

Part 7: What is Salafism? A Salafi 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.¹ They are generally regarded as the exemplars of Islamic practice and are considered by most Muslims as 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 effectively the yardstick against which to measure succeeding societies and communities.² 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.³ Contrary to Oliveti's assertion that Salafism rejects the four established traditional schools of thought (Madhabs)⁴ Wiktorowicz highlights the movement's consideration of the latter as being part of the *salaf*.⁵ Salafism, however, rejects the preference of any school of thought process 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.⁶ In fact, those who accuse Salafism of rejecting the schools of thought fail to acknowledge disclaimers echoed by the founders of these established schools of thought; namely, if a prophetic injunction is discovered which contradicts the school's position, the latter must be discarded in preference of the former.⁷ 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:

¹ Wiktorowicz, Q: 'Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West,' Rowman & Littlefields, 2005, p. 184.

² Inge, A: 'Salafism in Britain: The New Generation's Rebellion,' unpublished MA dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2008, p.9

³ "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 [chapter] 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.

⁴ Oliveti, V: 'Terror's Source: The Ideology of Wahhabi-Salafism and its Consequences,' Amadeus Books, 2002, p.36

⁵ Wiktorowicz, Q: 'Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West,' Rowman & Littlefields, 2005, p. 184.

⁶ Philips, A. A. B: 'The Evolution of Fiqh (Islamic Law & The Madh-habs),' Tawheed Publications, 1988, pp. 65-101

⁷ Al-Albani, M. N: 'The Prophet's Prayer described,' Al-Haneef Publications, 1993, pp. viii - xvi

“Followers can be distinguished by their adherence to a strict concept of the conditions that entail the violation of tawhid (oneness of God) specifically, those occasions on which an entity besides God is worshipped. For Salafis, these occasions are not limited to times of prayer and contemplation, but encompass all actions.”⁸

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.”⁹

It is, perhaps, pertinent to cite Shaikh Ali Hasan Abdul Hamid’s definition of Salafism 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 Book [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 Book and the Sunnah with the understanding of the Salaf us-Saalih...”¹⁰ 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.”¹¹

⁸ 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

⁹ Ibid, pp.11, 12

¹⁰ Hamid, 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

¹¹ Ibid

This definition of Salafism, from an insider perspective, is in stark contrast to other academic outsider perceptions on the movement.¹² For example, Stemmann refers to Salafism as an:

*“...ambiguous concept that has served to designate various and very different movements throughout the years.”*¹³

It is often purported that Salafism is misunderstood and misconstrued by various researchers and adherents to the religion with both seeking to justify their perspectives within a contextual framework that is inherently flawed from the outset. 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 perception regarding the origins of Salafism.

A plethora of research findings, propounded by non-Muslim and non-Salafi orientated Muslim academics, point to two main origins of Salafism; the first being attributed to Muhammad Abdul Wahhab, from whom the Wahhabist movement emerged and the second, emanating from the late nineteenth century reformers, Muhammad Abduh, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Rashid Rida. The ambit of discussion at this stage is to outline academic observations surrounding these reformers and to contrast these with Shaikh Ali Hasan's earlier, insider perspective that defined Salafism. Before examining Wahhabism, consideration of the other purported source of Salafism will also be discussed briefly. Stemmann refers to Salafism as an *'ambiguous'* term in view of the different sociological and historical realities surrounding the movement.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ Cesari supports Stemmann 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 at during that time to be intellectual and progressive.¹⁶ Wiktorowicz highlights the disparity between Salafism as it stands today and compared to that of the late nineteenth century. He observes:

¹² 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.

¹³ Stemmann, 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

¹⁴ Ibid, p.3

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Cesari, J: 'Muslims in Europe and the Risk of Radicalism,' cited from 'Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge in Europe', Chapter 8, p.100, Ashgate Publishing Company, Edited by Coolsaet, R. 2008, p.99.

