attract more students from other parts of London than from its local community. Yet even though Madinah College was set up with the financial support of a charity called British Education & Support Trust (whose trustees are based both within the UK and in the Gulf), Farouq acknowledged that Madinah College still has trouble making sure there are enough students to cover the costs of hosting segregated classes—suggesting again that

even attempts by Madinah College to revive Salafi *daʿwa* have only been somewhat successful.

Since the early 2010's, a new network of "social media Salafis" has also emerged working to reintroduce quietist Salafism to a new generation of British Muslims following the shortcomings and failures of the *daʿwa* of more established Salafi networks. Although this network's three key preachers, AbdulRahman Hassan, Imran Ibn Masrur (known as Daʿwah Man), and Abu Taymiyyah, did not grow up in, or emerge from any of the existing Salafi networks in the UK, they are ideologically closest to, and generally on good relations with, Brixton Mosque and its wider network. Hassan, was born in London in 1988. From a Somali background, he grew up with much Islam at home, and particularly Salafism as his father had studied in Saudi Arabia in the 1970s-1980s meeting shaykhs like Ibn Baz and al-Albani. Hassan himself came onto the scene as an influential student of knowledge in the 2010s, after also studying abroad in both Saudi Arabia and Somalia. He gained particular popularity (or notoriety) in 2012 for his "advice to Salafi Publications" in which he took a clear stance against SP. Hassan has not associated himself with any one (or series of) mosques in the UK. Indeed, a disclaimer on one of his videos states "Ustadh AbdulRahman Hassan is not associated with any masjid [mosque], nor is he a representive [sic] of any masjid and the views which he holds may differ to the management of the masjid in which the talks take place" (PearlsOfKnowledge, 2012). This has also been the case with both Daʿwah Man and Abu Taymiyyah, who although may at times speak at different Salafi mosques in the UK, do not associate with any one (or series of) mosques in the UK, instead relying on social media as their main platform.

A lawyer by training, Daʿwah Man has been involved in giving *daʿwa* since the early 2010's. Growing up in a house where "everyone used to listen to Dr. Zakir Naik and Ahmed Deedat", South Asian preachers both known for *daʿwa* to non-Muslims, Daʿwah Man was initially inspired to focus on giving *daʿwa* to non-Muslims. Yet, in 2012, Daʿwah Man's focus began to shift to giving *daʿwa* or *naṣīḥa* (advice) to Muslims. In fact, after becoming acquainted with Hassan and with Salafism, Daʿwah Man's focus shifted to Muslim youth "that are engrossed in *bidaʿh* [reprehensible innovation]" and "engaged in major sins".[78]

---

[78] Interview with Daʿwah Man. Telephone interview. 03/11/2018.

Abu Taymiyyah, who moved to London at the age of 7 from Holland,[79] likewise grew up with much Islam at home. He explained to me that his parents "tried to the best of their ability to keep [them] on like praying and being orthodox Muslims". Yet, this certainly did not prevent Abu Taymiyyah from going "off the rails" as a teenager. It was only after a particular gang-related incident at his school that Abu Taymiyyah began to re-assess his lifestyle. He explained:

> One of these reasons is that my friend got shot, one of the gang members was shot and that really made me think, because I was expecting that all of the members of the gang would come together and go after the one who caused the shooting, […] but no one did that, nobody did anything. So I started thinking to myself, is that going to happen to me? If I get shot, nobody is going to do anything?

Abu Taymiyyah, with encouragement from his parents, thus began to explore Islam in greater depth. Travelling to Yemen with his father, to learn Arabic and memorize the Qur'an, Abu Taymiyyah perhaps ironically began his journey in Hadramut, at a Sufi *madrassa* called Dar Al Mustafa. Indeed, I was surprised to find that Abu Taymiyyah only left this *madrassa* because he had to leave Yemen for visa-related reasons. Recalling how heartbroken he was when he had to leave he explained "I was actually, I was broken, I didn't want to leave, I literally broke down into tears, I didn't want to leave, I thought these individuals are the light of my religion, and I'm going to be guided living here". Indeed, Abu Taymiyyah recalls being shocked after later hearing from his uncle that "these guys [Dar Al Mustafa] are *mushriqs* [associate partners with God], they've got *kufr* [disbelief] with them". In 2010, after sorting out his visa issues, Abu Taymiyyah went back to Yemen to continue his learning journey. This time, however, he found himself in Dammaj, home to the late Shaykh Muqbil. After very reluctantly exploring Salafism, he eventually hit a turning point when he began to realise that in Dammaj they weren't "doing a single thing except with evidence, with a hadith, with an *āyā* [verse] from the Qur'an", and nobody's statement is accepted except that it has to be backed up with a narration, a Prophetic statement, or something from the Quran".

Since then, Abu Taymiyyah has become more and more committed to Salafism and to Salafi *daʿwa*—finding in Hassan and Daʿwah Man able and willing *daʿwa* partners. Indeed, though he was studying at IUM at the time of my interview with him, Abu Taymiyyah is still engaged in UK *daʿwa* efforts. Explaining the reasons behind his decision to engage in *daʿwa*, he recalls:

> I'd seen there was a big need, you had people standing on the *mimbar* [pulpit] saying things that is just really not suitable for a person on the *mimbar* to say, and

[79] Abu Taymiyyah didn't respond to questions about his ethnic background.

> I seen that ignorance was very widespread as well, so I thought I could at least lighten the ignorance by doing something that I've studied and learned, and hopefully in the proper way or the correct way, so that's how I started giving *da'wa*.

In fact, both Abu Taymiyyah and Da'wah Man are very well aware of the failures of the more established Salafi networks in the past couple of decades as well as the challenges continuing to face Salafi *da'wa* today. Da'wah Man argued for example: "people weren't being taught […] there was no progression, people were only connected to *Salafiyya* based on emotions, or based on companionship". He also recognized that "a substantial enough amount" of those who came to Salafism in the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s, have now left. This is also the case with Abu Taymiyyah who admitted that many have left Salafism and "started going to the opposite side of the spectrum, maybe becoming more liberal".

Da'wah Man is thus attempting to "learn from the mistake of the people in the 90s". Abu Taymiyyah also similarly claimed that he has "without a shadow of a doubt" taken into consideration the shortcomings of Salafi *da'wa* in the past couple decades when planning his own approach to *da'wa*. For Abu Taymiyyah, that has meant being especially careful to avoid the "harshness" often associated with Salafism. Although he still engages in refutations deeming them at times necessary, he says "one of the things that I'm trying to do is, even if I call out somebody in public, I try and speak in a very soft way". He also tries to limit the time he spends refuting, or at least tries to draw attention away from it as he doesn't want to be associated solely with refutations the way SP has for example. He explains: "if somebody goes on my YouTube channel, he never come out with the conclusion that all I do is refute, of course, you have to go through hundreds of videos, and go down to actually see where the refutation section is".

Abu Taymiyyah has also attempted to soften the image of Salafism in the UK by paying more attention to matters of the heart. He admits that, particularly in comparison to the Sufi circles that he has previously been a part of, Salafi circles are lacking in this respect. He argues:

> When I was with the Sufis there, they give a lot of concern to having good manners, good etiquette, your heart is melting, they give a lot of concern to that, but then you have the issue of the fundamentals of your religion like *tawḥīd*…and then Salafis they're kind of like the opposite, when I say Salafis I mean a lot of the ones in the UK.

Abu Taymiyyah has thus made it a point to include more "heart softeners" in his *da'wa*. He argues: "Heart softeners, the spiritual side of Islam has a big role to play in *Salafiyya*". Indeed, Abu Taymiyyah's YouTube has videos titled "Emotional Last Khutba",

"Emotional Khutba in Arafat", "The Salaf in Manners", and "Sincerity & How the Salaf Hid Their Good Deeds".

Daʿwah Man and Abu Taymiyyah have likewise made considerable effort to reach out to the young generation, or those between 16-24 years, that Brixton has missed. Daʿwah Man argued: "Your phone has become the most essential thing in your life". He thus has a "holistic social media team". The essential role that social media has played in this network's *daʿwa* is also quite evident when one compares Abu Taymiyyah's popularity before and after he began to use social media. Originally of the opinion that pictures and videos were *ḥarām*,[80] Abu Taymiyyah's *daʿwa* was quite limited. He recalls:

> Until I changed my views on the issue, and I started doing videos and things like that, that's how me giving *daʿwa* really took off, that's when many organisations started calling me around the country, because there's still such a big need for people to come and to deliver Islamic sermons, with the right methodology.

Indeed, many of the women I spoke to while attending Mad Ting in the Masjid women's classes had heard about Daʿwah Man and/or his classes through some online means. May, for instance, first came across Daʿwah Man after searching online for advice on how to deal with heartaches after going through a particularly bad break up with her boyfriend. She recalled a good lecture on heartbreaks by Daʿwah Man and the impact it had on her. She says: "it was really really good, and I remember listening and being like: 'OK, it makes sense now', so I told myself: 'listen, I'm going to start properly taking my religion seriously'". Abidah, a recent convert who had attended her first Daʿwah Man class while I was doing my fieldwork, similarly heard about Daʿwah Man online from young women she met on Instagram. She recalls:

> I messaged one sister, and I said: "*As-salām ʿalaikum* [peace be upon you], I really want help! I really want to make friends! Could you please help me make friends in London?" So she shouted me out, and she had like 1000 followers, so all these sisters were messaging me, *Al-ḥamdu li-llah* I was overwhelmed. I was like Oh my God all these girls want to talk to me, and help me. I was so happy.

This network's approach to *daʿwa* has also included reaching out, in particular, to those who are "troubled" like drug-users or those in gangs for example. Daʿwah Man explains: "There has to be something there that is dedicated to the drug dealers, the guys on the road, some of our sisters who are clubbing and so on and so forth". As such, Daʿwah Man and Abu Taymiyyah have made a point to engage these people, not just by addressing *daʿwa* to them online, but also on the street. Abu Taymiyyah recalls, for example, a day

---

[80] See the opinion of Al-Fawzan on pictures & videos ("The purpose of", 2015).

when he stopped his car and parked after seeing "a bunch of Somali kids" that were "smoking weed". He recalls going up to them and "giving them *daʿwa*":

> I told them, guys I'm not telling you to leave anything, ok? I'm not telling you to leave your girlfriends or all your drugs, all I'm saying is start praying, because obviously I know, in the back of my mind, that Allah says *salat* [prayer]. It removes the filth and the evil from your life, it removes all of that.

This does not depart much from Brixton's *daʿwa* back in the 1990s, yet Daʿwah Man has also gone a bit further by offering giveaways to his attendees such as Gucci handbags, trainers, AirPods, and free food to incentivize youth to attend his events. Indeed, these giveaways are one of his trademark *daʿwa* moves. This network's attention to drug dealers and gang members is also related to the rise in knife crime in London. In 2019, for example, the number of teenagers stabbed to death reached its highest level since 2008 (Mackintosh & Lee, 2019). Although no data exists to suggest that Muslim communities are disproportionately impacted by, or in any way responsible for, this increasing knife crime, there is little doubt that a significant portion of offenders and victims of knife crime tend to be from Black, Asian, and minority (BAME) backgrounds.[81]

Engaging the younger generation has not just been a matter of changing the medium, but also the message. Daʿwah Man's Mad Ting in the Masjid classes (as well as so many other videos posted on social media) address topics of particular relevance to youth. Daʿwah Man speaks about girlfriends and boyfriends, infidelity and heartache, depression and anxiety, music and Snapchat, drugs and alcohol, racism and being broke, as well as make-up and vloggers. Daʿwah Man also uses hip "street" lingo with phrases like "bruv" and "the epicness" to engage his audience. Indeed, when introducing Mad Ting in the Masjid classes for young women, he explains "we speak to them in a way that they understand and we speak to them about things that are relevant to them" (Naseeha Sessions, 2018b). The fact of the matter is that neither Abu Taymiyyah nor Daʿwah Man have to try too hard to relate to their audience (well, at least their male audience). Abu Taymiyyah's own experience with gangs and youth-violence gives him a certain credibility vis-à-vis his audience. Daʿwah Man's video titled "Abu Taymiyyah got stabbed" (Naseeha Sessions, 2018a) is just one of the many *daʿwa* videos that capitalize on these preachers' prior experiences.

---

[81] Crime data indicates that 62 percent of knife crime offenders were from a BAME background in 2016-2017 (Greater London Authority, 2017).

It would also be hard to deny that, for many youth, Daʿwah Man has a certain enchanting charisma. This became particularly obvious to me when Daʿwah Man was unable to attend scheduled Mad Ting in the Masjid women's classes and sent a substitute preacher to take his place for a few weeks in a row. I witnessed much disappointment and dismay amongst the young women attending the classes in Masjid an-Noor in Acton. In fact, the number of women attending began to decrease week after week when it became clear that Daʿwah Man was no longer leading the classes that month.

The network's "cool" aspect does not work on its own, but is instead paired with the classic Salafi focus on knowledge. This network glorifies the IUM as the bastion of Islamic education—encouraging British Muslims to apply to the IUM and even assisting them in their applications. In addition, Daʿwah Man, who was unable to attend IUM, explained that he has, along with Hassan, gone to great lengths to set the stage for the same type of learning to happen here in the UK for those unable to travel. Daʿwah Man has since set up Knowledge College—an online platform that teaches classic Salafi texts like the *Book of Tawhid* by Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab to further this project. Daʿwah Man explained that while Mad Ting classes are meant to attract attendees using "heart softeners", Knowledge College is meant to increase their knowledge of Islam with the combined goal of achieving "'*istikām* on the *dīn* [religious uprightness]". Explaining the importance of Knowledge College he argues: "If I just give you a reminder, your *īmān* will…it's like an injection or a painkiller, the pain will only go for a short amount of time but it won't solve the problem, do you see? Knowledge solves the problem". In fact, both Laila and May first started their journey by attending Mad Ting sessions and now are enrolled in Knowledge College.

Although Daʿwah Man's ability to mobilize the youth is certainly linked to his incorporation of youth (and street) culture into Salafi *daʿwa*, his position is still very much bolstered by his links to traditional sources of authority and legitimacy. Daʿwah Man tells his audience "it's not just us talking from ourselves, it's always Qur'an and hadith". Indeed, even on a talk about weed, he explains he hasn't had to "reinvent the wheel" as Ibn Taymiyyah has already written about *ḥashīsh* [marijuana].[82] Daʿwah Man is also always talking about the scholars that he is in touch with, and his videos at times feature scholars like Shaykh Faisal al-Jasim in Kuwait for example. This link to the scholars has

---

[82] Interview with Daʿwah Man. Telephone interview. 03/11/2018.

again worked to give Daʿwah Man legitimacy. For example, when I asked Laila if it had been a "feeling" that attracted her to Daʿwah Man's classes she explained: "It's not a feeling. You know what it is, it was, first of all, the teachers were praised by some of Saudi's biggest scholars, so I was like OK, if Saudi's big big scholars are praising these people, then obviously they got at least a good basis of knowledge".

Furthermore, Daʿwah Man has, following in the footsteps of his teacher Hassan, attempted to give particular attention to women in ways not very typical of other Salafi communities in the UK. Indeed, he seems aware of women's conscious and unconscious departures from Salafi gender norms (discussed in Chapter 6). Arguing that "an entire generation of women" has been missed by early Salafi actors in the UK, Daʿwah Man explained that he hosts more women's only classes than men's only classes so that he can tailor his message to women. He explains "when I talk to you as a woman, I can tailor my message to you, in hopes that it can benefit you more, better, and then you can become a teacher". Besides giving particular attention to women's classes, Daʿwah Man does not teach behind a barrier but instead chooses to conduct face to face classes with women. This is of course quite different than the women's classes that speakers like Imam Umar and Abu Khadeejah host. Explaining this departure from the norm to me, Daʿwah Man explained:

> We know that 57 percent of communication is received through body language, and 30 percent is words. So when you don't allow the women to be able to engage with the speaker, by observing him, then you've just limited her experience, so 50% of what he's saying is lost in translation.

In addition, he justified these face-to-face women's classes by going back to the actions of Prophet Muhammad who, he underscores, did not use a barrier when teaching women. Although he acknowledges that there is a difference of Islamic opinion on this topic, he argues that while barriers might make sense in Middle Eastern societies where women are already segregated from men, this is not the case in London. Commenting on those who chose to teach behind a screen in the UK, he argues: "They study back in Dammaj or Yemen or Saudi Arabia, and they come back and they forget that London is not Medina. There's a difference".

While the changes noted above such as the "softening" of Salafism, face-to-face classes for women, and references to London's distinctiveness from other contexts in the Middle East, suggest departures from the Salafism of the 1990s and 2000s, these changes have been quite superficial. Daʿwah Man's apparent championing of women while may appear

at odds with Salafism is still in reality very heavily shaped by traditional Salafi approaches to gender. Daʿwah Man has continued to propagate the majority of gender discourses explored in Chapter 6. Similarly, Abu Taymiyyah's attempts to distance himself from the "harshness" associated with Salafism, and inclusion of heart softeners, has not brought the Salafism of this network much closer to a "Sufi" Islam. His "heart softeners" are not *dhikr* (remembrance) but usually just stories aimed at eliciting an emotional response. In fact, members of this network still vehemently espouse anti-Sufi messages. They also continue to propagate Salafi common sense ideas about Qur'an and hadith, knowledge, evidence and authenticity, and following the Salaf for example. Thus, while these actors may have used new *daʿwa* strategies and infiltrated social media, they have still continued to propagate a Salafi conception of the world within London's Muslim community.

7.4 Reforming Salafism: Activist Salafism in London & Mainstream Islam

Of all three Salafi networks, the activist Salafis have made the greatest changes to their *daʿwa*. As we will see in this section, they have distanced themselves from the Salafi label and some (particularly sectarian) Salafi discourses, become more independent from other members of the transnational Salafi bloc in the Middle East, and cooperated with non-Salafi Muslims. Speaking about some of these changes Hamid has argued:

> Conscious of the negative connotations that the term "Salafi" had accrued, particularly after 9/11, some Western Salafis [such as Islam21C and AlMaghrib] attempted a strategic de-emphasis of Salafi motifs in their language and literature and instead will use phrases like "orthodox Islam" or "normative Islam", to encode their Salafi loyalties (2016, p. 128).

Yet, while there has been in some cases a strategic move away from the Salafi label, I argue that this move has had less to do with the negative connotations that the term developed following 9/11, and more to do with the term's association with a "harsh" Salafism following the rise of ultra-loyalist Salafism (Dawood, 2020). I also argue that these changes have been very much related to British Muslims' practical experiences and transformations within Salafi circles. The development of critical consciousness, in most cases, has not meant a complete departure from Salafism, but an attempt to reform Salafism—making it more suitable for the present context. The Salafi war of position driven by institutions and organizations associated with this network has thus, as we will see below, undergone a lot of changes.

For example, Islam21C, an activist Salafi network associated with al-Haddad, has altered the content of its *da'wa*. In fact, when I interviewed al-Haddad, he was quite reluctant to even admit that he may have, in earlier decades, referred to himself as Salafi. He argued:

> I was not really, to be honest with you, interested in labels. Maybe I was calling myself Salafi in terms of *'aqīda*, right?...I, for example, do not accept the *t'awīl* of *Asmāʾ wa-al-Ṣifāt* [figurative or metaphorical interpretation of the Divine Names and Attributes], and do not accept *ṭabaruq* [seeking blessings from objects].

In fact, many of those who affiliate with his network now prefer to use the word Athari, for example, to refer to their approach to *'aqīda*. Athari is a scholarly Islamic movement of the 8th century that later became, according to Spevack, a term that refers to "theologians, often though not always followers of the Ḥanbali school of law, who in theory reject using rational proofs in theology, opting instead to reference only the Qurʾan and *ḥadith* for their theological positions" (2016, p. 537). Those who have adopted this term, instead of the Salafi label, regard it as more mainstream because of its association with the Hanbali school of law.

Islam21C has not just stopped talking about Salafi *'aqīda*, but about *'aqīda* altogether. On the Islam21C website, only a few articles explicitly make reference to *'aqīda* or *tawḥīd*. I also found that Dr. Salman Butt, editor in chief of Islam21C, was very reluctant to admit that most of those who work at Islam21C follow an "Ibn Taymiyyan-type *'aqīda*"—arguing that at Islam21C "they are not too hung up" on matters of creed. Another of my participants, loosely associated with this network, similarly explained to me that the move away from discussions about *'aqīda* is a strategic one. He argued:

> I don't think they [Islam21C] use these terms [like *'aqīda*] now. Maybe 10-15 years ago, but if you want to be influential in the mainstream, to Muslims outside your circle, you can't use these terms anymore. […] We need terms that are more friendly, more welcomed by everyone.

Hence, Islam21C now speaks of "mainstream Islam", "orthodox Islam", "consensus", and "divine values" instead of Salafism, *tawḥīd*, and *'aqīda*. This is the language that key members of the network like al-Haddad, Butt, and Asif Uddin all used during their interviews with me. For example, Butt, speaking about Islam21C's goals, argued that Islam21c's aim is "to be a resource for Muslims and even non-Muslims who want to know, what is the 'say it like it is' orthodox kind of Islamic [viewpoint is] …no sugar-coating". Similarly, Uddin, speaking about Sabeel (one of the network's programmes), argued that it has assisted Muslims in the UK "in terms of how to deal with some of the

problems that Muslims are facing in contemporary settings, and how to hold on to that orthodoxy".

