'Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Sufism:

A study into the reasons behind and a remedy for increased violent radicalisation among British Muslims'

by

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Abstract

In the British media there is much coverage given to radical and violent acts carried out by British Muslims in the name of Islam such as recent suicide bombings. Though there is an abundance of literature available on the subjects of extremism, fundamentalism, Islamism and Wahhabism it does not adequately address the underlying issues. Whilst prominent Sufi Muslim groups promote their approach as the alternative way and a cure, this would appear to be an oversimplification of the situation. Muslim modernist reformers suggest that Government action is urgently needed to remove the extreme ideologies that are preached within mosques and other institutions and pressure is being brought to bear on the British Muslim community. The question remains as to what the remedy is for the situation.

This dissertation studies the Wahhabi approach to assess its success or failings as an 'extremist' Islamic perspective within Britain and analyses Sufism as its potential remedy. The study uses literature along with first and second hand empirical data to research the underlying issues that British Muslims face.

The research leads to the conclusion that the resolution is not formulated by simply backing one or another strand of Islam, be it traditional, extreme or reformist, but by also addressing national and international socio-economic issues that affect the Muslim community in Britain. There are salient points made regarding current efforts of think tanks that appear to overemphasise theological reform. This approach is almost as detrimental to the situation as an over-promotion of any particular Islamic approach; the result could be schism and friction within the Muslim community and further isolation of the community.

The dissertation also recommends engaging with the British youth on a long-term basis and this needs to be from within the community. The Muslim values which enlightened and contributed to the world today need to be recognised and built upon. The inference from this dissertation is that work in this field needs to continue in order to produce positive results which will be mutually beneficial for both the Muslim community as well as the wider British public.

1 Introduction

Terrorism in the UK had previously been associated with the IRA in Northern Ireland. Today, Britain is facing a unique crisis in the form of an increase in terrorist activities perpetrated by people from within the Muslim community. As seen in recent press reports, many are from Westernised families and not, as the media may have portrayed the terrorists of 9/11, imported from Arab countries.

Muslim groups are beginning to deny any part of Muslims in terrorist attacks, however, there are other religious groups appearing in the UK media who are calling for an Islamic government saying that peace in the world will only be achieved through this. The violence has begun to occur only thirty to forty years after the first wave of immigrants from the West Indies and the Indian sub-continent.

The blame is often laid at the door of Wahhabism which is widely known to have been founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1791) and provided the religious zeal to join hands with Muhammad ibn Saud (d.1765) a tribal leader who desired to unite the Arab people of Najd, Saudi Arabia under one banner. Wahhabism is known to preach a puritanical form of Islam in which its opponents are often branded as heretics. Its central raison d'être was to purify the Muslim world of heretic innovations allegedly begun by Sufism. The activities of the Wahhabis of the Najd region included the destruction of tombs of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad which they believed were being used by Sufis for acts of excessive veneration. It allegedly led to the suppression of the populace of Najd (Sunnis and Shiites alike) including the people of Makka and Madina (Kanaan: 2004). Wahhabism is described as 'extremist, radical, puritanical, contemptuous of modernity, misogynist, and militant….Islamo-fascism…' (Delong-bas, 2004:3).

In spite of its literalist, inflexible nature, modern day Wahhabism appears to have stood the test of time. This is allegedly due to political backing from the Saudi government funded by petrodollars. In recent times, governments, political analysts and the media have identified it as 'the major "Islamic threat" facing Western civilisation and the inspiration for Osama bin Laden and his al Qaida network…' (Ibid.).

Wahhabism is deemed to have links with the Deobandi school of the Indian sub-continent and to have begun to infiltrate western nations, including Britain. The purist Islamic perspective is seen to have influenced a large number of mosques within the UK in which hate speeches are allegedly delivered in which curses are sought on the 'enemies of Islam' including Christians and Jews.

Contrary to Wahhabism's harsh image, Sufism is seen as the antithesis to Wahhabism and other purist ideologies. Sufis claim that not only is Sufism the oldest religious ideology in the history of man, but it is central to Islam. In the words of Sufi Abid Hussain (Geaves, 2000), it always existed; it just didn't have a name. Sufism is generally known as one of the more accommodating forms of Islam; Sufi masters have been known to study scriptures from other religions and even look for parallels in order to find common ground. The Sufi way of spirituality and love as espoused by Rumi[1], Hafiz[2] and Saady[3] gives the impression that the way of the Sufi is the closest to that of the Prophet Muhammad and true Islam. As recently as March 2010 the President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, promoted Sufism as an ideology that could counter

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1 Maulana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi (d. 1273) born in the village of Wakhsh in Tajikistan. Also known as Maulana or Mevlana to whom the Mevlavi tariqa of Turkey is traced and a famous Sufi poet

2 Khawaja Shams al-Din Hafiz-i Shirazi (d. 1390) a native of Shiraz and a famous Sufi poet

3 Abu Muhammad Muslih al-Din Abdallah Shirazi (d. 1283 or 1291) a native of Shiraz and a famous Sufi poet

'extremism'.[4] This has already been attempted in Algeria in its struggles against anti-government violence.[5] Dr. Tahir ul-Qadri a well known scholar of Islam with links to Sufism, issued a decree in 2009 denouncing all forms of terrorism.

This dissertation has two objectives which are to assess Wahhabism's success or failure in Britain and assess how Sufism as an alternative paradigm addresses the issues of Britain's youth.

During the course of the dissertation a number of challenges were faced:

Difficulty in finding relevant literature

Given the sensitive nature of this topic, there was a general issue in finding people who were willing to be interviewed. This was despite offering to travel to meet interviewees at their convenience

Where people had agreed to give their views, they often did not deliver

The above challenge was perplexing because it was assumed that the community felt a need to reform in the post 9/11 and 7/7 attacks. The enthusiasm from the community was not forthcoming.

The transliterations of a number of Arabic and Urdu words into English often appear within literature without diacritics although the Arabic and Urdu pronunciations warrant them. An example is the word *jihād* often written simply as *jihad*; the word Quran is usually found without its two diacritics of ' and ā; similarly, the word ḥadīth is often written as hadith. Because of this common inconsistency in the use of diacritics, a decision was made to use diacritic-free English transliterations throughout this dissertation.

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4   http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/national/sufi-teachings-can-counter-extremism-zardari-630 accessed 27.07.10

5 http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL7211358 accessed 27.07.10

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The Literature Review highlights and analyses extant literature relating to the objectives highlighted in the Introduction. These were to assess Wahhabism's success or failure in Britain and assess how Sufism as an alternative paradigm addresses the issues of Britain's youth.

The first objective is addressed in Section 2.2 of the Literature Review and the second objective is addressed in Section 2.3; there is a Summary of literature findings in Section 2.4.

The approach towards analysing Wahhabism was to obtain literature that discussed its political, theological and social perspectives. In order to analyse whether or not Sufism is the alternative paradigm, literature was researched to find the specific failings of Wahhabism that Sufism was addressing.

It has become increasingly obvious that there is a gap in extant literature in addressing the two research objectives above because literature often appears to be superficial, repetitive and one-sided.

2.2 Wahhabism

The term 'Wahhabism' bears connotations of an extreme or fundamentalist, pan-Islamic political agenda. It is commonly used by writers on political Islamic movements as well as in the media around the world. Where a definition for Wahhabism can be found, it is usually a repetition of the same themes: 'Saudi Arabia', 'Bin Laden', 'Ibn Abd al-Wahhab' and 'purist Muslims'.

Some definitions are given below:

'A conservative and intolerant form of Islam that is practiced in Saudi Arabia: *"Osama bin Laden and his followers practice Wahhabism"* '[6]; 'Conservative Sunni Islamic sect based on the teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, an 18th century scholar from what is today known as Saudi Arabia, who advocated to purge Islam of what he considered innovations in Islam'[7]; Tariq Ali (2001) describes how Wahhabism poses an international threat and it has formed an international net in which 'Bin Laden and his gang are just the tentacles; the head lies safely in Saudi Arabia, protected by US forces'[8]; Delong-Bas (2004:91) describes Wahhabism as a 'negative, exclusionary approach in which violence and military action…[play]…a more prominent role.'

The theology of Wahhabism is to be found in the biography of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792). There is an abundance of writing on this topic; however, it is often contradictory and superficial.

Allen's *God's Terrorists*[9] gives a blistering and useful account of the biographical context and history of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. It contains a critical commentary on the various escapades of both him and his followers stretching from the eighteenth century to the post-World War II era. Allen (2007:48) also discusses how Ibn Abd al-Wahhab had a Sufi teacher named Muhammad Hayat who originated from India and that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's purist teachings were by-and-large due to the influence of his other teacher Abd Allah ibn Ibrahim ibn Sayf (d. unknown) who had been an admirer of Shaykh ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328). This gives the reader a mixed message as to what exactly is Wahhabism's theology and where it positions itself in regard to Sufism. Furthermore, the impression that the reader gets is that Wahhabism and the literalist perspective of Islam are possibly older and more integral to Islam than is commonly believed, but Allen omits any discussion or elaboration on these two notions.

Interestingly, Allen draws from the work of Natana Delong-Bas, a writer who does not portray Ibn Abd al-Wahhab as espousing an intolerant theology as other writers would. Allen (2007:320) appears to be greatly influenced by the bias within the sources he drew from which were largely anti-Wahhabi and pro-British writings of government officials in India'. Furthermore, he confesses that his deficiencies in Arabic, Persian and Urdu mean that a number of important original sources remain unexamined.

Pro-Ibn Abd al-Wahhab writers like Delong-Bas (2004:17) inject discussions on Ibn Abd al-Wahhab with some complexity. She denies his description as a warmonger and active supporter and promoter of violence. She goes on to say that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab believed that women had rights in balance with the rights of men in both public and private life. A further point to note is how Delong-Bas has not greatly used the accounts

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6 http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=wahhabism accessed 19.07.10

7 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wahhabism accessed 19.07.10

8 Ali, T (2001) *The Real Muslim Extremists* available online at http://www.newstatesman.com/200110010012 accessed 27.06.10

9 Allen, C (2007) *God's Terrorists: The Wahhabi Cult and the Hidden Roots of Modern Jihad* (Abacus)

of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's opponents (2004:16) saying 'polemical works have largely been discarded in the reconstruction of the biography of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and the early teachings of the Wahhabi movement.' Delong-Bas (2004:16) claims to have not used the accounts of travellers: none of them were contemporary and where they were, they had not met with Ibn Abd al-Wahhab or any Wahhabis.

