ROOTS OF DIVERSITY

Re-examining Proto-Salafi Movements and the Foundations of Modern Salafism

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This study re-examines the historical and ideological roots of modern Salafism by exploring its proto-Salafi antecedents, which emerged as localized Islamic reformist movements during the 18th and 19th centuries. Through a comparative historical analysis of key movements in South Asia, West Africa, and Arabia, the paper challenges the dominant narrative of Salafism as a unified, global, and inherently violent ideology. Instead, it highlights the diversity of proto-Salafi movements and their responses to distinct socio-political, colonial, and theological contexts. Emphasizing shared doctrinal principles such as the rejection of bid'ah (innovation) and the prioritization of tawhid (monotheism), the study demonstrates how these movements contributed to shaping modern Salafism while contesting its portrayal as a monolithic phenomenon. This nuanced exploration provides a framework for understanding Salafism's foundational diversity, its regional adaptations, and its evolution into a multifaceted contemporary movement.

KEYWORDS: Salafism, Proto-Salafi Movements, Islamic Revivalism, Religious Reform, 18th and 19th Century Islam, Colonialism and Islam, Modern Salafism

1. INTRODUCTION

Salafism, as commonly understood today, is often linked to modern political upheavals and extremist movements, particularly in the Middle East. In public and academic discourse, it is frequently portrayed as a rigid and often violent ideology, epitomized by groups like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.[1] The events of September 11, 2001, in particular, have reinforced the association of Salafism with radicalism and global jihad. This perspective situates Salafism as a relatively recent phenomenon, emerging as a reaction to the political and social turmoil of the 20th century in the Middle East.[2] However, this interpretation oversimplifies the complex origins and historical development of Salafism, ignoring the diversity of earlier movements that share similar ideological principles but arose in vastly different socio-political contexts.

The prevailing narrative of Salafism as a monolithic, modern, and global ideology overlooks the existence of various revivalist movements that emerged during the 18th and 19th centuries. These movements, though ideologically aligned with the core doctrines of Salafism, principally adhering to the practices of pious ancestors, developed independently in different regions, shaped by their unique political, social, and colonial circumstances. This study seeks to challenge the common assumption of a unified, global Salafism by exploring the diversity of early Islamic reformist movements, which this paper terms proto-Salafi movements. These movements cannot be neatly categorized within the framework of modern Salafism, nor should they be viewed as part of a single, cohesive global ideology.

Existing scholarship on Salafism has made important contributions to understanding its historical and ideological roots. Some scholars have highlighted the significance of localized dynamics in shaping early Islamic reformist movements.[3] However, much of the contemporary discourse still leans toward viewing Salafism as a global and modern phenomenon, driven by 20th-century Middle Eastern political and social forces. This study diverges from this view by arguing that early proto-Salafi movements were not globally connected, nor were they ideologically uniform. Instead, they were responses to local conditions and pressures, which influenced their doctrines and strategies. However, many modern Salafi groups trace their ideological and religious heritage to them, making these movements foundational to the understanding of contemporary Salafism.

The central question this paper seeks to address is how the proto-Salafi movements that emerged during the 18th and 19th centuries contributed to the development of modern Salafism and in what ways they challenged the notion of Salafism as a unified, global ideology. The main argument of the study is that these movements adhered to doctrinal principles now associated with Salafism, such as the emphasis on *tawhid* (Monotheism) and the rejection of *bidʿah* (innovations), but their diversity in thought and practice challenges the idea that Salafism has always been a monolithic or inherently violent movement. This study thus seeks to reframe the understanding of Salafism by exploring its proto-Salafi antecedents and the complex local factors that shaped their emergence and evolution.

While these movements emerged in different contexts and responded to local sociopolitical realities, their shared emphasis on religious purism and reform made them the predecessors of what is now often labeled as Salafism. Modern Salafi movements and groups often claim religious and doctrinal inheritance from these earlier revivalist movements. Though these movements shared common themes: anti-colonial resistance, a rejection of

local innovations and syncretic practices, loss of Islamic glory, and a call to return to the pristine Islam of the early generations, understanding these historical movements as part of a singular global Salafi narrative oversimplifies the rich diversity of Islamic reformism.

This paper employs comparative historical analysis, focusing on key proto-Salafi movements that emerged during the 18th and 19th centuries in regions such as Arabia, South Asia, and West Africa. Through detailed case studies of three such movements, the paper examines the socio-political and colonial contexts that shaped these movements. Primary sources, including religious texts, political treatises, and historical records, will be analyzed to highlight the doctrinal and strategic variations within these movements, illustrating their contributions to the broader Salafi tradition.

The paper begins with a literature review, examining how Salafism has been defined and studied in modern scholarship, followed by critiques of the global Salafism narrative. The literature review will also explore Islamic revivalism and the proto-Salafi movements, highlighting the historical continuities and doctrinal developments that have shaped modern Salafi thought. The methodology and sources section, besides describing the sources used, outlines the comparative historical analysis by way of detailed case studies of key Proto-Salafi movements in South Asia and West Africa as the primary method employed.

This is followed by a section on the theoretical framework used, where an attempt has been made to conceptualize the proto-Salafi movements, which are foundational to this study. The findings will discuss the empirical evidence that challenges the concept of a unified global Salafism, emphasizing the regional and doctrinal variations within these movements.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The fact that one of the earlier scholarly works on Salafism was titled 'Global Salafism' explains how Salafism was seen as a unified global phenomenon.[4] Wicktorowiz, Hamdeh, Maher, Meijer, Rougier, and Wagemakers, were primarily interested in understanding how Salafism as a global ideology spread in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and structured itself as a social force in varied contexts before spreading to Western countries.[5] Roy was perhaps the first to argue that Salafism represents a deculturalized form of Islam, stripped of local traditions to attain a "pure" religion.[6] He highlights the globalized appeal of Salafism due to modern deterritorialized Muslim conditions.[7] Similarly, Haykel links Salafism to the 18th-century Wahhabi movement before its diffusion to other parts of the world, stressing on key principles like *tawhid* (oneness of God), opposition to *shirk* (polytheism), and *bid'ah*.[8] Al-Rasheed critiques the Saudi-Wahhabi association, arguing that its political ties have fueled global perceptions of Salafism as radical.[9]

Sageman introduces the term "Global Salafi Jihad," emphasizing that the global Salafi jihad movement transcends local contexts and represents a transnational religious ideology that is inherently violent.[10] Roy sees the global Salafi jihad movement as a reaction to the failure of traditional political Islam and argues that it has become a transnational force that rejects political structures while promoting violence as a means to achieve a utopian Islamic state.[11] Kepel traces the ideological shift from political Islam to violent jihadism, showing how radical Salafism evolved into a tool for disenfranchised Muslim populations.[12]

Many scholars have challenged the notion of a unified global Salafism. Ostebe, Bonnefoy Thurston, Gauvain, and Pall investigated the various indigenous manifestations of Salafism and demonstrated that the concept of a unified global Salafism erases important historical and regional distinctions.[13] Zaman argued that

movements like the Deobandi and Ahle Hadith movements while sharing some features of Salafi puritanism cannot be categorized under a monolithic global Salafism because their concerns were often rooted in local issues of colonialism and Muslim power.[14] Roy later critiques Salafism's supposed coherence, emphasizing its fragmentation and regional variations molded by local politics.[15]

Wehrey and Boukhars opposed Roy's thesis of "deterritorialized Islam" by arguing that the Salafi movements are not driven by a global, immutable ideology but are shaped by local dynamics.[16] For them, seeing Salafism as an extension of Saudi Arabia's soft-power projection was a gross distortion of reality and they advocated the notion of 'hyperlocalism' to analyze the development and evolution of Salafi groups. Dalmasso expands on the regional critique, showing that North African revivalist movements, such as Libya's Sanusiyyah, had distinct anti-colonial goals unrelated to modern Salafi ideology.[17]

Although existing scholarship examines Salafism's global spread and variations in its modern manifestations, it largely treats Salafism as a reactionary or deculturalized ideology, often emphasizing its political and ideological rigidity, especially in modern contexts. This overlooks the foundational diversity and localized adaptations within the 18th- and 19th-century proto-Salafi movements, which did not uniformly adopt a singular approach to doctrine or practice. While many scholars address modern manifestations of Salafism as heterogeneous, there is limited examination of how early proto-Salafi diversity itself contributed to the plurality within modern Salafism, contesting the idea of an inherently monolithic or transnational movement from its roots. By addressing this gap, the study seeks to contribute to a more granular understanding of Salafism's foundational diversity, offering insight into the diverse doctrinal approaches that challenge the conventional narrative of a monolithic, inherently global or violent Salafism.

3. METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

This study aims to compare proto-Salafi movements by examining their doctrinal principles, socio-political contexts, and influence on contemporary Salafi ideologies. Using a combination of comparative historical analysis and case studies, drawn from both primary and secondary sources, the research applies a comprehensive analytical framework to explore doctrinal and contextual variations across three key cases.

The main methodological approach adopted is comparative historical analysis as it allows for an in-depth examination of how similar ideological movements, proto-Salafi in nature, arose independently across different geographic regions in response to local political, social, and economic conditions. Comparative historical analysis is particularly well-suited as it provides a way to trace both continuity and divergence over time and across regions. This enables the study of comparison of the movements' common goals, such as the emphasis on *tawhid* (monotheism) and rejection of *bid'ah* (innovations), while also recognizing the local circumstances that shaped the methods these movements employed, whether peaceful reform or violent jihad. It allows the study to situate these movements within the broader spectrum of Islamic revivalist history while paying close attention to regional particularities.

The paper employs a case study approach focusing on three key proto-Salafi movements: Tariqa Muhammadiya in India, the Faraizi Movement in Bengal, and the Sokoto Caliphate in Nigeria. The analytical framework compares cases along several key dimensions like doctrinal features, responses to colonial forces, leadership and legacy, and influence on modern Salafism. The study compares how each movement emphasized key Salafi doctrines such as *tawhid* (monotheism), the rejection of *bid'ah* (innovations), and at times *takfir* (declaring someone as a *kafir* or unbeliever). It will also analyze each movement's stance on issues

like Sufism, *taqlid* (imitation of established schools of jurisprudence), and their respective interpretations of jihad.

The study also investigates the varying strategies of resistance, whether violent or non-violent, that these movements adopted in response to their respective political challenges. Particular attention is paid to how the leaders used religious ideology to mobilize followers and their long-term influence in their respective regions. Finally, the paper examines how these proto-Salafi movements have influenced modern Salafi groups, particularly in terms of ideological inheritance, and how these groups have invoked the legacy of these movements to legitimize their own actions and ideologies.

The research draws on a combination of primary and secondary sources to reconstruct the historical context and ideological framework of the proto-Salafi movements. Primary sources include historical documents, letters, speeches, and writings from the leaders of the proto-Salafi movements themselves, such as Sayyid Ahmed Barelvi's writings on jihad and Islamic purity in particular, *Sirat ul Mustaqim* , Haji Shariatullah's religious edicts, proclamations, and writings and Uthman Dan Fodio's numerous writings, including *Bayan Wujub al-Hijrah* and other treatises justifying his jihad and his vision for a purified Islamic state. These primary sources will provide firsthand insights into the motivations, strategies, and doctrinal positions of the proto-Salafi leaders.

Wherever possible, the primary sources are supplemented by a vast body of secondary sources in the form of academic literature, historical analyses, and contemporary interpretations of these movements. Additionally, contemporary accounts from newspapers, government reports, and writings from colonial officials (particularly from British India and West Africa) has also been used to provide further context and third-party perspectives on how these movements were perceived and resisted by local and colonial powers.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CONCEPTUALIZING "PROTO-SALAFI" MOVEMENTS

The term Salafism refers to a doctrinal movement within Sunni Islam that seeks to return to the practices of the *Salaf al-Salih* (the pious predecessors), understood as the first three generations of Muslims—*Sahabah* (companions of the Prophet), *Tabiʿin* (the generation after the companions), and *Tabiʿ al-Tabiʿin* (the generation following the Tabiʿin).[18] While the essence of Salafism is often defined by its focus on puritanism and a return to the foundational texts of Islam (the Qur'an and Sunnah), modern scholarship presents diverse interpretations of what constitutes Salafism and how it has evolved into a global movement.

The concept of 'proto-Salafi' movements is foundational to this study, as it provides a lens through which to view the 18th and 19th-century Islamic revivalist movements that share ideological and doctrinal similarities with modern Salafism but developed independently in response to specific regional and historical contexts. The term 'proto-Salafi' thus refers to movements that, while not explicitly identifying as Salafi, embodied many of the core doctrines that would later come to define Salafism, such as the emphasis on *tawhid* (monotheism), the rejection of *bidʿah* (innovations), and the call for a return to the practices of the pious ancestors. These movements sought to purify Islam from what they perceived as corrupting influences and emphasized the primacy of the Qur'an and Sunnah over local customs and legal schools.

The notion of a proto-Salafi movement challenges the dominant understanding of Salafism as a modern phenomenon, suggesting instead that the roots of Salafi ideology can be traced back much further in history. This study posits that the proto-Salafi movements of the 18th and 19th centuries were not merely isolated regional events but were part of a broader trend of Islamic reviv-

alism that sought to restore the purity of Islamic practice in the face of political decline, colonialism, and internal divisions within the Muslim community.

4.1 Religious Revivalism and Authenticity Debates

Religious revivalism, particularly in the context of Islam, has often emerged in response to periods of political decline and external threats. The proto-Salafi movements examined in this study are no exception, as they arose during a time of significant upheaval for the Muslim world, marked by the decline of Islamic empires, the expansion of European colonialism, and the internal fragmentation of Muslim societies. These movements can be understood through the lens of revivalist theory, which posits that religious movements often arise as a reaction to perceived moral and spiritual decline, seeking to restore an idealized past.[19]

Scholars of Islamic revivalism have argued that revivalist movements often aim to return to authentic Islam, which they see as having been corrupted over time by foreign influences, internal divisions, and innovations.[20] This framework is highly applicable to the proto-Salafi movements of the 18th and 19th centuries, as leaders like Sayyid Ahmed Barelvi, Haji Shariatullah, and Uthman Dan Fodio framed their movements as efforts to restore the true Islam practiced by the first generations of Muslims. The movements that emerged during this time, sought to purge Islam of what they considered *bid'ah* (reprehensible innovations) and return to the Qur'an and Sunnah as the sole legitimate sources of Islamic law and practice.

Return to the glorious past is another theme of these movements, which they saw as being upended by colonial domination. Anti-colonial resistance is thus another key theoretical framework for understanding these movements. The decline of Muslim political power and the imposition of colonial rule were often

seen as both a symptom and a cause of the moral decay within the Muslim community. In this context, religious revivalism became intertwined with anti-colonial resistance, as these movements sought not only to purify Islamic practice but also to resist the political and cultural influence of the colonial powers.

This frameworks of religious revivalism and anti-colonial resistance seeks to analyze how the proto-Salafi movements functioned both as religious reform efforts and as political responses to the challenges of colonialism and declining Muslim power. By framing these movements within this dual theoretical context, the study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how and why these movements emerged and how they relate to the broader history of Salafism.

4.2 Doctrinal Continuity and Local Divergences

Conceptualizing these movements as proto-Salafi is also a way to highlight their doctrinal continuity with modern Salafism while acknowledging the significant differences in context, methods, and goals. However, unlike modern Salafism, which has become globalized and often politicized, these earlier movements were deeply embedded in their local socio-political environments and were shaped by the specific challenges and crises of their time. While these movements shared key doctrinal principles with modern Salafism, they must be understood within their unique historical and regional contexts.