*“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.”*¹⁷

Additionally, Inge also observed the political activism of the earlier movements and contrasted this with the apolitical position of contemporary Salafis.¹⁸ Interestingly, she considers Salafis to be ideologically ‘indistinguishable’ from Wahhabis with them being more intrinsically related to the Wahhabist ideology than that of Jamal al-Din Afghani et al.¹⁹ Wiktorowicz’s above mentioned research must not be ignored from the perspective of what the researcher 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. Evidence of this can be seen in Muhammad Abduh’s interpretation of an ideological aspect of Islam; the belief in the *Jinn* (an unseen aspect of Allah’s creation that possesses free-will similar to mankind). Their creation and attributes are elucidated clearly in Qur’anic and prophetic descriptions, however, Abduh chose to interpret and confine their description to a more scientific rationale.²⁰

Wahhabism: An overview

Wahhabism is considered the parent of contemporary Salafism by many researchers today:

*“Salafi ideas are rooted in the wahhabi school of thought, which originated on the Arab Peninsula at the time of ‘Abd al-Wahhab in the eighteenth century.”*²¹

This part of the discussion will not explore or deliberate over Wahhabism in too much detail due to the availability of extensive works about the movement and its founder.²² However, the relevance of this movement and its ideology requires some discussion in view of it being intrinsically linked to Salafism. Consideration has scarcely been given to

¹⁷ Wiktorowicz, Q: ‘Anatomy of the Salafi Movement: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism’ Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group 29: p.212, 2006

¹⁸ 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

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Wiktorowicz, Q: ‘Anatomy of the Salafi Movement: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism’ Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group 29: p.212, 2006

²¹ Roald, A S: ‘New Muslims in the European Context: The Experience of Scandinavian Converts,’ Brill, 2004, p.150

²² Delong-Bas, N J: ‘Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad,’ I.B. Taurus, 2004 & Commins, D: ‘The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia,’ I.B. Taurus, 2006

evidence suggesting Salafism existed *before* Wahhabism or indeed, other reformist movements that followed, and the possibility (or likelihood) that *they* actually adopted the Salafi ideological construct and methodology for their respective circumstances and environments. In this regard, the definition of Salafism, cited by Ali Hasan earlier in this section, should be reiterated: it is not restricted to a term, place or group. The author would also suggest it is not constricted by time either; rather, it is Salafism's adjustment to each societal context that needs to be examined before it is applied. Hasan's conclusive statement regarding succeeding generations (like 'Abd al Wahhab's and Muhammad Abduh et al.) comparing their respective circumstances and environments: '*ideologically, practically, perceptively and executively – with the manhaj of the Salaf and their application of the deen*'²³ serves as evidence to the claim of Salafism preceding movements like those referred to above. The frequent application of Wahhabism as a synonymous term to Salafism is slowly beginning to lose credibility and is now, increasingly, considered to be a misnomer, especially in view of the Salafi rejection of this terminology.²⁴ To further elucidate this point, reference to King Abdul Aziz al Saud's declaration during Hajj in 1946 should suffice as evidence on the country's position regarding Wahhabism:

*"Verily, I am Salafi and my creed is that of Salafiyyah which is based on the Book and Sunnah...They say we are "Wahhabis"; rather, we are Salafis and we preserve our deen (religion and way of life) and follow the Book of Allaah and the Sunnah of His Messenger...there is nothing between us and the Muslims except for the Book of Allaah and the Sunnah of His Messenger."*²⁵

Despite Inge's earlier consideration of Salafis as ideologically indistinguishable from Wahhabis, she goes on to express a preference for usage of the term, Salafi. This is due to her conclusion that the term 'Wahhabi' is used:

*"...derogatorily in order to portray the movement [Salafis] as centred on just one individual in history."*²⁶

Her observation accords to the strategy deployed by the Combating Terrorism Center's strategy in labeling the jihadi movement as Qutubis in order to discredit them. (This was discussed earlier in the above section.) In fact, the use of terminology, as a strategic tool to demean opponents and/or alien concepts etc., is not new. So far as this stratagem relates to Islam, it can be traced back to Orientalist writings that described Muslims as '*Muhammadans*'²⁷ inferring their worship of a finite man (Prophet Muhammad) as

²³ 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

²⁴ Kepel, G: 'The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West,' Belknap Harvard, 2004, p. 157.