The majority of writers usually share the same sentiments as Allen in laying the blame for an extremist form of Islam at the door of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab; however the contradictory views on Ibn Abd al-Wahhab seem to display more than simple differences of opinion on a controversial figure within history; they often show a lack of in-depth analysis and use of convenient sources and historic bias which further discounts the accounts of the man and make any formulation of a Wahhabi theology difficult. The suggestion of bias is substantiated somewhat by Commins (2006:3) '[historians need to] choose sides in the argument between Wahhabis and their foes'.

Commins does not appear to add anything to the discussion on Wahhabism or 'extremist' Muslims. His book entitled *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* is another example of repetitive discussion between the Wahhabi link to the Saudi administration, Egypt's Brotherhood and Deobandis of the Indian sub-continent. Discussion is therefore on the political and pan-Islamic aspects with little discussion on Sufism as an alternative paradigm and no discussion on issues that relate to Britain. Interesting to note is that Commins (2006:xi) includes Delong-Bas as one of the people who read and commented on portions of his book. The suggestion is that her associates do not echo Delong-Bas' views of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab as a non-violent man.

Regarding Wahhabism's social aspects, Commins (2006:126) suggests a natural clash between Wahhabism and secular education, describing a rivalry between the establishment of the first Saudi Arabian university in Riyadh in 1957, subsequently renamed in 1982 as King Saud University, and pressure brought to bear by the Wahhabi establishment for a religious university to balance the Riyadh University's anticipated secular character. The result was the Islamic University founded at Madina in 1961. Higher education within the Kingdom is often non-existent and this is mentioned by writers (citation needed). However, the discussion by Commins, as with other writers on the subject of Wahhabism, does not address any social projects or initiatives or involvement by so-called Wahhabis in Britain.

Some writers such as Quintan Wiktorowicz (2005) have attempted to tackle the notion of *jihadi* or terrorist ideologies in Britain by analysing certain Islamist groups. However, this analysis is irrelevant qua analysis of Wahhabism because its aim is to understand the rise in British Islamist groups that promote *jihadi* rhetoric and not to discuss the Wahhabi ideology. The work nevertheless is fresh, contemporary and reliable being based on hundreds of interviews with leaders of the Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) and al-Muhajiroun members. Wiktorowicz does not address the objectives of this dissertation because of the absence of any in-depth discussion or comparison between the paradigms of Wahhabism and Sufism.

The lack of unbiased material is coupled with a focus on the political aspects of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and little analysis on Wahhabism's theology, or the merits of religious revival which has been a common activity of Islamists throughout the centuries. The writings on Ibn Abd al-Wahhab therefore give a biographical account of the man and his ideologies but despite conflicting evidence regarding him this contradiction is not addressed by any of the writers. The subject appears to have been left inconclusive with further analysis required.

2.3 The 'Wahhabi / Salafi critique'

The second objective of this dissertation was to find literature on Sufism being a potentially alternative approach to Wahhabism.

Sufi literature is abundant in public as well as in university libraries. The rivalry of both approaches is often mentioned in what appears to be passing comments within literary works or journalistic articles, but searches on the internet often return little on this topic.

Ron Geaves (2006:147) mentions the 'Wahhabi/Salafi critique' which refers to the tendency of 'anti-Sufi' movements within Britain to criticise Sufi *tariqa*s. The term alludes to a long line of anti-Sufi activities which has endured through the centuries and manifested in more recent times in the movement of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. Other than Geaves, few if any other writers use the term Wahhabi/Salafi critique; Geaves himself often does not use it; he writes about the contribution that Sufi *tariqa*s have made to British society such as the welfare activities by the likes of the Ghamkol Naqshbandis of Birmingham, however, he does not elaborate on the possibility of Sufism as an alternative to Wahhabism. Geaves (2000:53) devotes a chapter in *The Sufis of Britain* to the 'Wahhabi critique'. His appraisal, though, does not amount to a detailed discussion. He regards the term Wahhabism as a misnomer (2000:53) because it is often applied to Islamist groups who, although having certain elements in common, do not have any contact with each other.

The polarisation of much of Muslim Britain into either the Wahhabi or the Sufi camps and the potential rivalry between the two positions is not addressed within Sufi literature in any detail. Carl Ernst almost appears to refute such a Wahhabi–Sufi rivalry although his analysis falls short of anything substantial. He (1997:79) suggests that there is not such a clear rivalry between the two when he says that a nineteenth century reformist Sufi thinker named Ahmad ibn Idris of Fez agreed with the 'Wahhabis in condemning saintly intercession and pilgrimage to their tombs.' He also describes the inception of the twentieth-century fundamentalist movements by the likes of Hasan al-Banna (d. 1949) in Egypt and Abul Ala Mawdudi (d. 1979) in Pakistan as being raised in social circles where saint-veneration and Sufi orders were the norm giving the impression that the two paradigms can potentially co-exist within a pluralistic society; he even suggests an influence of one group on another by saying that the Wahhabis appropriated the hierarchical social organisation of Sufism. Ernst does not elaborate on this point in any detail though.

Ernst (1997:79) uses the term 'fundamentalist critique' to describe fundamentalist rhetoric which 'claims to rely on the literal word of God instead of human reasoning…' This would appear the closest that he comes to appraising the potential rivalry of these two paradigms and the closest that any writer researched during this dissertation has come to describing the modern conflict between Wahhabis and Sufis. Ernst mentions the word Wahhabi in his book one more time but does not tackle the issue head on.

Some journalistic articles and interviews with politicians such as the Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari[10] which mention that that Sufism has a role to play in mankind's struggle for a peaceful world. Again the mention is brief and not explored in depth.

Commins (2006) likewise fails to provide any more in-depth analysis than Geaves or Ernst; he also does not appear to use any term which describes a Wahhabi-Sufi 'rivalry' or 'critique'. Commins (2006:11) however does mention the aversion that Wahhabism had towards Sufism by describing Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's endeavours as

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10 This was whilst addressing the International Conference on Sufism and Peace, stated Dawn Newspaper: http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/national/sufi-teachings-can-counter-extremism-zardari-630 accessed 09.08.10

displaying a desire to bring the practices of Sufi orders into conformity with rules of Islamic law. He (2006:20) further supports this by claiming that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab had declared prominent and venerated Sufi masters such as Ibn al-Farid (d. 1235) and Ibn Arabi (d. 1240) to be non-Muslims but that level of analysis is only predictable given that such notions have already been discussed by a number of other writers.

With regard to discussing whether or not Sufism can be regarded as the potential saviour of the British Muslim community, Commins (2006:78) alludes to Sufism being compatible with a pluralistic environment, when he mentions how Sufi orders occupied an important niche in the pluralistic Ottoman religious culture. This is mainly because the Ottomans promoted one type of Sufism within the Muslim empire that supported their rule. But Commins does not follow up this notion and this is indicative of the lack of literature and analysis in this area.

Interesting literature is available from other initiatives such as Dr. Tahir ul-Qadri's fatwa issued in February 2010 denouncing all forms of terrorism. Qadri does not pit both approaches against each other though. The rivalry can be inferred from the fact that the world was apparently awaiting his fatwa; seeing the media coverage that Qadri received on the internet and radio, there does not appear to have been such a well publicised denunciation of 'extremism' from any part of the Muslim world in recent times. Qadri is known as being a prominent Sufi personality heading up a number of welfare projects around the world. This sends a strong message to the world that Sufism has both the potential to contribute to society and bring peace to the more violent strands of the Muslim world.

When writers have painstakingly conducted research and case studies on Islamist groups within Britain they do not appear to have used the term Wahhabism. This obscures the path of Wahhabism from Saudi Arabia to Britain. One such example is that of Wiktorowicz (2005) and his book entitled *Radical Islam Rising; Muslim Extremism in the West* in which an activist movement called al-Muhajiroun is discussed at some length. He (2005:2) calls Sufism the 'antithesis' of fundamentalism. However, throughout the whole book, Sufism is only mentioned in the context of it being rejected by fundamentalists as it apparently violated *tawhid al-ilah* (unity of God): Sufis were charged with heresy for saint worship and blindly following their Sufi masters in a way similar to Jews and Christians venerating their saints, rabbis and priests (Wiktorowicz, 2005:171).

Hussain, A's article entitled *Combatting Terrorism with Fethullah Gullen* available on Gullen's website sounds promising but on reading it one can see another example where a struggle between Sufism and Wahhabism and Salafism is mentioned but again the topic is not sufficiently analysed to provide an answer to the question at hand. Neither does it discuss the issues of Britain nor does it critically analyse the two paradigms in enough detail to form a balanced opinion. The writer appears to have already made up their mind about the issue and the statement would appear to have more of an impact left at a sufficiently high level of analysis.

2.4 Summary

The suggestion that Sufism is the antithesis of and a cure for Wahhabism is usually found briefly in some literary works and press articles and is often discussed within Sufi *tariqa*s.[11] The available literature, however, clearly shows that there is a lack of in-depth analysis in this area and the literature does not address the objectives of this dissertation adequately. The situation within the British Muslim community warrants

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11 Discussions such as some held by this author with the Naqshbandiyya Order of the Ghamkol Masjid in Birmingham during July 2010.

attention and guidance from scholars on the subject of jihad and political activism and scholars appear to have failed to address the issue leaving a gap for writing on this subject.

Literature appears also to ignore the fact that Muslims are the product of socio-political situations and this has been the situation for Islam since the time of the Prophet Muhammad. This is seen in the early theological debates of the Mutazilite, Qadarite and Jabbarite era.

The conclusion is that there is a need for scholarly work which portrays a balanced view on the topic.

3 Wahhabism in a British context

3.1 Biographical analysis of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab

In order to understand the generally accepted definition of Wahhabism, the endeavours of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab need to be put into context. Even if Ibn Abd al-Wahhab were to be regarded as the source of all Islamist activities, there is enough in his biography to disregard his influence on Muslims around the world.

Wahhabism is widely reported to have originated in eighteenth century Saudi Arabia as a purist Islamic movement which eventually dominated the various tribes and minority groups in the Najd area of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, who was born in the town of Uyainah in 1702 or 1703 (Allen, 2007:42), was its founder. His early years were characterised by being a devoted student of religion (Allen, 2007:48) who at the age of ten could recite the whole Qur'an from memory. His father was a judge who followed the Hanbali School of jurisprudence and was descended from a long line of respected jurists who were also Hanbalis. One of the key influences on Ibn Abd al-Wahhab would appear to have been Abd Allah ibn Ibrahim ibn Sayf (d. unknown), an admirer of Ibn Taymiyya's (d. 1328) theology. Ibn Sayf introduced him to a teacher of *hadith* called Muhammad Hayat of Sindh (d. unknown) who was a follower of the Shafi'i School of jurisprudence and a Naqshbandi Sufi.