Islam21C's network has also gradually become even more "political" than when it first started out—with al-Haddad no longer just suggesting that British Muslims can vote, but even arguing that in some cases it would be "sinful" not to vote. He has also gone from suggesting that voting is simply about weighing up the benefits and harms of participation (*maṣāliḥ* & *mafāṣid*) and instead suggesting "maybe after a particular point, we need to have our own party, maybe we need to have our own independent representatives, maybe also we need to get into the process so we learn about how it works and the tricks of politics" (Islam21c, 2018). Islam21C has also been at the forefront of the fight against Prevent. Butt, for example, who was banned from speaking in UK universities after being deemed an "extremist", contested this—achieving an important victory with the UK court of appeal ruling that Prevent guidelines on inviting controversial speakers violate freedom of speech (Gayle, 2019). This sort of activism has in effect transformed Islam21C into an organization that works on the behalf of all "mainstream" Muslims and not just Salafis.

This change in discourse has also been accompanied with changes in Islam21c's *da'wa* strategy. Islam21C has become particularly concerned with forging unity and cooperation with other Muslims (non-Salafi) actors. As early as 2007, al-Haddad came together with some members of the TI movement, and others, to sign a pledge, "The Pledge of Mutual Respect and Cooperation" in which signatories largely vowed to refrain from attacking each other and pledged to also urge other Muslims to "cease all attacks on individual Muslims and organizations whose varying positions can be substantiated based on the broad scholarly tradition of the Sunni Muslims" ("Pledge of Mutual", 2007). Al-Haddad has since then shared platforms with members of the British Muslim community that are clearly not Salafi such as Riyadh ul-Haq, the same Deobandi leader who had been at the forefront of the fight against Salafis back in the 1990s. The Islam21C website has also featured articles by a wide variety of individuals associated with organizations like HT, CAGE (an advocacy organization that campaigns against state policies associated the War on Terror), and MPAC (Muslim Public Affairs Committee UK) for example. Indeed, Nisbet, the media spokesmen of HT explained:

> We now have a very good relationship with Shaykh Haitham al-Haddad. Why is it possible? Because he said look: I'm following a *madhhab*, and my *madhhab*, might be slightly different than yours, but it's a *madhhab*. So let's not focus on

all the differences, let's all focus on what we have in common, which is everything else.

In a similar way, AlMaghrib Institute has evolved through the years owing to Yasir Qadhi's own evolution. Qadhi recalls:

> Definitely *Al-ḥamdu li-llah* I think it's very clear and *In Shāʾ Allah* this is not self-boasting, it's a matter of fact, that my presence in AlMaghrib definitely pushed them in ways they definitely would not have gone otherwise, I mean, I remember was it 2008 or 9, we had a female speaker on stage for the very first time, Dalia Mogahed, we invited her, and that was a ground breaking move, we actually lost some students at that point, how dare you invite a female onto stage to sit with you, we invited Imam Shakir to our class in California, and he came on our AlMaghrib stage, again this is in 2008 or 2007.

Qadhi was thus a key driver behind the Muslim Pact and has also, as we saw in his quote above, played a role inviting female speakers to be a part of AlMaghrib—a move that is largely at odds with the gender dynamics of Salafi circles (as we saw in Chapters 2 and 6).

Lewisham Mosque, which may have been at one point in time quite aligned with Salafism has, thanks to Imam Begg's own transformation, also evolved in its approach becoming much more inclusive towards other approaches to Islam. For example, one of the two other imams at Lewisham Mosque is a Hanafi who studied in Bangladesh. The other imam at Lewisham Mosque, Imam Ashraf, though studied at IUM, is actually quite critical of Salafism. In fact, Imam Ashraf currently teaches a lot of books by Imam Al Ghazali—known for being an Ash'ari Sufi. Speaking about his own ideological orientation and experience at IUM, Imam Ashraf explains:

> I don't believe people should be bullied into ascribing into any group, so myself for example, I might agree with different groups with different things, but I wouldn't fit into one category. […] I think it's enough to say that we're Muslims. By nature, I'm very critical, just by nature, so I'll challenge things if I don't agree, and I can't change that about myself, so maybe that's what protected me [from becoming a "Salafi"].

During Ramadan 2021, for example, Imam Ashraf gave courses on "Purification of the Self" and Imam Begg on "Inner Dimensions of Fasting". These courses certainly depart from the courses one would typically expect at a "Salafi mosque".

Al-Muntada has likewise, through the years become more of a community mosque that caters to an increasingly diverse local community than a "Salafi" mosque that draws "Salafis" from around the country. Recognizing the challenges facing Salafi *da'wa*, imams at Al Muntada have, for example, attempted to broaden their base of support. This is the case with imam Omar Hajaj, for example, who does not identify as "Salafi" and

does not use the Salafi label for *da'wa* purposes. Recently returned from studying at IUM in 2017, Hajaj explains that he has taken certain steps to avoid being labelled a Salafi. He explains: "so when I came back [from Medina], I said, I wouldn't even want to teach books like *Kitab al-Tawhid* publicly, because that's what a typical Medina student would do, so I don't get labelled as a Salafi, so that I can reach out to more people". At the same time, however, Hajaj refuses to publicly deny the "Salafi" label. He explains: "A lot of my followers might be Salafis. And I want to target them as well. And I want to reform the young Salafis". The fact that Hajaj will neither confirm, nor deny, that he is "Salafi" is another example of how the Salafi label has been strategically used by actors. Hajaj also set up Yaseen Youth Tours (YYT) in 2016. Through YYT, Hajaj organizes Umra and *ḥajj* trips, as well as other fun activities (e.g. paintball and football) and workshops for Muslim youth. Hajaj's organization makes no mention of any Islamic content, let alone any Salafi concepts in its promotional material. In its About section, YYT is simply presented as "a new non-profit organisation that aims to inspire and empower Muslim youth through Umrah development programmes".

The establishment of Islamic Education and Research Academy (iERA), an Islamic missionary organization founded in 2010 by Abdurraheem Green and others, is also evidence of the changes that have occurred within this network. Green recalls that prior to establishing iERA, he had decided it would not be a "Salafi" organization. He explains:

> When we founded IERA, we said we are non-sectarian, right? The only thing we're not open to, is extremes of jihadi, terrorist, *takfiri* [Muslim who accuses another Muslim of apostasy], that type of stuff, ISIS type guys, or on the other hand, extreme liberal, extremely liberal, or extremely Sufi, but basically anything that's middle of the road, orthodox Islam, they're welcome.

Green likewise joked that they "don't have a *'aqīda* test" for those who work with them. iERA also appointed Hamza Tzortis as CEO in 2017, who although is certainly known for giving *da'wa* to non-Muslims (and for his former association with HT) had not been previously associated with Salafism. Tzortis explained that since he has become CEO, a greater range of Muslim actors have agreed to work with iERA. He argued "I think it's getting better because I became CEO as well, because I wasn't known to be a harsh Salafi type, I like philosophy. [People think] it's impossible that he's Salafi because he's a philosopher". iERA's *da'wa* strategy has certainly moved beyond the typical Salafi *da'wa* on saving erring Muslims and focuses more on *da'wa* to non-Muslims. For example, iERA hosts a "Jesus Exhibition" in which information about "what Muslims believe about Jesus" is displayed and shared with members of the Public. iERA also hosts four-day new Muslim residential retreats.

It is important to note, however, that although some members of this network may not see themselves as spreading Salafism, this is not to say that these organizations and individuals no longer play a role in the articulation of Salafism. In the case of iERA, for example, the fact remains that most of those who work with iERA are, or were, Salafi at some point. Baz has also shown in her thesis, for example, that elements of iERA's *da'wa* remain "doctrinally" linked to Salafism because of its "key working relationships" with Salafi institutions like the IUM (2017, p. 68). Islam21C also similarly continues to publish articles on typical Salafi points of discussions such as the *mawlid*, celebrations like mother's day, and the 15th of Shaaban. It also continues to advocate classic Salafi viewpoints in these articles (i.e. it is better to not engage in these controversial practices/celebrations). Islam21C also remains connected to politically oriented Salafi networks in Saudi Arabia—frequently writing articles in defence of key figures of the movement like Salman al-'Awda.

Even YYT, which features trips and activities for youth, plays a role in imparting Salafi common sense. Hajaj argued, for example, that although it might seem to others that he is "not teaching them [the youth] *tawḥīd*" he indeed is. He explained:

> When we do these activities and trips, when we have the opportunity, we give the messages. But when someone is closing his ears, from the beginning, whatever you say to him, they're not going to listen. These activities are the means, not the objective, through these means we get to deliver our messages.

Likewise, AlMaghrib continues to be linked to Salafism. Qadhi, for example, admitted that although AlMaghrib has changed, "it's true overall the people that are there, overall subscribe to the Athari creed at some level". One of AlMaghrib's class descriptions reads, for example, "Delves into the importance of following the Sunna and following the methodology of the salaf. Explains the concept of *bid'ah, ṭaqwa* [piety]*, īmān* [faith], and the way of *ahl'l-Sunna wa'l-jamā'ah* in relation to practical and theological issues" ("Curriculum", 2020). The fact that this network remains linked to "Salafism" is perhaps not too surprising given how many of those involved in the Salafi war of position have, as we saw in Chapter 5, altered their understanding of Salafism but not departed from it completely.

One important consequence of this new Salafi activism relates to the network's relationship with other Salafis. Activist Salafis' move away from "Salafi" *da'wa* has given both the Brixton and SP networks even more of a reason to speak out against, and

distance themselves from, this network. Imam Umar of Brixton, for example, argues: "[Yasir Qadhi has] nothing to do with *Salafiyya*. We went to school together, he did a 360 {sic} degree turn with what he left with and what he is today". Likewise, speaking about al-Haddad, Abu Khuzaima said: "Let me just put this on the record, we don't consider him to be Salafi, if you're going to be diplomatic about principles of *Salafiyya* then you don't have the right [to be considered Salafi]". Abu Khadeejah, of SP, has similarly critiqued al-Haddad—calling him out especially for "broadening" his message. Speaking about al-Haddad he argues: "because you're broadening your message, you're on everybody's map. So obviously more people are going to flock to you, but the fact is…you might get a huge turnout at your lecture, but how many are actually embracing your ideology? Very few". Yet, as we will see in the next chapter, contrary to Abu Khadeejah's opinion, this network's strategy has actually played a major role in disseminating Salafi common sense beyond Salafi circles.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has revisited the Salafi war of position which began in the 1980s, and is still underway today within London's Muslim community. No longer focused on universities and colleges, Salafi actors have relied on traditional media, built more mosques (in the case of SP), and dominated the online and social media sphere. Certainly, the importance, and effectiveness, of the online sphere as a site of articulation for the Salafi movement, is especially apparent when one compares the role (or lack thereof) that Brixton Mosque has played in the last decade, with that of other more influential Salafi actors such as SP and the "Social Media Salafis".

As we have seen, however, the Salafi war of position has not been seamless; it has been "slow-moving, and multi-dimensional, a 'long-labour', with many set-backs, and incremental gains" (Chalcraft, 2021, p. 29). Indeed, after recognizing the challenges facing Salafism from within the Muslim community, some Salafi actors have had to alter the content and strategy of their *da'wa* in an attempt to regain ground lost to other Muslim actors like the TI movement. These attempts at reform have thus at times been, as other scholars (Hamid, 2016) have argued, largely strategic. Yet, as I have argued in this chapter, these shifts have also in several cases been a result of the very real experiences and transformations that British Salafis have undergone in Salafi communities. I have also demonstrated how the shifts discussed in this chapter, have been more a result of,

and/or related to, local-level developments within the Muslim community, as opposed to major political developments and shifts like 9/11.

At the same time, however, this chapter has argued that despite the shifts in discourse and strategy that we have seen in this chapter, there has been more continuity than change in the conception of the world disseminated by these groups. We have seen how these groups have, regardless of shifts in discourse and strategy, continued to proliferate Salafi common sense. They have also remained connected to other members of the transnational Salafi bloc, though they have, with the exception of SP, begun to operate more autonomously.

This chapter has also provided insight into the changing dynamics of London's Muslim community, and the Salafi community more specifically. We've seen, for example, how these communities have grown to encompass a greater number of Black Muslims. We've also seen how race, mental and emotional health issues, family problems, socio-economic conditions, gang violence and knife crime have all interacted with Salafism. Indeed, the effectiveness of the Salafi war of position is largely related to Salafism's ability to operate within this changing context. It is also very much related to, as we will in the next chapter, the diffusion of Salafi common sense beyond Salafi circles.

8. Salafism without Salafis: Exploring the Wider Impact of Salafism in London

8.1 Introduction

> "The hope of every ideology is to naturalize itself out of History into Nature, and thus to become invisible, to operate unconsciously" (Hall, 1988, p. 8).
>
> "Every philosophical current leaves a sedimentation of 'common sense': this is the document of its historical reality" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 326).

When I first began my fieldwork in non-Salafi mosques, I was surprised to find that many of my participants used the phrase "Qur'an and Sunna" to describe their approach to Islam. After a few weeks, I began to understand that the phrase "Qur'an and Sunna" signified an Islam based solely on the textual sources—one that supposedly stood in sharp contrast to "wishy washy" Sufi approaches, the "blind following" of those who followed a *madhhab*, and "cultural Islam". Yet, what surprised me most about my participants' use of this phrase, was how divorced it was from the movement that had worked to popularize it. I found that only some of my participants had previously come across the term Salafism, and/or could define what Salafism was. An even smaller number seemed to be aware of the link between their approach to Islam, and that of Salafism.

Literature on Salafism, and Islam more generally, has long suggested that Salafi communities, though small, have had a large influence on Muslim communities. Speaking about British Salafis, for example, Hamid has argued: "While they make up a small number of the approximately 1,600 mosques in Britain, their influence is increasing disproportionally due to their effective distribution of literature, activism and a strong media and internet presence" (2016, p.56). Nehaoua has also cautiously suggested that a "Salafization of the devout middle classes in Egypt" may be taking place thanks to the growing popularity of Salafi shaykhs (scholars) and programmes featured on the Egyptian religious channel al-Nâss and other conservative satellite channels such as al-Majd or al-Fajr (2010). Also speaking of Egypt, Al-Anani and Malik have referred to a "wave of salafization [that has] reshaped the religious sphere in Egypt to become more conservative and less progressive in terms of political and religious views" (2013, p. 61). El Obeid has

likewise argued that "a quiet radicalization/Salafization of Sudanese society", and more specifically of Sufi centres, is occurring through a "three-step process" in which women are first targeted, then mosques are infiltered, and then villages are transformed (2020, p. 63). Abdul Hamid, has also claimed that the "normative understanding and practice of Islam" (2016, p. 3) in Malaysia has evolved as a result of "gradual Salafization", while El Alaoui has discussed the "increasing salafization of the public norm" within the Arab world (2011, p. 11). Cesari has similarly discussed the "Salafization of Islamic Norms", arguing that the Wahhabi movement "has succeeded in imposing its beliefs not as one interpretation among many but as the global orthodox doctrine of Sunni Islam" (2013, p. 131).

Yet, because most works on Salafism have undoubtedly focused on Salafi communities, individuals, mosques, and organizations, little is actually known about the dynamics of this supposed "Salafization". Many of the above comments about "Salafization" have been said in passing within larger works on Salafism, for example, and/or have not been based on solid ethnographic research or any other empirical data. In some cases, a somewhat sensationalized approach to the "Salafization" of Muslim communities has also been adopted. El Obeid, equates Salafization with radicalization for example, and Abdul Hamid argues, without much evidence, that Salafization is related to the supposedly "increasing numbers of Malay-Muslim youth harbouring an attraction towards radical Islamist movements such as ISIS" (2016, "Executive Summary"). These discussions have also given little attention to the limitations of this "wave of salafization" (Al-Anani and Malik 2013, p. 61), often suggesting a largely automatic process that occurs, for example, through three stages (El Obeid, 2020, p. 3).

This chapter explores the impact of the Salafi movement in London, beyond Salafi spaces, through participant observation and more than 60 interviews (mainly with women) in three non-Salafi mosques of differing ideological orientations. I argue that despite the challenges the Salafi movement has faced in recent decades, Salafism has become an important cultural force in London's Muslim communities as evident by the imprint that it has left on the common sense of British Muslim women. Indeed, Salafism has, to some extent, achieved a certain invisibility operating unconsciously, and shaping the way that some British Muslims have come to understand and practice Islam.

I begin by introducing the three non-Salafi mosques, and larger communities, which I regularly frequented between 2017-2019. I then examine the elements of my participants' common sense that can be traced to Salafism, before commenting on the factors that have facilitated the internalization of this common sense. I also highlight the limits of Salafi common sense by shedding light on segments of London's Muslim population who seem largely untouched by Salafism, as well as those who while may have at one point been influenced by Salafism, but have now evolved in the way they understand and practice Islam. While I explore non-Salafi spaces more generally, there is undoubtedly a focus on women within this chapter due to the gendered nature of British mosques (see Chapter 1 for a more thorough discussion on this). This is not necessarily a limitation in this context, however, but actually shines quite some light on the reproduction of Salafism and Salafi culture because of the crucial role that women tend to play in the reproduction of culture and common sense within British Muslim communities.

8.2 Background on Cases

As briefly discussed in Chapter 1, this chapter is based on my fieldwork in three non-Salafi mosques: Wembley Central Mosque (WCM), Finsbury Park Mosque (FPM), and Harrow Central Mosque (HCM). The first mosque, WCM, is located near Wembley Central Station. WCM moved to its current location in 1993 after members of the local community purchased a vacant church with the help of donations from the community as well as financial support from Muammar Gaddafi.[83] WCM serves a large community of Muslims from different ethnic backgrounds—with many Muslims from a South Asian background, a Somali background, and some from a Middle Eastern origin. WCM caters to a community of a somewhat lower socio-economic standing than the other mosques that I visited; the mosque belongs to a neighbourhood where 34.6% of households are living in poverty, or have an equivalised household income of less than 60% of the country's median (after housing costs).[84] This is well-above the median percentage of households in poverty in London (25.7%). Though it is hard to paint an accurate picture of the mosque's ideological history, long-time attendees of the mosque suggest that the mosque had some Salafi influence back in the 1990s (in the form of *madrassa* teachers

---

[83] Interview with Mufeeda. London. 13/12/2017. Gaddafi was involved in missionary activity, particularly within Africa (Heneghan, 2012).

[84] Here I am referring to the Middle Layer Super Output Area that the mosque belongs to.

for example). During the time of my fieldwork, the imam (leader of the mosque) at WCM was of Pakistani origin and had been the imam of the mosque for more than 20 years. He followed the Hanafi *madhhab*, and at times invited speakers associated with the activist Salafi network and particularly Islam21C.[85] On the other hand, the management committee of the mosque was associated with the Deobandi-TJ movement.

The second mosque, FPM, is located two minutes' walk from Finsbury Park underground station. Building work on FPM's present-day five-storey building began in 1985, with the help of a donation by Saudi Arabia's King Fahd (Hasan, 2002). It opened to the public in 1993. When FPM mosque was first built, the Bengali community was the largest Muslim community in the area. Since then, Muslims originating from Somalia, Eritrea, Algeria, Turkey, and other Middle Eastern countries have joined the Finsbury Park community.[86] FPM is in a neighbourhood where the percentage of households living in poverty (25.1%) is quite similar to the median percentage of households in poverty in London (25.7%) (ONS, 2017). The mosque is currently run by the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB)[87] associated with the MB—and thus while has a somewhat political or activist leaning—is not doctrinally exclusive, often inviting speakers from different ideological and ethnic backgrounds. The chairman of the mosque acknowledged that there was some Salafi influence within the community up until about five or more years ago, but that this no longer seems to be the case. He explained: "people understand the situation more, that we live in a non-Muslim country, doesn't mean that we have to do something against our religion, but our religion is quite flexible. It gives you the middle which you can choose from". Another member of the management likewise explained that, as a management, they have tried to counter Salafi influence by bringing in speakers from a wide variety of different backgrounds so as to expose the community to alternatives to Salafi thought.[88] It is interesting to note that though FPM was built using donations from Saudi Arabia, this does not seem to have had a direct impact on the

---

[85] During my fieldwork, there was ongoing conflict between the imam and the management committee of the mosque. After my fieldwork at WCM was concluded, I was informed by members of the community that the Imam had left the mosque due the ongoing conflicts between him and the management.
[86] Interview with FPM Manager. London. 01/08/2018.
[87] Finsbury Park mosque has a somewhat notorious history. In 1997, a radical preacher Abu Hamza al-Masri became the imam. After being shut down in 2003 by its trustees, and after a police raid, the mosque was re-opened in 2005 and has since been under the leadership of the MAB.
[88] Interview with a member of FPM management. 01/08/2018.

mosque's "loyalty" towards Saudi Arabia. If anything, FPM was the only mosque of the three non-Salafi mosques I visited that critiqued, during Friday prayers, the Saudi establishment for its alleged murder of Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi Arabian journalist and critic of the Saudi regime.

