

Part 4: Salafism: An ideological precursor to violent extremism?

4. Salafism (Salafiyah)

Academic and journalistic discourses regarding Salafism as a contributory factor to violent extremism have remained largely unchallenged until quite recently.¹ This section will examine Salafism in light of such discourse. The preceding section's discussion of extremist origins and the traits that are characteristic of violent extremism, will provide a contextual basis upon which to determine whether Salafism's ideological and methodological mosaic accords with emerging profiles of movements that advocate terrorism today. The import of this section is also to introduce an effective counter narrative to the existing discourse on this subject; however, from an insider's perspective. This, therefore, serves to widen the existing discourse by distinguishing other movements which, while possessing similar doctrinal elements to Salafism, differ in rudimentary aspects of both ideology and practice. Reference to the previous section's delineation between belief-related and deed-related components of extremism will be relied upon to suggest areas of demarcation between Salafism's ideological foundation and practice and that of the other movements equated with it in the extremist realm. Such differentiation is necessary in view of particular academic observations suggesting that:

Radical interpretations do contain similarities with 'Jihadi' [extremist] discourse, using the same vocabulary...and often even the same religious terminology. This fact may explain the connection many young people perceive between wahhabism and jihadism.²

Further support is garnered from research which observes that:

Even though it does not incite terrorism directly, salafi doctrine does provide the same religious framework that is used by radical groups such as al-Qaeda.³

¹ Lambert, R: 'Salafi and Islamist Londoners: Stigmatised minority faith communities countering al-Qaida,' *Crime Law Soc Change* (2008) 50:73-89

² Cesari, J: 'Muslims in Europe and the Risk of Radicalism,' cited from 'Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge in Europe', Section 8, p.100, Ashgate Publishing Company, Edited by Coolsaet, R. 2008

³ Ibid, p.98

Other observations insist:

It is obvious that the spread of Salafism...contributes to the increase of Takfirism, for Salafism is the ideological parent, root and base of Takfirism.⁴

Oliveti's work in this field ends up being a rather unsophisticated polemic against Salafism and cannot, therefore, be considered in the same realm as other existing academic attempts to explore the movement or its ideology; however, such work illustrates the increasing importance for insider perspectives on this area of research in order to effectively counter the misconceptions expounded therein. In order to illustrate this necessity, Oliveti's oversimplification of Salafism simply needs to be cited. He summarises Salafism to be the following:

- i. It is literalist
- ii. It is anti-reason and anti-philosophy
- iii. It is anti-culture (or at least 'high anti-culture' –[inferring backwardness⁵])
- iv. It is anti-nomian (that is, it refuses to accept traditional authority)
- v. It is internally unstable (it has no internal safety mechanisms or 'checks and balances') and;
- vi. It is aggressive and repressive.⁶

He provides a more extensive category of tenets perceived to constitute the Salafi ideology and in doing so exposes the bias which permeates his entire research. For the sake of brevity, these categories will not be explored in this section. His conclusion, after the above mentioned summation, should be referred to as indeed, it is paradoxical to his main assertion of Salafism being a violent extreme methodology: *'Wahhabi-Salafism as such is not, however, murderous.'*⁷ He next proceeds to attribute violent/terrorist (and "murderous") characteristics to, who he categorises as, *'Salafi-Takfiris'*.⁸ The author will argue that jihadi/extremist thought actually adopts established Islamic lexicology/terminology in an attempt to promote itself as being the most authentic and the correct interpretation of the

⁴ Oliveti, V: 'Terror's Source: The Ideology of Wahhabi-Salafism and its Consequences,' Amadeus Studys, 2001, pp. 77-78

⁵ The suggestion in parenthesis in this instance is the author's.

⁶ Oliveti, V: 'Terror's Source: The Ideology of Wahhabi-Salafism and its Consequences,' Amadeus Studys, 2001, pp. 43

⁷ Ibid,

⁸ Ibid, pp.43-48

religion and, therefore, in order to achieve legitimacy to these claims, attaches itself to Salafism. This is because of the fact that Salafism has the closest ideological affinity to their 'jihadi' way of thought. In support of this assertion, Lambert highlights:

The fact that al-Qaida terrorists adapt and distort Salafi and Islamist approaches to Islam does not mean that Salafis and Islamists are implicitly linked to terrorism or extremism.⁹

Finally, this section will serve as a reference point against which research findings in sections eight and nine (case studies and interviews) can be compared. This is necessary so as to provide an empirical context around which both primary and secondary research has been conducted, enabling the reader to be informed of the religious dynamics that are involved alongside prevalent socio-economic, political or identity issues that affect/influence the interviewees and case studies. This section also provides a more specific context to Salafism, compared with takfeerism, and the former's suggested correlation with violent extremism.

Before proceeding to examine Salafism in more detail, it is important to outline existing academic and journalistic impressions of the movement in order to provide a premise from which the ensuing examination and counter narrative can systematically develop. Reference has already been made to Oliveti's work on Salafism which concludes that the movement's ideology is the 'parent' of *takfirism* which equates to violent extremism.¹⁰ Subscribers to this view have often relied on research that regards Salafism as a new, alien concept to Islam and have ignored emerging academic and journalistic discourse that has attempted to provide a more historically accurate portrayal of the movement and its ideology.¹¹ In fact, Salafism or, as it is often termed, Wahabbism, is considered the corrupting influence that propels unsuspecting youth towards violent extremism.¹² Roald defines Salafism as one of the extreme movements among Scandanavian converts and identifies well known extremists, like Osama bin Laden and Abu Hamza al-Masree, as Salafis, despite their well known beliefs of takfeer on the Muslims and terrorism which are positions contrary to

⁹ Lambert, R: 'Ignoring Lessons of the past' Criminal Justice Matters, Issue 73, September 2008, p.23, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

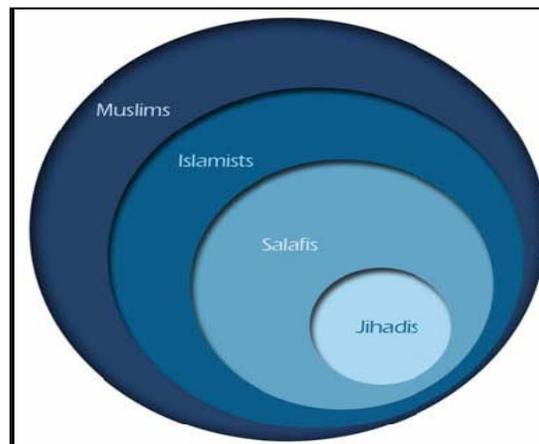
¹⁰ Oliveti, V: 'Terror's Source: The Ideology of Wahhabi-Salafism and its Consequences,' Amadeus Studys, 2001.

¹¹ Hamid, S: 'The Attraction of "Authentic" Islam: Salafism and British Muslim Youth', in Meijer, Roel, ed., *Global Salafism: Islam's new Religious Movement*. London: Hurst, forthcoming, 2009. p.10

¹² Moussaoui, A S: 'Zacarias Moussaoui: The Making of a Terrorist,' Serpent's Tail, 2003.

established Salafist doctrines.¹³ She is not alone in making this distinction and, in fact, it is hardly surprising that such conclusions are reached, especially when an element of extremist protagonists themselves affiliate their ideologies and practices with Salafism.¹⁴ More recent attempts to define Salafism from a non-Muslim perspective can be observed in academic works like those of Wiktorowicz¹⁵ and perhaps, to a degree, researchs like the Combating Terrorism Center's executive report on militant ideologies. The latter research attempted to differentiate and map the array of movements perceived as influential to extremist thought and development.¹⁶ Despite the author's reservations regarding the typology of Salafis developed by Wiktorowicz, and the overall import and conclusions of the Combating Terrorism Center's (CTC) executive report, some of their respective findings provide a platform upon which a *Muslim* insider's perspective can emerge to enable a comprehensive and, arguably even more accurate piece of research that contrasts or, at the very least, complements existing work in this field. Although the CTC report concludes the '*jihad*' ideology to be a 'subset' of the Salafist ideology,¹⁷ their depiction of this, as highlighted in figure 1 below, can be modified to illustrate the *positioning* of Islamic movements amongst wider Muslim populations.