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was already showing hard-line and intolerant tendencies in his twenties, apparently as a reaction to Sufism and there was an uncomfortable encounter with his father and his uncle who was also a religious teacher. He believed that Sufism's teaching of tolerance towards people in general had weakened the militant streak in Arabs of the Najd region and this allowed colonialist powers to gain a foothold. He also came up against the scholars of the day with his puritanical approach to Islam. The scholars of his then dwelling place, Uyainah, denounced him as a schismatic, branded him a heretic and ordered him to leave the town. He went to live with his father who had moved to Huraymila but his views were not accepted there either. He thereafter kept his views to himself until his father's death in 1740. After that he took over as judge and began to 'act and pronounce judgement in accordance with his new teachings.' (Allen, 2007:51). The populace turned on him and he fled Huraymila and sought refuge back in Uyainah.

Ibn Taymiyya's (1263−1328) influence on Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was through his teacher Ibn Sayf. The former's purist movement was as a result of the Mongol invasion in which thousands of Muslims were slaughtered at the hands of Hulaku Khan (d. 1265). Ibn Taymiyya's desire to purify Islam was intended to pull the Muslim world out of its despair by returning it to the original teachings of Islam. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, although apparently one in a line of Islamist revivers, regarded Muslims whom he saw as apostates as the enemy of the religion.

Following his initial rejection by contemporary scholars, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab made a comeback through marriage ties to the ancestors of the current Saudi regime and it is this tactic throughout his remaining life that enabled him to stay at the centre of the political scene and establish his power in Saudi Arabia. Muhammad ibn Saud of the Aal Saud (Family of Saud) established close ties with Ibn Abd al-Wahhab in 1744 and declared himself as Amir with Ibn Abd al-Wahhab as Imam. This Imam-Amir coalition was to form the basis of the ruling administration in the Kingdom today. It was an approach which was successful in oppressing minority groups such as Shiites and Sufis. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab successfully merged Islam and politics in the form of a holy *jihad*. In return for allegiance he promised Paradise.

Both Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Abd al-Wahhab allowed *jihad* against one's (unjust) rulers even though both belonged to the Hanbali School of *fiqh* and Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855) prohibited this.

The intolerance of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab is shown in the attacks on the graves of prominent personalities of Islam's history in 1802. Imam Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud's eldest son, Saud ibn Saud, attacked the sacred shrine of the Shiites in which Husayn, grandson of the Prophet and son of Imam Ali is buried. Allen quotes Lieutenant Francis Warden as saying that they 'pillaged…and plundered the Tomb of Hossein…slaying in the course of the day, with…cruelty, above five thousand of the inhabitants.' (Allen, 2007:63). The Turkish government could take criticism as having failed to protect the tombs and the people that visited them, however, the trend of militancy shown by the followers of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was clear. Therefore Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's *jihad* is a unique phenomenon in Islamic history and should be treated as such.

The *hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad in which the lesser *jihad* is compared and contrasted with the greater *jihad* highlights the inherent risk of jihadis turning off in periods of peace.[12] The Prophet explained how the *jihad al-nafs* (combat with the self) is superior to the *jihad* against a foe because the inner enemy is unseen, unexpected and requires self-appraisal which is harder on the ego (*nafs*) than appraising other people. Furthermore, the diversion of the Companions' attention to themselves is a way of shutting down the frame of mind in which one is mentally prepared to kill or be killed. The original Wahhabi movement fell foul of this flaw and it is seen how the warring tendency within the Najdi tribe has not changed until this day. This tendency to wage war appears to have continued to this day with Arabs often being accused of promoting a 'culture of violence'[13] even in today's society in which humanity prides itself in its civilised manners. This to an extent explains why the Taliban have continued in their quest for *jihad* after being supported by the United States against Russia during the 1980s.

Despite the Saudi administration's bloody beginnings, it has endured as an ally to the West, supplying it with oil for the best part of a century along with opportunities for a growing number of expatriates.[14] Despite this, a cost cannot be put on the calamitous effect that the apparent oppression has had on the now minority groups within the Kingdom. In more recent years, it is reported that there is somewhat of a tolerance-through-ignorance policy in operation where the Kingdom chooses to turn a blind eye towards minority groups because it struggles to embrace them openly.[15]

The current state of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia belies Delong-Bas' (2004:17) portrayal of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab as a pacifist: how is it possible that Saudi Arabia, where Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's writings are venerated, is accused of oppression towards women and other minority Muslims in the name of Islam? Muslim women were not allowed until recent times to drive cars on their own under the ruling of *sad al-dharai*.[16]

Some of the issues in the state of Arab society in the Najd area today with regard to women's rights and the rights of minority Muslims may well be as a result of scholars

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12 **Al-Khatib narrated it in *Tarikh Baghdad* (13:493=13:523)**… http://www.livingislam.org/n/dgjh_e.html accessed 01.08.10

13 Smith, L (2010) The Strong Horse: Power, Politics, and the Clash of Arab Civilizations (Knopf Doubleday)

14 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6210358.stm accessed 28.07.10

15 Though there are still reports of the religious police detaining and beating Shiite pilgrims. See http://www.kuwaittimes.net/read_news.php?newsid=ODY2OTAzODU0 accessed 17.08.10

16 Loosely translated as preventing of paths to social degeneration.

selectively following the teachings of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. If it is possible for this to occur with the original sources of Islam (Quran and Hadith) then it is also possible for it to occur with the works of someone such as Ibn Abd al-Wahhab.

Though so-called radical groups within Britain display a desire to purify Islam and for military and political dominance, any link with Ibn Abd al-Wahhab is untenable. Though, given that he is regarded highly, he must accept some culpability.

Allen's (2007) depiction of a link between purist movements in the Najd area, the Indian sub-continent, Ikhwan reformers of Egypt and Afghan tribes is based on the relationship that Shah Waliullah (d. 1762), a key influential figure of purist movements within the Indian sub-continent, had with Ibn Abd al-Wahhab: they both studied with the same teachers in Madina and possibly even attended the same lectures together and discussed the same topics. He further claims a link between so-called Wahhabi groups and Deobandi[17] and Ahl-i-Hadith[18] preachers in the Indian sub-continent stretching back to the eighteenth century. This is also untenable because his writing contradicts itself when he goes on to say how the Ahl-i-Hadith of India refuted this link when they petitioned the Government of India to stop using the term 'Wahhabi' in relation to them and the group also denied any links with Wahhabism.

The circumstances regarding each instance of radical behaviour are different, whether it was in the case of Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab or Britons. In order to understand who the Wahhabis of Britain could be, an understanding of the main Islamist groups is needed.

3.2 Islamist groups of Britain

Anti-Wahhabists attempt and often fail to demonstrate clearly that there is a political link between acts of violence in the name of Islam and the influence of the Saudi administration. The Saudi government being Arab and the apparent 9/11 suicide bombers coming from Saudi Arabia is a very convenient correlation. The 7/7 attacks in London, however, began to challenge the Wahhabi-Saudi link. Modern literature has begun now to focus on what influences people of Britain. The difficulty in literature on this subject is in being able to identify clearly who in Britain are the candidates for the label of 'Wahhabi'.

3.2.1 The Salafiyyah

The Salafiyyah could be regarded as similar to Ahl-i-hadith in their Islamic outlook. The Salafiyyah movement is often deemed to be closely linked with Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab due to the obvious reverence that they afford him by studying his famous *Kitab al-Tawhid*, commentated on many times over by various Saudi shaykhs and selling on Salafi websites and in their bookshops. However, alongside Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's books one can at times also find Natana Delong-Bas' book entitled *Wahhabi Islam*[19] which portrays Ibn Abd al-Wahhab in a positive manner and as someone who did not actively promote any form of violence.

Geaves (2000: 54) writes how the origins of what is labelled as the Salafiyyah movement in the UK are based on the teachings of Egyptian reformers such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1897), Rashid Rida (d. 1935) and Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905).

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17 A person affiliated with Dar ul-Ulum Deoband, a seat of learning based in India greatly influenced by Maulana Qasim Nanautawi (d. 1901) whose scholarly line traces back to Shah Waliullah al-Dehlavi (d. 1762).

18 Means 'People of the Hadith'. This is a group of Muslims understood to have been founded by Shah Waliullah al-Dehlavi (d. 1762) who follow the Islamic sources usually avoiding the imitation of any of the major fiqh imams such as Abu Hanifah. This group is commonly found in Pakistan and India.

19 Delong-Bas, Natana J. Wahhabi Islam (Oxford University Press, 2004)

Strangely, Abduh was in favour of legal reform within the Muslim world and used rationality in the application of *maslaha* [20] to reform law. Three examples of controversial decrees of his are allowing Muslims to accept interest and dividends, to eat meat prepared by non-Muslims in foreign lands and to allow Muslims to wear non-traditional dress.[21] These views are liberal as compared to the likes of Rashid Rida. Though the Salafiyyah may be regarded as purist Muslims, in Britain their focus is on the teachings of Islam and they are not reliably known to be involved in Islamic political activism.

Geaves (2000:57) explains that according to Joffe (1998) the Salafi movement's activities in attempting to purify Islam 'coincided with socio-political and economic developments in the Middle East which paralleled the reforms in the Ottoman Empire and the Transformation of Egypt in the 1920s.' Modern Salafis greatly identify themselves with Ibn Abd al-Wahhab; however, their identity is complicated because their scholars are also known to denounce terrorism,[22] although terrorists would also identify with Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. Terrorism or 'extremist' Islam therefore does not have a clear-cut face within the Salafi community. Geaves (2000:57) points out that '[t]he main thrust of the attack was not directed at the West, but at the need to purify Islam from the teachings and practices of the Sufi tariqas' − implying that although some of the initiatives of the Salafis may have been identical to the Wahhabis, that religious militancy has not necessarily translated into extremism or violence.

The writings of Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966) are often deemed to be an influence on the modern terrorist;[23] however, similarly to Ibn Taymiyyah, the context of Qutb's writing was his reaction to colonialism within Egypt whereas within Britain, the immigrants from South Asia and the first and second generation Muslims are here by choice. Therefore, the link between Middle Eastern reformers and British Muslims is not reliable. Furthermore, Qutb's intellectual ancestor was Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905) and as described above he espoused a more accommodating view of Islamic jurisprudence for Muslims. Abduh had been in favour of *talfīq*.[24] Abduh himself was not averse to Sufism, having been involved in it during his life. He had always retained a respect for it.[25] The two approaches of Abduh and Qutb at times are in some ways different: Abduh's desire to evolve Islamic law in a constantly changing world was not seen in the same way within the writing of Qutb who espoused a move away from the *jahiliyyah* (ignorance) of western societies and a return to original Islamic principles. Qutb's writings should therefore be taken with some caution.