The third mosque, HCM, is the newest of the mosques, established in 2011 using community donations (and no foreign government funding). This purpose-built mosque replaces another small mosque that was housed in a set of two terraced houses. Though originally meant to cater to the entire Harrow Muslim community, there have been serious conflicts, over control of the mosque, between differing ideological factions (one associated with a somewhat Salafi/"Qur'an and Sunna" approach, and the other with the South Asian Barelvi movement). Although relatively open when it was first founded, HCM's management has since been taken-over by trustees associated with Barelvism. Though some members of the Harrow community associated with other approaches to Islam have continued to attend HCM (at least for Friday prayers), many no longer do so as they do not feel comfortable and/or welcome within the mosque now. Instead, some members of the community have preferred to attend the nearby Sri Lankan mosque. Nonetheless, HCM does still cater to a local community and is attended by many who are not too fussed by the mosque's ideological orientation as well as those who associate (consciously or unconsciously) with Barelvism. Though geographically close to WCM, HCM caters to a community that has a better socio-economic background than WCM (27.3% neighbourhood poverty rate vs. 34.6% neighbourhood poverty rate respectively (ONS, 2017)). It overwhelmingly draws Muslims from a South Asian and particularly Pakistani background, but also welcomes congregants from an Afghani and Somali background.

As can be seen in the descriptions of these mosques, all three mosques have had some form of Salafi influence. Anecdotal evidence suggests that such influence is certainly not unique to these three mosques, but is also likely to be present in other mosques in London as well. Yet it is also important to keep in mind that these three cases are not intended to be representative of all mosques in London but are simply meant to contribute to our understanding of how Salafism has operated in diverse contexts and communities.

Figure 5: Picture of WCM, FPM, HCM

Finsbury Park Mosque.
Source: "North London Central Mosque, Finsbury Park" by Danny Robinson is licensed under CC by 2.0

Harrow Central Mosque.
Source: "Harrow Central Mosque" by Robert Cutts is licensed under CC by 2.0

Wembley Central Mosque.
Source: "Central Mosque, Wembley" by Danny Robinson is licensed under CC by 2.0

8.3 A New Common Sense & New Culture

As alluded to earlier in the introduction of this chapter, while carrying out fieldwork in non-Salafi mosques, I frequently came across the phrase "Qur'an and Sunna". Ilhaam, for example, in her forties, proudly spoke of how her sons are "upon Qur'an and Sunna" and Hani likewise spoke of how she "just follow[s] Qur'an and Sunna". Women also frequently spoke of how they would only carry out practices that were firmly based in the Qur'an and Sunna. Saleema, for example, recalled how she previously rejected a potential spouse because he was carrying out practices that didn't seem in line with the Qur'an and Sunna. She explained "if I haven't read it in the Qur'an, and there's no hadith (report of the words and deeds of Prophet Muhammad), and there's no backing to it, then I can't just follow something without evidence". Similarly, Tazkiya said: "to me, it's simple, what's in the Qur'an, what's in the Sunna, the strongest evidence, that's it". Hind also spoke of how she only relies on the website IslamQ&A.info for "authentic knowledge". She explained:

> I go to Islam Q&A website [when I have a question]. I know its authentic knowledge because they usually have very detailed answers, they specify whether the hadith is ṣaḥīḥ [authentic] and they mention the Qur'an verse backing up the answer. It's very important to me that it's an authentic answer.

Qamar likewise spoke of the need to "do a bit of research", "corroborate evidence", and check whether a hadith is "sound" or not.

This focus on the main Islamic sources, evidence, and authenticity was in many times also pared with a noncommittal, and at times outright antagonistic, approach towards the *madhāhib*. Tazkiya explained how although her family follows the Hanafi *madhhab*, she takes from all four "wherever the evidence is strongest". Ameera likewise spoke of how no one in her family follows one *madhhab*, but instead follows "whichever one [*madhhab*] is strongest". She explained: "We don't say I'm Hanbali, I'm Hanafi…and I'm this. In our family we don't really do this". Nisrine, had a much more antagonistic approach to the *madhāhib*. When asked about them she explained:

> I follow *dīn* [religion] of Prophet Ibrahim. I don't believe in Imam Hanafi, Shafi. No I don't believe, OK? They are all scholars. I follow the Qur'an and Him—the Prophet (Peace be Upon Him). This [the *madhāhib*] is their [the scholars] own opinion. This is why we are divided, isn't it? If we go to according to Qur'an and hadith you can't be divided. No clash.

In several cases, when I asked women how they would go about answering any questions they had, they spoke of referring directly a collection of "authentic" hadiths like Sahih al-Bukhari. This was the case with Wafaa, whose father has the whole collection of Sahih

al-Bukhari at home. Indeed, the availability of translated Qur'ans and hadith collections like Sahih al-Bukhari have made it much easier for British Muslim women to directly approach the Islamic texts—bypassing the scholarship of jurists. Wajiha, for example, was encouraged by her Muslim colleague at Tesco where she worked, to read Sahih al-Bukhari. She recalls: "So I asked him to get a book for me, and he got a Sahih al-Bukhari book. […] I would just read and follow through all the hadith and apply it". Wajiha thus found Sahih al-Bukhari to be an easily accessible source, that served as a starting point for her rediscovery of Islam.

The need to avoid innovations and only practice Islam the way the Prophet and *Ṣaḥābah* (the Prophet's companions) did, was also a given in the many conversations I took part of, or witnessed. This was particularly evident whenever I attempted to bring up the topic of the Prophet's birthday, or the *mawlid* (or *milad*). When I asked Mufeeda for example, if it would be an issue if someone was to try and hold a *mawlid* celebration at WCM, she responded: "That is an issue, a hundred percent. That would cause an uproar I think. Because the majority of the community here, they don't believe in that, because obviously we have to try and be as authentic as possible". Lateefa, at FPM, similarly spoke of how growing up she used to take part in *mawlid* celebrations, but has now stopped celebrating the Prophet's birthday as "there have been advances in knowledge". She explained "we now learned that the *aṣḥāb* [companions] of the Prophet didn't do it. […] The big shaykhs, I listen to, have now learned that only things that were part of the Sunna are good, but this wasn't part of the Sunna". I even found that some women, who had no problem praying at HCM (a supposedly Sufi mosque), still had an issue with celebrating the Prophet's birthday. This approach was also applied to other controversial acts and celebrations that the Salafi movement has warned against over the years like the 15th of *Sh'abān* and *khatamāt-al-Qur'an* (collectively completing a reading of the Qur'an on behalf of the deceased).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of my participants were also uneasy about, and in some cases strongly criticized practices associated with Sufism, and particularly Barelvism. Several of those who attend WCM, for example, although live closer to HCM, prefer to attend WCM because HCM is "Sufi" and "they stand up and they start singing" after

prayer for example.[89] Aisha, in her forties, also lamented the "innovations" she encounters while visiting Pakistan. She explained:

> Visiting graves, saints, that is very very common in Pakistan, because Pakistan was originally a pagan country. […] People when they came to Islam, they took Islam and they started [to] bring their own habits, and then they modified it and beautified it, you cannot do this, you cannot do cheating with Allah because you like it. […] I have seen lots of bida'hs [bida' reprehensible innovations].

Naseema, a woman from a Pakistani background in her 60s, likewise unprompted, questioned why so many people visit *pirs* (spiritual teachers), saying: "What [do] they have no trust in Allah? What is it? Why do they do that?".

Many women also had a wholly negative perception of culture. Hanan, from a South Asian background, speaking about WCM, frustratingly said: "I think from what I have seen, culture is poisonous. Everyone that comes in there [WCM], comes with some kind of culture". This negative perception of culture was especially apparent in the case of British Muslims from a South Asian background, but certainly not exclusively so. At FPM, Farah, in her thirties and from a Moroccan background, also argued: "When people mix culture and Islam, it creates the biggest poison". She spoke about how the cultural practices that she witnesses back in Morocco anger her. The topic of culture also especially featured in conversations about intergenerational conflicts. Abeera, 18, for example, spoke about difficulties with her parents, and wondered why they couldn't understand that "culture is nothing in front of religion". She also expressed her frustration over being restricted to marrying someone from a Pakistani background. Saleema, in her thirties, likewise spoke about parental and community pressure to have a big wedding, and how these cultural traditions are "man-made" and do not "fit in the *dīn*". This negative perception of "home" culture was also sometimes accompanied by a preference for Saudi style dress—with many women donning a black *ʿabāya* (loose over-garment worn by women in contemporary Saudi Arabia) while attending the mosque. Yet, I found that even some older Somali women who retained their bright Somali traditional dress, also spoke about following "Qur'an and Sunna", and/or about the impermissibility of the *mawlid* or *khatamāt*. This suggests the limitations of taking dress as an exclusive indication of women's approaches to Islam.

---

[89] Interview with Madiha. London. 16/03/2018. Interview with Nisrine. London 19/01/2018.

As can be seen in Abeera's example above, in some cases, younger women in their late teens, 20s, and 30s, have come to understand and practice Islam differently than their parents. Indeed, Abeera tearfully spoke about her struggles with her parents who follow "cultural" Islam and do not approve of her decision to wear the *jilbāb* or attend the mosque so frequently. Similarly, Nawar spoke to me about how her mom continues to associate with Barelvi practices that she simply cannot understand. She explained: "My mom is more traditional. She follows blindly. I don't just believe what my parents teach". These intergenerational divides were not just restricted to younger women, however. I met Ilhaam, in her forties in HCM. She spoke to me about how her father still associates with *pirs* and views her approach to Islam as "Wahhabism". She explained:

> We don't believe in Saints anymore. […] I came [to the UK] 20-25 years ago when I got married. I started to attend the sisters' circle [at the Sri Lankan mosque], and learn hadith. My husband also told me things […] My father has only been here five years, he still believes in saints and gets angry [about how I practice Islam]. My brother is like me.

In the case of Ilhaam's family, it seems as though the length of time spent in the UK has been an important factor—helping to explain why Ilhaam and her brother, have changed how they practice Islam but their father, a 73-year old man who recently migrated to the UK from a village close to Islamabad, still largely identifies with his original understandings of Islam.

In some cases, though, the intergenerational divide noted above, and well-documented in the literature (e.g. Hinnells, 2007; Liberatore, 2017; Vertovec & Rogers, 1998), seems to have narrowed over the years. Hanan, for example, spoke to me about how after eight years of trying, she actually managed to persuade her father of certain doctrinal stances. Tazkiya likewise told me about how she's altered her mother's approach to Islam. She explained "I show her a lot as well. It shouldn't be like this, it should be like this… *Al-ḥamdu li-llah* [thank God] she's learned a lot from it and she's changed when she sees evidence for it". Zaina also spoke about getting her mother "hooked" on Nur-Ul-Quran classes (discussed later in this chapter) at WCM. She explained: "she does it from her WhatsApp and stuff. And it's a big thing because I never thought my mom would because she objected to a lot of things [that I originally shared with her]." Nisrine, a mother of two daughters in their thirties, also provided me with a mother's perspective. She recalled: "I used to think this prayer [Sunna prayer] is for the Prophet. And when my children started reading they said: 'Mum please, you misguided us'".

In fact, in many cases, I could not really find any major differences between the common sense of women in their twenties, and women in their 40s, 50s, 60s, or even 70s. We saw this in a few examples above, where, even older woman spoke about the need to corroborate evidence and avoid innovations. A few of my younger participants also spoke about how their parents practice Islam in a similar manner to them. Reema, for example, explained that her parents taught her that celebrating the Prophet's birthday is a *bida'h*. She explains:

> I sort of see that as *bida'h* [celebrating the *mawlid*] because, obviously, my parents are like, some people do go over the board, but we aren't supposed to because even the Prophet himself, *ṣalla Allāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam* [Blessings of God and Peace Be Upon Him], he never used to celebrate his birthday, rather he fasted always on Mondays and Thursdays.

Hani likewise explained that her mother practices Islam similarly—the only difference being that she listens to Somali shaykhs.

These common sense ideas, as evident in the examples above, have not been exclusive to women from a particular ethnic background, nor have they been limited to women from a particular socio-economic class. I found that several highly educated and professional women within non-Salafi mosques have also adopted these elements of common sense. Indeed, within the South Asian community, common sense truths about evidence and authenticity, for example, are often associated with higher education and professionalism. Associating oneself with what one of my participants called "new Islam"[90] (as opposed to "traditional, cultural Islam") is often a sign of one's higher socio-economic status in the community, and distinguished women from low-skilled South Asian migrants that originated from certain villages who still practice "village" Islam. This is somewhat reminiscent of Gellner's distinction between folk Islam and orthodox or "High" Islam (Gellner, 1992). These elements of common sense have thus not been the exclusive property of "elites" nor the "marginalized"—but seem to be associated with a much wider segment of the British Muslim community.

8.4 The Salafi War of Position and British Muslim Common Sense

As can be seen in the examples above, elements of Salafism have found their way into the common sense of many British women. Those familiar with other Islamic movements in the UK might be quick to point out that some of these elements of common sense could

---

[90] Interview with Ali. London. 21/07/2018.

potentially be linked to other Islamic movements as well. For example, the Jamaat-e-Islami in the UK has also sought an "unadulterated" Islam—dismissing "South Asian culture" (Amin, 2017). The Deobandis, as previously discussed in Chapter 4, are also known for their polemics against South Asian Barelvis and opposition to Sufi practices such as the celebration of the *mawlid*, *pirs*, and visiting graves. Others familiar with the literature on religious change in contemporary Muslim communities may also suggest that the reworking of British Muslim common sense has been a result of migration, globalization, deterritorialization, the individualization of Islam, objectification of religious knowledge, and the fragmentation of Islamic authority (e.g. Eickelman, 1992; Jacobson, 1998; Mandaville, 2001; Meer, 2010; Peters, 2006; Roy, 2004; Schiffauer, 1988). Yet, as we will see in this section, these elements, in this case, can be directly traced to Salafi *da'wa*.

Indeed, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, the Salafi war of position has included the effective use of both traditional and new media channels. Many of my participants, for example, gained much of their knowledge about Islam through TV channels like Islam Channel (which especially during the 1990s and 2000s used to host many Salafi preachers like Yasir Qadhi and Bilal Philips) and Peace TV (run by Dr. Zakir Naik—an Indian preacher who does not officially affiliate with the Salafi movement but is certainly associated with it). Naima recalls: "When Islam Channel come on, I just remember Yasir Qadhi, he was just the only person doing shows. […] He was just going over the five pillars, the fundamental aspects of faith, and because it was repetitive it stuck with me". Islam Channel was also an important source of Islamic knowledge about "correct" practice and belief. Adeela, a 70-year-old woman originally from Togo, recalled how she "learned a lot of things from Islam Channel" and has since changed the way she places her hands during prayer after learning the "correct" placement. A few of my participants, also mentioned attending the Global Peace & Unity conference hosted by Islam Channel between 2005-2013, which often hosted speakers like Dr. Zakir Naik and Bilal Philips.

Although Salafi speakers have at times given lectures at these mosques, especially in the case of WCM where speakers like Dr. Salman Butt and Asif Uddin (both associated with Islam21C) have given *khuṭab* (sermons) and lectures over the years, I found that most women give much more importance to popular preachers they've seen on TV or on social media (Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp). Preachers that have never used the Salafi label, or no longer use the Salafi label, but are connected to the movement, like Bilal Philips,

Abdurraheem Green, Dr. Zakir Naik, Yasir Qadhi, and Mufti Menk (a popular international preacher and IUM graduate based in Zimbabwe), were very frequently mentioned to me as sources of authority.

Indeed, these popular preachers have played an important role in popularizing Salafi common sense. Popularisers, Crehan argues, "are crucial if the narratives produced by sophisticated, specialized intellectuals are to be transmuted into easily graspable common sense" (2016, p. 122). These preachers have simplified "Salafi" ideology, focusing on a few key messages that have found their way into the common sense of British Muslims. They have spoken about avoiding "blind following" and the importance of following "Qur'an and Sunna". They have separated "culture" from "religion", and warned people off from committing *bida'h*. These key messages are very clear in the screenshots of YouTube videos and other *da'wa* material below. These popularisers have also connected their messages to the experiences of British Muslims such as those experiencing intergenerational conflicts, those attending institutes of higher education and seeking "logic" and "evidence", as well as those whose migratory experiences have left them wiling and open to a new approach to Islam. They have used their own prestige and position (as highly qualified physicians—in the case of Dr. Zakir Naik,[91] and/or returnees from IUM) to make their worldview appear so obvious that challenging it would seem ridiculous. The fact that so many of these popular preachers do not, or no longer, use the "Salafi" label and preach a "mainstream" or "orthodox" Islam, as we saw in the previous chapter, has also facilitated the diffusion of this common sense.

Figure 6: Screenshots from YouTube Da'wah Videos & Other Da'wah Material
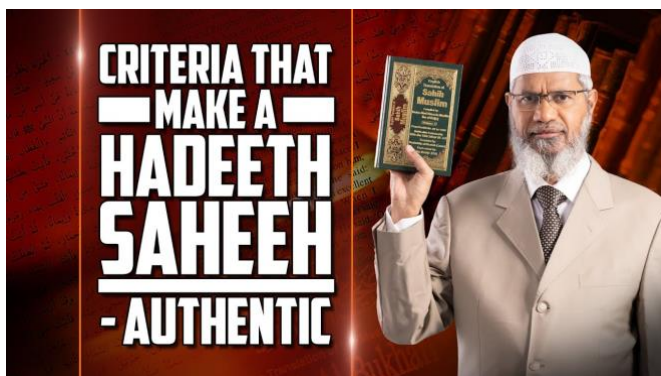
Source: Criteria that make a Hadeeth Saheeh - Authentic – Dr Zakir Naik (Dr Zakir Naik, 2020).

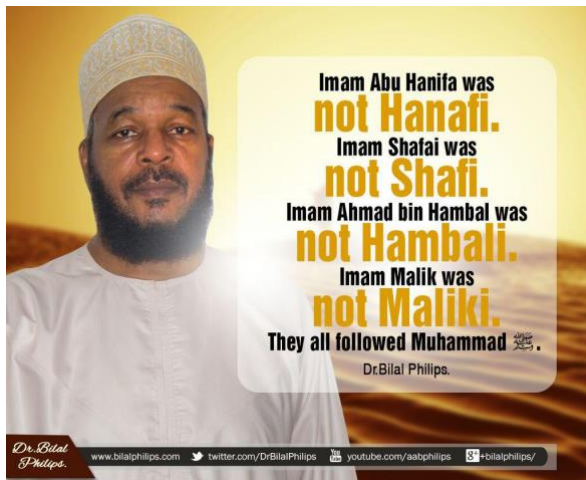[91] A few of my participants were mentioned, and were impressed by, the fact that Dr. Zakir Naik was a physician.
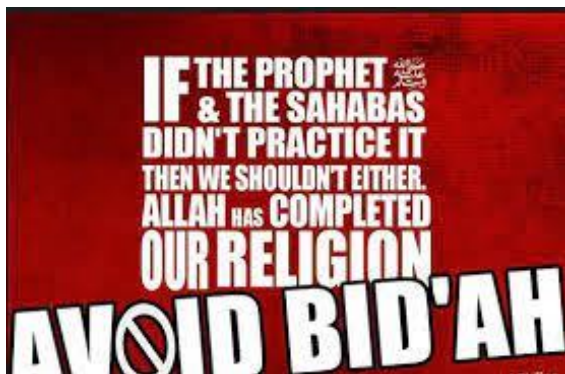
Source: Common Errors in Ramadhaan (Dr Zakir Naik, 2014).

Source: Why One Shouldn't Celebrate Mawlid un Nabi Prophet's Birthday - Mufti Menk (Fezekir, 2014).

Source: Imam Abu Hanifa was not Hanafi (Dr. Bilal Philips, 2015).

Source: Be Aware of Bidah/Powerful Message/Mufti Menk (The Deen Show, 2015).

Institutions like AlMaghrib and AlKauthar, discussed in Chapter 3, have also been very influential amongst the wider British Muslim community in London. Several participants spoke to me about attending weekend seminars hosted by AlMaghrib, particularly during the 2000s. Others spoke about the classes they took online, and the "authentic" knowledge they gained through these courses. My participants again were not aware of AlMaghrib and AlKauthar's links to Salafism, but simply saw this as an Islam based on "Qur'an and Sunna". This was also the case with websites like Islam Q&A and books by preachers like Yasir Qadhi.

Friendships with other women in the mosque, and even everyday personal interactions with other members of the congregation seem to have also led to the diffusion of Salafi ideas and practices. I witnessed one woman in WCM, for example, advising her fellow female congregants that it is supposedly "not recommended" to pray Sunna prayers at the mosque during Friday prayers as the Prophet never did that.[92] I also witnessed another woman at WCM speaking to another female congregant, wearing loose-fitting trousers, about correct dress during prayer.[93] Some of my participants also spoke to me about how they had learned about the impermissibility of some practices, or began to listen to a particular preacher or attend a certain class over the years thanks to other women in the mosque. This was especially the case in WCM and FPM, because women in these mosques frequently socialize, share food, and read Qur'an following the end of Friday prayers.[94]

Within WCM, British Muslims from a South-Asian background have also been influenced by women's organizations like Al-Huda (a spin-off from the South Asian Jamaat-e-Islami run by Farhat Hashmi) and more recently Nur-Ul-Quran (founded by Iffat Maqbool—a student of Farhat Hashmi). These organizations have sought to reform middle and upper-class Pakistani women's approach to Islam, in Pakistan (Ahmad, 2008) but also in other countries like the United States, Australia, and Canada (Babar, 2010). They have operated in a similar manner within the South Asian community in London. Mufeeda, who attends these classes, explained for example, that she was drawn to Nur-

---

[92] This is not an opinion that I came across in any Salafi circles, but seems an extension of a "only doing what the Prophet and the Ṣaḥābah did" approach. Field Notes 19/01/2018.

[93] Field notes 08/12/2017.