²⁵ King Abdul Aziz al Saud's address to pilgrims, November 1946; '*Al-Mus-haf wa's-Sayf*' pp.135-6 cited in Suhaymee, A.S: 'Be a Serious Salafi!' 2009, p.6

²⁶ Inge, A: 'Salafism in Britain: The New Generation's Rebellion,' unpublished MA dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London p.10

²⁷ Schacht, J: 'The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence,' Oxford, 1950.

opposed to an infinite and omnipotent God, (Allah). Inge's subsequent reason for desisting from using the term Wahhabi is pertinent because of its specific association with Saudi Arabia and the fact that this:

*"...renders the term unrepresentative of the form of religiosity that has taken root among many Muslims worldwide."*²⁸

Salafism in relation to political and extremist manifestations

The effect of belief-related (ideological) and deed-related (behavioural) extremism amongst the earlier generation of Muslims has been previously discussed. Specific focus was given to the emergence of the Khawaarij comparisons made to some contemporary proponents of belief-related extremism, like Syed Qutb. Examination of possible extremist tendencies amongst British Salafis from an insider perspective had not, at the time of writing this paper, been conducted. This examination, therefore, aims to determine the nature of such tendencies and to provide a template against which the succeeding research chapters 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 in chapter four, 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."*²⁹

Al-Ghulu (Extremism)³⁰

This terminology has become increasingly relevant, particularly in relation to the Salafi-Jihadi classification. Reference has been made to Oliveti's conclusion that, generally, Salafis are not "murderous" by nature; however, this observation must now be considered in light of the prevalent Salafist typology and refer exclusively to the quietist faction. Husain's observation – regarding Salafi extremism in relation to their attire and "cultish" manner of observing the five obligatory prayers – must also be reconsidered in

²⁸ 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

²⁹ 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

³⁰ Note: This can also be described as excessiveness

view of this.³¹ The researcher suggests that, whilst behavioural traits and outward displays of religiosity may appear extreme, a more accurate description of these characteristics would be that they are excessive. This is acceptable, even according to many Salafi adherents, as the latter description denotes a religious fervency often found amongst new converts to Salafism.³² 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.”³³

There are also a number of Qur’anic and prophetic warnings censuring excessiveness. For example, the Prophet said:

“Do not be strict upon yourselves, for then Allah will be strict upon you. Verily, a people were strict upon themselves so Allah was strict upon them. It is the remnants of those people in the hermitages and monasteries.”³⁴

In fact, many discussions have ensued on website blogs regarding ‘Salafi’ as well as ‘*movement burnout*’ where excessive practice, alongside eventual disillusionment, have led to individuals developing psychological problems, recanting their faith etc.³⁵ Perhaps one of the more lucid examples of excessiveness emanating from Salafism, particularly in the West, is the manner of propagation and discourses between 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. Hamed highlights the emergence of ‘*Super Salafis*’ in the UK who began, what he terms, a “*purist inquisition*” by labeling other Muslim groups as deviant.³⁶ In fact, these particular Salafis established an organisation which became known:

“...for their increasingly intolerant and polemical attitude to former colleagues as well as their vindictiveness towards other Muslim groups.”³⁷

³¹ Husain, E: ‘The Islamist’, Penguin, 2007, pp.70-72.