Figure 1: Jihadi Constituencies¹⁸



¹³ Roald, A S: 'New Muslims in the European Context: The Experience of Scandinavian Converts,' Brill, 2004, pp. 150-161

¹⁴ Oliveti, V: 'Terror's Source: The Ideology of Wahhabi-Salafism and its Consequences,' Amadeus Studys, 2001.

¹⁵ Wiktorowicz, Q: 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism' Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group 29: 2006

¹⁶ McCants W, Brachman, J and Felter, J: 'Militant Ideology Atlas' Executive Report, November 2006, Combating Terrorism Center, U.S. Military Academy

¹⁷ Ibid, p.10

¹⁸ McCants W, Brachman, J and Felter, J: 'Militant Ideology Atlas' Executive Report, November 2006, Combating Terrorism Center, U.S. Military Academy, p.5

The illustration shows the four groups referred to are not concentric, suggesting a shift away from shared core beliefs, with the '*jihadi*'s' being the most marginalised. Evidence to support this proposed paradigm can be obtained from research examining the causes behind Mohammad Sadiq Khan's progression towards violent extremism, which culminated in the coordinated terrorist attacks in London on 7th July 2005. He initially attended Salafist orientated study circles before disappearing and attending more clandestine and extremist lectures of the '*jihadists*' or, to be more precise, takfeeris.¹⁹ His gradual shift across the religious constituencies depicted in figure 1, towards the '*jihadi*' community was considered by family and friends to be a change towards religiosity, i.e. he began to practice his faith more by praying and attending study circles etc:

Most people in Beeston were pleased that the kids were becoming more religious. 'Better them being Wahabbi than on drugs...People appreciated the kids running a studyshop because they were peers to the younger generation who were no longer listening to their elders.'²⁰

These observations accord with the author's firsthand experience and encounters with Zacarius Moussaoui and Richard Reid (aka the Shoe Bomber), who both also attended Salafi orientated Mosques (i.e. Brixton) and study circles, before gravitating towards more extremist environments and teachings.²¹ The gravitations described, and the causes behind them, shall constitute part of the case study exploration in section 8. The empirical evidence cited above provides a strong argument for an alternative understanding of figure 1 above. Instead of each constituency/movement being solely a subset of the other, (as intimated in the CTC report), the alternative depiction can be given, highlighting the *embedding* of movements amongst particular communities or groups. Saggat's findings also support an alternative theoretical basis for figure 1. In his lecture, entitled, '*The One Per Cent World: Managing the Myth of Muslim Religious Extremism*,' he identifies a '*circle of tacit support*' amongst some Muslims in Britain for violent extremism.²² He further identifies violent extremists as the:

¹⁹ Malik, S: 'The Making of a Terrorist: My brother, the bomber,' Prospect Magazine, Issue 135: June 2007, p.41

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Refer to author's study: 'Extremist in Our Midst' Confronting Terror', Palgrave MacMillan, 2011 for case studies of Moussaoui and Reid

²² Saggat, S: 'The One Per Cent World: Managing the Myth of Muslim Religious Extremism,' University of Sussex, Lecture 16th March 2006. Transcript, pp.11-12

tiny element [the 'red dot' at the centre of his concentric circles diagram] in a much larger sea of non-violent moderation.²³

His isolation of violent extremists further reinforces the author's suggested alternative understanding of figure 1; namely, the embedment and marginalisation of the extremist, takfeeri groups amongst larger Muslim groups or communities. It is important to note that this positioning or embedment can be a strategy of the extremist group and is either covert or overt, depending on the prevailing socio-political or religious climate affecting the communities they are positioned amongst at any given time.²⁴ That said, the explanation supporting the CTC's depiction of constituencies in figure 1 remains relevant and should not be completely discarded due to CTC's legitimate observation:

These constituencies can be envisioned as a series of nesting circles. Each constituency is responsive to leaders in the broader constituencies of which it is a part, but each has its own set of thinkers that are best positioned to influence their base. The largest constituency is comprised of Muslims...This includes Sunnis...and Shi'is...and ranges from secularists to fundamentalists.²⁵

Wiktorowicz is perhaps one of the few authors who first attempted to obtain *primary* data that accurately reflects a Salafi's (Salafist) perspective on Salafism. Aspects of his research in Amman, Jordan during the late 1990's involved interviews with renowned senior students of knowledge and scholars.²⁶ Whilst highlighting this point, it is interesting to note that, up until recently,²⁷ he continued to maintain positions similar to Roald et al. who considered extremists like Osama bin Laden to be adherents of Salafism. That said, he does however, acknowledge:

²³ Ibid

²⁴ In support of the author's assumption in this regard, reference should be made to section 1 of this research: Early Encounters with Extremism: Brixton Mosque, which provides accounts of extremists' attempts to influence individuals and affairs considered advantageous to the advancement of their cause.

²⁵ McCants W, Brachman, J and Felter, J: 'Militant Ideology Atlas' Executive Report, November 2006, Combating Terrorism Center, U.S. Military Academy, p.5

²⁶ An example of this can be witnessed in his research conducted in Jordan with individuals like Shaikh Alee Hasan Abdul Hameed in 1997, later published as Wiktorowicz, Q: 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism' Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group 29: 207- 239, 2006

²⁷ During informal discussion between the author and Wiktorowicz in Oxford (2008) during the Demos, GFF and UK Cabinet Office's 'Responding to Radicalisation' Conference, he indicated that a more precise categorisation of Salafism that departed from his earlier typology could be used. This categorisation would be singular in describing Salafism and could possibly be phrased 'Salafiyyah Wasitiyyah' - The balanced or 'middle' Salafism. Despite the above mentioned encounter, the author has not established whether Wiktorowicz has developed this strand of thought further in his subsequent academic writings or discourse.