One of the key arguments of this study is that the proto-Salafi movements of the 18th and 19th centuries were deeply shaped by their local socio-political environments. Unlike the modern globalized Salafi movement, which often presents itself as a transnational ideology, these earlier movements were highly localized in their responses to specific political, social, and economic conditions. For example, the Tariqa Muhammadiya in India arose as

a reaction to the decline of Muslim political power in the wake of British colonialism and the rise of Hindu dominance in key sectors of society, the Faraizi Movement in Bengal was a reaction to the economic marginalization of Bengali Muslims under the British zamindari system, which placed economic and social power in the hands of Hindu landlords and Dan Fodio's ideas were shaped by the political fragmentation of the Hausa states and the syncretic practices that had become widespread in the region.

5. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

The era of colonialism led to a spurt in revivalist movements in the Islamic world in the form of the critique of the contemporary state of affairs in terms of a return to an idealized early Islamic period. Historically, more often than not, whenever the Muslim rulers failed to defend their empires against non-Islamic onslaughts, the dominant cause of defeat was attributed to deviation from the true path rather than obsolete military tactics, strategic blunders, or technological primitiveness.[21] A true Islamic establishment, it was claimed, was meant to prevail for all times to come.[22] The destruction of Baghdad at the hands of Mongols drove Ibn Taymiyyah to see the inevitability in the form of numerous innovations that had crept into the faith.[23]

The first modern revivalist movement often associated with Salafism was the Wahhabi Movement in the 18th century, led by Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab in Arabia. ʿAbd al-Wahhab's movement emphasized the strict rejection of innovations in religious practice and the purification of Islam, drawing on the works of medieval scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah. Around the same period, Shah Waliullah in South Asia was advocating for a similar return to the foundational texts of Islam, focusing on the Hadith and rejecting the blind following of jurisprudential

schools (taqlid).[24] Similar revivalist movements arose in various parts of the Muslim world in the late 18th and 19th centuries.

The table below outlines key revivalist movements across various regions in the 18th and 19th centuries, focusing on their core ideologies and religious lineages or schools of thought (Madhabs).[25] Muhammad al-Shawkani, whose ideas were rooted in the Ashʿari tradition,[26] in Yemen advocated rejecting the practice of *taqlid* (blind following of legal precedents).[27] In Baghdad Abu al-Thana al-Alusi, operating within Ottoman regions, emphasized prioritizing the Qur'an and Sunnah and followed the Shafiʿi school of thought.[28] In North Africa, Muhammad ibn ʿAli started the Sanusiyyah movement, rooted in Sufi traditions that advocated for a return to life and practices of early Islam.[29]

These movements were diverse but shared the common theme of the revival of the Islamic glorious past. The so-called modern accretions to Islam (*bidʿah*), for most of these revivalists, were the reasons for the decline of Islam and defeat of Muslim rulers. The rejection of these innovations (*bidʿah*) and return to Islam practiced by the first generations of Islam became their primary revivalist plank. Thus, the ideational framework of all these movements was identical and shared creedal similarities with the Salafi ideology. It can be convincingly argued that Sayyid Ahmed, Muhammad al-Shawkani, Usman Dan Fodio Haji Shariatullah, etc. were Salafis, at least in the creed (*ʿaqidah*).

5.1 Tariqa e Muhammadiya (South Asia)

The decline of the Muslim Mughal empire and the ascension of the British brought about a quick end to the hegemony of Muslims in the political and social landscape of the subcontinent. The power relations were upended. With the advent of the British, a new scenario emerged where Hindus, who earlier were primarily dependent on the patronage provided by the ruling Muslim elites,

were replacing Muslims in almost every field of the new British dispensation.[30] The Muslim reaction to the British discriminatory attitude and the perceived Hindu usurpation of Muslim privileges was in the form of attempts to regain their former glory. They sought to rediscover the 'forgotten attributes' that had supposedly brought glory to Islam in the past.[31] The various Islamic voices that emerged were thus single-handedly focused on regaining the lost glory.

This sense of loss and the need to revive the Islamic political and religious authority provided fertile ground for the rise of the revivalist movements in the subcontinent. One of the most prominent and undoubtedly the most influential militant movements of the 19th century was started by Sayyid Ahmed of Rae Bareilly,[32] who has been categorized by some western scholars as the first modern Islamic leader to lead a religious, military, and political movement with a call for jihad.[33]

His movement called the Tariqa Muhammadiya (Way of Muhammad) was heavily influenced by the teachings of Shah Waliullah and his son Shah Abdul Aziz, two influential Islamic scholars who advocated for a return to the foundational principles of Islam. Shah Waliullah emphasized the need to reject innovations (*bid'ah*) that had corrupted Islamic practice and called for a return to pure monotheism (*tawhid*).[34] Sayyid Ahmed Barelvi, a disciple of Shah Abdul Aziz, took these teachings further, coupling them with an armed struggle (jihad) against the British and Sikh rulers in northern India. The Tariqa Muhammadiya was, therefore, not only a religious revivalist movement but also a socio-political resistance against colonial domination and the increasing influence of non-Muslims in the region.

Leadership and Ideology

Sayyid Ahmed Barelvi, advocated a strict interpretation of Islam that sought to cleanse the faith of practices he deemed un-Islamic,

such as the veneration of saints in Sufi and Shiʿa rituals. His movement was given the name of the Wahhabi movement[35] of India by some of the rivals of Sayyid Ahmed and Britishers; since then, scholars of different hues and colors continue to call it such even when there is not much evidence of any direct influence from Najd.[36] Charles Allen writes, "...the argument that Syed Ahmed picked up his ideas of Wahhabi intolerance and jihad while in Arabia is untenable. The reality is that he had already accepted the basic tenets of Wahhabism….as a pupil of Shah Abdul Aziz..."[37] The creedal similarities of Sayyid Ahmed's Tariqa with the Wahhabi movement of Arabia were one among several reasons for the British to brand it as a Wahhabi.

Influenced by the Salafi-like principles of Shah Waliullah, Barelvi emphasized the importance of following the Qur'an and Sunnah while rejecting blind adherence to the four traditional Sunni schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*taqlid*). According to Barabara Metcalf, "Sayyid Ahmed's works stressed above all the centrality of *tawhid* and denounced all those practices and beliefs that were held in any way to compromise that most fundamental of Islamic tenets."[38] Barelvi's movement drew heavily on the idea of jihad, not only as a means to purify Islam but also as a tool to resist British and Sikh rule, which he viewed as threats to the Islamic way of life.

The Tariqa also condemned the practices of local Sufi orders, which Barelvi and his followers believed had introduced un-Islamic innovations into the faith. Sayyid Ahmed was also strictly against the Shiʿa practice of taking out the *taʿziyah*[39] processions. He condemned the Shiʿa for allegedly following un-Islamic practices; his followers argued that Sufism, Shiʿa doctrines and practices, and popular customs were the three sources of threat to the Islamic faith.[40] His vision for the movement was both theological and political, aimed at establishing an Islamic state governed by Shariʿah and free from foreign influences.

Main Tenets and Practices

The Tariqa Muhammadiya's core ideological tenets included strict monotheism (*tawhid*), the rejection of *bidʿah*, and a return to the practices of the early Islamic community. Metcalf writes "Sayyid Ahmed's works stressed above all the centrality of *tawhid*, the transcendent unity of God, and denounced all those practices and beliefs that were held in any way to compromise that most fundamental of Islamic tenets. God alone was held to be omniscient and omnipotent."[41] He condemned the Shiʿa for following un-Islamic practices; his followers argued that Sufism, Shiʿa doctrines and practices, and popular custom were the three sources of threat to the Islamic faith.[42]

One of the most significant aspects of the movement was its emphasis on jihad as a means of achieving these goals. Sayyid Ahmed led his followers in a series of military campaigns against the Sikh Empire in the Punjab region, with the ultimate aim of establishing an Islamic state. Sayyid Ahmed declared himself the Imam or the supreme religious leader and was called Khalifah (Caliph) by his followers.[43] While the movement also sought to reform the spiritual life of Indian Muslims, it was highly militant in nature, and its reliance on armed struggle distinguished it from many other revivalist movements of the period.