³² 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

³³ Narration reported in the hadeeth collection of Hanbal, A, (2/188 and 210) and others with an authentic [*saheeh*] 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

³⁴ Narration reported in hadeeth collection of Dawood, A and Yala, A, 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.420

³⁵ Lee, U: ‘The Rise and Fall of the Salafi Movement’; <http://wordpress.com/tag/rise-and-fall-of-salafi-movement/> and Nelson, T: ‘Recovering from the ‘Movement Mentality’; <http://www.tariqnelson.com/2007/02/recovering-from-the-movement-mentality>

³⁶ Hamed, 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,

³⁷ Ibid, p.11

Wiktorowicz's inference to the excessiveness of Salafis becomes apparent when he describes the same organisation as Hamed 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."*³⁸

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'³⁹, 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 judgments 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."*⁴⁰

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."*⁴¹

Other characteristics of excessiveness that are attributed to Salafis include their initial desire to completely detach themselves from society on the premise of 'uzlah' (seclusion) that was elucidated upon in the previous chapter. The extent of such 'uzlah' resulted in individuals and indeed, communities, becoming ghettoised due to their refusal to engage and interact with wider society. The researcher's experience of this phenomenon can be recounted here. Some of the weekly sermons, during his tenure as chairman of Brixton Mosque (between 1994 and 2009), expressed the necessity of limiting the extent of interaction with the wider non-Muslim society, as well as the reasons for such interaction. This was to continue until the congregation was able to

³⁸ Wiktorowicz, Q: 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism' Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group 29: p.212, 2006

³⁹ Cole, J & Cole, B; 'Martrydom: Radicalisation and Terrorist Violence Among British Muslims,' Pennant Books, 2009 p.159 citing Janis, I; 'Victims of Groupthink,' (2nd edition) (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1982).

⁴⁰ Cole, J & Cole, B; 'Martrydom: Radicalisation and Terrorist Violence Among British Muslims,' Pennant Books, 2009 p.159

⁴¹ Ibid

establish their Muslim identity. Interfaith cooperation on any matter at that stage was advised against:

*“Dialogue implies discussion, exchanging ideas, compromise. It is not for us to reconcile differences. How do we reconcile the fact that they commit shirk and have distorted their religion?”*⁴²

Many Salafis would insist that the nature of the *uzlah* intended was of the meritorious, recommended type, and this is correct; however, in the absence of continuous scholarly direction on the implementation and contextualisation of this particular act, some adherents risk falling into what may be considered excessiveness in today’s society. Hegghammer and Lacroix, in describing the characteristics of ‘*rejectionist Islamism*’ that arose in Saudi Arabia during the 50’s and 60’s, (and more recently in the 90’s), highlight the extent of the movement’s withdrawal from society and compare it to Shukri Mustafa’s Jama’at al-Muslimum in 1970’s Egypt.⁴³ While the initial premise of the *rejectionist* movement’s withdrawal, or *uzlah*, was similar to Shukri’s their general objectives differed at first. For example, the ultimate aim of Shukri was revolutionary in that he sought the collapse of what he perceived to be a disbelieving Egyptian society⁴⁴, whereas the ‘*rejectionists*’, dissociated themselves from what they considered a corrupt Saudi society.⁴⁵ The researcher suggests the latter example of *uzlah* is closer to the type practiced by Salafis in the UK and Western perceptions of it contributing to violent extremist manifestations must be tempered by first establishing the import behind the premise of such acts.

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.⁴⁶ It’s

⁴² Baker, A: ‘Da’wah not Dialogue,’ Brixton Mosque & Islamic Cultural Centre, transcript of Friday Sermon, 3rd September 1999.

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, p.15); <http://www.cambridge.org/journals/mes>

⁴⁴ Kepel, G: ‘The Roots of Radical Islam,’ Saqi, 2005, p.75

⁴⁵ 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.14); <http://www.cambridge.org/journals/mes>

⁴⁶ Roald, A S: ‘New Muslims in the European Context: The Experience of Scandinavian Converts,’ Brill, 2004, pp.159-161

somewhat exclusionist approach to other Muslims has contributed to this negative societal perception.⁴⁷

Al-Tanatta' (exorbitance or extravagance)