In many cases, scholars claiming the Salafi mantle formulate antipodal juristic positions, leading one to question whether they can even be considered part of the same religious tradition.²⁸

The author suggests, in light of these observations, that Wiktorowicz's research, at that particular stage, was inconclusive as indeed, had it been, he is likely to have reached the conclusion that Osama bin Laden was indeed one such individual who could be described as '*claiming the Salafi mantle*'²⁹ while not belonging to the movement due to his declared extremist takfeeri beliefs and practices. One of the most significant areas of Wiktorowicz's informative research, which has since found resonance with Muslim and non-Muslim academics and practitioners alike, is his delineation of Salafism into three distinct strands; *Salafi-purists*, *Salafi-politicos* and *Salafi-jihadis*.³⁰ He refers to the discord that arose between junior and senior clerics in Saudi Arabia during the first Gulf War as the period when Salafi movements fractured into the three factions constituting his present typology.³¹ The author suggests that such delineation fails to effectively take into account the historical and ideological origins and causes of extremism discussed in the previous section. A historical consideration in this instance is necessary if an understanding about earlier fractious movements, such as the Khawaarij and Shia etc, and their relationship to contemporary counterparts, are to be understood. Additionally, emerging movements and groups themselves have sought to unequivocally demarcate their respective ideological, political or violent revolutionary affiliations. *Salafi-purists* would, in this instance, attribute to themselves an ideological orthodoxy and astuteness in their religious practice, whereas the '*politico*' and '*jihad*' strands would make similar claims whilst sitting comfortably under the remaining political and violent revolutionary affiliations that are synonymous with the Ikhwan al Muslimeen (Muslim Brotherhood) and takfeeri movements respectively. Evidence in support of this demarcation between the three groups is intimated in the preceding section's discussion on Syed Qutb's political beliefs and template or 'roadmap', 'Signposts.' This, as Kepel illustrates, outlined a revolutionary strategy to implement Allah's Lordship (*Haakimiyyah*) in, what he considered, a disbelieving Egyptian society.³² In their most sedate form, Qutb's ideas espoused the political ambitions of the Ikhwan al Muslimeen

²⁸ Wiktorowicz, Q: 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism' Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group 29: p.207, 2006

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid, pp.217-228

³¹ Wiktorowicz, Q: 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism' Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group 29: p.232, 2006

³² Kepel, G: 'The Roots of Radicalism', Saqi, 2005.

movement of that era and, in their more extreme manifestations, they expounded the justification of takfeer upon every society, including Muslim, which failed for any reason to completely establish Tawheed al-haakimiyyah as the sole source of legislation. These two positions reflect both the political and takfeeri spheres against which Salafism has always been polemical. Therefore, consideration of three distinct movements and their areas of divergence from each other, as one and the same entity with only slightly differing objectives, serve to obscure and unnecessarily complicate the true reality of the extremist phenomenon today. In fact, when considering the Ikhwani ideology against Wiktorowicz's delineation, their discourse fluctuates between political and takfeeri/revolutionary concepts. This becomes apparent when considering some of the Ikhwan al Muslimeen's publications. They clearly illustrate the movement's delineation between itself and Salafism. In fact, there is an assertion that aspects of Salafism, in its contemporary form, emanated from the Ikhwan al Muslimeen.³³ Another aspect of Salafism is, according to Eleftheriadou, (a contributor to the Ikhwani publication being cited), the '*Salafi-Jihadi*' trend. Both 'trends' according to her observations, have "*politico-philosophical*" approaches that lack concise theoretical distinctions.³⁴ The inference to a political impetus in Salafism can be countered by evidence pointing to the contrary. For example, Wiktorowicz acknowledges Salafi-purists (who the author suggests are, in actuality, the only adherents to orthodox Salafism) as being apolitical:

Purists do not view themselves as a political movement; they in fact often reject reference to Salafis as a harakat (movement), because this carries political connotations.³⁵

Quite recent research findings, conducted by DEMOS, also confer this observation.³⁶ In fact, the Ikhwani methodology and their resultant emphasis on politics is avidly captured in their own words:

Dawa (Islamic propagation) is legitimate but what is to be done in the meantime[?]³⁷...Al Banna advocated the postponement of the shift from

³³ Eleftheriadou, M: 'Muslim Brotherhood Vs Salafi-Jihadi Islam: Confronting the "Black Sheep" of Political Islam,' Center for Mediterranean & Middle Eastern Studies, January 2008 ; Issue 9, pp.2-8

³⁴ Ibid, p.2

³⁵ Wiktorowicz, Q: 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism' Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group 29: p.218, 2006

³⁶ Briggs, R. Fieschi, C. Lownsborough, H: 'Bringing it Home: Community-based approaches to counter-terrorism,' DEMOS, 2006, p.62

³⁷ Bold italics are the author's emphasis

educational to political work for only after the entire society endorses the Muslim Brotherhood's message. However, with the passing of time the Muslim Brotherhood, in Egypt and beyond, had to find a way to deal with the regime politically.³⁸

The Ikhwan al Muslimeen's declared political intent is thus clearly underscored by this statement and, based upon their disassociation from Salafism, they should not be considered *Salafi-politicos* as intimated in Wiktorowicz's typology. A subsequent counter argument may be proffered stating Wiktorowicz's typology refers specifically to the factions that arose following the 1991 Gulf War. The importance of referring to the earlier, more classical period of Islam is essential in order to provide a comprehensive context of when the emergence of factitious groups began. Wiktorowicz is correct in highlighting the causes of the split between senior and junior clerics, and the resulting aspersions cast on those who dissented from the main body of Ulema. They were labeled Khawaarij, due to their beliefs which were considered synonymous with Syed Qutb's. In fact, clerics such as Safar Hawali were subsequently labeled '*Qutubis*'.³⁹ Cesari also supports the argument for delineation between Salafism and the Ikhwani ideology and practice when observing:

Pan-Islamist movements should not be constructed as monolithically reactionary or defensive. A distinction must be drawn between the wahhabi/salafi and tablighi movements on the one hand, and the Muslim Brotherhood on the other.⁴⁰

Similarly, the '*jihadi*' / takfeerist violent extreme is underscored by unequivocal declarations made by its adherents such as Osama bin Laden, Ayman Zawihiri and their associates who, by the very nature of such statements, dissociated themselves from Salafism, both ideologically and methodologically.⁴¹ In fact, extremist protagonists, such as Abdullah el Faisal, have

³⁸ Eleftheriadou, M: 'Muslim Brotherhood Vs Salafi-Jihadi Islam: Confronting the "Black Sheep" of Political Islam,' Center for Mediterranean & Middle Eastern Studies, January 2008 ; Issue 9, p.6

³⁹ McCants W, Brachman, J and Felter, J: 'Militant Ideology Atlas' Executive Report, November 2006, Combating Terrorism Center, U.S. Military Academy, p.10

⁴⁰ Cesari, J: 'Muslims in Europe and the Risk of Radicalism' cited in Coolsaet, R: 'Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge in Europe' Ashgate, 2008, p.97.

⁴¹ Osama bin Laden stated in response to an interview question from Hamid Mir of Lahore's 'Dawn' daily newsresearch (7th November 2001), regarding the murder of innocent civilians: "*This is a major point of jurisprudence. In my view, if an enemy occupies a Muslim territory and uses common people as human shields, then it is permitted to attack the enemy...America and its allies are massacring us in Palestine, Chechyna, Kashmir and Iraq. The Muslims have the right to attack America in reprisal... The American people...pay taxes to their government, they elect their president, their government manufactures arms and gives them to Israel, and Israel uses them to massacre the Palestinians. The American Congress endorses all government measures and this proves that [all] America is responsible for the atrocities*

proceeded so far as to categorically pronounce takfeer upon Salafis, highlighting the permissibility of killing them.⁴² When compared to Salafi doctrines and practice that are underpinned by the ideological as well as historical import and an understanding of the Companions of the Prophet, the inclinations of the above mentioned individuals are those of a Kharijee, takfeeri nature. The author, therefore, suggests that consideration of the above mentioned Ikhwani and takfeeri perspectives, together with the proposed theoretical framework discussed (figure 1), highlights the difficulty surrounding attempts to categorise the three particular constituencies or movements discussed as one broad movement. Their respective ideological and methodological delineations, although similar rudimentarily, have evolved to such a degree that they now remain distinct from each other in particular doctrinal and methodological approaches. To generally categorise them as belonging to one and the same broad entity, each being situated at different ends of an imaginary spectrum, is to obfuscate parameters between movements that have been polemical in their opposition to violent extremism and those seeking to justify it.