In many ways, Sayyid Ahmed's movement had all the creedal ingredients that modern Salafis practice. Athar Abbas Rizvi writes, "…Sayyid was known as *ghayr Muqqallid*[44] or Salafi… (H)e urged his followers not to follow *fiqh* texts blindly as they followed *ahadith*."[45] Sayyid Ahmed's focus on *tawhid,* rejection of blind *taqlid*, disdain for *bidʿah*, and prioritization of *ahadith* made Tariqa a typical Salafi-like movement. Tariqa also mirrored Wahhabis by advocating and waging armed jihad to restore 'true' Islam.

Despite criticism of the Shiʿa and certain Sufi ideas and practices, Sayyid Ahmed refrained from rejecting them or calling them *mushrik*s (polytheists). We do not find any discussion in *Sirat* where Sufis and Shiʿa are blamed for committing *kufr,* or they were

Revivalists/ Movements	Period	Leaders	Region	Core Ideology	Madhhab/ Lineage
Wahhabi Movement	18th	Muhammad Ibn Abd al Wahhab	Arabia	Rejecting Innovations	Hanbali
Waliullahi Movement	18th	Shah Waliullah	South Asia	Prioritizing Hadith	Hanafi
Sokoto Caliphate	18th/19th	Uthman Dan Fodio	West Africa	Adopt true Islam	Qadiriyyah
Al-Shawkani	18th/19th	Muhammad al Shawkani	Yemen	Reject *taqlid*	Ash'ari
Alusis of Baghdad	19th	Abu al Thana al Alusi	Ottoman Regions	Prioritizing Qur'an, Hadith	Shafi'i
Tariqa e Muhammadiya	19th	Sayyid Ahmed Barelvi	South Asia	Reject innovations	Hanafi
Ahle Hadith	19th	Nazir Ahmed	South Asia	Reject *madhhab*s and *taqlid*	Ash'ari
Sanusiyyah	19th	Muhammad ibn Ali	North Africa	Return to life of early Islam	Sufi
Faraizi Movement	19th	Haji Shariatullah	Bangladesh	Reject *taqlid*	Hanafi

Table.1

declared apostates. In fact, the Sufi connections of Sayyid Ahmed Khan and that of his spiritual guide Shah Waliullah, conditioned Tariqa's assessment of Sufi ideology and practices. Also, Sayyid Ahmed's views on Shi'a were also shaped by his own claim of being from the Prophet's lineage.[46]

The accommodation of Sufis and Shi'a, Pearson argues, was a result of the need to project Muslims as unified against the British and Hindu onslaught.[47] The political competition was not with the Shi'a or Sufis but with the non-Muslim Hindus; thus, the group power dynamics demanded a united front against the Hindu assertion. This showed that doctrinal arguments were tailored to suit the needs of the Islamic movements more as political entities rather than as religious bodies.

Legacy and Influence on Contemporary Salafi Groups in the Region

Sayyid Ahmed's movement did not die with him. The flag of resistance was carried forward by his disciples, who set up resistance camps in different parts of the North and Northwest of undivided India. The Tariqa had a profound impact on the development of Islamic thought and political activism in South Asia and the movement's intellectual and religious legacy lived on in later South Asian revivalist movements. The Ahle Hadith movement, which shares many doctrinal similarities with Salafism and the Deobandi Movement in India, was influenced by Sayyid Ahmed's call for religious reform and rejection of innovations to purify Islam and restore its glory.[48]

Modern jihadist groups in South Asia frequently invoke the legacy of Tariqa's emphasis on jihad, its rejection of local innovations, and its strict interpretation of Islam continue to resonate with contemporary Salafi and jihadist ideologies in the region. Within minutes of setting off a series of bomb explosions in the capital city of New Delhi in 2008, Indian Mujahideen, India's most

potent homegrown militant group, sent an email to various media houses claiming responsibility for the attacks. The email was in the form of a charter or manifesto that laid down the reasons for attacks and their plans. It read, 'We, the Indian Mujahideen…have carried out this attack in the memory of two eminent Mujahids of India: Sayeed Ahmed Shaheed and Shah Ismail Shaheed who had raised the glorious banner of jihad against the disbelievers in this very city of Delhi. It is the great hard work and sacrifices of these visionary legends that shall always inspire us to carry on the fight against *kufr* (disbelief) till our last breath."[49]

Sayyid Ahmed's emphasis on jihad as a tool for Islamic revival has continued to inspire jihadist movements in South Asia. His call for jihad against non-Muslim rulers, as well as his rejection of syncretic practices, has been appropriated by contemporary jihadist groups, who view him as a precursor to modern Islamist militancy. As noted by Ayesha Jalal, the symbolic legacy of the Battle of Balakot continues to resonate with jihadist groups in South Asia, particularly in India where the memory of Sayyid Ahmed's struggle is invoked in the fight against Indian rule.[50] Balakot continues to play a symbolic role for the jihadists in Pakistan and India, both geographically and symbolically. It is thus not surprising when the Indian government decided to hit the militant training centers in Pakistan after a Jaish-e Mohammad terrorist allegedly killed 40 Indian paramilitary soldiers in Kashmir in Feb 2019, they zeroed in on Balakot.[51]

5.2 Faraizi Movement (Bengal)

The loss of power in the form of the unraveling of the Mughal empire after the British arrival was most visible in Bengal where the Permanent Land Settlement Act of 1793, implemented by the British, transferred significant power to Hindu landlords, leaving many Muslim peasants economically disadvantaged and politi-

cally powerless.[52] Like the movements started by Shah Waliullah and Sayyid Ahmed of Bareilly, similar revivalist movements emerged in Bengal that lamented the loss of Muslim glory in the subcontinent. Haji Shariatullah was a part of this growing intellectual movement in Bengal that evolved as a response to the sudden loss of Muslim power and privileges.

Leadership and Ideology

Haji Shariatullah founded the Faraizi Movement, in 1818, in response to the socio-economic marginalization of Bengali Muslims under British colonialism and the dominance of Hindu zamindars (landlords). In a way akin to Sayyid Ahmed, Shariatullah also blamed the impure accretions that had crept into the faith with continued intermingling with the Hindus as the primary cause of Muslim decline.[53] He believed that the socio-political decline of Muslims in Bengal was a result of their departure from true Islamic teachings and their incorporation of Hindu customs and superstitions.[54]

Shariatullah succeeded in providing political agency to the Muslim peasants of Bengal, who saw both British rule and Hindu domination ruinous for Muslims.[55] Mubashar Hassan argues that the revivalist nature of the Faraizi movement gave a sense of pride to the Bengali peasants who began seeing themselves as the descendants of the ancestors who had ruled India before the British came and robbed them of their high place.[56] After Shariatullah's death, his son Dudu Miyan took over the leadership of the movement and continued to fight for the rights of Muslim peasants against the Hindu zamindars. Under Dudu Miyan, the Faraizi Movement became more politically active and engaged in direct confrontations with both the Zamindars and British authorities.[57]

However, in contrast to the Tariqa e Muhammadiya, which engaged in armed jihad against the Sikh rulers of Punjab, the Faraizi Movement's political engagement was more focused on

non-violent resistance to the British colonial system and the Hindu landlords who dominated the peasant economy. Shariatullah's call for Muslim peasants to refuse to pay unjust taxes and to resist the exploitation of the zamindars was a form of socio-political resistance that aimed at empowering the Muslim population without resorting to violence.[58]

Shariatullah had spent time in Mecca studying Islamic theology and called on Muslims to shun innovations and restore the practice of *fara'id* (obligatory Islamic duties).[59] His ideology was shaped by the Salafi-like principles of returning to the Qur'an and Sunnah as the sole sources of religious guidance. Shariatullah rejected the *taqlid* (blind following) of the traditional schools of Islamic jurisprudence and advocated for *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) based solely on the foundational texts of Islam.[60] He also condemned the widespread adoption of Hindu customs among Bengali Muslims, arguing that these practices had corrupted the true faith.