In spite of claims that Salafis are heavily financially subsidised by Gulf states, particularly Saudi Arabia, so far as the UK is concerned, there remain a handful of Salafi mosques that are either owned or funded outright by the indigenous community. No finances have been received by many of the Salafi communities, except perhaps for donations to fund literary or propagatory material.⁴⁸ Claims of exorbitance are usually leveled against Salafis by takfeeri protagonists and their sympathisers.⁴⁹

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

Among the Muslim community 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."*⁵⁰

This is perhaps explained by their supposed rejection of different schools of thought, (*madhabs*) in preference to primary and secondary sources of Islamic legislature.⁵¹ The characteristic of inflexibility is also witnessed in Salafis' eschewal of cultural norms and the advocacy of explicitly Islamic normative values.⁵² Wiktorowicz also refers to the Salafis' concern regarding the human intellect and desires pervading the parameters of religiously proscribed characteristics with the resultant effect being the manipulation of the faith.⁵³ He cites Roy's assertion that Salafis' objective, in this instance, is the '*deculturation*' of the Muslim community – that is:

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.159

⁴⁸ Inge, A: 'Salafism in Britain: The New Generation's Rebellion,' unpublished MA dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London pp.21-23

⁴⁹ Reference can be made to Al Qaeda's as-Sahab video footage of Tanweer Hussain's martyrdom recoding in 2005 in which he accused Saudi scholars of being content with their lifestyle, i.e. driving Toyota jeeps/SUVs etc.

⁵⁰ Roald, A. S: 'New Muslims in the European Context: The Experience of Scandinavian Converts,' Brill, 2004, p.152

⁵¹ Inge, A: 'Salafism in Britain: The New Generation's Rebellion,' unpublished MA dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London p.12

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Wiktorowicz, Q: 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism' Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group 29: p.210, 2006

*"They seek to strip Islam as practiced into its pristine elements by jettisoning folk customs and delinking Islam from any cultural context."*⁵⁴

I suggest the apparent rigidity and inflexibility displayed behaviourally by Salafis has a context that should not be ignored. While 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 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.⁵⁵ Similarly, this practice was revived in the UK during the late nineties; however, it caused consternation in particular mosques whose congregation were largely unfamiliar with the act and, in contrast, considered it a desecration of their place of worship. In the event, Salafis have been heavily criticised for their solidarity against a concerted effort from Muslim liberals and secularists to homogenise a new western version of Islam and, thereby relegate significant portents of Muslim identity to relative obscurity.⁵⁶

At this stage, it should be noted that the excessive characteristics described above are not directed solely to 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. Hamed 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.'"*⁵⁷

Hamid concludes that the new group's tactics of discrediting perceived rivals is similar to a form of religious McCarthyism.⁵⁸ Super Salafis were known to accuse their

⁵⁴ Roy, O: '*Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*,' London: Hurst Publishers, 2004 cited in Wiktorowicz, Q: '*Anatomy of the Salafi Movement: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*' Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group 29: p.210, 2006

⁵⁵ 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>

⁵⁶ Qunfuz: '*Abusing Quilliam's name*,' <http://qunfuz.com/2009/08/13/abusing-quilliams-name/>

⁵⁷ Hamed, 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

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.⁵⁹ Inge cites my observations in her work regarding Salafism in the UK; namely, that;

"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" ⁶⁰

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. Hamed 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." ⁶¹

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.⁶² 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.⁶³

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. 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 behavior; however, based on existing evidence, discussed

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.13

⁵⁹ 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).

⁶⁰ Inge, A: 'Salafism in Britain: The New Generation's Rebellion,' unpublished MA dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London p.19

⁶¹ Hamed, 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

⁶² Roald, A. S: 'New Muslims in the European Context: The Experience of Scandinavian Converts,' Brill, 2004, p.160

⁶³ Ibid

in this and the previous chapter, violent extremism is not necessarily the foregone conclusion for an individual possessing these characteristics. Having said this, it would be premature to attempt to determine the validity of these observations at this stage without first examining existing empirical evidence relating to this aspect. These behavioural manifestations of extremism must be considered as part of a wider mosaic that 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 terrorist.