The mix of ideologies that were evolving in the Middle East during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have also appeared within Britain and often manifest themselves in fiery speeches delivered by impassioned imams at Friday prayers and other Muslim festivities such as the two Eid prayers and the twenty-seventh night of Ramadan and arguably also in the above mentioned suicide attack.[26]

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20 This is the notion of formulating laws in order to safeguard the interest of Muslims.

21 Amin, (date. unknown): Chapter 75 (p. 1493), *A History of Muslim Philosophy*: http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/hmp/index.html accessed 17.08.10

22 See Abdul Waahid, A K (2009) *Islam's Reply to Extremism* (cd), The Olive Tree Advice Centre.

23 See Loboda, L. *The Thought of Sayyed Qutb*, Ashbrook Statesmanship Thesis.

24 This is the notion of allowing a mujtahid the choice of following a *madhhab* of their choice or to choose their own opinion.

25 http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ip/rep/h049.htm#H049SECT1 accessed 29.07.10

26 Radical purist views which influence suicide bombers have also infiltrated the mainstream Muslim community of Britain whether the populace realise it or not and they are even expressed during the holiest events of the Muslim calendar whereas peace and mercy are more befitting for these occasions.

3.2.2 Barelvis, Deobandis and Ahl-i-hadith

These groups originated in the Indian sub-continent. None of them accepts the label of 'Wahhabi' which they regard as a term that describes a zealot or excessively purist Muslim. The relationship between Deobandis, Barelvis and Ahl-i-hadith[27] is rarely amicable.

Barelvis[28] usually label the Deobandis, Ahl-i-hadith, Salafi and others who generally do not carry out the *mawlid* or birthday celebrations of the Prophet Muhammad, *urs* (anniversary of death) of a dead Shaykh as Wahhabi.[29] Deobandis and Barelvis send blessings on the Prophet Muhammad regularly and Geaves's (2000:54) statement that Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab banned such practises distances both these groups from Wahhabism.

This also challenges the impression that Geaves gives about the Deobandis being 'Wahhabi-lites'. Deobandis use the term 'Wahhabi' to refer to the Ahl-i-hadith or Salafis whom they consider to be purists to a greater degree than themselves. The clearest manifestation of potential Wahhabi or radical tendencies among the Deobandis (and in some mosques populated by Arabs) is at the time for Jumuah prayer when the imams often decide to curse and even pray for destruction of the enemies of the Muslims. Such rhetoric is quite common within the mosques of Britain and is often the result of issues inherited from the Indian sub-continent. These issues are often, in a Qutbian way, ones which the *mawlawi*s[30] display out of their zeal for freedom. From field research conducted as part of this dissertation, it is apparent that the most striking part of these sermons is that they are often in Arabic and the congregation being of Urdu, Hindi or Punjabi speaking backgrounds have little or no idea of what the imam is saying.

Barelvis are greatly influenced by Sufism and some purist Deobandi groups are also deeply influenced by it: the Husseini group of Lahore is one example and Shaykh al-Hadith Sufi Sarwar preaches *tasawwuf* to other scholars and students from the University of al-Jamiah al-Ashrafiyyah.[31] This is indicative of the osmosis of Sufi thought into a number of other 'purist' Muslim groups and its appeal to a wide audience. This also challenges Geaves' (2000:56) notion that 'the reformed Sufi influence in the (Deobandi) movement does seem to have gone into decline after the advent of Muhammad Wahhab's movement in Arabia with its strong anti-Sufi rhetoric'.

In terms of *taqlid*, Barelvis and Deobandis are ardent *muqallid*s (followers) of the Hanafi School which is rejected by the Salafis who regard Abu Hanifah as a misguided Imam of the *ahl al-ray*.[32]

From a Salafi perspective, Deobandis and Barelvis are innovators in the *Din* (religion) and regard them as having close links with Sufis; for that reason, they could not be Wahhabis. Deobandi and Barelvi practises such as raising the hands for supplication in congregation after each prayer are reminiscent of the Sufis; Salafis consider these *bidah*s (innovations) along with others such as the use of *misbaha* rosary

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27 The same can also be said of the Salafiyyah

28 A follower of Ahmad Raza Khan (d. 1921) who was a reformer in India during the colonial years. The Barelvis are usually influenced by Sufis, more so than Deobandis. Barelvis are known for celebrating the urs of dead saints and the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad each year.

29 The founder of the Barelvis, Ahmad Raza Khan (d. 1921), defended what he believed to be traditional (sunnat) practises of the Sufis against reformist movements of the Indian sub-continent. The other groups therefore are averse to the mawlid and urs celebrations.

30 Or *maulana*s which means 'scholar' in Urdu

31 Source: visits to these places by this author and interviews conducted with these groups.

32 The term means 'People of opinion'. It depicts the supposed methodology of Abu Hanifah's School of jurisprudence in Iraq

beads for *dhikr* (divine remembrance) which often resemble the practices of Sufis as well as different religions.

The Salafis could be regarded superficially as the British equivalent of the Ahl-i-hadith, however, they dissociate themselves from the term 'Wahhabi', but this is not because they reject being called a follower of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab but at the incorrect use of al-Wahhab, one of Allah's ninety names and of the incorrect use of the name of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab.

There would appear to be great influence in the Deobandi theology of Mawdudi and Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624) but a general lack of understanding as to who Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab was.

In today's UK, there is little difference apparent between the Sufism-oriented Barelvis and Deobandis, apart from when one enters the mosque in which the former have more influence, one sees 'Ya Muhammad' (O Muhammad) on the wall and usually at the entrance. This is indicative of the teachings of Ahmad Barelvi (d. 1831) who espoused that the Prophet Muhammad was always *hazir* (present) and *nazir* (watching). This is indicative of the theological difference between Barelvis and others who would regard this notion as *shirk*[33].

The internal strife and competition between Deobandis and Barelvis can be said to have preoccupied these communities in Britain for the latter part of the twentieth century in their efforts to establish their own mosques within Muslim communities; the mosques of one group are not known to invite openly the worshippers of another group. The Salafis are especially looked upon suspiciously because they do not want to hold either study circles in any of the other two main groups' mosques nor enthusiastically attend prayers there. When they do, they often sit in an isolated position and on discussion with some of them it has become apparent that they would only be willing to take over the running of the mosques completely but not be willing to engage or integrate into their communities.

3.2.3 Al-Muhajiroun and Hizb ut-Tahrir

The Deobandis, Barelvis and Salafis do not openly admit any type of political agenda. Al-Muhajiroun, deemed to be in support of radical Islamic thought and also militant, do have a political agenda. Omar Bakri Mohammed, who was the founder and worldwide leader of this group, openly declared the suicide bombers in the Israeli Café of Mike's Bar as 'heroes' (Wiktorowicz, 2005:6). He displays a sense of pan-Islamism and supports the founding of an Islamic caliphate in Muslim lands. This group does not appear to have perpetrated violence in Britain as yet, though this may simply be intentional in order to maintain a presence in Britain by keeping it out of bounds.

Geaves identifies Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) which is known for its desire to establish an Islamic state (Wiktorowicz, 2005:7) even in Britain as having the potential to ignite the fire of extremism or jihadist sentiments. Bakri joined this group in 1977. This group had been banned and severely suppressed in Saudi Arabia (Wiktorowicz, 2005:7) where Bakri had difficulty in recruiting people, hence, making it difficult to associate this group with Ibn Abd al-Wahhab or the Saudi administration. After being cast out of HT, Bakri continued work under the banner of al-Muhajiroun and over time it emerged as a group in its own right.

This desire to establish an Islamic caliphate for the implementation of Sharia is not extreme or jihadist nor does it pose a threat to British society or the British public. The comments from the Archbishop of Canterbury in 2008 that Sharia was inevitable in the

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33 The forbidden ascription of a partner to Allah

UK[34] coupled with the emergence of Sharia law courts in Britain which are under the control of Dr. Shoaib Hasan,[35] who has no links with these groups, show that there is an untenable link made between the requirement to establish an Islamic way of life and the political activities of HT and al-Muhajiroun.

3.3 Summary

Given the cultural (and to a great extent, ideological and religious) gap between immigrants from the Indian sub-continent and the second generation Muslims, it can be said that British Muslims have not necessarily inherited the issues that their parents brought with them from the sub-continent. Contrary to common belief, the first-generation Muslims are not greatly influenced by Wahhabism, nor are they clearly linked to extremist or terrorist activities. This leaves a question hanging over the militant activities of groups such as al-Muhajiroun, HT, and others which support *jihadi* or militant activities. Scholarly literature and media reports accuse militant groups of extremist activities but fail to pin-point how they influence the youth or analyse the factors that are contributing to underlying issues faced by Muslim youth in Britain.

The objective of establishing the success or failure of Wahhabism as an ideology is not possible because of the difficulties surrounding the definition of Wahhabism, as well as the erroneous link between the desire to live Islamically with the political agenda of some fringe groups that are labelled as Wahhabi by both writers on this topic as well as the media. Nevertheless, Britain is faced with a rise of extremist behaviour and in order to deal with it, a solution is required. Sufism is often discussed within the media and within political circles as being the cure and given that the British government recently supported the establishment of the Muslim Sufi Council of Britain. Given the sparse material on this topic, it needs to be discussed in some detail.

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34   http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/archbishop-of-canterbury-warns-sharia-law-in-britain-is-inevitable-779798.html accessed 01.08.10

35 http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1197478/Sharia-law-UK--How-Islam-dispensing-justice-side-British-courts.html accessed 01.08.10

4 Sufism: an alternative perspective for British Muslims

4.1 The Wahhabi–Sufi rivalry

The second objective of this dissertation is to establish how Sufism as an alternative paradigm addresses the issues of Britain's youth. There are underlying issues within Islamic theology whose contention goes back to the formative period within the early centuries of Islam. Geaves (2000:56) alludes to this point wherein questions about the nature of Allah, his non-corporeality, his anthropomorphism, his attributes and an understanding of what he desires, often become a bone of contention. This has been at the heart of the Sufi−non-Sufi divide: how far is Islam willing to accommodate hermeneutical interpretations of Quranic verses and Prophetic traditions? What exactly constitutes *shirk*? How much freedom is allowed within religion to express one's love for Allah? How literal is literal: does every verse within the Quran have an inner meaning and outer meaning or is there such thing as an outer meaning at all? Throughout these debates and attacks, Sufism has remained the one approach that has clearly stood the test of time and survived everywhere in the Muslim world working with all kinds of cultures. Ibn Arabi, a past Sufi master, even addressed the issue of equality between the sexes where traditional scholars often struggled to clear Islam's name.[36] Sufism is greatly responsible for the spread of Islam in the Indian sub-continent and saw the flow of Sufism from the Khwajagan of Afghanistan[37] to India and back again in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It has survived purist movements and political turmoil in Arab countries and even the theological turmoil of the early centuries of Islam. The scholars of Islamic *fiqh* and Sufism claim that it goes back to the Adam himself (Geaves, 2000).