Main Tenets and Practices

The Faraizi Movement centered on the enforcement of *farai'd*, or the obligatory duties of Islam, such as daily prayers (*salah*), fasting (*sawm*), and the payment of alms (*zakat*). The Faraizi movement rejected *shirk* (associating others with God) and the joining of any Hindu rites and ceremonies.[61] Shariatullah emphasized the importance of practicing Islam as prescribed in the Qur'an and Sunnah, rejecting all forms of innovation or *bid'ah*, particularly those that had been incorporated into the religious practices of Bengali Muslims as a result of their interaction with Hindu culture.[62]

The Faraizi Movement's religious reforms were closely linked to its social and political agenda, as it sought to empower Muslim peasants against the Hindu zamindars who had oppressed them. The movement also sought to reform Bengali Muslim society by

abolishing practices such as shrine worship, the celebration of Sufi saints' *urs* (anniversaries), and other customs that Shariatullah deemed un-Islamic.[63] The Faraizis sought to eradicate these practices and restore what they saw as the authentic practices of Islam, as practiced by the Prophet and the early generations of Muslims (*Salaf al-Salih*).[64]

The focus on absolute *tawhid* and the condemnation of modern rituals, which were believed to be Sufi accretions, led many British and even some Indian scholars to conclude that the Wahhabi tradition heavily influenced Faraizi movements like Tariqa-e-Muhammadiya.[65] However, Shariatullah was a student of Sheikh Tabir, one of the foremost authorities of the Hanafi school in Makkah during the early 19th century.[66] It becomes pertinent to mention here that Wahhabi traditions strictly follow the Hanbali jurisprudence and, at the same time, reject the *taqlid*[67] of religious scholars. Shariatullah, like Sayyid Ahmed, was an ardent follower of the teachings of Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi and Shah Waliullah.[68]

Legacy and Influence on Contemporary Salafi Groups in the Region

The Faraizi Movement had a lasting impact on the development of Islamic revivalism in Bengal and beyond. Its emphasis on the purification of Islamic practice and its rejection of local innovations were key features of later Islamic reform movements, including those aligned with Salafi ideology. The movement also laid the groundwork for the rise of a strong Bengali Muslim identity, which would later play a role in the formation of modern Bangladesh.

Contemporary Salafi groups in the region, particularly those advocating for strict adherence to Islamic principles, continue to draw on the legacy of the Faraizi Movement as an example of Islamic resistance against external cultural and political forces. The 2016 edition of an al Qaeda Magazine evokes Shariatullah's legacy in this context,

> No matter how harsh it sounds, a rebellion against this oppressive system is what the land of Haji Shariatullah needs these days. And as we do so, let us also revive the spirit of the Faraizi movement and return to our true roots. A revival of Islam in our individual and collective lives should be our answer to those who seek to stamp out Islam from Muslim Bangladesh.[69]

Two of the most prominent Salafi Jihadist groups of Bangladesh, Ansar al Islam (AAI) and Jamaat ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) repeatedly invoke Shariatullah's legacy to justify their action and goals. A study of AAI and JMB documents available online, where the group took responsibility for the attacks, reveals how these groups try to justify their actions by rooting their ideas in the historic traditions of the Faraizi movement. Out of the total sixteen documents that were studied and analyzed, fourteen mentioned Shariatullah and his ideas as their primary source of inspiration.

Faraizi Movement represents a critical example of how proto-Salafi ideas were adapted to address the specific socio-political and religious challenges faced by Muslims in colonial Bengal. While it shared key features with other revivalist movements, such as a focus on religious purism and the rejection of innovations, its emphasis on socio-economic justice and resistance to Hindu domination made it unique within the broader spectrum of Islamic revivalist movements in the 19th century. The movement's legacy continues to shape Islamic thought and practice in the region, making it an essential case study for understanding the diversity of proto-Salafi movements across the Muslim world.

5.3 Sokoto Caliphate (West Africa)

Within months of the declaration of a Caliphate by Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, thousands of miles away from Iraq, another Abu Bakr also declared the establishment of an Islamic State in some areas of

North-East Nigeria. Many believed that Shekau's announcement was inspired or rather hastened by Baghdadi's announcement of the Caliphate.[70] This may very well be true, but there is no denying that Shekau's declaration of a caliphate was not simply an opportunistic call for attention rather, there existed a deeply rooted historical precedent and resonance for a caliphate in Nigeria and neighboring countries, the legacy of which Boko Haram sought to appropriate."[71]

Those who argue that the jihadi campaign of Boko Haram has primarily been influenced by the international milieu of Salafi Jihadism overlook the deep epistemological and theological tradition of Islamic revivalism akin to the Salafi creed and method that took root in Africa in the 19th century. Boko haram leaders right since their founder Yusuf drew inspiration, both ideological and temporal, from the Sokoto Caliphate, which was established in the early nineteenth century Northwest Nigeria by Usman Dan Fodio. Dan Fodio led an Islamic revivalist movement in Western Africa, and his heroics and piety have captured the imagination of successive generations of Muslims in West Africa who have attempted to emulate his feat.

Leadership and Ideology

Dan Fodio, who was an ethnic Fulani,[72] belonged to the Qadiriyyah[73] order of Sufism and led a jihad against the Hausa Kings of Gobir. In 1804, Dan Fodio migrated (*hijrah*) to the Western grasslands of Sokoto and established the Sokoto Caliphate.[74] This migration marked the beginning of a widespread uprising against the Hausa kingdoms, culminating in the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate which became the largest centralized Islamic state in West Africa. He assumed the title of *Amir ul Momineen* (Commander of the Faithful) and began the expansion of his empire. By 1808, he controlled the entire region of Hausa and Sokoto after defeating the kings of Gobir, Kano, and Hausa, among others.[75] Dan Fodio

raised jihad against the Hausa Kings, whom he accused of mixing local tribal and regional traditions with Islam.[76]

The movement that led to the formation of the Sokoto Caliphate was rooted in Usman Dan Fodio's desire to reform Islam and eliminate what he perceived as un-Islamic practices that had crept into the region due to syncretism, local customs, and the perceived moral decay of the Muslim rulers in the area.[77] The turning point came in 1804 when Usman Dan Fodio declared jihad against the Hausa rulers of Gobir, who had imposed restrictions on his preaching activities and were accused of failing to adhere to Islamic principles.

The Sokoto Caliphate, under Usman Dan Fodio's leadership, was characterized by its commitment to Islamic revivalism and the establishment of an Islamic state based on the principles of *tawhid* (the oneness of God) and strict adherence to Islamic law. Dan Fodio's vision was rooted in purifying Islam from local pagan practices, emphasizing orthodox Islamic teachings, and establishing a state that implemented the Shari'ah. He believed that many of the Muslim rulers and their subjects in the Hausa kingdoms had deviated from the path of true Islam by incorporating pre-Islamic and animistic traditions into their religious practices.

Usman declared *takfir* on the rulers of his time for their mixing of polytheistic and animistic practices with Islam.[78] To rally support for his jihad against the rulers of Hausaland, *takfir* of rulers provided him with the necessary religious justification.[79] Dan Fodio's approach towards *takfir* was in line with the traditional Salafi approach, where making *takfir* on a Muslim was highly discouraged until or unless he (Muslim) did not make it permissible.[80] It was sufficient for him to make *takfir* on the rulers and justify Jihad in the *Dar al-Harb* (Abode of War) and, therefore, satisfy his fellow tribesmen.[81]

Usman fought for the removal of *bid'ah* from Islamic practices and the revival of the Sunnah. Despite being a leading member of the Qadariyyah Sufi order, he made it clear that anyone who goes

into *tasawwuf* (spiritual mysticism) should go into it for knowledge of the heart.[82] He rejected practices such as whirling around, musical playing, or extremism that were not within the Shariʿah limits.[83] Fodio tried to bind Sufism within the Shariʿah practices by encouraging every serious student of Sufism to study *fiqh*.[84] This was his way of restricting Sufi practices within the Shariʿah border. Such a portrayal of Dan Fodio also made his appropriation by the Salafis seamless.