[94] This was not the case in HCM where women tended to leave right after the Friday prayer.

Ul-Quran classes at WCM because: "a lot of women were coming from professional backgrounds, there were a lot of lawyers, a lot of doctors, housewives as well, there were psychologists, and normal people like me. So there were a lot of professional people from very elite Pakistani backgrounds". Though offshoots of Islamist organizations, these organizations have largely abandoned the political approach of the Jamaat-e-Islami. Both of these organizations have also been influenced by an Ahl-e-Hadith or non-*maddhab* approach to *fiqh* [Islamic jurisprudence]—departing from the Hanafi *madhhab* typically adopted by many South Asian Muslims. Often accused of being "Wahhabi" or "Salafi" (Dorsey, 2018) these organizations have certainly encouraged a more direct approach to the Islamic sources. Women who attended Nur-Ul-Quran classes at WCM found this approach to *fiqh* quite appealing. When I asked Aamaal, who has an MA from SOAS, whether Nur-Ul-Quran classes explored *fiqh* according to any particular *madhāhib*, she excitedly responded: "No! That's the thing. It's literally just looking at hadith. […] So it's not taking from a *madhhab*, it's going directly to the hadith".

Several of my participants were also influenced by institutions linked to Saudi Arabia—especially Regent's Park Mosque. Regent's Park Mosque, which receives much (though not all) of its funding from Saudi Arabia, is linked to what Dr. Ahmed al-Dubayan, a Saudi diplomat who is the current director of the mosque, describes as "tolerant Salafi Islam". Speaking about the "methodology" adopted at Regent's Park Mosque. He explains:

> This methodology is very close to academic Salafism, but of course Salafism in the media is used sometimes for political meaning, and I don't mean that. I mean the methodology of understanding Islam. All these schools of thought they are respected. They are all our imams, but we don't stick to one of them, and follow blindly.

He also spoke of how Regent's Park has sought to "correct" the problems associated with "cultural" Islam. He argued:

> One of the problems we have here in the UK, is that people have a mixture of religion and traditions. Since Islam came from different backgrounds here in the UK, you have Africans, Asians, Arabs, so everyone came from a different social background, these societies they bring different traditions. Some people have these traditions as religion, and they try to even practice it, and it's not religion. This is what we always say to many things. This is not Islam. This is a tradition practiced by yourself, or by your society, but it's not Islam as it is in the Qur'an, or the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Regent's Park Mosque has thus sought, and certainly contributed to, the reworking of the common sense of British Muslims in London. One of my participants, Aisha, for example, recalled: "the first thing that I said when I went to Regent's Park Mosque, [is] I could

differentiate this is very pure and very simple [in comparison to 'cultural' Islam]". Zareena was likewise delighted when she visited Regent's Park Mosque for the first time. She recalls "I didn't know there was another type of Islam. When I went to Regent's Park mosque, I said: 'OMG this is my Islam'. It was my lifeline".

A few of my participants also at times attended other mosques such as Al-Muntada. Ameera, for example, enjoyed occasionally visiting and hearing the *khuṭab* at Al-Muntada, especially in comparison to the "uninspiring" *khuṭab* repeatedly given by the imam at WCM. She explained:

> The imam [at WCM] he can't speak English, when he does its broken English. He says the same *khuṭba* in Arabic every year, every ʿId for the last 10-15 years. And you can tell he's reading off a book. If you're in London, and you can't speak English, how are you going to speak to your community?[95]

Ameera, and a few other women, also regretted the lack of community activities hosted by WCM and HCM—especially in comparison to more active mosques like Al-Muntada and the Sri-Lankan mosque. Visits to mosques like Regent's Park and Al-Muntada were thus another channel through which women at non-Salafi mosques became acquainted with Salafi common sense.

8.5 "Internalization"

The influence of Salafi preachers, media, and institutions is quite evident in the discussion above. Yet, while these links to Salafism may be quite apparent to us, they certainly were not to the vast majority of my participants. When asked about Salafism, many of participants were puzzled and had no, or little, idea what I was referring to. When I asked Saleema, for example, if she had come across the word Salafi before, she responded "I have, but don't know much. How would you describe it?" Zaina had heard the term before, but didn't see how it was related to her approach to Islam. She said: "I'd describe myself as a Muslim to be honest. We read the Qur'an, follow the Sunna, follow the Qur'an, I don't understand why there are all these labels". Ahlam similarly explained: "We're all one. Where the other people divide themselves into Sunni, Shia, Salafi, they have so many different [labels]. To be honest, yeah I'm Sunni, I know that, but it shouldn't go past that point". Abeera also explained: "Some of my friends they follow a *manhaj*, like Hanafi, Salafi, or like they follow a scholar. Me personally, I never grew up

---

[95] Comments such are these are in line with the literature on British Muslim Imams (e.g. Abbas & Siddique, 2012)

in a family where we would follow a proper sect or a scholar. It's always just been that we follow the Qur'an and Sunna". Nisrine also claimed to not follow Salafism, yet a few minutes later listed Bilal Philips, Dr. Zakir Naik, and Abdulraheem Green as her favourite preachers. Zareena also failed to see how her approach of "Qur'an and Sunna" was related to Salafism arguing "I'm not Salafi or Wahhabi, I mean I don't wear niqab [full face veil], I wear a little bit of make-up, and I mean I wear coloured hijabs [headscarves], do you see what I mean?" Similarly, Anum spoke about how she enjoyed attending Nur-Ul-Quran classes at WCM because her teacher did not belong to any groups or sects—again failing to recognize how the approach adopted by Nur-Ul-Quran classes, has largely been influenced by an Ahl-e-Hadith/Salafi type approach to *fiqh*. She explained: "What I like[d] about our teacher was that she was not supporting any particular group, and also she never mentioned any group". Indeed, for so many of my participants, these elements of common sense have "appeared objectified, as unquestioned givens cut off from the socio-historical processes and interests through which they had evolved" (Giroux, 1983, p. 25).

Of course this was not the case with all of my participants. A few of my participants had a bit more knowledge about Salafism but preferred to not use the Salafi label. Tazkiya for example, comparing herself to friends who attended a SP mosque, argued: "Even though they [also] follow the Qur'an and Sunna, they follow it to the T, which I understand, Masha'Allah [what God has willed] is very very good. […] But at the same time, to me, I feel like you can be relaxed with things." Tazkiya thus deemed her "Qur'an and Sunna" approach not strict enough to merit the Salafi label. Another one of my participants, Mufeeda, also preferred to not use the Salafi label—deeming it unnecessary, but did recognize her relationship to Salafism. She explained "obviously if somebody really pushed me, 'What are you?' I'd say: 'I am towards the Salaf'". For most of my participants though, Salafi common sense simply appeared as the "truth" or "Islam". Indeed, as Hall has argued, common sense "shapes our ordinary, practical, everyday calculation and appears as natural as the air we breathe. It is simply 'taken for granted' in practice and thought, and forms the starting-point (never examined or questioned) from which every conversation begins" (Hall, 1988, p.8).

Common sense, despite being fragmented and incoherent, also "holds together a specific social group, it influences moral conduct and the direction of will" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 332-333). In this case, common sense has also enabled legitimate authority. I found, for

example, that several of my participants deem Saudi Arabian scholars and Qur'anic translations especially authoritative. This also, in some cases, extended to Arab scholars and scholarship more generally. Yara, for example, speaking about the Imam, explained "the Imam is great. He studied in Saudi. He is Sunni". Similarly, Maria, a white British convert in her mid-50s, spoke about wanting to "get decent Arabic teachers, not these mullahs that teach Tablighi", in reference to the *madrassa* teachers the Tablighi management had recently hired. Wafaa, a 35-year old born and raised in London (from a Pakistani background), spoke about how when faced with conflicting opinions, she would "always go with the Arabic influence, what the Arab scholars say, rather than what somebody from Pakistan says". Aisha, from a Pakistani background, similarly argued: "most of the Arabs I have seen, they are Masha'Allah [what God has willed], according to Qur'an and Sunna". In fact, when I asked Hanan, originally from a South Asian background, if she celebrates the Prophet's birthday she was shocked that I would even ask her about this, assuming that because I'm Egyptian I should know better. She said: "You're from *Masr* [Egypt]. So you should know this. This is *bida'h*. We don't celebrate birthdays, for starters. Right?" Similarly, Nisrine holds a high opinion of Saudi Arabia. She spoke of how although she has never met a "pure Saudi", because "Islam came from there, it is best to follow them". When I questioned her further about this given the current state of Saudi Arabia and the more recent social and political changes, she argued: "It's still better than everything else. […] They don't do extra. They don't do *bida'h* much".

Migration & The Reworking of Common Sense

Perhaps one of the key questions that arises here, is what factors have facilitated this reworking of common sense? Although I have previously argued that the reworking of British Muslim common sense can be traced to Salafi *da'wa*, this is not to say that other processes such as migration, for example, have not facilitated the internalization of this common sense. Indeed, my participants' migratory experiences featured heavily in our conversations. Anum for instance, explained that in the UK she and her husband have had more time to delve into Islam than when they were back in Pakistan. Anum recalls: "Since I came to England in 1996 I have been more inclined to Islam, because I personally think when you are back home you've got so many things going on socializing and this and that. My husband was a student so he had some time to invest in other things". This is not too surprising given that migratory experiences are often associated with changes in migrants' religious beliefs and practices. In *The Transnational Villagers*, for example,

Levitt finds that the changing character of her participants lives "transformed their religious practices" (2001, p. 171). She explains "the climate, pace of life, and difference in the balance of work and leisure in Boston and Miraflores changed how faith was expressed" (Levitt, 2001, p. 171).

The fact that my participants in most cases left behind a Muslim-majority country and migrated to a Muslim-minority country has also intensified the impact of migration. As Mandaville has argued:

> The Muslim subjectivity also often becomes more aware of its religion in minority situations. In the "homeland" Islam was an intrinsic aspect of that context's lifeworld, one which was taken for granted. […] Migration is hence a rupture, an important break which can lead to changes in the significance of Islam and of being Muslim (2001, p. 115).

I found that many of my participants were anxious about practicing Islam in the UK. In HCM, Jawaria, an older woman from Somalia, who was sitting with another older women from a Somali background, explained that when they both arrived in the UK they became "more strong in their knowledge and their *īmān* [faith]" because they had to worry about their children's faith. Jawaria explained: "I mean in this country they are teaching our children that two men can be married. We also have children asking us: 'why do you believe in Islam?' We have to worry about atheism amongst our youth". Hani, a young woman, originally from Somalia, who arrived in the UK about a year ago from Kenya also shared how, since arriving in London, she has "become more firm and more strict. […] Because in Kenya, even though it wasn't a Muslim country, there were still so many Muslims. Here there are so many different individuals. I should be stronger; I'm scared of being misguided".

Hani's statement above is also a reminder of the complex migratory paths that some British Muslims have experienced. While much of the literature on migration and socio-political remittances tends to speak solely of a country of origin and a country of destination, several of my participants, especially those originally from African countries like Somalia and Ethiopia, had spent a year or more in other countries like Kenya, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia prior to coming to the UK. These transit countries have also had an influence on my participants' common sense. Basma, a 58 year old Somali woman who previously lived in Saudi Arabia, for example, recalled how "the strong Islam started from there, more religion, *ṣalah* [prayers], and everything". It is thus important to keep in mind these influences when exploring changes in migrants' religious beliefs and practices.

Migrating to the UK has also often meant exposure to a different approach to Islam. Radiyah spoke, for example, of how she used to celebrate the *mawlid* in Somalia, but here she doesn't "see it being celebrated anywhere". Aisha also spoke about how although she was largely practicing "cultural" Islam in Pakistan, when she arrived in the UK and first visited Regent's Park Mosque she could tell that this is the real thing. She recalled:

> Then I came here and the first place that just pulled me away from me, that was a wonderful experience, that was Regent's Park Mosque. And when I went there, and I heard the Qur'an, it just melted me, *subḥānAllah* [Glory be to God]. You can say, in my heart I had thirst for something, I could feel that this is the thing.

Aisha thus came to see this Islam as the "pure" Islam—failing to recognize the underlying interests and influences that have worked to shape Islam at Regent's Park Mosque. Migrants have also in some cases been quite open, if not searching for, this "new" approach to Islam, seeing it as a means to fit in with their new communities or as a way of improving their social status within these communities. The search for an Islam "free of culture" may thus also be a by-product of, or may have at least been facilitated by, the migratory process.

A direct approach to the Islamic sources, although encouraged by the Salafi movement, is also related to other developments such as the greater availability of these resources in English and increasing literacy rates. This direct approach to the sources also seems to be useful to second generation British Muslims dealing with intergenerational conflicts. Speaking about British Muslims, Nielsen (1987) argues:

> Many of those who have established for themselves some space for manoeuvre, separately from the domaine of parental and closely defined social pressures, when they look to a resource in Islam resort to Qur'an and hadith, reading them as documents speaking directly to their own situation (p. 392).

I found this to be the case with, Nawar, for example, who was previously in an abusive marriage. When Nawar had questions about what "Islam" says regarding marriage, she never reached out to a shaykh but to Sahih al-Bukhari. She recalled:

> I also started to read hadith, I would read Sahih Bukhari, I started off just reading the chapters on divorce then I started reading everything. I started to explore what *sharī'a* [Islamic Law] really says about women and marriage. I wanted to know if it's really right that a woman has to be patient even if she's being abused. I found out that we don't have to take either physical or emotional abuse.

Sahih al-Bukhari was thus a useful tool in Nawar's negotiations with her family and helped her escape her abusive marriage.

8.6 The Limits of Salafism

This chapter has thus far discussed the internationalization of Salafi common sense. Yet, it is important to recognize, that this "internalization" was far from automatic, all-encompassing, or straightforward. Though many elements of Salafi common sense hung together, in most instances, women, consciously or unconsciously only chose to adopt some of these elements of common sense but not others. For example, I found that while Yasmeena stopped celebrating the Mawlid because the "Ṣaḥābah didn't do it", she still continued to adopt the Shafi *madhhab* associated with her home country of Somalia. I also found that while Aaliyah now listens to Dr. Zakir Naik and has been influenced by his attitude towards culture, she has not changed her approach to the *madhāhib* and still follows the Shafi *madhhab* associated with her home country of Eritrea. This is especially interesting given that one of Dr. Zakir Naik's main messages has been the need to "follow Qur'an and Sunna" and avoid blind following the *madhāhib* (messageOFmessengers, 2010).

Salafi gender discourses, such as those discussed in Chapter 6, seem to also be largely missing from my participants' common sense. Reema for example, when asked about the ideal role for Muslim women argued:

> I don't agree with people who say women should clean, cook, and you should ask for your husband's permission. That's all lies. There's no restriction when it comes to women in Islam, as long as you're dressed properly and you fear Allah only, then you go out there, work, get your money, look after your kids. You know your husband should really be helping. Prophet Muhammad, Peace be Upon Him, used to really help Khadija and Aisha with the kids, and he used to go into the kitchen, and he used to cook and clean.

While at WCM, I also witnessed a conversation between two of my participants who follow "Qur'an and Sunna" about their unwillingness to be "second wives" in polygamous marriages. One of these two women, Tazkiya spoke to me at length about her decision not to adopt all Salafi discourses, particularly gender discourses. She explained:

> I think I'm more relaxed [in comparison to some of my Salafi friends]. Like for some, they say you have to wear niqab. To me, I don't think that's something that's an obligation for us. You know, if you're travelling, there are some that say you can't travel more than 50 miles outside London without a *maḥram* [close male blood-relative that is unmarriageable because of a close kinship relation]. Me, I'm relaxed. I don't mind flying out on my own. That's just me. It sounds like I'm picking and choosing, but there's somethings that I think you can be chilled out about.

I also rarely come across discussions on *'aqīda* (creed) within the mosques I attended—with only a few of my participants mentioning *'aqīda* unprompted. This suggests that Salafi discourses on "blind following" have been much more effective than those on the

importance of "sound" *aqīda*. Salafi quietist discourses discouraging political participation have also not made their way into the common sense of the women that I interviewed. Many of my participants had voted previously in UK elections, and one of my participants was even canvassing for the British Labour Party at the time of my fieldwork. The fact that Salafi quietist discourses have not been internalized by my participants is perhaps not too surprising given that the speakers that my participants listen to have been mostly associated with the activist Salafi network. Indeed, this is further evidence that the Salafi network that has most effectively engaged with the larger community of British Muslims, is the activist Salafi network that, as we saw in the previous chapter, has more recently rid itself of the "Salafi" label and moved towards "mainstream" or "orthodox" Islam.

This chapter has thus far focused on individuals whose common sense has at least been somewhat reworked by the Salafi movement. Yet, in all three mosques, but especially in HCM, I came across women whose common sense seems largely untouched by the Salafi movement. Within HCM, for example, I met Fahima who although has been in the UK for more than 15 years, spoke about Islam primarily as a "religion of the heart". When I first met her at HCM after Friday prayer, she was very passionately singing along and enjoying the very "songs" that have kept some of my participants away from HCM. She explained "in this mosque they always have prayers praising the Prophet after *ṣalah* [prayer], and *nashīds* [Islamic hymns]. I'm used to this back home in Pakistan. I really like it". Fahima also takes a very different approach to answering any questions she has about Islam. As opposed to women who consult an authentic hadith, or visit the Islam Q&A website, Fahima instead explained: "if I have a question about Islam, I ask a shaykh I know, or my friends. I have a lot of friends who are *'aalimāt* [female scholars]. If I find different answers, because sometimes there is more than one opinion, I follow my heart". Indeed, she argued "religion is from your heart. You should follow what you feel is right". This was also the case with Fajr who has been in the UK for six years, and still prefers to listen to Pakistani speakers (associated with the Barelvi movement). Fajr, like Fahima, when faced with faced with a question about Islam, explained that she would either ask her father-in-law or the imam of the mosque. I also interviewed Nadia, who has been in the UK for three years, and similarly spoke of her love of *na'ats* [Islamic hymns], and, a few weeks after our interview, invited me to attend an event featuring the visiting Pakistani singer Syed Fasihuddin Soharwardi.

I also met women, from other backgrounds like Algeria, Somalia, and Morocco, that seemed to have not "internalized" much Salafi common sense. Jawaria and her friend, at HCM, seemed to be largely practicing Islam in the same way they did back in Somalia. When speaking about their approach to Islam, they alluded to the Islamic schools they attended in Somalia and explained that they have not attended any classes, or listened to any new speakers, since they arrived in the UK almost twenty years ago. Instead, they just "come to the mosque to pray and then go".[96] I also found that two older women, originally from Algeria who attend WCM, still listen to the same preachers that they used to listen to back home, while only making minor changes to the way they practice Islam (e.g. they no longer celebrate the mawlid as "it's not celebrated here"). I likewise spoke with Sherifa, born in Italy but originally from Morocco, who moved to the UK at the age of 15. Though in her early 20s, I found that Sherifa though does not celebrate the *mawlid*, had a generally positive opinion about it and those who celebrate it in Morocco. In fact, Sherifa was not familiar with the word *bida'h*, spoke in a neutral tone about "culture", and does not seem too concerned with evidence or authenticity when seeking answers to questions she has.

Like the men and women who came to Salafism in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, who have since developed a critical consciousness about the "Salafi project", I found that a few British Muslim women in non-Salafi mosques in London have a critical consciousness about these elements of common sense. Bushra, originally from Ethiopia, spoke about how although she no longer celebrates the Prophet's birthday, she's not sure if that is really warranted. She explained:

> These restrictions on Islam, most of them are from Saudi Arabia. […] Most other countries like Egypt and Ethiopia celebrate the *mawlid*. We used to wear new clothes. It was a good opportunity to teach our children. But they said its *tashbīḥ* with the Christians [imitating the ways of the Christians].

She also had the same doubts about *khatamāt-al-Qur'an*, saying: "It's not just about the mawlid, it's about *khatmas* [*khatamāt*] when someone dies for example. And *tasbīḥ* [using prayer beads]. But this is *dhikr Allah* [remembrance of God]. Allah is generous and forgiving, why would he punish us for this?" Inaya, originally from Sudan, similarly recognized the relationship between these common sense notions and Saudi Arabia, and has consciously resisted certain practices. She recalled: "I've had a few people come and tell me, sister, don't use the *sibḥa* [prayer beads], use your fingers, in the mosque. But I told them, I focus better when I use a *sibḥa*".

---

[96] Interview with Jawaria. 05/04/2019.

This was also the case with Haajar who has also begun to question, and rethink, her approach to Islam after years of being concerned with "*bidaʻh, bidaʻh, bidaʻh*". Haajar spoke to me about birthdays, for example, explaining:

> I thought celebrating birthdays was *ḥarām*. And I never used to eat cake of my colleagues, but now when I look back, I'm like aww come on! Come on! If you're told, this is *bidaʻh,* this is *bidaʻh*. then you agree with it. And then later when you follow *shyūkh* [scholars]. Wait a second, let's think about this, we live in the West.

Hajaar has started listening to scholars associated with other approaches to Islam. Her experiences at Oxford University, where she went to university, have also impacted her approach to Islam, working to limit the impact of Salafi common sense. She recalls:

> Outside of school I used to wear an *ʿabāya*, tried to keep it black only. And then I went to Oxford, and I was like I can't do that. I don't want to make them [those at the University] feel uncomfortable. And at that time in 2010, I was the only *muḥajaba* [veiled woman] in the whole year. So I bought coloured scarves. Black [*ʿabāya*] but with coloured scarves.