Hegghammer and Lacroix introduce a delineation of Salafism which is, perhaps, more accurate in its specificity so far as it relates to Saudi Arabia's political climate during the 50's and 60's.⁴³ Particular characteristics that emerge from this delineation, later on in their research, find possible correlation with those discovered amongst a few British Salafi communities in the UK today, as will be seen shortly. Hegghammer and Lacroix describe the emergence of two types of Islamism, (one of which has already been highlighted by Wiktorowicz) – the “Islamic Awakening” (*al-sahwa al-Islamiyya*) and a more, “...isolationist, pietistic and low-class Islamist phenomenon, which can be termed “rejectionist” or “neo-salafi.”⁴⁴ Both strands have coexisted for more than thirty years, each possessing distinct ideological approaches with the former being more politically orientated. Hegghammer and Lacroix's summation of the *al-sahwa* movement is significant insofar as it reintroduces the symbiotic relationship highlighting the movement's ideological affinity and practice; “*Ideologically, the Sahwa represented a blend of the traditional Wahhabi outlook (mainly on social issues) and the most contemporary Muslim*

perpetrated against Muslims...” Cited in: Kepel, G: ‘The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West,’ The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004, pp.124-125.

⁴² Refer to Section 8, case study 3 for a more detailed account of el-Faisal's lectures and sermons against Salafis.

⁴³ Hegghammer, T and Lacroix, S: ‘Rejectionist Islamism in Saudi Arabia: The Story of Juhayman al-Utaybi Revisited,’ Cambridge University, International Journal of Middle East Studies (Vol. 39, no.1, 2007, pp. 103-122); <http://www.cambridge.org/journals/mes>)

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.3

*Brotherhood approach (especially on political issues).*⁴⁵ The initial phase of the 'rejectionist' movement can be described as apolitical with an:

extreme social conservatism, strong emphasis on ritual matters, as well as...scepticism toward the state and its institutions.⁴⁶

These descriptions accord, to a greater extent, with the UK Salafi position. Interestingly, Hegghammer and Lacroix observe a particular trend that is symptomatic of group radicalisation:

whereby a small faction breaks out of a larger and more moderate organisation after a process of politicisation and internal debate. After the break, the behavior of the radicalised faction is more determined by ideology and charismatic leadership than by structural socio-economic and political factors.⁴⁷

Hamid points to a similar occurrence when Abu Khadeejah and his followers dissociated themselves from Jami'at Minhaj As-Sunnah (JIMAS) and went on to form OASIS and, subsequently Salafi Publications.⁴⁸ Ironically, Abu Khadeejah's dissociation was, according to him, due to JIMAS' politicisation of Islam and not visa-versa as observed in Hegghammer and Lacroix's research of Juhayman's rejectionist movement.⁴⁹ At this point, a discussion on Salafism will ensue.

4.1. What is Salafism? Another perspective.

The term '*Salaf*' can be translated lexicographically as 'to precede'. According to Islamic lexicography it refers specifically to '*al-salaf al-salih*'; the pious predecessors who encapsulate the belief and practices of first three generations of Muslims.⁵⁰ These generations are generally regarded by Muslims as the exemplars of the religion. They are the criterion upon which successive generations can gauge the extent of their religiosity, development and success on individual and societal levels. In other words, they are in essence, the yardstick against which to

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.4

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.14

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.13

⁴⁸ Hamid, S: 'The Attraction of "Authentic" Islam: Salafism and British Muslim Youth', in Meijer, Roel, ed., *Global Salafism: Islam's new Religious Movement*. London: Hurst, forthcoming, 2009. p.10

⁴⁹ Inge, A: 'Salafism in Britain: The New Generation's Rebellion,' unpublished MA dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2008

⁵⁰ Wiktorowicz, Q: 'Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West,' Rowman & Littlefields, 2005, p. 184.

measure succeeding societies and communities.⁵¹ Quranic and prophetic texts support this position and stipulate that these generations, particularly the first, provide the key to what can now be considered to be socio-religious, socio-political and socio-economic prosperity.⁵² Contrary to Oliveti's assertion that Salafism rejects the four established traditional schools of thought (Madhabs)⁵³ Wiktorowicz highlights the movement's consideration of the latter as being part of the *salaf*.⁵⁴ What is rejected by Salafism, however, is the preference of any Madhab process of thought or ruling over clear and established Quranic and prophetic injunctions. These latter two sources of legislation always supersede other subsequent avenues of religious thought and/or injunctions derived from 'secondary' routes. It is only in the absence of the two when subsequent approaches, i.e. rulings based upon consensus, (Ijma), analogical deduction (Qiyas) etc. apply.⁵⁵ In fact, those who accuse Salafism of rejecting the Madhabs fail to acknowledge disclaimers echoed by the founders of these established schools of thought; namely, if a prophetic injunction is discovered which contradicts the Madhab's position, the latter must be discarded in preference of the former.⁵⁶ All of the founders' position in this regard were unequivocal, hence their ascription to the '*al-salaf al-salih*.' The term Salafi (Salafi/Salafist) is an ascription to '*al-salaf al-salih*.' Inge observes:

Followers can be distinguished by their adherence to a strict concept of the conditions that entail the violation of tawhid (oneness of God) - specifically...these...are not limited to times of prayer and contemplation, but encompass all actions.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Inge, A: 'Salafism in Britain: The New Generation's Rebellion,' unpublished MA dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2008, p.9

⁵² "You are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind; you enjoin what is good and forbid all that Islam has forbidden, and you believe in Allah." Surah [section] Ali-Imran [3:110], "And whosoever contradicts the Messenger after the right path has been shown to him **and follows other than the believers' way**, We shall keep him in the path he has chosen and burn him in Hell – what an evil destination!" Surah an-Nisaa [4:115], Prophet Muhammad said; "The best of generations is my generation, then those who come after them, then those who come after them," (i.e. the first three generations), Hadeeth collected in Bukharee and Muslim [graded 'Mutawaatir' which is the highest grading of authenticity for narrations, second only to the Qur'an]. Hadeeth cited in Jami'at Ihyaa' Minhaaj Al-Sunnah's publication: 'A Brief Introduction to the Salafi Da'wah' 1993, p. 3.

⁵³ Oliveti, V: 'Terror's Source: The Ideology of Wahhabi-Salafism and its Consequences,' Amadeus Studys, 2002, p.36

⁵⁴ Wiktorowicz, Q: 'Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West,' Rowman & Littlefields, 2005, p. 184.