Apart from *takfir*, Dan Fodio, among other ideational discourses, proselytizes the concept of *al-wala wa'l-bara* (avowal and disavowal) as a theological weapon to (a) reject the syncretic and heathen practices that were prevalent in Northern Nigeria and (b) to use it for a 'true interpretation' of Islam as a puritan and monotheistic religion.[85] In Chapters 4 and 5 of *Bayan* Wujub, Dan Fodio stresses the prohibition of befriending the unbelievers and the obligation of befriending the believers, respectively.[86] He argues that according to the three main sources of Islamic legislation, viz., the Qur'an, Sunnah, and *ijmaʿ* (consensus), befriending an unbeliever is forbidden.[87]

Impact and Legacy

The Sokoto Caliphate had a profound impact on the religious, political, and social landscape of West Africa. Its influence extended beyond the immediate region and contributed to shaping Islamic revivalism in Africa. Dan Fodio's ideas pervade the Salafi discourse in West Africa despite the fact that he was affiliated with the Qadiriyyah Sufi order, whose practices Salafis usually abhor. However, Dan Fodio's acts, deeds, and ideas were consistently interpreted as the practice of true *Sunnah* that inspired Salafists' religious and political agendas.

This Salafi appropriation of Sufi Dan Fodio is neither new nor unique. Salafis have not refrained from incorporating outside personalities into their fold as long as they serve religious and

political purposes.[88] Dan Fodio's memory was invoked by Salafis, as this collective memory supported their program of socio-religious transformation. In Hirsh and Stewarts' words, Salafi remembrance and appropriation of Dan Fodio's thoughts were conditioned by their current needs and sociopolitical conditions.[89] This way, the relationship Salafis established with Dan Fodio was one of tradition, i.e., a set of discourses that gained authority over time and contributed to the normative framework of the Salafi community and its practices.[90]

Boko Haram regularly invokes Dan Fodio's memory and stakes claim to his legacy. It rejected almost every politician of post-independence Nigeria as infidel or apostate and not worthy of emulation. Shekau claimed that Boko Haram considered only Usman Dan Fodio as their true leader.

> *Today, I will say my own. To the people of the world, everybody should know his status: it is either you are with us (Mujahideen Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah, following the creed of al-salaf al-ṣaliḥ)* or you are with the Christians – the likes of Obama, Lincoln, Bush, Clinton, Jonathan, and Aminu Kano. They are your fathers of democracy, the likes of Tafawa Balewa. They are all infidels. It is Uthman Dan Fodio that is our own.[91]

The application of *takfir* and the practice of *al-wala wa'l-bara* by Boko Haram are usually seen against the backdrop of increasing Salafi Jihadi influence on the African jihadist groups.[92] The ideas and actions of Boko Haram, for some scholars, were explained as an African practice of al-Qaedism.[93] Such a portrayal of jihadi ideas as a foreign import ignores the longstanding traditions of *jihad, takfir,* and other radical ideas in Africa since Dan Fodio's times. Yusuf and Shekau while declaring *takfir* on Muslims or advocating the disavowal of Christians were thus drawing on the religious inheritance and traditions of *takfir* and *al-wala wa'l-bara,* which already existed in Nigeria.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The comparative study of the Tariqa Muhammadiya, Faraizi Movement, and Sokoto Caliphate reveals a complex picture of proto-Salafi movements in the 18th and 19th centuries. These movements, although sharing core theological principles associated with Salafism—such as the emphasis on *tawhid*, the rejection of *bidʿah*, and the desire to return to the practices of the early Muslim community—were deeply rooted in their respective local contexts and responded to distinct political, social, and colonial challenges. The findings challenge the notion of Salafism as a modern, unified, and inherently violent global ideology, highlighting the diversity within these movements and their nuanced approaches to reform, revival, and resistance.

Challenging the Narrative of a Unified Global Salafism

One of the most significant findings of this study is that the proto-Salafi movements in the 18th and 19th centuries were not part of a unified global ideology, as is often assumed in discussions of modern Salafism. Rather, these movements arose independently in response to specific regional and historical conditions. While they shared common theological foundations—such as their emphasis on returning to the Qur'an and Sunnah and their rejection of innovations in religious practice—their methods, goals, and approaches were shaped by the unique challenges they faced in their local contexts.

Tariqa Muhammadiya illustrates how proto-Salafi principles were mobilized in response to the political decline of Muslim power and the rise of British colonialism. Tariqa Muhammadiya was primarily concerned with reclaiming Muslim political power in a localized context. In contrast, the Faraizi Movement in Bengal focused less on armed resistance and more on social reform

and economic justice for Bengali Muslims oppressed by Hindu landlords and British colonial authorities. Dan Fodio's movement, meanwhile, emphasized the need to purge Islam of syncretic practices and innovations, though it did not completely reject the Sufi traditions that were deeply embedded in the religious culture of the region.

Overall, these proto-Salafi movements were not monolithic and could adapt to local religious traditions while still advocating for reform and purification. These movements were diverse in their goals and methods, shaped by their local contexts rather than driven by a unified global ideology. The focus on purification and reform was consistent across the movements, but how this was interpreted and applied varied significantly depending on the political, social, and economic conditions of the region.

Local Contexts in Shaping Proto-Salafi Ideologies

The findings highlight the critical role that local contexts played in shaping the ideologies and actions of proto-Salafi movements. The Tariqa Muhammadiya, Faraizi Movement, and Sokoto Caliphate each responded to distinct local challenges, and their approaches to Islamic reform reflected these specific circumstances. In both India and Bengal, the decline of Muslim political power and the rise of British colonialism were key factors driving the emergence of proto-Salafi movements. The Tariqa Muhammadiya's emphasis on jihad against the British and Sikh rulers was a direct response to the political marginalization of Muslims following the collapse of the Mughal Empire. Similarly, the Faraizi Movement arose in response to the economic and social disenfranchisement of Bengali Muslims under British rule, particularly as the colonial administration empowered Hindu zamindars at the expense of Muslim peasants. These movements show how proto-Salafi ideologies were mobilized in contexts of political and economic

decline, where the leaders saw a return to Islamic principles as a means of restoring Muslim dignity and authority.

In northern Nigeria, the Sokoto Caliphate's emphasis on purification was driven by the widespread practice of religious syncretism, where Islamic and pre-Islamic animist traditions had become intertwined. Dan Fodio's movement sought to eliminate these syncretic practices and establish a state governed by pure Islamic law. This demonstrates that proto-Salafi movements were not always rigid in their rejection of local customs but could incorporate elements of existing religious practices as part of their broader reform efforts.

Continuities and Discontinuities Between Proto-Salafi Movements and Modern Salafism

The study reveals both continuities and discontinuities between the proto-Salafi movements of the 18th and 19th centuries and modern Salafism. While these earlier movements share theological foundations with modern Salafi thought, they differ in important ways, particularly in terms of their political goals and methods. One of the clearest continuities between proto-Salafi movements and modern Salafism is their shared emphasis on *tawhid* and the rejection of *bidʿah*. All three proto-Salafi movements sought to purify Islam by eliminating innovations and returning to the practices of the early Muslim community. This theological foundation remains central to modern Salafi thought, particularly in its focus on strict monotheism and opposition to practices like Sufism, saint veneration, and shrine visitation. The movements also shared a commitment to following the Qur'an and Sunnah as the primary sources of religious authority, a principle that continues to define modern Salafism.