The focus on the oppression of Sufism by Muslim purists has recently come to the fore, accelerated by the search of the British Government for a solution to the rise in Islamic extremism in Britain recently manifesting in suicide bomb attacks. This has also brought to the public eye the tireless efforts of the Haqqani Sufi Shaykh Hisham Kabbani who campaigned in the pre−9/11 days to raise awareness of the pending attacks. This has provided the backdrop to allow the Shaykh to bring out the Sufi voice and 'officially' enter Sufism into mainstream Islam in Britain. His celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday in number 10 Downing Street has done a great deal to raise the profile of Sufism within Britain. His flourishing relationship with royalty[38] seen in his hosting of a Sufi event in Manchester on 4th February 2010 is another indication of harmonious relationships that Sufism can bring to the table. Despite the seeming division in the Muslim community caused by the polarisation into either non-Sufi and Sufi, there appears to be a benefit in that the moderate Muslim has a potential representative in the form of Sufism. This is also indicated by Geaves (2000:59) who has written about the potential of Sufism to counter the extremist tendencies as he analyses the writings of Sufi Shaykhs such as Kabbani (1998).

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36 See http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/women.html accessed 01.08.10

37 This long line of Khawaja Sufis founded the Chishtiyyah *tariqa* and included Khawaja Uthman Harwani (d. unknown) of Afghanistan and Khawaja Muin al-Din Hasan (d. unknown) of Sijistan, Afghanistan who migrated to Lahore and then Delhi.

38 There is a tradition of many great Sufis being at variance with rulers of their times and avoiding their company. Al-Ghazali (d. 1111) is reported to have said that one should not look at the face of a tyrant and unjust sultan; if it becomes necessary, one should turn their face away while talking to such a ruler (http://dawoodi-bohras.com/news/179/64/On-Sufi-approach-to-Islam/d,pdb_detail_article/ accessed 26.08.10). This would appear to trace its roots back to the period of unjust kings and caliphs of the Muslim world.

The immanent danger that needs addressing is the possibility of hard-line or extremist rhetoric that has already infiltrated Britain's mosques remaining there. The Friday sermons of anger aimed at perceived enemies of Islam are indications that there are some remnants of the reaction to the colonialism of Muslim lands imported into Britain. This voice is increasingly becoming dated as British Muslims struggle to form an identity for themselves.

Geaves (interview conducted by this author, 2010) explains that there has been a fair amount of opportunism exhibited by Sufi groups in the wake of the issues of recent years especially after the 9/11 and 7/7 incidents. Sufis capitalised on the opportunity saying that Sufism would never support the violent actions of such radical groups. Furthermore, given that Sufis have also historically been involved in military conflicts, it cannot be simply said that Sufism is an apolitical, non-militant group of mystics.

4.2 Sufism: conclusion

The question as to whether or not Sufism is an alternative paradigm is a complex one on many levels. There is a plethora of writings on Sufism stretching back centuries: the scholarly writings on this subject have, as previously mentioned, traversed centuries, cultures, peoples, eras, languages and an array of other variable factors in society. The extant writings of the likes of Idries Shah (d. 1996) have been a companion to the British people from the mid-twentieth century until today. Book stores proliferate with both original writings in Arabic and Persian as well as interpretations in English by Orientalists, Westerners, Sufis and non-Sufis. Many writers such as Annemarie Schimmel (d. 2003) have given the best parts of their lives to the study of Sufism, taking up residency in centres of Sufi culture[39] and Islamic scholars to this day search to define the inner kernel of Islam through the Sufi way. Sufism's roots are seen by some to emerge from the Hadith of Jibril narrated in the *Forty Ahadith*[40] of Abu Zakaria Muhi al-Din Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi (d. 1278) in which Jibril (the Angel Gabriel) comes to the Prophet Muhammad and asks him an array of questions, one of which is about *Ihsan* to which the Prophet replies that it is to worship Allah as though one sees him and if one cannot see him then one should realise that Allah sees him. The clear message of this hadith is that Sufism is greatly experiential and it aims to bring one closer to Allah.

This section of the dissertation could not possibly hope to cover the vast amount of books on Sufism or the wide range of its topics. Given the lack of in-depth literature available on the possibility of Sufism being the alternative paradigm to extremism, it leads one to the following conclusions.

Some prominent Sufis in Britain such as Shaykh al-Kabbani have a good relationship with the British ruling administration and this will be viewed by politically-oriented Islamists as a political tool which politicians can use according to their whims and non-Islamic objectives if required. This will always be a point of contention and sticking point for supporting Sufism as an alternative perspective given that some such groups are receiving funding from the British government.[41]

Sufism promotes certain non-Orthodox activities such as the veneration of saints, which even non-extremist groups such as Deobandis can critically argue against using Islamic sources. Sufism would need to be able to accommodate such differences of

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39 http://www.goethe.de/ins/pk/lah/en1097776.htm accessed 01.08.10

40 http://www.sunnah.org/ibadaat/Rajab_commentary40hadīth.htm accessed 01.08.10

41 http://www.butterfliesandwheels.org/2010/the-british-labour-governments-ruinous-approach-to-combating-islamic-extremism/ accessed 01.08.10

opinion otherwise Sufis will fail to engage with other Islamic elements within British society.

Many Sufi Muslims uphold the British monarchy as divinely ordained rulers whereas there are anti-royalists even in Britain, given the monarchy's German descent. This notion had its origin in the Banu Umayyad caliphate where the oppressive rulers espoused the view that Allah had supported their rule through predestination. This again is a contentious point which goes back to the heart of Islamic theology and the days of the Qadarite-Jabbarite debates.[42] The issue is where one draws the line between accepting a ruling establishment on the grounds that they are divinely ordained and opposing them on their oppressive policies. It has further ramifications for British citizens because of the pledge to the British monarchy and the British state which is expected from each citizen.[43] Despite the passing of centuries this point is still contentious and not likely to be resolved by simply promoting Sufi values.

Sufism is not necessarily averse to political involvement even by military means. Even a Sufi could interpret a political situation to justify the taking up of arms and possibly fighting for a bad cause. The Janissary Turkish troops were closely linked to Haji Bektashi Veli (d. 1270) and often called 'Sons of Haji Bektash'[44] a well-known Sufi of the thirteenth century who came to Anatolia from Khorasan settling in the small village of Suluca Karahoyuk (Nasr, 1997:359). The Bektashi way became central to the Janissary corps because every man who joined them had to take an oath of loyalty to Haji Bektash Wali, thus this would in effect make them his *murid* (follower).

Othman Dan Fodio (d. 1817) of the Qadiriyyah Order in West Africa launched a *jihad* to reform his followers and formed the Sokoto Caliphate in Nigeria[45]. This *jihad* was also instrumental in inspiring later Sufi leaders to form new states in Fouta Jallon in 1725, Fouta Toro in 1776 and Masina in 1810.

Is the relationship between prominent Sufis like Shaykh al-Kabbani and the ruling administration reciprocated in the same way by his counterparts? The whole-hearted backing by the British government of Sufis in the early twenty-first century does not appear to be as forthcoming now with some reports that the government is not considering Sufism as the only strand of the Muslim community with which it is willing to engage. This gives the impression that Sufis of Britain have not managed to maintain their once flourishing ties with the British ruling establishment. Furthermore, the recent function arranged by Shaykh al-Kabbani to which he invited Prince Charles has only been noted as a musical festival on his 'official website' as opposed to being promoted as an effort to spread Islam through love.[46] It would be too late for a personality such as Haqqani to preach an apolitical perspective because of the support he has already given to the likes of Prince Charles and solidarity shown to the British Government. To a typically non-Sufi group such as the Salafis Haqqani probably is regarded as a sell-out. Furthermore, even within Sufis, there are some such as al-Ghazali (d. 1111) who have espoused a general divide between rulers and *walis*.[47] The implication is that there

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42 See Watt, Montgomery J. (1975) *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, Oneworld Press.

43 http://www.centreforcitizenship.org/pledge.html accessed 01.08.10

44 http://www.beyond-the-pale.co.uk/albanian4.htm accessed 31.07.10

45 Nasr, 1997:295 referencing Doi A. R. I. *Sufism in Africa*

46 http://www.princeofwales.gov.uk/newsandgallery/gallery/trh_visit_manchester_608019307_397614779.html accessed 31.07.10

47 Generally meaning 'friends' of Allah. This was a title regarded to be applicable to Sufi saints. See Engineer A (2009) *Sufism – Culture and Politics* available online at http://www.csss-isla.com/arch%2014.htm accessed 16.08.10

are some Sufis who would not regard Haqqani's affiliation with royalty and ruling powers as legitimate and this could result in realignment with more extreme groups.

Sufism cannot therefore necessarily be deemed as an apolitical strand of Islam. Nasr (1997:163) writes that one of the prominent characteristics of the Naqshbandi *tariqa* was the way in which it never hesitated in being critical of or confrontational towards political powers. He goes on to quote Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi as saying that '[t]he King is the soul and the people the body. If the King goes astray, the people will follow suit.' Given that this strand of Sufism is traced back to either Abu Bakr or to Imam Ali, it is inevitable that there are political ties with the Naqshbandis and that they would even be willing to engage in combat for the right cause. The other Sufi *tariqas* on the other hand may have had a slightly different approach in that their policy was 'As you are, so shall be your rulers.' (Nasr, 1997:163) which implies a focus on oneself rather than others, nevertheless, armed conflict cannot be ruled out of the Sufi theology.

The inference is that whereas a so-called Wahhabist Muslim was willing to fight against the British Government and its citizens in favour of the Afghan Taliban, the Naqshbandi Sufi might be willing to take the side of the British Government against the Afghan Taliban and this is a problematic situation for any Muslim if they were required to fight against a fellow Muslim even if given approval by their government. The well-known Prophetic *hadith* is often quoted in this regard which states that if two Muslims fight amongst each other both of them are destined to hell-fire (Sunan Abi Dawud).[48]

Given the Naqshbandiyya principle of opposing one's rulers if need be, there is no guarantee that even British Sufis can be stopped from joining forces with militant and *jihadi* groups in Afghanistan and other such places. The result is that militancy could possibly begin to occur even within the Sufi community of Britain. The Muslim world may well see the formation of 'pro-War on Terror' Naqshbandis and 'anti-War on Terror' Naqshbandis splitting the Muslim community even further.