⁵⁵ Philips, A. A. B: 'The Evolution of Fiqh (Islamic Law & The Madh-habs),' Tawheed Publications, 1988, pp. 65-101

⁵⁶ Al-Albani, M. N: 'The Prophet's Prayer described,' Al-Haneef Publications, 1993, pp. viii - xvi

⁵⁷ Inge, A: 'Salafism in Britain: The New Generation's Rebellion,' unpublished MA dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2008, p.11

She observes Salafis continuous endeavour to adhere, as much as possible, to the sources of religious legislature in an attempt to emulate the Prophetic model. She highlights the example of the *salaf* as a secondary source of guidance:

which Salafis regard as an accurate indication of the Prophetic paradigm because these ancestors were taught by him directly.⁵⁸

It is, perhaps, pertinent to cite Shaikh Alee Hasan Abdul Hameed's definition of Salafism (Salafiyah) in order to capture a comprehensive but concise view about this movement and its adherents:

Upon mention of the terms 'Salafiyyah' and 'the Salafis', many people [think] about the existence of a hizb (group/party) or the development of hizbiyyah (biased partisanship) or the likes... Yet none of that is the real case in regards to the upright Salafi manhaj [methodology] and the ideas of its...preachers. For Salafiyyah really means: the correct comprehensive Islam which Allaah revealed upon the heart of Muhammad [May Allah's peace and blessings be upon him]. Salafiyyah is not at all a restricted term for a group of people, rather it is an ascription to the salaf (the praiseworthy and righteous predecessors) mentioned in the Study [Qur'an] and the Sunnah. So, all who understand the deen [religion] according to the understanding of the righteous Salaf of the Ummah, is Salafi whether he mentions this frankly and openly or is quiet about it...So Salafiyyah is not a party, group or organised movement, rather it is for all Muslims, groups and individuals because it is comprehensive Islam according to the Study and the Sunnah with the understanding of the Salaf us-Saalih..."⁵⁹ Shaikh Alee then concludes with the following words; "So it is incumbent on the Ummah to compare its situation, ideologically, practically, perceptively and executively – with the manhaj of the Salaf and their application of the deen."⁶⁰

This definition of Salafism, from an insider perspective, is in stark contrast to other academic, outsider perspectives on the movement.⁶¹ For example, Stemmann refers to Salafism as an:

ambiguous concept that has served to designate various and very different movements throughout the years.⁶²

⁵⁸ Ibid, pp.11,12

⁵⁹ Hameed, A. H: *'As-Salafiyyatu, limaadhaa? Ma'aadhan wa Malaadhan: Abhaathun wa Maqalaatun wa Haqaa'iq wa Bayyinaat wa Radd 'ala Shubuhaat – [Why Salafiyyah as a Refuge and Safe-Haven? A response to the doubts]* Abridged and translated version: Amman, Jordan: Daar ul-Athariyyah, 2008, p.13

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ At this juncture, it is important to note that, throughout this research, the term 'movement' has been used to describe Salafism in view of its existing currency in academic circles when referring to Islamic trends and groups.

When examining much of the existing research in this field, and the scarcity of primary, insider-sourced evidence it is easy to ascertain the inevitability of the resulting misnomer. One of the primary components of such flaws is the academic and journalistic perceptions regarding the origins of Salafism research findings point to two main origins of Salafism; the first being attributed to Muhammad Abdul Wahhab, from whom the Wahhabist movement is alleged to have emerged and the second, stemming from the late nineteenth century reformers, Muhammad Abduh, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Rashid Rida. Stemann refers to Salafism as an 'ambiguous' term in view of the different sociological and historical realities surrounding the movement.⁶³ He suggests it was initially a renaissance project for Muslim thought, developed by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh who were both "fascinated" by the extent of Western scientific and technological progress during the late nineteenth century. Their project sought to reconcile the desired return to the practice of Prophet Muhammad and his early companions with a process of modernisation similar to that witnessed in the West.⁶⁴ Stemann is supported by Cesari in his suggestion of Muhammad Abduh et al establishing a reformist movement based on a return to the "*revealed text and hadith*". Cesari's research also suggests that, contrary to existing opinion, the movement was considered during that time to be intellectual and progressive.⁶⁵ Wiktorowicz highlights the disparity between Salafism as it stands today and compared to that of the late nineteenth century. He observes:

Opposition to rationalism and its various schools of theology also helps explain the Salafis' antipathy toward the earlier salafiyyah (Islamic modernists) influenced by Jamal al-Din, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida. There has been some confusion in recent years because both the Islamic modernists and the contemporary Salafis refer (referred) to themselves as al-salafiyya, leading some observers to erroneously conclude a common ideological lineage. The earlier salafiyya, however, were predominantly rationalist Asharis.⁶⁶

⁶² Stemann, J J E: 'Middle East Salafism's Influence and the Radicalization of Muslim Communities in Europe,' The GLORIA Center, Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, Volume 10, No.3, Article 1/10 - September 2006, p.1

⁶³ Ibid, p.3

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ Cesari, J: 'Muslims in Europe and the Risk of Radicalism,' cited from 'Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge in Europe', Section 8, p.100, Ashgate Publishing Company, Edited by Coolsaet, R. 2008, p.99.

⁶⁶ Wiktorowicz, Q: 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism' Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group 29: p.212, 2006

Additionally, Inge also observed the political activism of the earlier movements and contrasted this with the apolitical position of contemporary Salafis.⁶⁷ Wiktorowicz's above mentioned research must not be ignored from the perspective of what the author would describe as 'self-association.' Individuals' and / or groups' ascription to Salafism does not automatically render them Salafis. Rather, citing the example of Jamal al-Din Afghani's et al. above, although their movement was founded on the premise of referring back to the *salaf al-salih*, they promoted rationalist doctrines, alongside politically motivated revivalist strategies which conflicted with foundational and methodological tenets of Salafism.

4.2. Salafism in relation to extremist manifestations

The earlier sections examined the effect of belief-related and deed-related extremism amongst the earlier generation of Muslims. Specific focus was given to the emergence of the Khawarij in this regard and was compared to the more contemporary proponents of belief-related extremism, like Syed Qutb. Examination of possible extremist tendencies amongst British Salafis, from an insider perspective, has not, at the time of writing this research, been conducted. This examination, therefore, aims to determine the nature of such tendencies and to provide a template against which the succeeding research sections can be measured so far as they relate to the beliefs (ideology) and deeds (methodological practice and behavioural patterns) of interviewees and case studies. It is necessary, however, to note at this stage that the area of focus shall be on deed-related or, to be more precise, behavioural extremism only in view of establishing that the main area of ideological demarcation between Takfeerism and Salafism is the understanding and contextualisation of Tawheed al-Haakimiyyah. Deed-related/behavioural extremism and its manifestations will be examined to determine whether a correlation exists between Salafism and violent extremism. Al-Mutairi's categorisation of extremism, discussed at the beginning of this study, shall be revisited here as shall his observation that:

The extremist is characterized by taking to his religion in a very strict and severe manner (Al-Tashaddud). He is also characterized, in his relations with others, by harshness and incivility, (Al-Unf). He is also characterized by going deeply and beyond the needed limit when it comes to actions of the religion. All of these words, save Al-Tatarruf, have been mentioned in the texts of the Sharee'ah.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Inge, A: 'Salafism in Britain: The New Generation's Rebellion,' unpublished MA dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2008, p.10

⁶⁸ Al- Mutairi, Dr. A R M L: 'Religious Extremism in the Lives of Contemporary Muslims' translated by Zarabozo, J M M, Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 2001, p.67

Whether these characteristics indicate an extremism of the type which constitutes terrorism and, whether they apply to Salafis in the absolute sense, can only probably be determined at the conclusion of this research, once research data has been examined and analysed against these observations.

4.2.1. Al-Ghulu (Extremism)⁶⁹

Salafis have been accused, to varying degrees, by their opponents of possessing this characteristic. Most, however, do not equate the movement with extremism of the violent or terrorist nature. Reference has already been made to Oliveti's conclusion that, generally, Salafis (with the exception of 'Salafi-Takfeeris) are not "murderous" by nature. Husain's observation of Salafi extremism was in relation to their attire and "cultish" manner of observing the five obligatory prayers.⁷⁰ The author suggests that, whilst behavioural traits and outward displays of religiosity may appear extreme, a more accurate description of these characteristics could be that they appear excessive. The latter description denotes a religious fervency often found amongst new converts to Salafism and⁷¹ some Salafis would argue that this fervency accords to the prophetic statement:

For every action there is a period of enthusiasm/activity, and for every period of enthusiasm/activity there is a period of rest/inactivity.⁷²

Perhaps one of the more lucid examples of excessiveness emanating from Salafism, particularly in the West, is the manner of propagation and discourses between some Salafis and their perceived opponents. This invariably extends to non-Salafi orientated Muslims but suffice it to comment on the internecine disputes within the movement itself. Hamid highlights the emergence of 'Super Salafis' in the UK who began, what he terms, a "purist inquisition" by labeling other Muslim groups as deviant.⁷³ In fact, these particular Salafis established an organisation which became known:

⁶⁹ Note: This can also be described as excessiveness

⁷⁰ Husain, E: 'The Islamist', Penguin, 2007, pp.70-72.