Despite these theological continuities, there are significant discontinuities particularly in terms of their political and social

approaches. Modern Salafism is often associated with transnational jihadist movements, such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, which seek to establish a global Islamic caliphate through violent means. In contrast, the proto-Salafi movements were more locally focused and adapted their methods to their specific regional challenges. For example, the Faraizi Movement was primarily concerned with social reform and economic justice for Bengali Muslims, whereas the Sokoto Caliphate used military force to establish an Islamic state.

The evolution of global jihadist ideology is another area of discontinuity between proto-Salafi movements and modern Salafism. While jihad played a role in both the Tariqa Muhammadiya and Sokoto Caliphate, it was primarily framed as a local struggle to reclaim Muslim political power in specific regions. Modern jihadist groups, by contrast, have adopted a globalized ideology of jihad that seeks to challenge Western powers and establish a worldwide Islamic state. This shift reflects the changing geopolitical landscape of the 20th and 21st centuries, as well as the influence of modern political Islam, which has shaped the goals and methods of contemporary Salafi movements in ways that differ from their proto-Salafi predecessors.

Implications for Understanding the Diversity Within Salafi Thought

The findings of this study have important implications for understanding the diversity within Salafi thought. It encompasses a wide range of beliefs, practices, and approaches to reform, depending on the specific political, social, and cultural contexts in which it is situated. The diversity of the proto-Salafi movements highlights the fluidity of Salafism as an ideology that can adapt to different contexts and challenges. In some cases, such as the Faraizi Movement, Salafi principles were mobilized to address social and economic injustices, while in other cases, such as the Tariqa Muhammadiya,

they were used to justify armed resistance against non-Muslim rulers. This flexibility suggests that Salafism should not be viewed solely as a violent or radical ideology, but as a broader theological framework that can be applied in various ways, depending on the needs and goals of the movement.

CONCLUSION

The study of proto-Salafi movements in the 18th and 19th centuries provides a nuanced understanding of the early roots of what is now recognized as Salafi ideology. These movements, while sharing common theological foundations, arose independently in diverse political, social, and colonial contexts. They were highly diverse in their methods, goals, and approaches, despite their shared commitment to core principles such as *tawhid* (monotheism) and the rejection of *bid'ah* (innovations). Each movement emerged in response to unique local conditions and adapted Salafi-like principles to fit the specific political and social needs of their communities. The local contexts in which these movements arose played a critical role in shaping their development. Political decline, colonial domination, and religious syncretism were key factors that drove the emergence of these proto-Salafi movements.

These proto-Salafi movements were not part of a unified global ideology but were instead locally focused, responding to regional challenges rather than adhering to a globalized vision of Salafi reform. The movements had distinct regional goals, and while they shared some theological similarities with modern Salafism, they operated independently of one another. Modern Salafism's tendency to be viewed as a transnational, unified movement is largely a product of 20th- and 21st-century geopolitics. These proto-Salafi movements demonstrate the importance of considering local contexts when examining the development and impact of Islamic revivalism.

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NOTES

1. A longitudinal study of all the opinion pieces and news reports about Salafism published in *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* during the past decade (2011–2021) amply reveals the tendency to associate Salafism with violence and describe Salafis as violent. More than two-thirds (67 percent) of the writings draw a strong relationship between Salafism and religious intolerance, and Salafism and brutal violence. Few pieces that try to offer a nuanced argument, classifying Salafis as either quietists or jihadists, still go on to admit Salafism's alleged propensity towards violence. I used Nexis Uni, a comprehensive academic search engine, for this study. I entered four keywords, 'Salafis,' 'Salafism,' 'Salafists,' and 'Salafiyya,' and then searched for

these keywords in *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*. For the details of the study, email at sshapoo@princeton.edu.

2. See Stéphane Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: The politics of religious dissent in contemporary Saudi Arabia* (Harvard University Press, 2011); Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (2006): 207–239; Peter Mandaville, *Global Political Islam* (London: Routledge, 2010).

3. See Bernard Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action" in Roel Meijer (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), 33–57; Itzchak Weismann, "A perverted balance: Modern Salafism between reform and jihad," *Die Welt des Islams* 57, no. 1 (2017): 33–66.

4. Roel Meijer, *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*.

5. Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (2006): 207–239; Joas Wagemakers, "Religion," *Oxford Research Encyclopedias* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Emad Hamdeh, "Introduction: Special Issue on Salafism," *The Muslim World* 106, no. 3 (2016): 407–410; Meijer, *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*; Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Bernard Rougier, *Qu'est-ce que le salafisme?* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France (PUF), 2015).

6. See Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

7. Ibid.

8. Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action," 32–57.

9. Madawi al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State: Islamic Voices from a New Generation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

10. Marc Sageman, "Understanding Jihadi Networks," *Strategic Insights* 6, no. 4 (April 2005).

11. Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1994).

12. Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2002).

13. See Terje Østebø, "Localising Salafism: Religious Change among Oromo Muslims in Bale, Ethiopia," *Islam in Africa Series*, vol. 12 (Leiden: Brill, 2011);

Laurent Bonnefoy, *Salafism in Yemen: Transnationalism and Religious Identity* (London: Hurst & Co; New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Alexander Thurston, *Salafism in Nigeria: Islam, Preaching, and Politics*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization, vol. 52 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Richard Gauvain, *Salafi Ritual Purity: In the Presence of God* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012); Zoltan Pall, *Lebanese Salafis between the Gulf and Europe: Development, Fractionalization and Transnational Networks of Salafism in Lebanon* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014).

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15. Olivier Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

16. Frederic Wehrey and Anouar Boukhars. *Salafism in the Maghreb: Politics, Piety, and Militancy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

17. Emanuela Dalmasso and Francesco Cavatorta. "Political Islam in Morocco: Negotiating the Kingdom's Liberal Space," *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 4, no. 4 (2011): 484–500.

18. See Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action," 32–57.

19. Ibn Khaldun was one of the earliest thinkers to theorize that religious renewal often emerges as part of a broader civilizational response to moral and social decay. Max Weber highlights how religious movements often arise during periods of societal disillusionment, acting as agents of moral and social rejuvenation. For more on revivalist theory, see Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

20. See Ernest Gellner, "Muslim Society," *Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology*, no. 32 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) and also John L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998).

21. For more on decay of Muslim rulers see Ruhollah Khomeini, *Islamic Government* (Hamilton, ON: Manor Books, 1979), 114–116.

22. Ibid.

23. Denise Aigle. "The Mongol Invasions of Bilād al-Shām by Ghāzān Khān and Ibn Taymīyah's 'Three Anti-Mongol Fatwas'," *Mamluk Studies Review* 11, no. 2 (2007): 89–120.
24. Irfan Habib, "The Political Role of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi and Shah Wali-ullah," *Proceedings of the Twenty-Third Session of the Indian History Congress, Aligarh 1960* (Aligarh: Indian History Congress, 1961).
25. M*adhhab*, which literally means 'way' is the name given to schools of law in Islam. Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki, and Hanbali are the four Sunni legal schools which were established between 9th and 10th century.
26. The Ash'ari tradition, or Ash'ari theology, is a school of Islamic theology which believes that the apparent meaning of the Qur'an and the Sunnah are the sole authorities in matters of *'aqidah* and Islamic jurisprudence and that the use of rational disputation is forbidden (*haram*).
27. Bernard Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkani* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
28. Itzchak Weismann, "Genealogies of Fundamentalism: Salafi Discourse in Nineteenth-century Baghdad," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 2 (2009): 267–280.
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30. Belkacem Belmekki, "The Impact of British Rule on the Indian Muslim Community in the Nineteenth Century," *Revista de Filología Inglesa* 28 (2007): 27–46.
31. Jim Masselos, *Indian Nationalism: History* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1985), 118.
32. Rae Bareilly is a district in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India. It is different from Bareilly, which was home to Reza Khan, founder of the Barelvi sect. Sayyid Ahmed is also addressed as Sayyid Ahmed Barelvi.
33. Olivier Roy, "Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan," *Cambridge Middle East Library*, vol. 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 56.
34. Marcia K. Hermansen and Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, "The Conclusive Argument from God," *Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science* 25 (1996): 350.