It can be seen that the answer to the increase in radical Islam within Britain is therefore not necessarily Sufism; on the contrary, the over-promotion of Sufism to British Muslims could result in a total split within the Muslim community on more levels than simply a religious one: there would now be a theological and a political split.

The answer must therefore be sought from identifying the underlying reasons why the British youth are finding that they need to express themselves in such devastating ways. This is achieved in the next section through case studies and field research.

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48 http://mukto-mona.com/wordpress/?p=292 accessed 01.08.10

5. Field Research

5.1 Introduction

The challenges in obtaining first-hand information on Muslim extremists have already been discussed in the Introduction. The research conducted for this section is predominantly second-hand with some first hand information where interviews could successfully be conducted with British Muslims. Priority was given to case study material published and stocked by university libraries; where news reports were used, the stories that were available on well known websites such as the BBC were referenced.

From Quintan Wiktorowicz's research included in *Radical Islam Rising: Extremism in the West*[49] it became increasingly apparent that the issues within Britain were being caused by similar underlying factors which were often socio-cultural and common to British Muslims. This is most apparent in the second-generation Muslims originating from the Indian sub-continent which is the ethnic origin of three of the 7/7 bombers with the remaining one being a convert to Islam of Jamaican origin.

5.2 Cognitive openings and the process of change

Wiktorowicz (2005:85) uses a term 'cognitive opening' to describe the process of a Muslim becoming more receptive to the possibility of new ideas and worldviews. It is somewhat of a shaking up of deep-rooted beliefs, almost like a paradigm shift in which a person's worldview changes. The reasons for such a shift can be several; however, simply listening to anti-West rhetoric is not always enough to bring about this change as seen during a control survey conducted by Wiktorowicz: most Muslims usually turn off or even 'ignore da'wa stalls' set out by activist groups and 'keep walking' (Wiktrorowicz, 2005:92).

Anjem Choudary, the leader of the UK branch of al-Muhajiroun, expressed in an interview (Wiktorowicz, 2005:90) that British Muslims were questioning their own identity especially after going to university and being encouraged by the education process to aspire towards professional careers. They would often ask whether they want to continue to live in British society and want their children to be brought up here or whether it is more appropriate to move elsewhere. An unsatisfactory answer could result in a cognitive opening and causing one to rethink one's ideology and identity. Such an opening is all that a radical such as Choudary needs in order to recruit.

Activist recruiters also use a technique of stimulating the person's mind so that in the words of Omar Bakri a newcomer 'himself determines the problem' (Wiktorowicz, 2005:97). A person is on the road to becoming a full-fledged member once that stimulation has started.

A recruiter who is open to a person's slow progress has a greater level of appeal than one who is more militant often scolding a new member for not attending lessons. Al-Muhajiroun are of the former ilk whereas HT are of the latter.

To Choudary and Bakri, such cognitive openings would be indicative of the failing of British society.

5.2.1 Racial and religious discrimination

A survey conducted in 2002 showed that sixty-nine percent of Muslims felt that the broader society did not consider them an integral part of life in Britain (Wiktorowicz, 2005:88) with many experiencing personal abuse because of their religion. In a control

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49 Wiktorowicz, Q (2005) *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers)

survey conducted by Wiktorowicz (2005: 102–103) it was felt for racial discrimination in the UK the mean score (from 1 to 10, where 1 was not at all a problem and 10 was a problem in every aspect of British society) was 6.19. Twenty-three percent indicated racial discrimination at their place of work.

Forty percent of all Britons believe Britain to be a racist society Wiktorowicz (2005:90); forty-five percent say that they know someone who is prejudiced; sixty percent of blacks and Asians say that they have experienced verbal racism; twenty percent complain of physical racial abuse.

This is brought home when, despite sacrificing one's culture, religion and ethics for a Western life style a person might still be labelled a 'Paki' (Wiktorowicz, 2005:91). Activist Islamists regard Britain the most racist society in the world (Wiktorowicz, 2005:103).

Incidents such as the Bradford riots in July 2001 resulted in forty-six rioters receiving sentences which on average came to 5.5 years (Wiktorowicz, 2005:88); these are longer than the sentence handed down to a rioter in Belfast. Muslims also feel that the terror laws are specifically targeting them above all others.

There is a growing sense that laws do not adequately protect Muslims as they do other ethnic minorities. It would appear that the religious identities of Sikhs, Jews and Gypsies (Wiktorowicz, 2005:88) have been bundled within their ethnic identities and laws against discrimination on grounds of ethnicity as well as religion doubly protect these communities. Discrimination on the grounds of religion is not always prevented adequately for Muslims, as seen in the case of two Muslims who prayed during their breaks and were consequently fired by their employer who was from the same North African group as them on the grounds that discrimination could not be proven. Because of this, Muslims feel that they are exposed.

5.2.2 Alienation and segregation

Discrimination, as well as 7/7 and 9/11 incidents, have resulted in a change in perception of some non-Muslims causing Muslims to feel excluded on a greater scale. In a survey conducted by Pew Global Attitudes Project in 2006 it was found that within Britain forty-two percent (vs. thirty-four in 2005) felt very concerned about the rise of 'Islamic extremism'.[50] A survey by YouGov in 2006 found that fifty-five three percent of non-Muslims felt British Muslims had grown more apart from the rest of British society[51]. This, however needs to be contrasted with a survey conducted by the Gallup World Poll in which seventy- four percent of Muslims living in London felt Muslims are loyal to the countries they live in.[52] The effect on Muslims is that there is unnecessary negative media attention on Muslims with public support for anti-Islamic rhetoric which can contribute to an increased sense of alienation. Eighty-four percent of non-Muslims have become more suspicious of Muslims since the attacks of 9/11 (Wiktorowicz 2005:88)

5.2.3 Identity crisis

The above factors often lead to an identity crisis amongst educated second-generation Muslims in Britain. Every professional Muslim interviewed by this author expressed the same concern. Ironically, although Muslims are struggling to find their

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50   http://pewglobal.org/2006/08/10/in-great-britain-muslims-worry-about-islamic-extremism/ accessed 18.08.10

51   http://www.yougov.co.uk/extranets/ygarchives/content/pdf/TSU060101002_1.pdf accessed 18.08.10

52 www.gallup.com/se/File/128150/WPTFMuslimsinEuropeExecSumm.pdf
 accessed 18.08.10

identity and promoting unity among Muslims, there is often a general desire within the Muslim community to move away from areas densely populated by Muslims. One's surroundings and upbringing inform one's identity; a knock in one's perception of their surroundings can cause a vacuum and if the knock were substantial enough, an identity crisis occurs. Activist groups often operate through networks of close associates and friends in which one associate attempts to attract another (Wiktorowicz, 2005:86).

The situation in which the British Muslim often finds himself is that he leads a double life as a traditional Pakistani at home and then as a British Muslim in public. This makes it more difficult to reconcile oneself to British culture.

5.2.4 International conflict involving Muslims

In the same YouGov survey aforementioned, fifty-eight percent of Muslims felt that Britain's foreign policy is anti-Muslim.[53] Such political questions are not satisfactorily tackled by traditional imams from the Indian sub-continent or an Arab nation because a person originating from outside Britain may not have the political interests of Britain at heart until they regard Britain as their home. Jihadis or extreme groups such as HT or the al-Mouhajirun seek to tackle the political issues of the day head on and are vocal in their views.

Given the complexity of these situations, activists can coax the potential recruit into a knee-jerk reaction and adopt radical or violent actions, although the actions of an individual may not have any impact on an international conflict. Nevertheless, the fear that the War on Terror could turn into a war on Islam (Wiktorowicz, 2005:109) is widely felt. This has been echoed by a number of Muslims professionals in Yorkshire interviewed by this author during July and August 2010. Although the likes of al-Muhajiroun do not profess to promote extreme activities, they certain can use media headlines to exploit a British Muslim.

5.2.5 Other factors

Factors such as unemployment can contribute to not only an identity crisis when Muslims feel they cannot get jobs because of their religion. Statistical data confirms that economic factors appear to be pitted against Muslims of the Indian sub-continent. Wiktorowicz (2005:89) explains how men of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin are 2.5 times more likely to be unemployed than a white man. 40 percent of young Bangladeshi men are unemployed as compared to 12 percent of whites of the same age group. Those employed earn less than whites and other minority groups per week (Wiktorowicz, 2005:89). This is an important factor because Muslims originating from Pakistan form forty-three percent of all Muslims in the UK (see Table 1).

Ethnic Group	%Muslim	%all Muslims	%Minority Population
Pakistani	92	43	16.1
Bangladeshi	92	17	6.1
Indian	13	8	22.7
Black Caribbean	1	Less than 1	12.2
Black African	20	6	10.5
Other ethnic group (excluding Chinese)	26	4	5
Mixed	10	6	15.6

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53   http://www.yougov.co.uk/extranets/ygarchives/content/pdf/TSU060101002_1.pdf accessed 18.08.10

Other Asian	37	6	5
Other black	6	Less than 1	2.1

Table 1: statistics of Muslims in the UK

[The total Muslim population was 1.59 million, 2.7 percent of the total UK population. The above Pakistanis are mostly from the Azad Kashmir region of northern Pakistan

Data is courtesy of Wiktorowicz (2005:89) referencing a UK Census taken in 2001].

Another major factor is the death in a family with 31.7 percent of people in the control group in surveyed by Wiktorowicz (2005:104) citing this as a reason as to why they decided to explore their religion more (see Table 2 below).

Reason	%age
Death in Family	31.7
Other	29
What does it mean to be a Muslim?	13
International conflict involving Muslims	13
Dissatisfied with own life	8
Feeling of loneliness	5
Near death experience	3

Table 2: Reasons why a person decided to explore their religion more deeply

5.3 Case Studies: bombers in the making

The stories of three second-generation Muslim youths who committed suicide bombings are analysed in this section to understand what factors influenced their decision to carry out these acts. The names are:

Muhammad Sidique Khan (d. 2005)

Omar Khan Sharif (d. 2003)

Asim Mohammed Hanif (d. 2003)

The acts committed by them confused the British public. Their stories are discussed below.

5.3.1 Mohammad Sidique Khan (d. 7th July 2005)

In 2007, Shiv Malik published an article called *My Brother the Bomber* in which he reportedly spent months in the Leeds suburb of Beeston becoming acquainted with Gultasab Sidique Khan, the brother of Mohammad Sidique Khan.[54] Mohammad was described as a softly spoken youth worker, yet something in his life changed the Islamic perspective of this individual who was western in his youth and was even called Sid by his colleagues.