⁷¹ Inge, A: 'Salafism in Britain: The New Generation's Rebellion,' unpublished MA dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, pp.24-31

⁷² Narration reported in the hadeeth collection of Hanbal, A, (2/188 and 210) and others with an authentic [*sahheeh*] chain of narration, cited in Abdul-Hameed's, A H: 'Forty Hadeeth on: The Call to Islam and the Caller,' Al-Hidaayah Publishing and Distribution, 1994, p. 39

⁷³ Hamid, S: 'The Attraction of "Authentic" Islam: Salafism and British Muslim Youth', in Meijer, Roel, ed., *Global Salafism: Islam's new Religious Movement*. London: Hurst, forthcoming, 2009,

for their increasingly intolerant and polemical attitude to former colleagues as well as their vindictiveness towards other Muslim groups.⁷⁴

Wiktorowicz's inference to the excessiveness of Salafis becomes apparent when he describes the same organisation as Hamid and observes that they:

eschew human systems of argumentation, preferring instead to make a point and follow it with a series of direct quotes from the Qur'an and sound hadith collections. In some cases, a religious position is stated in a sentence or two and is followed by page after page of quotations. For a Western audience, the presentation seems mind numbing and lacks convincing argumentation.⁷⁵

In fact, the composite nature of this group possibly accords with Drs J and B Coles' observations regarding Social Exchange Theory, particularly so far as it relates to 'Group polarisation':

Group polarisation occurs when a group of people making a decision shift their original opinions so that they are more extreme...The most extreme form of group polarization is 'groupthink'⁷⁶, which occurs when a highly cohesive in-group of individuals becomes so concerned with finding consensus among the members that they lose touch with reality. The optimal conditions for groupthink to occur are a highly cohesive group that perceives a threat, an active leader who advocates a solution to that threat and insulation from independent judgements about that solution. Groups that form this psychological environment develop an illusion of invulnerability which may predispose them to take risks due to excessive optimism.⁷⁷

The Coles further highlight an ensuing '*collective rationalisation*' among this type of group which comprises of the:

unquestioning belief in the moral superiority of the in-group, the shared illusion of unanimity and negative stereotypes of the out-groups.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Ibid, p.11

⁷⁵ Wiktorowicz, Q: 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism' Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group 29: p.212, 2006

⁷⁶ Cole, J & Cole, B; 'Martrydom: Radicalisation and Terrorist Violence Among British Muslims,' Pennant Studys, 2009 p.159 citing Janis, I; 'Victims of Groupthink,' (2nd edition) (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1982).

⁷⁷ Cole, J & Cole, B; 'Martrydom: Radicalisation and Terrorist Violence Among British Muslims,' Pennant Studys, 2009 p.159

⁷⁸ Ibid

4.2.2. Al-Tatarruf (Radicalism)

It is difficult to separate this particular categorisation from *al-Ghulu* (extremism), especially in view of the almost synonymous use of the terms in Western lexicology. In the existing context, radicalism is of concern if it causes gravitation towards violent extremism. However, radicalism by itself should not be considered, in every instance, as a violent extremist precursor; indeed, radical views and positions have often precipitated progressive reforms among individuals and societies. Salafism, as it is currently considered by a majority of the Muslim community, together with the majority (host) society is, at worst, an extreme movement and, at best, a radical one.⁷⁹ It's somewhat exclusionist approach to other Muslims has contributed to this negative societal perception.⁸⁰

4.2.3. Al-Tashaddud (strength, rigidity and inflexibility) and Al-Unf (harshness, sternness or meanness)

Among Muslim communities and increasingly, wider society, Salafis have become renowned for their rigid implementation and inflexible approach regarding jurisprudential and subsidiary branches of the religion. Roald considers the Salafi approach in this regard to be strict, noting that:

Salafis do not tolerate a multiplicity of views in matters of jurisprudence.⁸¹

The author suggests that the apparent rigidity and inflexibility displayed jurisprudentially and behaviourally by Salafis have a context that should not be ignored. Whilst these characteristics are likely to be found, in varying degrees, amongst some Salafi adherents, they can be juxtaposed with a legitimate and justifiable concern to preserve fundamental religious behavioural tenets and practices in Islam. Having said this, acknowledgement is given to the fact that, on occasions, the enthusiasm to preserve or indeed, revive religious practices has led to excessive behaviour resulting in adverse outcomes. An example of this can be illustrated by referring to Hegghammer and Lacroix's observations of Juhayman's '*rejectionist*' movement

⁷⁹ Roald, A S: 'New Muslims in the European Context: The Experience of Scandinavian Converts,' Brill, 2004, pp.159-161

⁸⁰ Ibid, p.159

⁸¹ Roald, A. S: 'New Muslims in the European Context: The Experience of Scandinavian Converts,' Brill, 2004, p.152

who, in some characteristics, resemble a minority of British Salafis. In an attempt to revive a prophetic tradition of wearing footwear while praying congregational prayers, the 'rejectionists' caused 'friction' with fellow worshippers by attempting to actualise this practice in the Prophet's mosque in Madina.⁸² At this stage, it should be noted that the excessive behaviour described above are not directed solely against non-Muslims or indeed, the wider non-Salafi community. These traits have, more noticeably of late, also been displayed and directed, during internecine disputes, against fellow Salafis. Hamid identifies the 1991 Gulf war as the starting point for fragmentation of the Salafi movement in the UK. The main fracture of the UK movement occurred in 1995 when, as aforementioned, the 'Super Salafis' emerged. Their disdain for former colleagues, who did not accord to their criteria of Salafism, and subsequent rebuke (or, as they claimed refutation) of these individuals/organisations defined their position amongst the Salafi and wider Muslim community. Hamid notes:

Because of their ruthless witch hunt, condemnation of other Salafis for their alleged adulterations of true Salafi belief and methodology, the purist Abu Khadeejah and his followers, were labeled 'Super Salafis.'⁸³

Hamid concludes that the new group's tactics of discrediting perceived rivals is similar to a form of religious McCarthyism.⁸⁴ Super Salafis were known to accuse their counterparts (fellow Salafis), who supported the notion of Balkans conflict constituting a defensive jihad, of being 'jihadi' and therefore, by inference, no longer Salafi.