35. The movement was called Wahhabi movement by the British whereas Sayyid Ahmed never used the term Wahhabi. He called his movement "Tariqa e Muhammadiyya" (The ways/order of Muhammad). Sana Haroon argues that Sayyid Ahmed actually called his movement as Rah-e Nubuwwat (Path of Prophethood). For further information, see Sana Haroon, "Reformism and Orthodox Practice in Early Nineteenth-Century Muslim North India: Sayyid Ahmed Shaheed Reconsidered," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 21, no. 2 (2011): 177–198.

36. Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*. For further information on Sayyid Ahmed, see Qeyamuddin Ahmad, *The Wahhabi Movement in India* (London: Routledge, 2020).

37. Charles Allen, "The Hidden Roots of Wahhabism in British India," *World Policy Journal* 22, no. 2 (2005): 87–93.

38. Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 58.

39. T*a'ziyah* literally means condolence or expression of grief. In South Asia, it is a kind of Muslim passion play around a replica of the tomb of Husayn, the martyred grandson of Prophet Muhammad, that is carried in processions during the Shi'a procession in Muharram.

40. I*slamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900*, 58.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Sheikh Muhammad Ikram, *Mauj-e-Kausar* (Delhi: Adabi Duniya, Matia Mahal, n.d.), 24–25.

44. One who does not adhere to the *fiqh* of the four main Sunni schools of jurisprudence.

45. M*auj-e-Kausar*, 67, 498.

46. Ahmad, *The Wahhabi Movement in India*, 285.

47. Harlan Otto Pearson, *Islamic Reform and Revival in Nineteenth Century India: The 'Tariqah-i Muhammadiyah'* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 1979), 41.

48. For further information on the influence of Sayyid Ahmed on later revivalist movements, see Ayesha Jalal, *Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2008).

49. Praveen Swami, "India's Invisible Jihad," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 22 (2017): 80–116.
50. Jalal, *Partisans of Allah*, 2.
51. Mansoor Ahmed and Maimuna Ashraf, "The Pulwama-Balakot Crisis," *CISS Insight Journal* 7, no. 1 (2019): 1–24.
52. Thomas R. Metcalf, *Aftermath of Revolt: India, 1857–1870* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015), 300.
53. See Muhammad Ahsanullah Faisal, *Haji Shariatullah's Faraizi Movement: History, Da'wah and Political Ideology* (Dhaka: Shariatia Library, 2010).
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Interview with Prof Mubashar Hassan via Zoom (n.d.).
57. Nurul H. Choudhury, *Peasant Radicalism in Nineteenth Century Bengal: The Faraizi, Indigo and Pabna Movements* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Asiatic Society, 2001).
58. Ibid.
59. F*ara'id* is the plural of the Arabic word *fard* (*farḍ*) which means obligatory duty.
60. Faisal, *Haji Shariatullah's Faraizi Movement: History, Da'wah and Political Ideology*.
61. Khan Ahmed, *History of the Fara'idi Movement in Bengal, 1818–1906* (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1965), 38.
62. Md Nazrul Islam and Md Saidul Islam, "Political Islam in Pre-independent Bangladesh: Puritanism, Muslim Nationalism, and Ethno-Nationalism," in *Islam and Democracy in South Asia*, edited by Md Nazrul Islam (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 137–166.
63. Ahmed, *History of the Fara'idi Movement in Bengal, 1818–1906*.
64. Ibid.
65. For such views, see Julia Stephens, "The Phantom Wahhabi: Liberalism and the Muslim Fanatic in Mid-Victorian India," *Modern Asian Studies* 47, no. 1 (2013): 22–52. See also Faisal, *Haji Shariatullah's Faraizi Movement: History, Da'wah and Political Ideology*.
66. Ibid.

67. T*aqlid* literally means "to follow (someone)" or "to imitate". In Islamic law, it denotes the unquestioning acceptance of the legal decisions of another without knowing the basis of those decisions.
68. Nazrul Islam and Saidul Islam, "Political Islam in Pre-independent Bangladesh: Puritanism, Muslim Nationalism, and Ethno-Nationalism," 137–166.
69. Sulaiman Ahmed, "Bangladesh at the Cross Roads," *Resurgence* (As Sahab Media, Subcontinent), Summer 2014, 79–81.
70. Abu Bakr Shekau was the leader of Boko Haram, a Nigerian Salafi Jihadist group that declared caliphate in 2014. For further information, see David Cook, "Boko Haram: A New Islamic State in Nigeria," *James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy* 11 (2014). See also Jacob Zenn, "Boko Haram's Conquest for the Caliphate: How Al Qaeda Helped Islamic State Acquire Territory," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 43, no. 2 (2020): 89–122.
71. Zacharias Pieri and Jacob Zenn, "The Boko Haram Paradox: Ethnicity, Religion, and Historical Memory in Pursuit of a Caliphate," *African Security* 9, no. 1 (2016): 66–88.
72. Fulani people, mostly Muslims, are the largest ethnic group in the Sahel and West Africa. JAS primarily comprises of Kanuri people. It is stated that Abdullahi dan Fodio, brother of Usman dan Fodio claimed that their family are part Fulani, and part Arabs, through 'Uqba ibn Nafi' who was an Arab Muslim of the Umayyad branch of the Quraysh, and hence, a member of the family of the Prophet. For further information, see Aliyu Abubakar, *The Torankawa Danfodio Family* (Kano: Fero Publishers, 2005).
73. The Qadiriyyah order is a Sufi order established by Shaykh 'Abdul Qadir Jilani (1077–1166) in Gilan, Iran. He was a Hanbali scholar, and his order relies strongly upon adherence to the fundamentals of Sunni Islamic law.
74. Hamza Muhammad Maishanu and Isa Muhammad Maishanu, "The Jihād and the Formation of the Sokoto Caliphate," *Islamic Studies* 38, no. 1 (1999): 119–131.
75. Ibid.
76. Bradford Martin, "Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth-century Africa," *Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization*, vol. 18 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 26–28.

77. Maishanu and Maishanu, "The Jihād and the Formation of the Sokoto Caliphate."
78. Ibid., 17.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. ʿUthman b. Fodio, *Bayān Wujūb al-Hijra ʿalā al-ʿIbād*, edited and translated by F. H. El Masri. Fontes Historiae Africanae: Series Arabica, no. 1 (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 116.
82. Seyni Moumouni, "Uthman (Osman) dan Fodio (1754–1817): Life and Religious Philosophy," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).
83. Shireen Ahmed, "An Interview on Uthman Dan Fodio," *Interview with Shiekh Abdul Hakim Quick*, *Africa.upenn.edu*, https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Uthm_Fodio.html.
84. Oludamini Ogunnaike, "Islamic Philosophies of Education in Africa," in *The Palgrave Handbook of African Education and Indigenous Knowledge* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020): 421–449.
85. Abdulbasit Kassim, "Defining and Understanding the Religious Philosophy of Jihādī-Salafism and the Ideology of Boko Haram," *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 16, no. 2–3 (2015): 173–200.
86. Fodio, *Bayān Wujūb al-Hijra ʿalā al-ʿIbād*, 58–60.
87. Ibid., 58.
88. Quintan Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan.* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001).
89. Eric Hirsch and Charles Stewart, "Introduction: Ethnographies of Historicity," *History and Anthropology* 16, no. 3 (2005): 261–274.
90. Ibid.
91. "Shekau: The Warlord," *Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC)*, available at http://www.trackingterrorism.org/article/who-real-abubakar-shekau-aka-abu-muhammad-abubakar-bin-muhammad-boko-harams-renegade-warlo-5.
92. Freedom Onuoha, "Boko Haram and the Evolving Salafi Jihadist Threat in Nigeria," in *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*,

edited by Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2014), 158.

93. Jacob Zenn, "Nigerian al-Qaedaism," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 16 (2014): 99–118.