Khan had volunteered for community youth mentoring in 1997 whilst at Leeds Metropolitan University and his conversion to a form of jihadi Islam reportedly began in 1999. Khan had been working with Omar Sharif and Asif Hanif, the two other suicide bombers discussed in this section of the dissertation. The youth mentoring activities also included explaining to Mirpuri youth that if they wanted to lever themselves out of poverty, they needed to branch out from jobs such as being taxi drivers and restaurant workers.

Beeston is an isolated and undistinguished suburb of Leeds and, one of the poorest places in England, it has remained a ghetto until recent times and become a neighbourhood in which drug dealers now operate. Khan had become a mentor to fellow Muslim youth and had reacted to the situation by affiliating himself with a group of second-generation Pakistanis who called themselves the Mullah Boys. This was a group of fifteen to twenty members which was formed in the mid-1990s whose initial mission it was to deal with the drug issue which the previous generation did not know how to deal with. Khan and his colleagues would reportedly take drug addicts to a flat and forcibly cleanse them of their drug habits.

After the 9/11 incident the Mullah Boys became increasingly religious. They exhibited Salafi tendencies and began to marry girls of their own choice and outside of the Pakistani community and to this end conduct marriages from the premises of Iqra, an Islamic bookshop on Bude Road. Though this caused a stir in the community they defended the marriages saying that pure Islam was not averse to such a practise.

Khan was initially affected by social problems he was surrounded with although it is not clear how he developed into a would-be suicide bomber. It is known that his activities became increasingly jihadi as he began to make excursions to Pakistan. He had links to Abdullah al-Faisal, a radical preacher jailed in 2003 for inciting racial hatred. Malik explains how little was known about Khan's intentions up until the 7/7 incident. Khan's friends were increasingly joining more fundamentalist groups thus possibly influencing his path also.

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54 Spelling of name is as per Shiv Malik's article available online at http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/2007/06/mybrotherthebomber/
    accessed 23.07.10

Additionally, Khan's brother Gultasab said that his local mosque could not connect with the second generation of Muslims because they could not speak English whereas more fundamentalist groups delivered sermons and printed publications in English.

5.3.2 Omar Sharif (d. 2003)

Omar Sharif, a British Muslim from Derby attempted to detonate himself at a bar in Tel Aviv, Israel but the bomb failed to go off. Sharif escaped from the scene but his body was found some twelve days later washed up on the beach and badly decayed.

In an article by Shiv Malik,[55] Sharif's friend Zaheer Khan explains how there was a gradual development in Sharif's radicalisation. Sharif had allegedly established links with Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) and in particular, Omar Bakri, whilst studying Maths at King's College London in 1995. Khan explained how Sharif was like 'an empty bowl' and how he 'didn't know much about the culture of his own family, his background' and he 'didn't have a clue about Islam'.

It would initially appear that the reasons for the radicalisation of Sharif were down to his affiliation with HT whose then leader, Bakri, had called for the assassination of John Major in 1991. Sharif's future wife had also been a student at King's College and they had both become more traditional in their dress and perspective on Islam since joining HT.

Even Bakri apparently had no prior knowledge of Sharif's intentions and to this day has denied any involvement in it.

The case of Sharif does nothing to provide a clear reason for the actions especially when HT vehemently denies any desire for their members to become suicide bombers. Nevertheless, the answer would appear to come from Bakri's explanation as to what the 'obligation of the time' is. In his view the obligation of the time is now jihad: the obligation of the Muslim ummah before the occupation of Muslim land was the establishment of a caliphate 'but when the non-Muslims gather together to fight against Muslims and occupy Muslim land, the mother of all obligations is to liberate, the fight back'.

The suggestion from the above is that rather than an intolerant form of Islam being the driving force behind Sharif's actions, it was the situation in Israel with the humanitarian crisis of the people of Palestine.

5.3.3 Asim Mohammad Hanif (d. 2003)

Asim Hanif was born in Hounslow, Middlesex in 1992. He is reported to have been a religious person from an early age. He had been a member of a Sufi group called Light Study based in Hounslow mosque and lead by a Syrian Shaykh called Muhammad al-Yaqoubi whose views are supposedly against violent jihad and al-Qaeda.[56] Despite his leaning towards Sufism Hanif is reported to have been seen in the offices of al-Muhajiroun several times.[57]

In late 2002 Hanif is reported to have travelled to Damascus Syria for studies in Arabic and Islam. He is said to have met with Omar Sharif Khan there. From there he apparently established links with radical Islamic groups and was drawn into the operations of Hamas.

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55 Malik, S (2006) *Omar Sharif: He Was the British Suicide Bomber Who Attempted an Attack in Tel Aviv Three Years Ago. Now, for the First Time, We Know Why*, New Statesman. Volume: 135. Issue: 4789. Publication Date: April 24, 2006. Page Number: 24 (available online at www.questia.com accessed 11.08.10)

56 See Bright A and Alam F (2003) *Making of a Martyr* at http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/may/04/terrorism.religion accessed 15.08.10
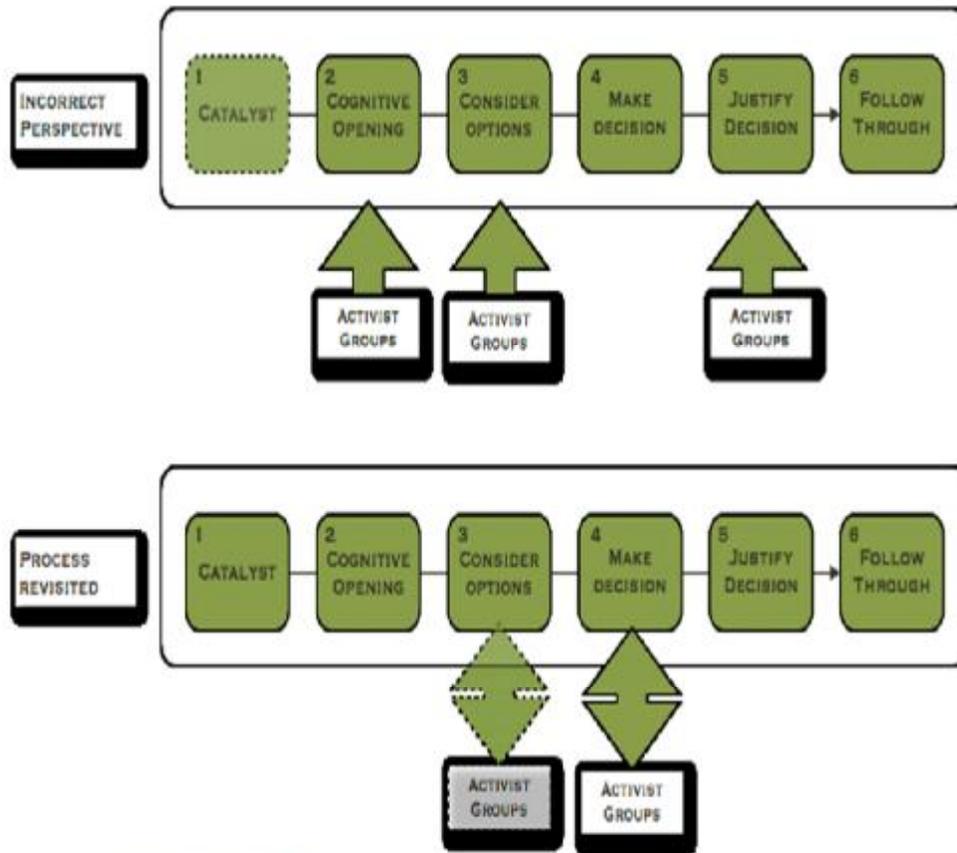
57 http://www.globaljihad.net/view_page.asp?id=204 accessed 11.08.10

Both he and Sharif travelled around Palestine for a number of weeks as peace activists before occupying a flat for one night during which they filmed their farewell speech in which they denounced the state of Israel and called Israelis the 'real terrorists' and 'sickos' along with Tony Blair and George Bush. Hanif justified his intentions to carry out the bombings by blaming the treatment of Muslims at the hands of Blair and Bush. The evidence points in the direction of British and American foreign policy being the catalyst in this episode.

5.4 Emerging Trends and Observations

In the above case studies it can be seen that the cognitive opening as discussed by Wiktorowicz appears to have occurred, providing an opening for radical elements. Each person's case was different and there is a degree of complexity surrounding the thought processes that lead a suicide bomber to their eventual conclusion.

Diagram 1 portrays the above process of radicalisation and compares it with that portrayed within alternative process which reflects the writings of the majority literature in this field and the British media.

INCORRECT PERSPECTIVE

| 1 CATALYST | 2 COGNITIVE OPENING | 3 CONSIDER OPTIONS | 4 MAKE DECISION | 5 JUSTIFY DECISION | 6 FOLLOW THROUGH |

ACTIVIST GROUPS | ACTIVIST GROUPS | ACTIVIST GROUPS

PROCESS REVISITED

| 1 CATALYST | 2 COGNITIVE OPENING | 3 CONSIDER OPTIONS | 4 MAKE DECISION | 5 JUSTIFY DECISION | 6 FOLLOW THROUGH |

ACTIVIST GROUPS | ACTIVIST GROUPS

EXTREMIST IN
THE MAKING

Given that suicide bombers often cite conflicts around the world as being the reasons why they decided to take drastic action, it is impossible to ignore the factors discussed in section 5.2. Dotted lined boxes and shapes indicate the possibility but not conclusive involvement of an actor or a part of the process.

Empirical evidence is inconclusive in placing the blame squarely on the shoulders of activists Islamists because at face value they have not always been aware of the intentions of suicide bombers. Nevertheless, they need to take some culpability given that they can often provide the channels for would-be bombers to mobilise around the world. Furthermore, given that most al-Muhajiroun activists were irreligious prior to them joining the movement describing themselves as secular and typically British (Wiktorowicz, 2005:102), there is some mileage in the notion that the militancy of such groups can have bring pressure to bear on an individual.

There is an emerging trend within the Muslim community of educated Muslims searching for answers to questions that living in a Western society raises. The questions are being asked and therefore the answers will also need to be provided otherwise there is the risk of another generation gap occurring where Muslims who were to some extent in-between cultures never managed to decide which one they belonged to and what that meant for their religion.

The new generation could potentially be so far removed from the first two generations that neither of them will be able to relate to it, thus losing all sense of ethnic identity; this could be seen as advantageous to theological discussions because it provides the context to revisit many of Islam's central notions, on the other hand, it could also create more crises for activist groups to operate and more confusion within a troubled community.