Behavioural characteristics such as harshness (*al-unf*) are difficult to separate from the other related traits discussed above, especially so far as it relates to the present discussion surrounding Salafis. Each of the characteristics described appear to be intricately interwoven. Harshness is also another trait attributed to Salafis and the evidence available in written discourses and recorded lectures etc. tend to support this position.⁸⁵ Inge cites the author in her work regarding Salafism in the UK and his observation that:

⁸² Hegghammer, T and Lacroix, S: 'Rejectionist Islamism in Saudi Arabia: The Story of Juhayman al-'Utaybi Revisited,' Cambridge University, International Journal of Middle East Studies (Vol. 39, no.1, 2007, p.6); <http://www.cambridge.org/journals/mes>

⁸³ Hamid, S: 'The Attraction of "Authentic" Islam: Salafism and British Muslim Youth', in Meijer, Roel, ed., *Global Salafism: Islam's new Religious Movement*. London: Hurst, forthcoming, 2009. p.10

⁸⁴ Ibid, p.13

⁸⁵ Websites like www.salafipublications.com espouse narratives that have been widely criticised for their harsh and somewhat abrasive content. Despite this, it should be noted that this organisation has been at the forefront of discourses against violent extremism. Only a handful of other websites are able to equal Salafi Publication's work in refuting extremism, (www.salafimanhaj.com is another such example).

Salafi Publications' 'overzealousness and insular approach' has been responsible for considerable divisions among Salafis and the wider community in Britain... and they ...have to an extent contributed to the bad reputation that Salafis have in the UK.⁸⁶

Indeed, many Salafis have begun to look introspectively at behavioural characteristics that are likely to have contributed to the overall negative portrayal of Salafism today. Hamid supports this observation when surmising that:

The repercussions of 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks forced introspection, rapprochement and convergence, where there had previously been divergence.⁸⁷

Roald also observes amongst converts in this instance that they belong to an '*initial*' conversion phase where they are '*more royal than the king*' in their excessive or overzealous behaviour.⁸⁸ However, she further observes the subsequent, more reflective stage adopted by many of them as they become acquainted with the religion. This, in turn, enables them to realise that their initial rigidity and inflexibility in adhering to religious rules and regulations was, in many instances, excessive.⁸⁹ A theoretical model of religious conversion, (figure 2) may provide an accurate depiction for the positioning of Salafis who may have undergone a process similar to the one described by Roald above:

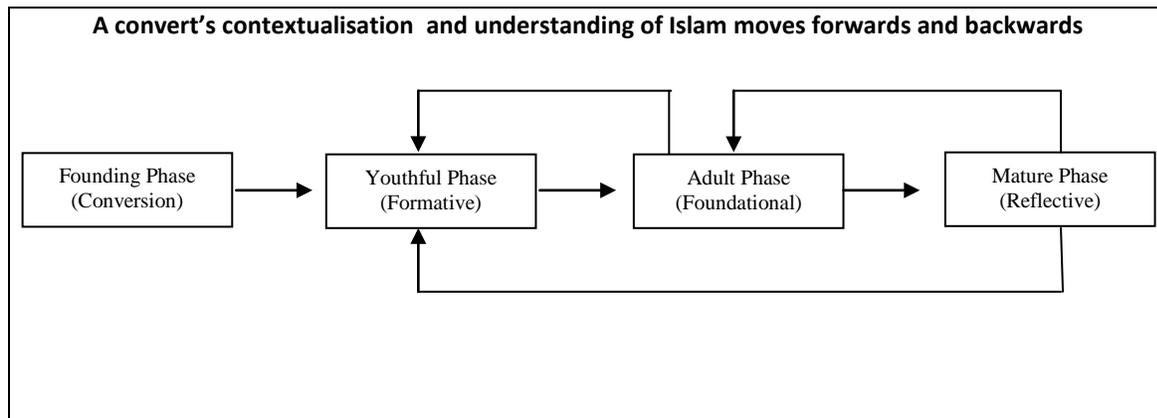


Figure 2: Life cycle of a convert's post conversion process

⁸⁶ Inge, A: 'Salafism in Britain: The New Generation's Rebellion,' unpublished MA dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London p.19

⁸⁷ Hamid, S: 'The Attraction of "Authentic" Islam: Salafism and British Muslim Youth', in Meijer, Roel, ed., *Global Salafism: Islam's new Religious Movement*. London: Hurst, forthcoming, 2009. p.10

⁸⁸ Roald, A. S: 'New Muslims in the European Context: The Experience of Scandinavian Converts,' Brill, 2004, p.160

⁸⁹ Ibid

The 'extreme' or excessive behavioural traits attributed to Salafis in this section possibly equate to, and are symptomatic of, the earlier *'founding and youthful'* phases of development illustrated in figure 2. Also, the behavioural traits discussed do not, in isolation, denote violent extremist tendencies in an individual. They may, at most, constitute part of a mosaic or profile of extreme or excessive behaviour; however, based on existing evidence, violent extremism is not necessarily the foregone conclusion for an individual possessing these behavioural characteristics. These behavioural manifestations of extremism must be considered as part of a wider mosaic which includes other possible drivers towards violent extremism, i.e. ideological, psychological and social agents, in order to determine the extent of their relative effect on the psyche of a potential violent extremist/terrorist.

4.3. Contemporary Takfeerism and its relation to historical violent extremist ideology and movements.

Reference has been made in this section to the emergence of the Khawaarij and, more recently, the ideology and thoughts of Syed Qutb. Osama bin Laden's beliefs relating to murdering non-Muslim civilians in retaliation to Western aggression against Muslim countries have also been highlighted. It is not, therefore, necessary to reiterate the contemporary position of takfeer and its protagonists extensively; however, recent scholastic discourses that have addressed extremism in the Muslim world should be examined.

In response to a question regarding the possible resemblance of contemporary terrorists to the Khawaarij, Shaikh Saleh al-Fawzan, one of the leading contemporary scholars in Saudi Arabia today, confirmed the former's congruity, adding:

Rather, they are even more violent and extreme than the (original) Khawaarij. The (past) Khawaarij did not destroy buildings and residents. [They] used to show up face-to-face on the battlefield...but they did not use to collapse buildings [with] everyone inside them – women, children, the innocent, those at peace with the Muslims...This is worse and more violent than the actions of the (original) Khawaarij.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Al-Fawzan, S: 'Are the Terrorists of Today the Khawaarij?' <http://www.fatwa1.com/anti-erhab/lrhabion.html> audio clip no. 20

4.4. Violent extremism/Takfeerism in relation to extremist manifestations.

Similarities can be drawn between some of the behavioural characteristics of Salafis and violent extremists/Takfeeris. It must, however, be acknowledged that the aforementioned behavioural characteristics are not exclusive to these movements alone and can be identified across a spectrum of Muslim personalities and groups (as well as non-Muslim groups and entities). In view of the ambit of this study, examination of these characteristics are limited to only Salafi and takfeeri/violent extremist adherents.

4.4.1. Al-Uzlah (seclusion/separation)

This was introduced and discussed in the previous section; however, an important demarcation should be made in this particular behavioural tendency so far as the Salafi and violent extremist/takfeeri movements are concerned. Al-Mutairi illustrates the purport behind the extremist's seclusion when describing Shukri Mustafa's increased influence among his followers in Egypt. Shukri (as he is commonly referred to) propagated an emotional as well as behavioural separation at the same time, in view of his position that Egyptian society was populated by disbelievers. It was, therefore, incumbent to institute a complete separation or withdrawal from society.⁹¹ This method of seclusion is considered by al-Mutairi to contravene the Shari'ah. His critique of Shukri's arguments for an extreme form of *uzlah* highlights at least ten errors in the latter's understanding and application of this act.⁹² Whilst intrinsically similar in nature to the classification described above, Salafis' implementation of *uzlah*, so far as it relates to their residing in the West, is based on the premise of preservation of the Islamic identity. This is especially true of converts who are careful to abstain from former lifestyles. However, such abstinence is contrary to the basis of Shukri's understanding and practice of *uzlah*. Salafis *acknowledge* the wider society and its conventions, and are apolitical regarding incitement towards violent revolutionary changes that attempt to precipitate Islamic law (Shari'ah). In some instances the Salafi motives for *uzlah* may be considered by some to be socially conservative in today's society; however, in any event, they remain in contrast to the violent extremist/takfeeri standpoint.⁹³