These changes are very similar to the shifts that self-identifying Salafis have experienced, and again are an indication of the limits of Salafism. Indeed, it remains to be seen how long-lasting Salafism's impact on the common sense of British Muslims will be, for as Gramsci has argued, common sense is "not something rigid and static; rather it changes continuously, enriched by scientific notions and philosophical opinions which have entered into common usage" (Gramsci, 1992, p. 173 as cited in Liguori, 2015, p. 88).

8.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the way that women, in three mosques of differing ideological orientations, understand and practice Islam. It finds that the common sense of many of these women (regardless of socio-economic or ethnic background) has been influenced by Salafism though they, in most cases, are not aware of this connection. Indeed, for the majority of my participants, Salafi common sense is simply taken for granted as "authentic Islam" or "Islam free from culture". This chapter also shed light on the channels through which this common sense has been disseminated—highlighting the complexity of transnational Salafi flows. It argues that British Muslim women in London have not just been influenced by organizations, teachers, and preachers linked to Saudi Arabia, but also other members of the transnational Salafi bloc—such as those in South Asia or in the South Asian diaspora.

The findings of this chapter are in line with literature that has discussed transformations or changes in the way that Muslims understand/practice Islam in the past couple of decades—particularly the tendency for Muslims, and even academics (see Ahmed, 2015) to distinguish between Islam and culture. As Fadil notes:

> The distinction between "culture", "tradition" and "Islam" has been one of the most recurrent observations across the literature on the religious experiences of Muslims in (and outside) Europe. Various studies have indeed shown how elements of culture and tradition are turned into superfluous aspects of one's religious faith in the quest for the "real Islam" (2015, p. 3).

Yet, at the same time, this chapter departs from the literature in two ways. Firstly, it suggests that within London the distinction between "culture" and "real Islam" is usually accompanied by other elements of Salafi common sense. We saw above, for example, the Salafi slogan of "Qur'an and Sunna", ideas about the importance of following the *Ṣaḥābah*, a noncommittal and at times antagonistic approach towards the *madhhab*, the adoption of a particular meaning of "*bida'h*" and "authenticity", as well as uneasiness with Sufi practices. The fact that these elements of common sense tend to hang together, and can be traced to Salafi dissemination channels, is evidence of the critical role that Salafism has played in the reworking of Muslim common sense, and suggests that these changes are not simply a by-product of migration, globalization, and deterritorialization. This is certainly one of the main benefits of the careful empirical approach taken in this chapter and sets this work apart from other commentaries on the "Salafization" of Muslim communities.

Secondly, this chapter demonstrates that this approach to understanding and practicing Islam is not at all guaranteed. Indeed, I have pointed to the limits of Salafism in this chapter—arguing that claims about the "Salafization" of Muslim communities need to be more carefully investigated in order to avoid exaggerated claims about Salafism's unadulterated and automatic influence in Muslim communities. I demonstrate, for example, how some women's common sense seems largely untouched by Salafism, how some women may have been influenced by some Salafi ideas but not others, and how some women have evolved in their understanding of Islam through the years. The accounts of the women in this chapter are thus evidence that "Salafization" is far from a straightforward process, and that Muslims interact with, and relate to, Salafi ideas in a complex manner. This chapter likewise implores us to pay more attention to interactions between Salafism and Muslim women, who, as we have seen, very often shape the way other members of their family (and friends) relate to and understand Islam.

The accounts in this chapter also challenge straightforward accounts about the importance, and impact, of Saudi funding for the spread of Salafi ideas. We find, for example, that Saudi funding for FPM has in no way guaranteed mosque support for Saudi Arabia, or for Salafi ideas. If anything, FPM has been somewhat critical of the Saudi regime in recent years, and has also worked to counter Salafi influence by inviting a variety of speakers with different doctrinal approaches. On the other hand, WCM, which received donations from Gaddafi (who sought to counter the religious influence of Saudi Arabia), has had Salafi influence in various forms over the years.

Conclusion

Initially puzzled by the popularity of Salafi ideas such as those about the dangers of "blind following" and *bida'* (innovations), the need to follow "Qur'an and Sunna", and the importance of "evidence" and "authenticity" within non-Salafi spaces in London, I set off to sort through the different elements of British Muslim common sense, or the taken for granted heterogenous ideas held in common by British Muslims. I traced out the links between these different elements and larger sociohistorical realities—focusing on the elements of common sense that can be traced to the Salafi movement. This research project has thus aimed to understand, through in-depth interviews and participant observation within Salafi and non-Salafi spaces, how the Salafi movement has impacted the common sense of British Muslims in London between 1980-2020. In doing so, it has also shed light on the movement's processes of becoming—carefully delineating the distinct, but overlapping molecular phases, through which London's Salafi movement came to be, and more specifically came to rework the common sense of British Muslims. I summarize these phases below, while alluding to the main arguments of this thesis. I then highlight the empirical and theoretical contributions of this research, before discussing its implications for the literature. Finally, I discuss avenues for further research.

Molecular Phases & London's Salafi Movement

In this thesis, I argued that the 1980s can be seen as the beginning of substantial Salafi activity within London. This period witnessed concerted efforts by Saudi Arabia and other members of the transnational historical bloc, to introduce Salafism as an alternative hegemonic conception, within London's Muslim community. We thus saw the often-times contradictory influences of the Ahl-e-Hadith, the Saudi religious establishment, al-Albani's Jordanian students, MB texts, and even a few individuals connected to jihadi groups during this initial phase. I also shed light on movement's diverse social base, paying particular attention to the different factors that facilitated the diffusion of Salafism within London during the 1980s and 1990s. Yet, I also stressed that the processes through which Salafism gained traction and consent within London have not been automatic or mechanical, but that Salafism only became "a new culture, a new moral life, and a new

way of seeing reality" (Gramsci, 1975, p. 2192) thanks to the ideological work of Salafi *duʿāt*.

The next phase of Salafism was marked by the organization of British Salafis. Realising the importance of a local Salafi umbrella organization for the success of the movement, we saw young British Salafis try and get organized under the umbrella of JIMAS. These attempts to organize have not been without issue, however. I argued, for example, that British Salafis found themselves caught in local dilemmas about decision making and leadership that were later amplified by debates within the transnational Salafi bloc. I also argued that these organizational disputes have been even more prevalent within British quietist Salafi communities due to quietists' quest for purity and concerns about partisanship. These organizational challenges led to the rise of three different Salafi networks during the early 2000s: 1) the politically oriented network, 2) the ultra-loyalist network, and 3) the quietist yet not quite ultra-loyalist network.

These three overlapping, but also at times competing, networks became the main drivers of a Salafi war of position, or slow cultural struggle within and against the different apparatuses of civil society (e.g. mosques, universities, publishing houses, social media and the internet) in London. This war of position has also included "an intense labour of criticism" (Gramsci, 1977, p. 12), with British Salafis working to discredit other Islamic movements such as the Deobandis and Barelvis. Indeed, during the mid-1990s, we find that the Salafis were able to set the terms of the debate, gaining a position of moral and intellectual authority in London's Muslim community. Other Islamic movements, such as the Deobandis and the Barelvis, for example, found themselves drawing on the Qur'an and Sunna during debates with, and arguments against, the Salafis. We thus saw changes to the standards according to which Islam is validated and verified within London's Muslim community.

Despite these early successes for the movement, the next phase was one marked by several challenges. During the 2000s, the TI movement, which also had claims to traditional authority, emerged on the scene and worked, and somewhat succeeded, to challenge Salafis' moral and intellectual authority. We also began to see many British Muslims experience contradictions as they attempted to live their lives as good Salafi Muslims. The gap between what Salafism was meant to be like in theory and in practice, and my participants' lived realities was too large for my participants and resulted in

contradictory consciousness. Many British Salafis also began to contest particular Salafi discourses around *fiqh* and *ʿaqīda* for example. This was also the case with Salafi gender norms, which were contested by women (and in a few cases men), who found them at odds with their lived realities, and have come to rethink these norms as well as the larger position of women in Salafi communities. These experiences in Salafi communities have also led to the emergence of a critical consciousness—or an awareness of Salafism's link to Saudi Arabia and the underlying interests involved in its propagation of Salafism. For many British Muslims, this has meant that they have lost faith in Salafism's articulation as "True" Islam. Yet again, the story here has not been a simple case of British Muslims abandoning Salafism in its entirety, but has in some cases actually involved a process of sublation where some elements of Salafi common sense have been retained and confirmed, and others have been discarded.

These experiences, transformations, and developments within Salafi communities spurred on a new phase of Salafi Da'wa, where some Salafi leaders began to re-strategize following set-backs in the Salafi war of position. A new generation of Salafi leaders, or social media Salafis, has also emerged. Aware of the shortcomings of their predecessors, they have renewed the Salafi war of position, and continued to make headway within London's Muslim community. This thesis thus underscored the reform and renewal that has in some cases taken place within the movement, but at the same time stressed that there has been more continuity than change within the content of Salafi *da'wa*. We also saw how, with the exception of the SP network, UK Salafi networks have consciously, and unconsciously, gained independence from other members of the transnational historical bloc—thinking more about the differences between the realities of life in the UK (and the West more generally), and life in the Middle East.

Finally, we saw how elements of Salafism have become an "iron fact of 'common sense'" (Gramsci, 1975, p. 441), achieving a certain invisibility and operating unconsciously within London's Muslim community. This attention to the common sense of the larger community of Muslims over the years, and not just Salafis, thus helps to explain the success of the movement and distinguishes it from other Islamic movements who have not reworked the common sense of British Muslims in a similar manner. Yet, even in this phase of "invisibility", the limits of Salafism are clear, with many British Muslims in London still largely untouched by Salafism. Indeed, it remains to be seen just how long-lasting Salafism's impact on the common sense of British Muslims in London will be, as

"[h]owever timeless commonsense truths may appear, in reality they are inherently in flux" (Crehan, 2016, p. 187).

In the next section, I discuss the empirical and theoretical contributions of this thesis.

Empirical Contribution

The empirical account offered in this thesis certainly goes beyond existing works on British Salafism reviewed in the Introduction. It is the first in-depth ethnographic account of the Salafi movement, that not only examines all major British Salafi networks but also Salafism's interaction with the wider Muslim community, in London—one of the oldest and most prominent hubs of the Salafi movement in the UK and Europe more broadly. It contributes to our understanding of the movement's emergence, processes of becoming, organizational challenges, transnational dynamics, and interaction with other Islamic movements. It additionally explores the lived realities of Salafis—particularly the doubts and contradictions they experienced, and their transformation through the years. This account of the Salafi movement also departs from works on British Salafism (with the exception of Inge's work (2016)) by incorporating a gender angle—shining light on how Salafi gender norms have been adopted, adapted, lived, contested, and renegotiated within Salafi communities.

Though not the main focus of the thesis, this work also contributes to our understanding of how class has interacted with Salafism, a subject rarely discussed in literature on British Salafism (see Amin 2017, p. 303-4). In this work, I demonstrate how class has not interacted with Salafism in a predictable way. I argue that while Salafism clearly has the potential to mobilize individuals from a marginalized background (Chapters 2, 3, 7), its social base has certainly not been limited to people from this background. I also demonstrate in Chapter 6, for example, how class has actually worked to limit the impact of Salafi gender discourses with some women choosing not to conform to Salafi gender norms about work because of their socio-economic circumstances for example.

Theoretical Contribution

This thesis has proposed a Gramscian approach to the study of contemporary Salafism, one particularly suited for the study of localities where Saudi Arabia and other

transnational actors have played a role in the diffusion of Salafism. By taking into account Saudi Arabia's role in the diffusion of Salafism, this framework departs from works on Salafism within a particular locality that do not give enough attention to the power dynamics involved in the diffusion of Salafism.

This framework also adopts and adapts other Gramscian concepts to make sense of how Salafism has fared within local communities. It conceptualizes Salafism as an alternative hegemonic conception, or an alternative way of seeing reality, capable of becoming universal, within a particular locality. Thinking of Salafism in this way highlights the ideological work that has gone into passing Salafism off as the Truth—moving us away from mechanical accounts of "Salafization" present in some of the literature. This framework also sheds light on Salafi *da'wa* by bringing attention to the war of position, or "moral and intellectual battles" (Fontana, 2008, p. 96) that have been carried out by the transnational Salafi historical bloc within civil society. This framework thus highlights the importance of the cultural front for Salafism, an oft-neglected and poorly understood dimension of Salafi movements. It also facilitates our analysis of the material dimensions of the Salafi project, without falling into the traps of deterministic and/or reductionist approaches.

This framework has also given Gramsci's concept of common sense a central role in the analysis—deeming it crucial to our understanding of how Salafism has been diffused. Indeed, it is this attention to, interaction with, and impact on Muslim common sense that sets the movement apart from other alternative Islamic conceptions within the UK. It is also this attention to common sense that sets this framework apart from other Gramscian approaches to Islamic movements and allows us a more nuanced understanding of the movement and its impact beyond Salafi circles. Gramsci's concept of common sense here also "offers us a way of thinking about the texture of everyday life that encompasses its givenness —how it both constitutes our subjectivity and confronts us as an external and solid reality — but that also acknowledges its contradictions, fluidity, and flexibility" (Crehan, 2016, p. 58).

Indeed, this approach also asks us to reconsider what we mean by lived Salafism, demonstrating how it's not enough to think of lived Salafism as simply the difference between Salafi discourses and experiences. Discussions on lived Salafism should also explore the implications of the gap between Salafi discourses and our participants' lived

realities in order to have a better understanding of the complexities that the diffusion of Salafism has engendered in local communities. Indeed, this framework allows for a critical assessment of the movement that moves us beyond simplistic discussions on the movement's success.

An additional benefit of this approach, especially when compared with other approaches to Salafism, is that it does not rid Muslims who have "adopted" Salafism of their agency. Within this framework, Muslims still possess critical thought processes, good sense, and critical consciousness. They are not blinded by "false consciousness", do not automatically adopt Salafism as a result of globalization processes, nor are simply at the receiving end of cultural frames. They themselves modify Salafism, as they live it.

Finally, this framework departs from other approaches to Salafism that tend to examine a movement at a particular point in time and place, using SMT for example, and instead, as we have seen, allows researchers to trace Salafism through its "molecular phases". By adopting a historically grounded approach to Salafism, we thus have a better understanding of how the movement has evolved during the past four decades. We are also able to capture more subtle changes within London's Muslim community that are missed when speaking simply about resources, political opportunity structures, and frames. The benefits of this historical approach are especially apparent in my analysis of the Salafi war of position at two different points of time in this thesis (in Chapter 4 and Chapter 7). These comparisons across time illuminate the similarities and differences in the way that Salafism has operated within London's Muslim community since its emergence in the 1980s.

Implications for the Literature

Having discussed the empirical and theoretical contributions of my thesis for literature on British and global Salafism, in this section, I discuss the ways that my thesis contributes to other major bodies of literature on British & European Islam, gender & Islam, and hegemony, religion, and common sense.

Literature on British Islam & European Islam

This research contributes to the literature on British Islam and European Islam more generally by not only shedding light on the British Salafi movement, but also other major Islamic movements like the Deobandi movement, Barelvi movement, TI movement, and HT. Chapter 4, in particular, helps us understand how other Islamic movements have related to, interacted with, and been shaped by, the Salafi movement in London. In doing so, it also clarifies the theological stances, discourses, *da'wa* techniques, and social bases of these movements. The thesis thus also contributes to our understanding of the larger Muslim activism scene and how it has shifted through the years.

This work has also contributed to the literature on intergenerational dynamics and conflicts within Muslim communities in the UK and Europe. In one sense, it provides further evidence for the existence of differences in the way that different generations of migrants understand and practice Islam (Hinnells, 2007; Liberatore, 2017; Vertovec & Rogers, 1998). It demonstrates in Chapter 8, for example, how some young British Muslim women understand and practice Islam in a different manner to their parents who often still associate with Islamic movements linked to their home countries like the Barelvi movement. Yet, at the same time, this thesis challenges this narrative on intergenerational conflict by suggesting as Amin (2017) has, that the differences between generations are not always this pronounced. In particular, it demonstrates how even older women and first-generation migrants have had their common sense understanding of Islam reworked. Salafi common sense has thus not been confined to second or third-generation migrants but has become much more widespread.

This work also contributes to debates about the reasons behind religious change within Muslim communities in both Muslim-minority and Muslim-majority countries. This thesis argues that while there is no doubt that increased literacy rates, the availability of translated Qur'ans and Hadith collections, migratory processes, globalization, deterritorialization, the individualization of Islam, the objectification of religious knowledge, and the fragmentation of Islamic authority (e.g. Eickelman, 1992; Jacobson, 1998; Mandaville, 2001; Meer, 2010; Peters, 2006; Roy, 2004; Schiffauer, 1988) may have contributed to and facilitated the reworking of British Muslim common sense, the Salafi movement has also played a major role in bringing about some of these changes. Indeed, the careful ethnographic approach that I have used to explore the common sense

of British Muslims, has allowed me to trace these elements of common sense to Salafi dissemination channels.

Literature on Gender & Islam

This thesis has also contributed to the literature on gender & Islam, and gender-traditional religions more broadly. At the most basic level, it has provided insight into the lives of Salafi women who are often excluded from larger works on Salafism in a particular locality. This thesis does more than that, however, it also challenges existing works on Salafi women that tend to speak of Salafi women as compliant actors that practice agency through their adherence to Salafi norms (e.g. Mahmood, 2005, Inge, 2017, Nisa, 2012). Instead, the thesis argues that Salafi women relate to, and inhabit, Salafi norms in a complex manner. It finds, for example, that Salafi women have not found all Salafi norms authoritative from the start. It also argues that Salafi norms do not operate in a vacuum—but that other inherited norms and values can work to encourage, or limit, the adoption of some Salafi norms.

This work also demonstrates how some women's experiences in Salafi communities have led them to both consciously and unconsciously depart from particular gender norms. At the same time, however, this thesis challenges "resistance" approaches to gender, in which women can only be seen as partaking in acts of resistance when these acts of resistance are in opposition to Islamic norms and in favour of Western or liberal norms. Indeed, in this thesis, I have argued that following practical experiences within Salafi communities, women have, using their good sense, reconsidered what it means to be a good Muslim women—within the Islamic tradition, and even by drawing on some elements of Salafi common sense in the process.

Given that similar debates exist within the literature on gender-traditional religions such as Catholicism, Mormonism, and Judaism (see Burke, 2012). This thesis also has relevance for this broader literature and suggests that again women should not be simply seen through compliance and resistance frameworks. It also demonstrates the importance of a life history approach for our understanding of women's experiences within gender-traditional religious communities.

Literature on Hegemony, Religion, and Common Sense

This thesis contributes to Gramscian literature within the field of IR, and particularly to the small but emerging body of work (e.g. Hopf, 2013; Worth, 2011) that draws on Gramsci's work on religion and common sense in the analysis of international politics. It is an example of how Gramsci's rich writings on religion, and the role of religion as a hegemonic agent within global civil society, can be useful in discussions on religion in the post-9/11 world. It also demonstrates the importance of mass common sense, and non-material ideas to hegemonic processes within the international sphere. By investigating Saudi Arabia's Salafi project, and its quest for hegemony, or moral and intellectual leadership, within global Muslim civil society, this thesis illustrates the complexities involved in transnational hegemonic projects. It describes the state of contradictory consciousness that has been a reality within Salafi circles and contributes to our understanding of the conditions under which good sense and critical consciousness can emerge.

This thesis furthermore contributes to literature that employs a Gramscian framework in the analysis of Islamic movements (e.g. Bayat, 2007; Butko, 2004; Chalcraft, 2016; Kandil, 2011; Merone, 2020; Ramaioli, 2017). It complements Ramaioli's work on Salafism in Jordan, for example, by providing an example of how the concept of common sense not only helps us make sense of Salafi mobilization, but also allows for a more nuanced understanding of the impact of Salafism in Muslim communities. It similarly contributes to Gramscian literature on religion more generally (Fulton, 1987; Billings, 1990; Grelle, 2016), showcasing religion and morality's potential to "serve as vehicles for the criticism and transformation of prevailing patterns of influence and power" (Grelle, 2016, p. 101).

This thesis also contributes to our understanding of processes of cultural and political change more broadly. We have seen how cultural transformations can be, as Gramsci has argued, "slow and gradual" (1985, p. 419). Wars of position can also be lengthy, face setbacks, and require actors to re-strategize. This work thus adds to a growing body of work that employs the concept of war of position to make sense of molecular transformations within the cultural and political front (e.g. Chalcraft, 2020; Kandil, 2011; Meek, 2016; Rogaly, 2020; Tong & Lei, 2013).

Avenues for Further Research

The findings of this research certainly open up avenues for further research on British Salafism. Given that this has been an in-depth exploration of how Salafism has impacted the common sense of Muslims in London, this work raises a number of questions about generalizability. Has the common sense of British Muslims in other areas in the UK been impacted by the Salafi movement in the same way? Or has this effect been unique to London where certain characteristics of London's Muslim community, such as its central position within transnational Salafi networks, have facilitated the reworking of common sense? Have Salafi communities faced similar challenges and experienced contradictions akin to those in London's Muslim community?