6. Conclusions and closing remarks

Sufism's inherent pluralism and humility contributes towards a harmonious society; but its eagerness to focus on these and other key aspects such as love can at times overpower its ability to self-appraise. This inability to self-critique is also seen in other Islamic groups. Wahhabism, Sufism's perceived antithesis, is a misnomer because purism is part and parcel of all strands of Islam and does not necessarily lead to extreme acts of violence. This opens up the discussion on the use of terms such as 'extremism' or 'Islamic extremist' which are widely used to denote literalist and purist approaches to Islam without due attention or analysis carried out on the Muslim groups in question. An extremity is a relative notion; if a purist and literalist approach to Islam can be called 'extreme', why can a completely liberal approach not also be called 'extreme' since both approaches, potentially being opposites, are equidistant from a middle way?

The issues that face the British Muslim community are complex. If not addressed, socio-economic issues in the more deprived areas of Britain and increasing ghettoisation will cause a growing sense of despair. The economic downturn affects all citizens of Britain, and from empirical evidence it could be argued that Asian Muslims are more affected than others. Given the pressure from radical Islamist (or terror-supporting) groups, modernists, the media, traditional scholars, and the first generation Muslims the community is in danger of being sidelined as opposed to being integrated into British society. Despite the above pressures, the Muslim community is expected to reform and to contribute to British society; the community needs time to reflect and weigh up its options.

The importance of engagement with British Muslims cannot be under-estimated especially given that many issues which face the wider Muslim world cannot be ignored or simply be passed off as Islamist issues especially when some of the political issues have a legitimate existence and impact on the minds of British Muslims. Most Muslims have opinions on current issues like the Israeli – Palestinian conflict, the threat of a hijab ban, detaining of 'terror suspects' for long periods of time without trial, stop and search policies of the Police and the detention of Britons in the Guantanamo Bay prison. It is the responsibility of prominent Muslims and leaders within the community to engage with the community and represent it. Freedom of speech entitles British Muslims to have their views heard on all socio-political issues. Table 3 below suggests a depiction of the various stages of a Muslim's perspective.

	Terrorism	Modernism	Moderation
Apoliticisation	A	B	C
Political Involvement	D	E	F
Violence	G	H	I

Table 3 depicts the various perspectives that a Muslim may find they have adopted or are adopting: it plots political involvement against religious attitudes. It also suggests how change may be brought about and gives a goal to focus upon.

Grey cells (A and I) suggest an impossible combination; red cells (D, G and H) are unfavourable places to be in that they pose threats to society; yellow cells (B and C) are cells which are neutral or optional; green cells (E and F) are desirable for the British community. Both yellow and green cells will reap most benefits for Britain. Examples of D could be argued to be politically active Islamist groups which use bully tactics to oppress other Islamist groups. An example of G is a suicide bomber, like the ones studied in the Case Study section; H shows a person whose main aim is not to incite terror but live in a modern world and is happy to use violent means to achieve their aims, such as domestic violence. It should be impossible for a moderate and violent Muslim to exist.

It can be seen that political involvement from the Muslim community in no way suggests that it will harm society; if anything, it should bring benefits to society with Islam's values of justice, equality, mercy etc. The task of transitioning from one cell to another is made easier by the teachings that are espoused by a particular strand of Islam. It may be that Muslim groups have a mix of elements within them, however, any assessment of an institution should be undertaken with care. Socio-economic issues make the task of progressing through the table more challenging.

Some Islamic institutions promise much yet appear to under-deliver, often losing credibility in their early stages. The Sufi Council of Britain, accused of being set up by US Neo-cons, does not appear to have made many headlines of late[58].

Government-backed think tanks such as the Quilliam Foundation promote theological reform but its current policy of naming, Islamism-grading[59] and shaming respected Muslim groups and an inability to win support from the mainstream Muslim community could exacerbate the sense of isolation that the community is feeling and further distance Quilliam and result in its plans to retrain Imams to fail. The Quilliam Foundation, in their state-of-the-art Central London offices, and alleged large salaries, portray an image quite distant from the humble, almost poor, image portrayed by the Prophet Muhammad and supported by Sufi *tariqa*s which are greatly influential in Britain. The community may see the classical scholarly method of studying traditional texts under the tutelage of a pious, often Sufi inspired, mentor in danger of extinction. It must also overcome the accusations of commercialism, opportunism and 'toeing the Government line'[60]levelled at it. This will not help in its efforts to try and win mainstream Muslim support especially when it often uncritically accepts Government policies and what it perceives to be British values.

The human state informs its theological outlook and as such the British Muslim is in a formative period. The socio-political context that surrounds the British Muslim community needs addressing at the same time as it finds its theology. Religious reinterpretation and reform should be natural processes of human evolution in mankind's attempt to adapt to his socio-political surroundings. There is room for reinterpretation of many notions from their apparent traditional definitions: jihad, apostasy, kufr, shirk, dar ul-harb, civil weddings are only a few. The community clearly need pragmatism, reform, coaching, counselling and most important time to reflect; change on such a large scale is a slow process and cannot simply be quickened with Government backing. Modern Turkey is on its way to reconciling modernism with its Islamic heritage, however, the process has taken the best part of the twentieth century. Sometimes, the key guiding principles of Islam are most easily overlooked such as the constant Quranic reminder to mankind of reflection, patience and turning to Allah. Given that the Muslim community is a minority group, it also requires support from the majority non-Muslim community.

Sincerity is obvious to the observer and it breeds loyalty. Muslim leaders need to display a sense of commitment and inspire. Reformers need to be aware of their audience before they engage with them and be careful not to

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58 Attempts to make contact for the purpose of this dissertation proved unsuccessful.

59 The report grades Muslim groups according to the levels of Islamism that Quilliam perceive exist within their perspectives: Quilliam Foundation *Preventing Terrorism: where next for Britain?* 14th June 2010 available online at http://www.mpacuk.org/story/100810/debate-quilliam-vs-european-muslim-research-centre-about-islamist-groups.html accessed 28.08.10

60 Kerbaj, R (2009) *Government gives £1m to anti-extremist think-tank Quilliam Foundation* http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article5549138.ece accessed 28.08.10

simply dismantle everything within Muslim communities and institutions in a reinvent-the-wheel method of reform and throw the baby out with the bathwater.

END

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Glossary of Terms

Ahl-i-hadith

A group of Muslims understood to have been founded by Shah Wali Ullah Dehlavi (d. 1762) who follow the Islamic sources usually avoiding the imitation of any of the major fiqh imams such as Abu Hanifah. This group is commonly found in Pakistan and India.

Barelvi

A follower of Ahmad Raza Khan (d. 1921) who was a reformer in India during the colonial years. The Barelvis are usually influenced by Sufis, more so than Deobandis. Barelvis are known for celebrating the urs of dead saints and the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad each year.

Dar ul-Harb

This translates as House of War and was a notion that medieval Muslim scholars used to describe the non-Muslim lands; it was used in opposition to Dar ul-Islam (see below). The inference was that Muslims were not allowed to live in Dar ul-Harb.

Dar ul-Islam

Translates as House of Islam and was used by medieval Muslim scholars to describe the lands under Muslim rule.

Dar ul-Ulum Deoband

See Deobandi

Deobandi

A person affiliated with Dar ul-Ulum Deoband, a seat of learning based in India greatly influenced by Maulana Qasim Nanautawi (d. 1901) whose scholarly line traces back to Shah Waliullah al-Dehlavi (d. 1762).

Dhikr

Arabic word meaning remembrance of Allaah

Extremism

Usually denotes a literalist rendering of Islam which allows room for unjustified violence as opposed to mercy and compassion.

First generation Muslims

Muslim immigrants from countries such as Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Arab countries whose native language is not English.

Hadith (pl. ahadith)

Prophetic tradition reaching back to the Prophet Muhammad. Among Sunnis ahadith can also include sayings of the Prophet's Companions and among Shiites they include the sayings of the ahl al-bayt.

Ihsan

The feeling that one is gazing upon Allaah whilst one is praying; manifested in an experiential feeling of Allaah's presence during one's salat.

Imam

Typically the leader of prayers for Sunnis; leader of community for Shiites.

Islamist

This term is typically used to refer to active organisations or individuals which have an Islamically oriented aims or mission statement. Islamists often espouse views on governmental policies and social life which involve implementing the Shariah principles or Islamic law.

Khanqah (Tekke in Turkish, Zawiya in Arabic)

A place where a Sufi may retreat to perform dhikr etc.

Kufr

Translates as disbelief. It is a term widely used to refer to people who have no religion; however, some Muslims even use this term to refer to what the Quran calls People of the Book (Jews and Christians).

Masjid

Another term for mosque: place of worship for Muslims.

Pir

A word for Sufis Shaykh used by people of Pakistani and Indian origin.

Salafi

A Muslim who follows the teachings of the '*salaf salih*' (pious predecessors). They preach a return to the original teachings of Islam as allegedly practised by the first three generations of Muslims. Salafis oppose taqlid and greatly admire the books of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab.

Second generation Muslims

Children of first generation Muslims whose first language is English and have predominantly been born and brought up in the UK.

Shaykh

A respectable word used to refer to a Muslim scholar or somebody in position of religious authority.

Shirk

A word which denotes the ascription of a partner or an equal to Allah.

Sufi

A follower of Sufism

Sufism (or Tasawwuf)

Discipline within Islam in which the adherent aims to achieve spiritual excellence and purification through certain practises such as remembrance of Allaah and also betters one's prayers so that they ultimately instil a sense of ihsan within themselves.

Tablighi Jamaat

A group of Muslim preachers originating in India under the auspices of Maulana Zakariyya (d. 1982). This group is influenced by the Deobandi cause but is also influenced greatly by Sufi teachings and has a great focus on prayer (salat) as well as dhikr. (See Malik, B (2007) *The Six Points of Tabligh*: http://ekhlas.files.wordpress.com/2007/11/the-six-points-of-tabligh.pdf accessed 28.08.10) and are:

Iman (faith)

Namaz (*Salat* or Prayer)

Ilm (knowledge) and *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah)

Ikram-i-Muslim (treating fellow Muslims kindly)

Ikhlas-i-Niyyat (purity of intention)

Dawat (inviting) and *tabligh* (preaching)

Tariqa

Arabic word meaning path and used in Sufi parlance to refer to a Sufi chain or *silsilah*.

Tasbih

Used to refer to an instrument like rosary beads used to carry out dhikr and is also used to refer to a set of oft-repeated words of dhikr.

Wahhabi

A term which is used by Deobandis and Barelvis mostly but seldom by Salafis or Ahl-i-hadith. The term is usually used to refer to a purist who follows the literal meaning of the Qur'aan and has a non accommodating view of Islam.