⁹¹ Mustafa, S: *Kitaab al-Khilaafah*, vol.3, p.20 cited in Al- Mutairi, Dr. A R M L: 'Religious Extremism in the Lives of Contemporary Muslims' translated by Zarabozo, J M M, Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 2001, pp.555-6

⁹² *Ibid*, pp.557-559

⁹³ *Ibid*, pp.526-551

4.4.2. Prohibiting employment in government positions

This behavioural trait is prominent among a small section of the Muslim community in the UK today and emanates from the extremist perspective that entails the following observations; i. accepting a position from an oppressive (and disbelieving) regime / government is, in actuality, a display of loyalty and support for them and that ii. it constitutes a type of attestation of the regime's/government's legitimacy and manifesto or agenda.⁹⁴ Despite Quranic, historic and scholastic evidence that clearly illustrate examples of either Muslim rule over non-Muslims on the basis of non-Muslim law (as in the case of the Abyssinian ruler, An-Najashi who converted to Islam during the Prophet Muhammad's era) or, the employment of Muslims under non-Muslim leadership, (as in the case of Prophet Yusuf),⁹⁵ the position of extremists and those sympathetic to their call remains unequivocal: Muslim employees of despotic or non-Muslim governments are considered apostates to the religion due to their indirect support and subscription to policies and legislature that does not govern in accordance with the Shari'ah and/or is designed to suppress the Muslim world. Al-Mutairi asserts that this behavioural characteristic also constitutes extremism, citing as evidence Maahir Bakri's observation that:

Every work, permissible or forbidden, in this jaahili society, must, in the long run, flow to one end: the help and support of the foundation of this disbelieving society (Egypt).⁹⁶

Shukri's subsequent observation only serves to elucidate Bakri's summation even further:

All of that...is but the authority of the taaghoot (false god), his jurisdiction and the sources of his godhood. Those who enter his system are nothing but his slaves and custodians of his pulpit.⁹⁷

Al-Mutairi confirms that the above extremist positions focused on the Arab and predominantly Muslim society of Egypt during the late 60s/early 70s; however, it is not difficult to observe how the same criterion is easily transferable in description to contemporary Western society.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Al- Mutairi, Dr. A R M L: 'Religious Extremism in the Lives of Contemporary Muslims' translated by Zarabozo, J M M, Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 2001, p.582

⁹⁵ The Qur'an: Surah [section] Yusuf, (12: verses 54-102).

⁹⁶ Bakri, M: 'Al Hijrah,' p.10 cited in Al- Mutairi, Dr. A R M L: 'Religious Extremism in the Lives of Contemporary Muslims' translated by Zarabozo, J M M, Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 2001, p.585.

⁹⁷ Mustafa, S:'Al-Khilaafah,' vol.5 p.13 cited in Al- Mutairi, Dr. A R M L: 'Religious Extremism in the Lives of Contemporary Muslims' translated by Zarabozo, J M M, Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 2001, p.585.

4.4.3. The justification for criminality

Since the mid to late nineties, the author has observed an increasing trend of criminality among a minority of Muslims, some of whom are inclined towards the violent extremist rhetoric. The premise for criminality is that Western societies, especially the US and UK, by virtue of their foreign policy against Muslim countries, are abodes of war, (*Darul Harb*). The authentic prophetic description of conditions pertaining to war entailing deception is erroneously cited when attempting to legitimise criminality. Invariably, this provides an attractive alternative to conventional societal participation via employment and training etc. for disenfranchised young Muslims who are unable or have refused to engage with wider society. The most severe examples of criminality can be witnessed in cases involving violent extremist protagonists like Abdullah el-Faisal who was convicted for inciting murder against non-Muslims.⁹⁹ Additionally, Abu Qatada espoused beliefs surrounding the legitimacy of breaking Western laws, stealing from and deceiving non-Muslims as well as entering illicit sexual relationships with non-Muslim women.¹⁰⁰ Anwar Al-Awlaki's endorsement of criminality under the guise of religious terminology and the West being an abode of war is a more recent example of this type of justification.¹⁰¹

These behavioural characteristics are promoted on the premise of the society being an abode of war can, in some instances, lead to hiding religious identities in an effort to 'blend in' and operate below the radar, so to speak. Although the removal of apparent religious identity, such as the beard or Islamic attire, cannot in every instance be attributable to a more clandestine intent, (i.e. some individuals may genuinely grow to believe their outward display of their faith to no longer be necessary or, indeed, they may have become weaker in their practice of the religion), the author has witnessed this behaviour amongst individuals who went on to become terrorists – Zacarius Moussaoui is such an example. The question remains - whether a correlation exists between criminality, especially violent criminality such as gun related crimes etc. and violent extremism.

⁹⁸ Al- Mutairi, Dr. A R M L: 'Religious Extremism in the Lives of Contemporary Muslims' translated by Zarabozo, J M M, Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 2001, pp.585-6.

⁹⁹ Refer to Section 8, case study 3

¹⁰⁰ Cole, J & Cole, B: 'Martyrdom: Radicalisation and Terrorist Violence among British Muslims', Pennant Studys, 2009, p.164 citing 'The Home Office case against Abu Qatadah', Daily Telegraph, 27 February 2007, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1543944/The-Home-Office-case-against-Abu-Qatada.html>

¹⁰¹ Al-Awlaki, A: 'The Ruling on Dispossessing the Disbeliever's wealth in Darul Harb', Inspire Magazine, Winter edition, 2010/1431, pp.55-60.

4.5. Section conclusions

This particular section has endeavoured to provide a comprehensive account of Salafism in relation to academic and journalistic discourses that have adversely influenced societal perceptions of the movement. Emerging research, which has sought to provide a more balanced academic perspective, has enabled further insight into the ideological and methodological practices of the movement; however, they have achieved limited success in causing a paradigm shift among policy makers and statutory bodies who continue to perceive Salafism as intrinsic to violent extremism. This section has also introduced discourse from an insider's perspective which has aimed to provide an additional dimension to existing research on Salafism and whether it has an affinity with the violent extremist ideology. Additionally, the section has sought to examine similarities between Salafist behavioural tendencies and that of takfeeri/violent extremists while illustrating unequivocal differences between the two movements. It is essential that this section be considered supplementary to the previous sections in order to contextualise the ideological and behavioural areas of divergence between Salafism and takfeerism/violent extremism. Consequentially, this will enable a more emphatic demarcation between the two movements and what constitutes a real threat vis-à-vis violent/non-violent extremism and social conservatism.

Increasing numbers of groups, formerly considered extreme by all accounts,¹⁰² are adopting the mantle of Salafism in an effort to attract support among 2nd/3rd generation Muslims and converts who are embracing the ideology and practice due to its orthodoxy and authenticity. Whereas contemporary Salafists endeavour to promote a comprehensive understanding and practice of Islam within the context of their respective societies today, extremists in contrast, attempt to propagate a variant and often distorted interpretation under the guise of Salafism in an effort to gain legitimacy. With this in mind the government and its advisors would do well to understand these nuances and thereafter, differentiate between socially conservative but socially integrated practices of some Muslims and violent extremist divisive entities intent on exacerbating existing societal schisms between communities in the name of religion.

¹⁰² Al Muhajiroun is one such example