Because this work has focused on the internal dynamics of the Salafi movement as well as its links with the wider Muslim community, questions around how the movement has been impacted by larger socio-political events have perhaps been somewhat side-lined in this discussion. Though the thesis has shed some light on the wider context that Salafism has operated within, explaining for example how UK government policy towards Salafis, has varied over the years, further research could focus more on these dynamics. Similarly, although this work has not been solely based on ethnography with women, there is no doubt that men, and particularly young men, have not featured as heavily within this work. Further ethnographic research amongst young British Muslim males would thus shed more light on the intersections between Salafism and this particular group. A gender angle, addressing Salafi masculinity would likewise complement the findings of this work.

This work also opens up avenues for further research within global Salafism. Chapters 5 and 6 raise interesting questions about the reasons behind the contradictions that my participants experienced when applying Salafism. One wonders, for example, if these contradictions are more related to the realities of life in the UK, or are inherent to Salafism? In Chapter 6, for example, we saw how some of my participants have faced challenges applying Salafi parenting discourses because they were concerned about how their children would manage in post-9/11 London. Yet, at the same time, we saw how even Abdullah, one of my participants whose children attend school in Saudi Arabia, has also faced difficulties with his children's upbringing. Indeed, so many of the

contradictions that Salafi women and men have experienced while applying Salafi principles in London could possibly take place in any society today. There is thus much to be gained from explorations of the lived realities, challenges, and contradictions that are experienced in other Salafi communities around the world.

Finally, I hope my research encourages other scholars to broaden the purview of their studies beyond self-identifying Salafi communities. Though, as we saw in Chapter 8, several researchers have previously alluded to processes of Salafization that have taken place in Muslim localities around the world, these works have rarely been based on a nuanced empirical exploration of Muslim communities. Indeed, as I argued in the beginning of this thesis, it is Salafism's impact on the common sense of British Muslims, in both Salafi and non-Salafi circles, that has been the most profound impact of the Salafi movement in the last four decades. The literature could thus undoubtedly benefit from greater attention to the intersections between Salafism and common sense in other Muslim localities.

References

Abbas, T. & Siddique, A. (2012). Perceptions of the processes of radicalisation and de-radicalisation among British South Asian Muslims in a post-industrial city. *Social Identities, 18.* 119-134. 10.1080/13504630.2011.629519.

Abdul-Hamid, A. (2016). The Extensive Salafization of Malaysian Islam. *Trends in Southeast Asia, no. 9*. https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/TRS9_16.pdf

Abdul-Wahid, A. (2013). May 1996: OASIS & Salafi Publications – Spreading Salafi Da'wah. *Abu Khadeejah.com.* https://www.abukhadeejah.com/may-1996-oasis-salafi-publications-a-new-approach-to-salafi-dawah/

Abdul-Wahid, A. (2014, February 11). The Permissibility of Asking the People to Aid in the Building of a Masjid or Other Than That for a Genuine Need. *Abu Khadeejah.com.* https://www.abukhadeejah.com/the-permissibility-of-asking-the-people-to-aid-in-the-building-of-a-masjid-or-other-than-that-for-a-genuine-need/

Abdul-Wahid, A. (2016). The extent of the evil of Jam'iyyah Ihyā at-Turāth of Kuwait – by Al-Allāmah Shaikh Muqbil Ibn Hādī al-Wādi'ī (rahimahullāh). *Abu Khadeejah.com. https://www.abukhadeejah.com/the-extent-of-the-evil-of-jamiyyah-ihya-at-turath-of-kuwait-by-al-allamah-shaikh-muqbil-ibn-hadi-al-wadii-rahimahullah/*

Abdul-Wahid, A. (2017). History: Ali Hasan Al-Halabī and Salafi Publications. The cause behind the break 15 years ago and the evidence-based refutations of the Scholars. *Abu Khadeejah.com.* https://www.abukhadeejah.com/history-ali-hasan-al-halabi-and-salafi-publications-the-cause-behind-the-break-15-years-ago-the-evidence-based-refutations-of-the-scholars/

Abdul-Wahad, A. (2018a). Arranged Marriages, Love Marriages and

    Forced Marriages. *Abu Khadeejah.com*. Available at:

    https://www.abukhadeejah.com/arranged-marriages-love-marriages-and-forced-

    marriages-islam/. [Accessed 17 Feb. 2020].

Abdul-Wahid, A. (2018b, Sept 24). Muhammad Ibn Hādi's Allegations and

    the Response of the Major Scholars in Light of the Manhaj of the Salaf. *Abu*

    Khadeejah.com. https://www.abukhadeejah.com/muhammad-hadi-allegations-

    and-response-of-the-major-scholars/

Abu Aminah. (2015). Are you a Victim of the Label 'Non-Violent Extremist'?

    SalafiManhaj.com.

    http://download.salafimanhaj.com/pdf/SalafiManhaj_Victim1.pdf

Abu Khadeejah SP. (2013, June 15). Habib Ali Jifri is an extreme Sufi, caller to the

    worship of graves - & the 'sheikh' of Hamza Yusuf, the innovator, friend of

    Yasir Qadhi!

    https://twitter.com/abukhadeejahsp/status/345987852066230273?lang=en

Abu Taymiyyah. (2016a, Aug 7). The Salaf in Manners - You think you're Salafi &

    your manners are disgusting? - Ustadh Abu Taymiyyah. [video]. YouTube.

    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DyuZ8Yi7B_Y

Abu Taymiyyah. (2016b, Oct 19). Emotional Last Khutbah|| Imagine You Died

    Jumping to the Tune of Drake? - Ustadh Abu Taymiyyah. [video]. Youtube.

    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvW6jsMZrzg

Abu Taymiyyah. (2018, May 30). Sincerity & How the Salaf Hid Their Good Deeds.

    [video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzJ9dbP7Yh4

Abu Taymiyyah. (2019, Aug 10). Emotional Khutbah in Arafat - Ustadh Abu

    Taymiyyah. [video]. YouTube.

    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmeepJoTRT4

Adraoui, M. (2009). Purist Salafism in France. In R. Meijer. (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Adraoui, M. (2020). *Salafism Goes Global: From the Gulf to the French Banlieues*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

Ahmad, S. (2008). Identity matters, culture wars: An account of Al-Huda (re)defining identity and reconfiguring culture in Pakistan. *Culture and Religion, 9*:1, 63-80, DOI: 10.1080/14755610801963236

Ahmed, S. (2015). *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic.* United Kingdom: Princeton University Press.

Al-Abbaad, A. (2011). *Attributes Of The Righteous Wife*. Authentic Statements.

Al-Anani, K. (2017). Unpacking the Sacred Canopy. In F. Cavatorta & F. Merone. (eds.), *Salafism After the Arab Awakening: Contending with People's Power*. London: Hurst. *People's Power*. London: Hurst.

Al-Anani, K. & Malik, M. (2013). Pious Way to Politics: The Rise of Political Salafism in Post-Mubarak Egypt. *Digest of Middle East Studies (Milwaukee, Wis.), 22*(1), 57-73.

Al-Ashanti, A. (2019). A Critical Review of the Book: Wahhabism and the Rise of the New Salafists: Theology, Power, and Sunni Islam. *SalafiManhaj.com.* http://download.salafimanhaj.com/pdf/SalafiManhaj_Nahouza.pdf

Al-Ashanti, A. and Sloan, A. (2014). Responsible Polygamy vs Irresponsible Polygamy. *Salafi Manhaj*. Available at: http://salafimanhaj.com/responsible-polygamy-vs-irresponsible-polygamy. [Accessed 17 Feb. 2020].

Al-Azami. (2018, Dec 17). The conflicting legacies of Hamza Yusuf. *TRT World* https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/the-conflicting-legacies-of-hamza-yusuf-22558

Al-Haddad, H. (2006). Advice To British Muslims Regarding The Coming Elections.

Islam21C.com. https://www.islam21c.com/politics/216-advice-to-british-muslims-regarding-the-coming-elections/

Al-Haddad, H. (2014). Towards a Strategy for Muslims in Europe. *Islam21C.com* https://www.islam21c.com/politics/towards-a-strategy-for-muslims-in-europe/

Al-Rasheed, M. (2002). *A history of Saudi Arabia*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Al-Rasheed, M. (2004). Saudi Religious Transnationalism in London. In M. Al-Rasheed. (ed.), *Transnational Connections and the Arab Gulf.* London: Routledge.

Al-Rasheed, M. (2016). Saudi Arabia and the quest for regional hegemony. *Hurst Publishers*.

https://www.hurstpublishers.com/saudi-arabia-quest-regional-hegemony/

Al-Rasheed, M. (Ed.). (2008). *Kingdom Without Borders: Saudi Political, Religious and Media Frontiers*. United Kingdom: Columbia University Press.

Amaechi, K. E. (2017). From Non-violent Protests to Suicide Bombing. *Journal for the Study of Religion, 30*(1), 52-77.

Amghar, S. (2011). *Le salafisme d'aujourd'hui. Movements sectaires en Occident.* (Paris: Michalon).

Amin, H. (2017). *Salafism and Islamism in Britain, 1965-2015*., PhD Diss. University of Cambridge.

Amin, H., & Majothi A. (2021). The Ahl-e-Hadith: From British India to Britain. *Modern Asian Studies,* 1-31. doi:10.1017/S0026749X21000093

Arabic Muslim [translated from Arabic]. (2013, Oct 3). Sheikh Ali al-Halabi Clarifies the Position of Rabi ʿ bin Hadi al-Madkhali [translated from Arabic]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dp4VGEFg-WY.

Archer, T. (2009). Welcome to the "Umma": The British State and its Muslim Citizens

Since 9/11. *Cooperation and Conflict, 44*(3), 329-347. Retrieved June 20, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/45084578

As-Salafiyyah, U. (2009). *Supporting The Rights Of The Believing Women.* Tarbiyyah Publications.

Azami, R. A. (2000). *Ahl-e-Hadith in Britain: History, Establishment, Organisation, Activities and Objectives.* London: Taha Publishers.

Babar, A. (2008). New 'social imaginaries': The Al-Huda phenomenon. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies, 31*:2, 348-363.

Baker, A. (2011). *Extremists in our midst: Confronting terror*. Basingstoke; New York. Palgrave Macmillan.

Baker, S. & Edwards, R. (2012) *How many qualitative interviews is enough? Expert voices and early career reflections on sampling and cases in qualitative research* (National Centre for Research Methods Reviews). Southampton, GB. National Centre for Research Methods.

Bangstad, S. (2011). Saba Mahmood and Anthropological Feminism After Virtue. *Theory, Culture & Society*, *28*(3), 28-54. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276410396914

Barclay, J. (2011). *Strategy to Reach, Empower, and Educate Teenagers (STREET): A Case Study in Government-Community Partnership and Direct Intervention to Counter Violent Extremism.* Global Center on Cooperative Security. https://www.globalcenter.org/publications/strategy-to-reach-empower-and-educate-teenagers-street-a-case-study-in-government-community-partnership-and-direct-intervention-to-counter-violent-extremism/

Bates, T. (1975). Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony. *Journal of the History of Ideas, 36*(2), 351-366. doi:10.2307/2708933.

Bayat, A. (1997). Un-Civil Society: The Politics of the 'Informal People'. *Third World*

Quarterly, 18(1), 53-72. Retrieved January 28, 2021, from

http://www.jstor.org/stable/3992901

Bayat, A. (2007). *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*. (Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures). Stanford University Press.

Bayat, A. (2013). *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East, Second Edition*. United States: Stanford University Press.

Baynes, C. (2018, Nov 21). 'Hate preacher' banned from UK still broadcasting to millions in Britain through 'personal TV station'. *The Independent.*

https://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/hate-preacher-banned-uk-zakir-naik-ofcom-islamic-extremism-peace-tv-a8644931.html

Baz, M. (2017). *Online Islamic Da'wah narratives in the UK: the case of iERA.* PhD Diss. University of Birmingham.

Beckford, J. (1978). Accounting for Conversion. *The British Journal of Sociology, 29*(2), 249-262.

Bhatt, C. (2014). The Virtues of Violence: The Salafi-Jihadi Political Universe. *Theory, Culture & Society*, *31*(1), 25–48. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276413500079

Billings, D. (1990). Religion as Opposition: A Gramscian Analysis. *American Journal of Sociology, 96*(1), 1-31. Retrieved June 22, 2021, from

http://www.jstor.org/stable/2780691

Birt, J. (2004). Wahhabism in the United Kingdom: Manifestations and Reactions. In M. Al-Rasheed, *Transnational Connections and the Arab Gulf.* London: Routledge, 168–184.

Birt, Y. (2017, Feb 14). Blowin' in the Wind: Trumpism and Traditional Islam in

America. *Medium*. Available online: https://yahyabirt.medium.com/https-medium-com-yahyabirt-blowin-in-the-wind-trumpism-and-traditional-islam-in-america-40ba056486d8 (accessed on 16 April 2020).

Blommaert, J. & Collins, J. & Heller, M. & Rampton, B. & Slembrouck, S. & Verschueren, J. (2003). Ethnographies of hegemony: Introduction. *Pragmatics*; *Vol 13*, No 1.

Boelhower, W. (1981). Antonio Gramsci's Sociology of Literature. *Contemporary Literature, 22*(4), 574-599. doi:10.2307/1207884

Bonnefoy, L. (2011). *Salafism in Yemen : Transnationalism and religious identity*. London: Hurst.

Bonnefoy, L., & Kuschnitizki, J. (2015). "Salafis and the 'Arab Spring' in Yemen: Progressive Politicization and Resilient Quietism." *Arabian Humanities*, no. 4. https://doi.org/10.4000/cy.2811.

Bowen, I. (2014). *Medina in Birmingham, Najaf in Brent : Inside British Islam*. London: Hurst.

Brown, J. (2007). *The Canonization of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunnī Ḥadīth Canon*. Netherlands: Brill.

Brown, J. (2011). Salafis and Sufis in Egypt. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (The Carnegie Papers)*. Available online: **http://www.carnegieendowment.org/2011/12/20/salafis-and-sufis-in-egypt/8kfk** (accessed on 28 June 2015).

Buci-Glucksmann, C. (1980). *Gramsci and the state*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Buechler, S. (1993). Beyond Resource Mobilization? Emerging Trends in Social Movement Theory. *The Sociological Quarterly, 34*(2), 217-235. Retrieved December 2, 2020, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/4120699

Burack, C. (2018, April 4). Number of Salafists in Germany has doubled in past five

years. *Deutsche Welle.* https://www.dw.com/en/number-of-salafists-in-germany-has- doubled-in-past-five-years/a-43243111

Burke, K. (2012). Women's Agency in Gender-Traditional Religions: A Review of Four Approaches. *Sociology Compass, 6*(2), 122-133.

Butko, T. (2004). Revelation or revolution: a Gramscian approach to the rise of political Islam. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, 31*:1, 141-162, DOI: 10.1080/1353019042000203430

Catney, G. (2013). *Has Neighbourhood Ethnic Segregation Decreased?* University of Manchester and Joseph Rowntree Foundation: Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity. Available

at: http://www.ethnicity.ac.uk/census/885_CCSR_Neighbourhood_Bulletin_v7.pdf.

Cesari, J. (2013). *Why the West Fears Islam: An Exploration of Muslims in Liberal Democracies*. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.

Chaibm, O & Brems, E. (2013). Doing Minority Justice Through Procedural Fairness: Face Veil Bans in Europe. *Journal of Muslims in Europe 2*(1).

Chalcraft, J. (2016). *Popular Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511843952

Chalcraft, J. (2020). Egypt's 2011 uprising, subaltern cultural politics, and revolutionary weakness. *Social Movement Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/14742837.2020.1837101.

Chalcraft, J. (2021). *Middle East popular politics in Gramscian perspective.* Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East. ISSN 1089-201X

Chandler, M. & De Peyer, R. (2016, Nov 11). Muslim preacher 'who advocated dying

while fighting jihad' given platform at London university. *Evening Standard.*

https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/muslim-preacher-who-advocated-dying-while-fighting-jihad-given-platform-at-london-university-a3400911.html

Charity Commission. (2019). Salafi Bookstore and Islamic Centre.

https://register-of- charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-details/?regid=1083080&subid=0

Chino, T. (2019). Religion, Common Sense, and Good Sense in Gramsci. In

Bernstein, A., Jackson, R., Fusaro, L., (ed.), *Revisiting Gramsci's Notebooks*.

Netherlands: Brill.

Chino, T. (2020). Gramsci's critique of Croce on the Catholic Church. *History of*

European Ideas, 46:2, 175-189, DOI: 10.1080/01916599.2019.1653352

Commins, D. (2005). *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia.* London: Bloomsbury

Publishing.

Commission for Countering Extremism comment on Times story. (2018, Oct 8).

Commission for Countering Extremism.

https://extremismcommission.blog.gov.uk/2018/10/08/commission-for-countering-extremism-comment-on-times-story/

Coulson, N. J. (1994). *A history of Islamic law*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Cox, R. W. (1981). Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International

Relations Theory. *Millennium*, *10*(2), 126-155.

https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298810100020501

Cox, R. W. (1983). Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations : An Essay in

Method. *Millennium*, *12*(2), 162–

175. https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298830120020701

Cox, R.W. (1987). *Production, Power and World Order: Social Forces in the Making*

of History. New York: Columbia University Press.

Crehan, K. (2016). *Gramsci's common sense : Inequality and its narratives*. Durham :
Duke University Press.

Crehan, K. A. F. (2002*). Gramsci, culture, and anthropology*. Berkeley: University of
California Press.

DaarusSunnah. (2013, Oct. 13). Is a Woman Allowed to Work if She Isnt in Need of
Money – Shaykh Abdul Azeez Ibn Baaz. [video]. YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzTF7cRC6L8

Dallal, A. (1993). The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought, 1750-
1850. *Journal of the American Oriental Society, 113*(3), 341-359.
doi:10.2307/605385

Danka, M. (2008). In Salah with Congregation, It is Sunnah to Straighten the Rows by
Joining Shoulder to Shoulder and Not Feet to Feet. *Croydon Mosque*. Retrieved
from:
http://www.croydonmosque.com/pdf/In_Salah_with_Congregation_It_is_Sunna
h_to_Straighten_the_Rows_by_Joining_Shoulder_to_Shoulder_and_Not_Feet_t
o_Feet.pdf

Dawood, I. (2020). Who is a 'Salafi'?: Salafism and the Politics of Labelling in the UK.
Journal of Muslims in Europe, 9(2), 240-261.

De Feo, A. (2018). Lifting the veil - why two French women gave up wearing a niqab.
The New European. https://www.theneweuropean.co.uk/top-stories/french-
woman-on-giving-up-niqab-veil-1-5416812

De Koning, M. (2009). Changing Worldviews and Friendships: An Exploration of the
Life Stories of Two Female Salafis in the Netherlands. In R. Meijer (ed.),
Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement. New York, NY: Columbia
University Press.

De Koning, M. (2010). Radicalization Series IV – Salafism as a Utopian Movement.

CLOSER. An anthropology of Muslims in Europe – A modest attempt by Martijn. https://religionresearch.org/closer/

De Koning, M. (2018). "I'm a weak servant": The question of sincerity and the cultivation of weakness in the lives of Dutch Salafi Muslims. In Beekers, D., & Kloos, D. (Eds.). *Straying from the Straight Path: How Senses of Failure Invigorate Lived Religion.* New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, pp. 37-53. doi:10.2307/j.ctvw04jdt.

De Smet, B. (2014). Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Egypt. *Science & Society, 78*(1), 11-40. Retrieved June 22, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/24583605

Does Saudi Arabia Preach Intolerance and Hatred in the UK and the US? An Independent Study into the Agenda of the Neo-con and Sufi Partnership. (2007). *Salafi Manhaj.com.* http://download.salafimanhaj.com/pdf/SalafiManhaj_Saudi.pdf

Dorsey, J. (2018). Pakistan's Lurch Towards Ultra-Conservativism Abetted by Saudi-Inspired Pyramid Scheme. *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, 12*:1, 66-88, DOI: 10.1080/25765949.2018.1439618

Downey, G. (1986). Risk in Culture: The American Conflict over Nuclear Power. *Cultural Anthropology, 1*(4), 388-412. Retrieved June 20, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/656378

Dr Zakir Naik. (2014, June 28). Common Errors in Ramadhaan a Cultural Viewpoint by Dr Zakir Naik. [video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SlFb9KgWns8

Dr Zakir Naik. (2020, Dec 3). Criteria that make a Hadeeth Saheeh - Authentic – Dr Zakir Naik. [video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijvvK_f7vL0

Dr. Bilal Philips. (2015, April 12). Imam Abu Hanifa was not Hanafi. [Facebook post]. https://www.facebook.com/DrBilalPhilips/photos/a.416616544088.176678.2285 28829088/10153197871629089/?type=3

Eickelman, D. (2009). Mass Higher Education and the Religious Imagination in

  Contemporary Arab Societies. *American Ethnologist, 19*. 643 - 655.

  10.1525/ae.1992.19.4.02a00010.

El Alaoui, H. (2011). The Split in Arab Culture. *Journal of Democracy,* (1), 5-16.

El Obeid, A. (2020). Women Wearing Niqab in Sudan: a Growing Phenomenon.

  Égypte/Monde arabe, 1(1), 57-68.

Erin, Ş. (2016). Diffusion of Islam in the United States: Comparative Personal

  Conversion Social Networks. *International Review of Social Research*. 6(4).

Euben, R. (1999). *Enemy in the mirror: Islamic fundamentalism and the limits of*

  modern rationalism : A work of comparative political theory. Princeton, N.J.:

  Princeton University Press.

Fadil, N. (2015). Recalling the 'Islam of the parents' liberal and secular Muslims

  redefining the contours of religious authenticity. *Identities,*

  DOI:10.1080/1070289X.2015.1091318

Farquhar, M. (2017). *Circuits of faith : Migration, education, and the Wahhabi mission*.

  Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Farquhar, M. (2019). Salafism After the Arab Awakening: Contending with People's

  Power Edited by Francesco Cavatorta and Fabio Merone. *Journal of Islamic*

  Studies (Oxford, England), 30(1), 126-129.

Femia, J. (1981). Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the

  Revolutionary Process. New York: Oxford University Press.

Fezekir. (2014, Dec 29). Why One Shouldn't Celebrate Mawlid un Nabi Prophet's

  Birthday - Mufti Menk. [video]. YouTube.

  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZDDciNnbzs

Filippini, M. (2016). *Using Gramsci: A New Approach*. London: Pluto Press. Retrieved June

  20, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1h64kxd

Filippini, M. (2021). The Forms of a Travelling Theory: A New Approach to Gramsci's Texts. *Middle East Critique, 30*:1, 9-24, DxOI: 10.1080/19436149.2021.1876398

Fontana, B. (2008). Hegemony and Power in Gramsci. In K. Smith & R. Howson (ed.), *Hegemony: Studies in Consensus and Coercion.* United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis.

Fouad, H. (2020). Unveiling the Innovators—A Glimpse on Sufi-Salafi Polemics. *Religions*, 11(3), 144. doi:10.3390/rel11030144

Free Mixing In Schools – Shaykh Ibn Baz. (2010). *Abdurrahman.org*. https://abdurrahman.org/2010/09/10/free-mixing-in-schools/

Fulton, J. (1987). Religion and Politics in Gramsci: An Introduction. *Sociology of Religion. 48*, Issue 3.

Gall, C. (2017). 'I Could Not Forget What Happened to Me That Night With Him.' *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/03/world/europe/henda-ayari-tariq-ramadan-oxford-muslim-scholar.html

Gambetta, D., & Hertog, S. (2016). *Engineers of Jihad : The curious connection between violent extremism and education*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gauvain, R. (2013). *Salafi Ritual Purity: In the Presence of God*. United Kingdom: Routledge.

Gayle, D. (2019, March 8th). UK's Prevent guidance to universities unlawful, court rules. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/mar/08/uks-prevent-guidance-to-universities-unlawful-court-rules

Geaves, R. (1996). Cult, charisma, community: the arrival of sufi *pirs* and their impact on Muslims in Britain. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, 16*:2, 169-192, DOI: 10.1080/13602009608716337

Geaves, R. (1999). Britain. In D. Westerlund & I. Svanberg (Eds.), *Islam Outside the*

Arab World. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press.

Geaves, R. (2006). "Learning the Lessons from the Neo-Revivalist and Wahabi Movements: The Counterattack of the New Sufi Movements in UK." In J. Malik and J. Hinnells (eds). *Sufism in the West*. London: Routledge, pp. 142 –159.

Gellner, E. (2012). *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*. United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis.

Ghaziani, A., & Fine, G. (2008). Infighting and Ideology: How Conflict Informs the Local Culture of the Chicago Dyke March. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society, 20*(1/4), 51-67. Retrieved June 20, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/40206147

Gillan, K. (2008). Understanding Meaning in Movements: A Hermeneutic Approach to Frames and Ideologies. *Social Movement Studies, 7:*3.

Gillan, K. (2018). Temporality in social movement theory: Vectors and events in the neoliberal timescape. *Social Movement Studies, 19*(5-6), 1-21.

Gilliat-Ray, S. (2010). *Muslims in Britain.* United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Giroux, H. A. (1983). Ideology and agency in the process of schooling. *Journal of Education (Boston, Mass.), 165*(1), 12-34.

Giroux, H. A. (2001). *Theory and Resistance in Education: Towards a Pedagogy for the Opposition.* United Kingdom: Bergin & Garvey.

Gramsci, A. (1957). *The Open Marxism of Antonio Gramsci.* Translated and Annotated by Carl Marzani. New York: Cameron Associates.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Translated and edited by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. New York: International Publishers.

Gramsci, A. (1975). Quaderni del carcere, 4 vols, critical edition. Gerratana, V. (ed.). (Turin: Einaudi).

Gramsci, A. (1985). *Selections from Cultural Writings.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Gramsci, A. (1992). *Prison Notebooks.* translated by Joseph A. Buttigieg, Vol. 1, New York: Columbia University Press.

Gramsci, A. (2000). *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935.* Forgacs, D. (ed.). United Kingdom: NYU Press.

Gramsci, A. (2011). *Prison Notebooks*. Translated by Joseph A. Buttigieg. Vol. 3. New York: Gramsci, A. (2011b). Prison Notebooks. Translated by Joseph A. Buttigieg. Vol. 2. New York: Columbia University Press.

Greater London Authority (GLA). (2017). *The London Knife Crime Strategy.* London: GLA.

Green, M.E. & Ives, P. (2009). "Subalternity and Language: Overcoming the Fragmentation of Common Sense." *Historical Materialism 17*: 3–30.

Grelle, B. (2016). *Antonio Gramsci and the Question of Religion: Ideology, Ethics, and Hegemony* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315640884

Grewal, Z. (2013). *Islam is a foreign country : American Muslims and the global crisis of authority.* New York : New York University Press.

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How Many Interviews Are Enough?: An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903

Hafez, S. (2011). *An Islam of Her Own: Reconsidering Religion and Secularism in Women's Islamic Movements*. New York; London: NYU Press. Retrieved June 21, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qfn3b

Hall, S. (1988). *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*. United States: Verso Books.

Hall, S. & O'Shea, A. (2013). Common-sense neoliberalism: The battle over common

sense is a central part of our political life. *Soundings (London, England),* (55), 8.

Hamid, S. (2008). The Development of British Salafism. *ISIM Review 21* (Spring): 10–11.

Hamid, S. (2016). *Sufis, Salafis and Islamists: The Contested Ground of British Islamic Activism.* London: I.B. Tauris.

Hamid, S. (2017, Dec 26). Sufis, Salafis and Islamists: The Shaping of British Muslim Religious Identities. *The Maydan.* https://themaydan.com/2017/12/sufis-salafis-islamists-shaping-british-muslim-religious-identities/

Hasan, S. (2002). *The Efforts of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in Supporting Mosques and Islamic Institutions in the United Kingdom.* Islamic University of Medina. Department of Scientific Research.

Hasan, U. (2017, Nov 10). Reflections from Kunar 1990 and Helmand 2010—The tragedy of Afghanistan's Wars. *Unity.wordpress.com*. https://unity1.wordpress.com/2017/11/10/reflections-from-kunar-1990-and-helmand-2010-the-tragedy-of-afghanistans-wars/

Haykel, B. (2003). *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad Al-Shawkani.* Cambridge University Press.

Haykel, B. (2009). 'On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action', in R. Meijer. (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*. London, UK: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd., pp. 33-57.

Haykel, B. (2020). Wahhabism and the Rise of the New Salafists. Theology, Power and Sunni Islam, written by Nahouza, Namira, 2018, *Die Welt des Islams, 60*(4), 506-509.

Heffelfinger, C. (2011). *Radical Islam in America: Salafism's Journey from Arabia to the West.* United States: Potomac Books.

Hegel, G. W. F. (2010). *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: The Science of Logic*. United

Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Hegghammer, T. (2010). The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the

Globalization of Jihad. *International Security, 35*(3), 53-94.

Heneghan, T. (2012). Special Report: Gaddafi's secret missionaries. *Reuters*.

https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-missionary-idUSBRE82S07T20120329

Hennessey, R. (l993). *Materialist feminism and the politics of discourse*. New York:

Routledge.

Hinnels, J. (2007). *Religious Reconstruction in the South Asian Diasporas: From One

Generation to Another.* United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.

Home Office (2001). *Prevent Strategy*. London: HM Government.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/atta

chment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

Hopf, T. (2013). Common-sense Constructivism and Hegemony in World Politics.

International Organization, 67(2), 317-354. Retrieved June 19, 2021, from

http://www.jstor.org/stable/43283304

Horst, F. (2013). *Towards a Dynamic Analysis of Salafi Activism: Conclusions from a

Dissection of Salafism in Germany.* International Institute for Counter-Terrorism

(ICT).

How to apply. (n.d.) *Zaytuna College.* https://zaytuna.edu/admissions/how-to-apply

Inge, A. (2016). *The making of a Salafi Muslim woman: Paths to conversion*. New

York: Oxford University Press.

Islam on Demand. (2011, July 30). *Bid'ah - Hamza Yusuf*. [video]. YouTube.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UaJOc9sWOM4

Islam on Demand. (2012, April 21). *The Salafi Fallacy - Abdal Hakim Murad.* [video].

YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MRXs5fqlXQ

Islam Rewards. (2016, February 26). *Salafi Vs Sufi Wars #UNITY - Shaykh Hamza*

Yusuf. [video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JpA-McfDZg

Islam21c. (2018, November 12). Is Voting Really Haram? *Sh Haitham al-Haddad Face to Face.* [video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3E_GwLZpww

Ismail, S (2008). Producing 'Reformed Islam': A Saudi Contribution to the US Projects of Global Governance. In M. Al-Rasheed. (ed.), Kingdom Without Borders. London; New York: Hurst and Columbia University Press, pp. 113-133.

Jackson, P. & Russell, P. (2010). Life history interviewing. In D. DeLyser. S., Herbert. S. Aitken., M. Crang., & L. McDowell. (eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative geography.* SAGE Publications, Inc.

Jacobson, J. (1998). *Islam in transition : religion and identity among British Pakistani youth.* United Kingdom: Routledge.

Jessee E. (2018). The Life History Interview. In: Liamputtong P. (eds) *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences.* Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-2779-6_80-1

Johnson, B. (2018). Denmark has got it wrong. Yes, the burka is oppressive and ridiculous – But that's still no reason to ban it. *Telegraph*. Retrieved from https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/08/05/denmark-has-got-wrong-yes-burka-oppressive-ridiculous-still/

Kabbani, M. (1996). *Islamic Beliefs & Doctrine According to Ahl Al-Sunna. A Repudiation of 'Salafi' Innovations*. Mountain View: As-Sunna Foundation of America.

Kandil, H. (2011). Islamizing Egypt? Testing the limits of Gramscian counterhegemonic strategies. *Theory and Society, 40*(1), 37-62. Retrieved November 20, 2020, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/41475681

Kapiszewski, D., MacLean, L., & Read, B. (2015). Site-intensive methods: Ethnography

and participant observation. In *Field Research in Political Science: Practices and Principles* (Strategies for Social Inquiry, pp. 234-265). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511794551.008

Karagiannis, E. & McCauley, C. (2006). Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami: Evaluating the Threat Posed by a Radical Islamic Group That Remains Nonviolent. *Terrorism and Political Violence, 18*:2, 315-334, DOI: 10.1080/09546550600570168

Katz, H. (2006). Gramsci, Hegemony, and Global Civil Society Networks. *Voluntas*, 17: 333-348.

Kenway, J. (2001). Remembering and Regenerating Gramsci In K.Weiler. (ed.), *Feminist Engagements: Reading, Resisting, and Revisioning Male Theorists in Education and Cultural Studies.* London: Routledge.

Kepel, G. (2002). *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam.* United Kingdom: Harvard University Press.

Kinnunen, T. (2019). Successful Jihadi Propaganda: demographics and preferences behind the appeal of Salafi-Jihadist propaganda in Jordan. MA Diss. University of Helsinki.

Knysh, A. (2007). Contextualizing the Salafi – Sufi conflict (from the Northern Caucasus to Hadramawt). *Middle Eastern Studies, 43:*4, 503-530, DOI: 10.1080/00263200701348847

Kolman, I. (2017). Gender activism in Salafism: a case study of Salafi women in Tunis. In F. Cavatorta. & F. Merone. (eds.), *Salafism After the Arab Awakening: Contending with People's Power*. London: Hurst, pp. 187–203.

Köse, A. (1996). *Conversion to Islam: A Study of Native British Converts*. United Kingdom: Kegan Paul International.

Kuschnitzki, J. (2017). The Establishment and Positioning of al-Rashad. In F. Cavatorta. & F. Merone. (eds.), *Salafism After the Arab Awakening:*

Contending with People's Power. London: Hurst.

Lacroix, S. (2011). *Awakening Islam: The politics of religious dissent in contemporary Saudi Arabia*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Lacroix, S. (2019). Saudi Arabia and the Limits of Religious Reform. *The Review of Faith & International Affairs, 17*:2, 97-101, DOI: 10.1080/15570274.2019.1608650

Lacroix S., & Shalata A.Z. (2016). The Rise of Revolutionary Salafism in Post-Mubarak Egypt. In B. Rougier & S. Lacroix. (eds.), *Egypt's Revolutions. The Sciences Po Series in International Relations and Political Economy*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-56322-4_9

Lahmami, A. (2016). Advice to my Sister – Abdulilah Lahmami. *Masjid Daar us Sunnah*. http://dusunnah.com/audio/advice-to-my-sister/

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

Lears, T.J. (1985). "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities." *The American Historical Review*, 90(3) pp. 567-593.

Levitt, P. (2001). *The Transnational Villagers.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Liberatore, G. (2017). *Somali, Muslim, British: Striving in Securitized Britain*. United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Academic.

Liguori, G. (2015). *Gramsci's Pathways.* Netherlands: Brill.

MacInnes, T., Aldridge, H., Bushe, S., Tinson A., and Born, T. (2014). *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion.* Joseph Rowntree Foundation. https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/monitoring-poverty-and-social-exclusion-2014

Mackintosh, T. & Lee, S. (2019, Nov 23). London knife crime: Number of teenagers

stabbed to death hits 11-year high. *BBC News*. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-50507433#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20teenagers%20stabbed,in%20the%20capital%20this%20year.

Mahmood, S. (2005). *Politics of Piety : The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Mandaville, P. (2001). *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma*. United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis.

Mandaville, P. (2016). Islam and International Relations in the Middle East: From Umma to Nation State. In Fawcett, L. (ed.). *International Relations of the Middle East*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mandaville, P. & Hamid, S. (2018). Islam as Statecraft: How Governments Use Religion in Foreign Policy. *Brookings Institution*. Available online: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/FP_20181116_islam_as_statecraft.pdf.

Marsh, S. (2018, July 20). Record number of anti-Muslim attacks reported in UK last year. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jul/20/record-number-anti-muslim-attacks-reported-uk-2017

Masjid Sunna Aston. [@MasjidSunnaAstn] (2019, June 11). *EXTENSION UPDATE* "ALLAHU AKBAR! BREAKING NEWS!! After news of the appeal reached brother & sisters in Kuwait & the gulf, we have received a hugely generous donation of £103,092.78!!! Collected by them thru Ramadhān! Our new target then is now £108,523. May Allah reward them!!* [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/MasjidSunnaAstn/status/1138397728743067653

Mathiesen, K. (2013). Anglo-American 'Traditional Islam' and Its Discourse of Orthodoxy. *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, *13*, 191-219. https://doi.org/10.5617/jais.4633

Maturidi333. (2010, June 10). *The Ash'aris & Maturidis - Defenders of Ahle-Sunnah by Sheikh Hamza Yusuf.* [video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-cO8zLNmyrM

McGuire, M. (2008). *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Meek, D. (2011). Propaganda, collective participation and the 'war of position' in the Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement. *Studies in the Education of Adults, 43*:2, 164-180, DOI: 10.1080/02660830.2011.11661611

Meer, N. (2010). *Citizenship, Identity and the Politics of Multiculturalism: The Rise of Muslim Consciousness.* United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Meijer, R. (2005). Review essay: taking the Islamist movement seriously: Social Movement Theory and the Islamist Movement. *International Review of Social History, 50* (2), 279-291.

Meijer, R (ed.). (2009a). *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*. London: Hurst & Co. Publishers.

Meijer, R. (2009b). "Introduction," in R. Meijer. (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Meijer, R. (2009c). Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong As a Principle of Social Action. The Case of the Egyptian al-Jamaʻa al-Islamiyya. In R. Meijer. (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*. London, UK: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd.

Meijer, R. (2010). Salafism: Doctrine, Diversity, and Practice. In K. Hroub. (ed.), *Political Islam: Context vs. Ideology*. United Kingdom: Saqi.

Meijer, R. (2011). "Politicising al-jarḥ wa-l-taʿdil: Rabiʿ b. Hadi al-Madkhali and the

transnational battle for religious authority." In N. van der Voort, K.Versteegh, &

J. Wagemakers. (Eds.), *The Transmission and Dynamics of the Textual Sources of Islam. (*pp. 375-99). Leiden: Brill.

Meleagrou-Hitchens, A. (2018). Salafism in America: History, Evolution, Radicalization. *Program on Extremism: George Washington University.* https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/Salafism%20in%20America.pdf

Meleagrou-Hitchens, A. (2012). *As American As Apple Pie: How Anwar al-Awlaki Became the Face of Western Jihad*. International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation.

Merone, F. (2020). Analysing revolutionary Islamism: Ansar al-Sharia Tunisia according to Gramsci. *The Journal of North African Studies*. DOI: 10.1080/13629387.2020.1801268

Mesbah, M. (2017). Salafi Movements and the Political Process in Morocco. In F. Cavatorta. & F. Merone. (eds.), *Salafism After the Arab Awakening: Contending with People's Power*. London: Hurst.

messageOFmessengers. (2010, May 13). Zakir Naik on Strictly Following a Madhab (or Mazhab). [video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwKiCrVC-YY

Metcalf, B. D. (2016). *Islamic revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Mohsin23. (2008, Sept 20). Are women allowed to work in Islam?? SalafiTalk.Net. [Online Forum]. http://www.salafitalk.net/st/viewmessages.cfm?Forum=9&Topic=6955

Morton, A. (2007). *Unravelling Gramsci*. London: Pluto Press.

Morton, A. (2012). Traveling with Gramsci: The spatiality of passive revolution. In: M.

Ekers. (eds.), *Gramsci: Space, Nature, Politics*. London: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 45–64.

Mouffe, C. (1979). Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci. In C. Mouffe. (ed.), *Gramsci and Marxist Theory.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. 168–204.

Mu'tazila. (n.d.) *Oxford Reference.* Retrieved 26 Feb. 2021, from https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100219659.

Murad, A. (2001, Sep 14). Recapturing Islam from the Terrorists. *Masud.* Available at: www.masud.co.uk/ISLAM/ahm/recapturing. htm

Murad, A. (n.d). Islamic Spirituality: The Forgotten Revolution. *Masud.* Available at: http://masud.co.uk/ISLAM/ahm/fgtnrevo.htm

Murray, K. & Worth, O. (2013). Building Consent: Hegemony, 'Conceptions of the World' and the Role of Evangelicals in Global Politics. *Political Studies, 61*(4), 731-747.

Ali, S., Asaria, M., Asaria, P., Haidar, A., Lone, S., Mueen,S., Shafi, S., Elshayyal, K.,

Sherif, J., Vakil, A. (2015). *British Muslims in Numbers.* Muslim Council of Britain. http://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MCBCensusReport_2015.pdf

Naeem, S. (2009). Sufism and Revivalism in South Asia: Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thanvi of Deoband and Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan of Bareilly and their paradigms of Islamic revivalism. *The Muslim World. 99*. 435-451.

Nahouza, N. (2018). *Wahhabism and the Rise of the New Salafists: Theology, Power and Sunni Islam*. London, New York: I.B. Tauris.

Naqshbandi, M. (2021). UK Mosque/Masjid Directory. *Muslims in Britain.* *https://mosques.muslimsinbritain.org/*

Naseeeha Sessions. (2018a, Nov 17). ABU TAYMIYYAH GOT STABBED! || NOT CLICKBAIT. [video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hsw0Wx_rD1g

Naseeha Sessions. (2018b, May 12). Sisters Special: MAD TING IN THE MASJID.

[video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5oWL9VNDvE

Nehaoua, S. (2010). Female Salon Preachers in Heliopolis: Towards the Salafization of

the Cairo Bourgeoisie?. *Le Mouvement Social*, *no 231*(2), 63-76.

doi:10.3917/lms.231.0063.

Nielsen, J. (1987). Muslims in Britain: Searching for an identity? *Journal of Ethnic

and Migration Studies, 13*, 384-394.

Nielsen, J. (1991). *Muslims in Western Europe.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Nisa, E. F. (2012). Cadari of Wahdah Islamiyah: Women as Dedicated Actors of Ultra-

Conservatism. *Intersections (Perth, W.A.), 30*, 35.

O'Toole, T., Meer, N., DeHanas, D. N., Jones, S. H., & Modood, T. (2016). Governing

through Prevent? Regulation and Contested Practice in State-Muslim

Engagement. *Sociology*, *50*(1), 160–177.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038514564437

Office for National Statistics. (2001). 2001 Census Data.

https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census/2011censusdata/2001censusdata

Office for National Statistics. (2017). Households in poverty estimates for middle layer

super output areas in England and Wales.

https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdf

inances/incomeandwealth/datasets/householdsinpovertyestimatesformiddlelayer

superoutputareasinenglandandwales

Ortner, S. (1995). Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal. *Comparative

Studies in Society and History, 37*(1), 173-193. Retrieved June 20, 2021, from

http://www.jstor.org/stable/179382

Østebø, T. (2012). *Localising Salafism: Religious Change among Oromo Muslims in

Bale, Ethiopia Islam in Africa*. Leiden: Brill.

Otterbeck, J. & Nielsen, J. (2016). *Muslims in Western Europe*. Edinburgh University Press.

Oxford University Press. (n.d.). Common Sense. In *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries*. Retrieved June 18, 2021, from

https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/common-sense

Özyürek, E. (2014). *Being German, becoming Muslim: Race, religion, and conversion in the new Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Pall, Z. (2014). Kuwaiti Salafism and Its Growing Influence in the Levant. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.

http://carnegieendowment.org/files/kuwaiti_salafists.pdf.

Pall, Z. (2017). Salafi Dynamics in Kuwait. In F. Cavatorta & F. Merone. (eds.), *Salafism After the Arab Awakening: Contending with People's Power*. London: Hurst, pp. 187–203.

Pall, Z. (2018). *Salafism in Lebanon: Local and Transnational Movements* (Cambridge Middle East Studies). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pall, Z. (2020). The Development and Fragmentation of Kuwait's al-Jama'a al-Salafiyya: Purity over Pragmatism. *The Middle East Journal 74*(1), 9-29. https://www-muse-jhu-edu.gate3.library.lse.ac.uk/article/755169.

Pall, Z. & Adraoui, M. (2018). Interviewing Salafis: overcoming fear and mistrust in Middle Eastern and European contexts. In: Clark, Janine A. and Cavatorta, Francesco, (eds.) *Political Science Research in the Middle East and North Africa: methodological and ethical challenges*. Oxford University Press Inc, New York, pp. 135-144.

Pall, Z. & De Koning, M. (2017). Being and Belonging in Transnational Salafism. *Journal of Muslims in Europe, 6*(1), 76-103.

Parvez, F. (2016). Prayer and pedagogy: Redefining education among Salafist Muslim women in France. *Journal of Religious and Political Practice. 2*,1.

Peach, C. (1990). The Muslim population of Great Britain, *Ethnic and Racial Studies,13*:3, 414-419, DOI: 10.1080/01419870.1990.9993680

Peach, C. (2006a). Islam, ethnicity and South Asian religions in the London 2001 census. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 31*(3), 353-370.

Peach, C. (2006b). Muslims in the 2001 Census of England and Wales: Gender and economic disadvantage. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 29*(4), 629-655.

Peach, C., & Glebe, G. (1995). Muslim minorities in Western Europe. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 18*(1), 26-45.

PearlsOfKnowledge. (2012, Dec 8). Advice to SalafiPublications PART 2 | Ustadh AbdulRahman Hassan. [video]. YouTube.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9kkj3yi6DY

Perry, M. (2002). *Marxism and history* (Theory and history). Basingstoke ; New York: Palgrave.

Peters, R. (2006). *'A Dangerous Book' Dutch Public Intellectuals and the Koran*. EUI RSCAS, 2006/39. Retrieved from Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository, at: http://hdl.handle.net/1814/6385

Petts, J. & Jolliff, A. (2008). Religion and Adolescent Depression: The Impact of Race and Gender. *Review of Religious Research, 49*(4), 395-414.

Philips, B. (1994). *The Fundamentals of Tawheed (Islamic Monotheism).* Saudi Arabia: International Islamic Federation of Student Organization.

Phillips, D. (2006). Parallel Lives? Challenging Discourses of British Muslim Self-Segregation. *Environment and Planning D-society & Space, 24*. 25-40. 10.1068/d60j.

Pierret, T. (2017). Salafis at war in Syria: Logics of fragmentation and realignment.

In F. Cavatorta & F. Merone. (eds.), *Salafism After the Arab Awakening: Contending with People's Power*. London: Hurst.

Quisay, W. (2019). *Neo-traditionalism in the West: navigating modernity, tradition, and politics.* PhD Diss. University of Oxford.

Radical Muslim preacher banned from entering UK. (2010, June 18). *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-preacher-ban-idUSTRE65H36420100618

Ramaioli, M. (2017). *Contentious Politics in the Arab Middle East: Jordanian Salafism and the Social Appropriation of Tradition.* PhD Diss. Syracuse University. Retrieved from https://surface.syr.edu/etd/778

Ramaioli, M. (2018). "Interviewing salafis: Negotiating access and ethics." In F. Cavatorta, and J.A. Clark, eds.. *Political Science Research in the Middle East and North Africa* 73-82. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Ramsey, C. (2016). Anti-Saint or Anti-Shrine? Tracing Deobandi Disdain for Sufism in Pakistan. In Bennet, C. & Alam S. (eds). Sufism, Pluralism, and Democracy. Sheffield: Equinox.

Ridgeon, L. (2015). *Sufis and Salafis in the Contemporary Age.* United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Riedel, B. (2017). Who are the Houthis, and why are we at war with them?. [online] *Brookings*. Available at: https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/12/18/who-are-thehouthis-and-why-are-we-at-war-with-them/

Rinaldo, R. (2014). Pious and Critical: Muslim Women Activists and the Question of Agency. *Gender & Society, 28*(6), 824-846.

Rizvi, M. (2019). Sufis, Salafis, and Islamists: The Contested Ground of British Islamic Activism (by Sadek Hamid). American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences 36-3:

Summer 2019.

Robinson, W. (2005). Gramsci and Globalisation: From Nation-State to Transnational Hegemony. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy, 8*:4, 559-574. DOI: 10.1080/13698230500205243

Rogaly, B. (2019). Brexit writings and the war of position over migration, 'race' and class. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space, 37*(1), 28–40. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263774X18811923f

Rogers, A. & Vertovec, S. (2018). *Muslim European Youth: Reproducing Ethnicity, Religion, Culture.* United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis.

Rougier, R. (eds.). (2020). *Les territoires conquis de l'islamisme*. (The Islamist Conquest of European Islam). Paris, Presses universitaires de France.

Roy, O. (2004). *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Roy, O. (2006). Islam in Europe: Clash of Religions or Convergence of Religiosities? In K. Michalski. (Ed.), *Religion in the New Europe* (pp. 131-144). Budapest; New York: Central European University Press. doi:10.7829/j.ctv10tq5h3.11\

Salafist places of worship have risen by 170% in France since 2010. (2018, May 30). *The European Post*. http://europeanpost.co/170-of-salafists-places-of-worship-in-france- since-2010/

Salem, S. (2020). Gramsci in the Postcolony: Hegemony and Anticolonialism in Nasserist Egypt. *Theory, Culture & Society*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276420935178

Sassoon, A. S. (1980). *Gramsci's Politics.* United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis.

Saunders, B., Kitzinger, J., & Kitzinger, C. (2015). Anonymising interview data: challenges and compromise in practice. *Qualitative Research, 15*, 616 - 632.

Schielke, J. (2015). *Egypt in the future tense: Hope, frustration, and ambivalence*

before and after 2011. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

Schielke, S. (2009). Being good in Ramadan: ambivalence, fragmentation and the moral
self in the lives of young Egyptian. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological
Institute*, *15,* 1. pp. 24-40.

Schielke, S. (2014). I want to be committed: Short-lived trajectories of Salafi activism
in Egypt. *La Ricerca Folklorica, (69)*, 21-37.

Schiffauer, W. (1988). Migration and Religiousness. In T. Gerholm & Y. Lithman.
(eds.), *The New Islamic presence in Western Europe*. London: Mansell.

Schwedler, J. (2006). The Third Gender: Western Female Researchers in the Middle
East. *PS: Political Science and Politics, 39*(3), 425-428. Retrieved December 18,
2020, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/20451777

Scott-Baumann, A. (2017). Ideology, utopia and Islam on campus: How to free speech a
little from its own terrors. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice, 12*(2), 159–
176. https://doi.org/10.1177/1746197917694183

Scott, J. (1989). Everyday Forms of Resistance. *Copenhagen Papers, No. 4*, pp. 33- 62.

Seawright, J., & Gerring, J. (2008). Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research:
A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options. *Political Research
Quarterly*, *61*(2), 294–308. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912907313077

Sedgwick, M. (2020). The Modernity of Neo-Traditionalist Islam. In D. Jung & K.

Sinclair (eds.), *Muslim Subjectivities in Global Modernity*. Leiden, The Netherlands:
Brill. doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004425576_008

Sellick, P. (2004). *Muslim Housing Experiences: A Research Report for the Housing
Association.* Oxford: Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies.

Sharhus.sunnah. (2002, Sept. 10). How to be a Righteous Wife. SalafiTalk.Net. [Online
Forum]. http://www.salafitalk.net/st/viewmessages.cfm?Forum=11&Topic=253

Shavit, U. (2017). Raising *Salafī* Children in the West. *Islam and Christian–Muslim*

Relations, 28:3, 333-354, DOI: 10.1080/09596410.2016.1239920

Snow, D., & Phillips, C. (1980). The Lofland-Stark Conversion Model: A Critical Reassessment. *Social Problems, 27*(4), 430-447.

Soares, B. & Otayek, R. (2007). *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan US.

Spevack, A. (2016). Egypt and the Later Ashar'ite School. In S. Schmidtke (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stephens, J. (2013). The Phantom Wahhabi: Liberalism and the Muslim fanatic in mid-Victorian India. *Modern Asian Studies, 47*(1), 22-52.

Stoddart, M. (2007). Ideology, Hegemony, Discourse: A Critical Review of Theories of Knowledge and Power. *Social Thought & Research, 28*, 191-225. Retrieved December 15, 2020, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/23252126

Sulafi1407. (2009, July 16). Advice To Salafi's of the UK (PART 1-a), By Sh. Ali Al-Tamimi. [video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0Ny2tkzxQ8

Süß, C. and Aakhunzzada, A. (2019). *The Socioeconomic Dimension of Islamist Radicalization in Egypt and Tunisia*. Peace Research Institute Frankfurt. Working Paper 45.

Taylor, B. (1976). Conversion and Cognition: An Area for Empirical Study in the Microsociology of Religious Knowledge. *Social Compass*, *23*(1), 5–22.

The Deen Show. (2015, Sep 3). Be Aware of Bidah/Powerful Message/Mufti Menk. [Facebook video.] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10152981346161104

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. (2010). Muslim networks and movements in Western Europe. Available at: http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1731/muslim-networks-movements-western-europe

The Power of the Muslim Vote and Muslim Voting Patterns. (2017). Mend.org.uk

https://www.mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Power-of-the-Muslim-vote-and-Muslim-voting-patterns.pdf

The purpose of the lectures is reached without picture-making – Shaykh al-Fawzan. (2015, April 26). *AbdurRahman.org*. https://abdurrahman.org/2015/04/26/the-purpose-of-the-lectures-is-reached-without-picture-making-shaykh-al-fawzan/

There Is No Obedience to the Creation in Disobedience to Allah – Shaykh Salih al-Fawzan. (2017). *Masjid Daar us Sunnah*. http://dusunnah.com/article/there-is-no-obedience-to-the-creation-in-disobedience-to-allah-shaykh-salih-al-fawzan/

Thurston, A. (2016). *Salafism in Nigeria: Islam, Preaching, and Politics. Kiribati: Cambridge University Press.*

Thurston, A. (2018, Oct 15). An Emerging Post-Salafi Current in West Africa and Beyond. *Maydan*. Available online: **https://www.themaydan.com/2018/10/emerging-post-salafi-current-west-africa-beyond/**

Timol, R. (2019). Structures of Organisation and Loci of Authority in a Glocal Islamic Movement: The Tablighi Jama'at in Britain. *Religions*, *10*(10), 573. doi:10.3390/rel10100573

Tirmidhi. *Jami` at-Tirmidhi, Chapters on Tafsir.* Book 40. Hadith 2641.

Tong, Y. & Lei, S. (2013). War of Position and Microblogging in China. *Journal of Contemporary China, 22*:80, 292-311, DOI: 10.1080/10670564.2012.734084

Trouillot, M. (2016). *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World*. United States: Palgrave Macmillan US.

Tuğal, C. (2009). *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism*. United States: Stanford University Press.

Turner, R. (2006). Constructing Masculinity: Interactions between Islam and African-

American Youth Since C. Eric Lincoln, The Black Muslims in
America. *Souls, 8*(4), 31-44.

Umm Idris. (2004, Dec 30). About Hamza Yusuf : sufi or not? SalafiTalk.Net. [Online
Forum]. http://www.salafitalk.net/st/viewmessages.cfm?Forum=9&Topic=4260

Umm.Eeasa.Beg. (2003, April 25). Advice on teaching children. SalafiTalk.Net.
[Online Forum] http://www.salafitalk.net/st/viewmessages.cfm?
Forum=19&Topic=550&sortby=desc

Vallely, P. (2007, Nov 1). Wahhabism: a deadly scripture. *The Independent*. Available
at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/wahhabism-a-deadly-
scripture-398516.html

Van Nieuwkerk, K. (2006). *Women embracing Islam: Gender and conversion in the
West*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Wagemakers, J. (2016a, August 05). Salafism. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of
Religion.* Retrieved 3 Jan. 2021, from
https://oxfordre.com/religion/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/a
crefore-9780199340378-e-255.

Wagemakers, J. (2016b). *Salafism in Jordan: Political Islam in a Quietist
Community*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Wagemakers, J. (2017). Revisiting Wiktorowicz: Categorising and Defining the
Branches of Salafism. In F. Cavatorta & F. Merone (Eds.), *Salafism after the
Arab Awakening: contending with people's power*. Oxford University Press.\

Wehrey, F. & Boukhars, A. (2019). *Salafism in the Maghreb: Politics, Piety, and
Militancy.* United States: Oxford University Press.

Werbner, P. (2005). Pakistani Migration and Diaspora Religious Politics in a Global
Age. In M. Ember, C. R. Ember, I. Skoggard (Eds), *Encyclopaedia of
Diasporas*. New York: Springer, Vol: II, pp. 475-484.

What Course will your Life Take? (n.d.). *AlKauthar.org.*

   https://seminars.alkauthar.org/

What is Hadith? (n.d.). *Ahadith.co.uk*. https://ahadith.co.uk/whatishadith.php

Wiktorowicz, Q. (2000). "The Salafi movement in Jordan." *Journal of Middle East*

   Studies. 32: 219–40.

Wiktorowicz, Q. (2006). Anatomy of the Salafi Movement. *Studies in Conflict and*

   Terrorism, 29(3), 207-239.

Williams, R. (1980). *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays.* United

   Kingdom: Verso.

Williams, R. H. (1977). *Marxism and Literature*. Greece: Oxford University Press.

Worth, O. (2011). Recasting Gramsci in international politics. *Review of International*

   Studies, 37(1), 373-392. Retrieved June 19, 2021, from

   http://www.jstor.org/stable/23024598

List of Interviews

This is a list of my interviews by name or pseudonym, place, and time of interview. I have chosen not to include any other biographical data about my interviewees in this list in an attempt to protect their identity and help ensure anonymity where necessary.

Aaliyah. London. 12/10/2018.

Aamaal. London. 17/01/2018.

Abdel Kareem. London. 05/07/2019.

Abdul Haqq Baker. Telephone interview. 09/08/2018.

Abdul Latif. London. 21/06/2019.

Abdulhaq Al-Ashanti. London. 12/01/2019.

Abdulilah Lahmami. Telephone interview. 08/08/2018.

Abdullah. London. 29/06/2019.

Abdur-Rahman ibn Yusuf Mangera. London. 29/10/2019

Abdurraheem Green. Telephone interview. 09/10/2018.

Abeera. London. 24/01/2018.

Abidah. London. 21/19/2018.

Abu Aaliyah. London. 29/08/2018.

Abu Aisha. London. 08/07/2019.

Abu Khadeejah. Telephone interview. 05/03/2019.

Abu Khuzaimah. Birmingham. 20/07/2019.

Abu Tayib. London. 02/07/2019.

Abu Taymiyyah. Telephone interview. 11/01/2020.

Abu Usamah al-Thahabi. Telephone interview. 13/11/2018.

Adam. London. 16/07/2019.

Adeel. London. 21/07/2018.

Adeela. London. 26/10/2018.

Ahlam. London. 23/01/2018.

Aisha. London. 19/01/2018.

Akhtar. Telephone interview. 14/11/2018.

Al Muntada Trustee 1. London. 16/07/2019.

Al Muntada Trustee 2. London. 16/07/2019.

Algerian Finsbury Park. London. 16/11/2018.

Algerian lady. London. 26/01/2018.

Ali. London. 21/07/2018.

Alyaa. London. 24/08/2018.

Ameera. London. 26/02/2018.

Amira. London. 05/11/2018.

Amr. London. 09/11/2018.

Anum. London. 17/01/2018.

Asif Uddin. Telephone interview. 04/08/2018.

Asmaa. London. 02/11/2018.

Azad. London. 22/10/2018.

Basma. London. 21/08/2018.

Bilal Philips. Zoom interview. 27/10/2018.

Bushra. London. 20/09/2019.

Daana. London. 16/03/2018.

Dina. London. 27/07/2019.

Dr. Ahmad Al-Dubayan. London. 05/09/2019.

Fadel Soliman. London. 05/09/2018.

Faduma. London. 13/05/2018.

Fahima. London. 05/04/2019.

Faiza. London. 27/07/2019.

Fajr. London. 13/09/2019.

Farah. London. 28/09/2018.

Farhana. London. 07/09/2018, 14/09/2018, 26/09/2018, 08/10/2018.

Fawzia. London. 04/08/2019.

Finsbury Park Manager. London. 01/08/2018.

Hadia. Birmingham. 03/08/2019.

Hafiz. Telephone interview. 25/09/2018.

Haitham al-Haddad. London. 02/07/2019 and 09/07/2019.

Hajaar. London. 10/03/2018.

Halima. London. 04/10/2019.

Hamida. Telephone interview. 28/10/2018.

Hamza Tzortzis. London. 28/09/2018.

Hanan. London. 24/01/2018.

Hani. London. 06/04/2018.

Haniya. Telephone interview. 03/10/2018.

Heba. London. 04/10/2019.

Hind. London. 24/08/2018.

Ibrahim. London. 11/07/2019.

Ikraam. London. 31/08/2018.

Ilhaam. London. 13/09/2019.

Imam Ashraf. London. 25/09/2019.

Imam of Wembley Mosque. London. 13/12/2017.

Imran ibn Mansur (Da'wah Man). Telephone interview. 03/11/2018.

Inaya. London. 26/10/2018.

Ishaq. London. 27.01.2019.

Jamila. Skype interview. 21/08/2018.

Jawaria. London. 05/04/2019.

Karima. London. 10/07/2019.

Kauthar. London. 21/03/2018.

Kingston Mosque Imam. London. 27/07/2018.

Kismet. London. 14/07/2019.

Laila. London. 09/10/2018.

Lateefa. London. 28/09/2018.

Madiha. London. 16/03/2018.

Magda. London. 24/08/2018.

Maha. London. 23/03/2018.

Maliha. Telephone interview. 12/11/2018.

Malika. Friend. London. 05/04/2019.

Management at Harrow Central Mosque. London. 28/03/2019.

Maria. London. 9/01/2018.

May. London. 12/10/2018.

Mazin. Telephone interview. 25/09/2018.

Mehmood. Naqshbandi. Email correspondence. 11/07/2018.

Mohamed Ghilan. Skype interview. 15/09/2018.

Mufeeda. London. 13/12/2017.

Muslim World League Assistant Director. London. 25/01/2019.

Nabil. London. 18/09/2018.

Naima. London. 11/07/2019.

Naseema. London. 23/01/2018.

Nawar. London. 13/09/2019.

Nazouha. Skype interview. 03/09/2019.

Nisrine. London. 19/01/2018.

Nusayba. Telephone interview. 12/11/2018.

Omar Hajaj. London. 04/07/2019.

Qadir. London. 22/02/2018.

Qamar. London. 22/01/2018.

Radiyah. London. 09/08/2019.

Rahima. London. 13/05/2018.

Reema. London. 20/09/2019.

Reham. London. 28/09/2018.

Sadia. London. 15/03/2018.

Sahra. London. 13/05/2018.

Sajid. London. 12/07/2018.

Saleema. London. 23/01/2018.

Salma. London. 02/11/2018.

Salman Butt. London. 19/10/2018.

Samar. London. 22/07/2019.

Sameera. London. 18/07/2018.

Samia. London. 16/03/2018.

Samir. Telephone interview. 05/08/2019.

Sarah. London. 16/11/2018.

Shahira. London. 04/09/2018.

Shakeel Begg. London. 22/07/2019.

Shams ad-Duha. London. 26/06/2019.

Sheikh Farid. London. 03/01/2019.

Sherifa. London. 19/10/2018.

Soaad. London. 08/07/2019.

Tazkiya. London. 23/03/2018.

The Salafi Feminist. Skype interview. 23/08/2018.

Umar Jamaykee. London. 21/02/2019.

Umm Abdulrahman. London. 13/05/2018.

Umm Ibrahim. London. 05/11/2018.

Umm Jamal. London. 30/01/2019.

Umm Sarah. London. 30/10/2018.

Umm Somayah. London. 24/07/2019.

Usama Hasan. London. 30/08/2018.

Uzma. London. 23/09/2018.

Wafaa. London. 06/09/2019.

Wajiha. London. 20/03/2018.

Yahya Nisbet. London. 01/07/2019.

Yara. London. 23/01/2018.

Yasir Qadhi. Skype interview. 10/10/2018.

Yasmeena. London. 06/04/2018.

Yasmin. Telephone interview. 24/07/2019.

Younis. London. 15/07/2018.

Zahra. London. 16/03/2018.

Zaina. London. 17/01/2018.

Zareena. London. 21/07/2018.