# Conflicts in Islam on the Asian and African 'Periphery': Doctrines, Cultures, and Politics

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Although Islam emerged as a religion of the book in the Arabian Peninsula, it has since become a global phenomenon spanning different regions and cultures across the world. From this perspective the history and development of Islam can be read as a struggle between consistency and diversity. On one side, it has been a remarkable achievement to maintain the relative coherence of the practice and belief systems of Islam over such vast distances. On the other, its divergent interpretations and practices have repeatedly threatened to disrupt the common framework of references.

The aim of this chapter is to discuss conflict on the 'periphery' of Islam in terms of this inner-Islamic dialogue that has shaped much of Islamic mobilisation.[1] Different trends emerged that at once followed a general pattern while at the same time questioning this pattern and its validity. Consequently we have to grapple with sweeping generalisations. To grasp the complexity of the issue we will have to question these very assumptions highlighting their inconsistencies and counter-currents.

## Centre and Periphery

The polarisation between the Arabian roots of Islam and its global spread has given rise to the problematic assumption that in Islam we can clearly distinguish between a centre and a periphery. Such dichotomy reflected the juxtaposition between the traditional 'centres of Islam' in Arabia, with Mecca and Medina occupying a special place of pride, and the role and power of scholars, leaders and followers of Islam to interpret and practice it as a religion in vastly diverse circumstances on the so-called periphery. Often this also refers to the elevated role of Arabic as the sacred language of the Quran, but also of most rituals. But the understanding of the centres or core areas of Islam as much as of its 'periphery' has been shifting over time. In addition to the Arabic-speaking world, the regions symbolising powerful Muslim dynasties and

representing the Caliphate, such as the mainly Persian-speaking Safavides (1501-1722) or the Turkish-Ottomans (1299-1923) have been considered as centres in their own right. Also Muslim communities farther 'away' from the 'heartlands' of Islam in Southeast, South and Central Asia, or Sub-Saharan Africa can only conditionally be considered belonging to the 'periphery', if the term stands for 'outlying' or 'marginal.' Islam arrived in those regions not long after its ascent in the Middle East. Muslim Empires and kingdoms such as the famous Grand Moghuls in South Asia (16th-19th c.), the Malay Sultanates in Southeast Asia (14th-20th c.), the Khanates of Central Asia and the Caucasus (10th-20th c.), the African Empires of Mali (13th-16th c.) and Songhay (15th-16th c.) have come to symbolise old and strong traditions of Islam. The 800-year presence of Islam on the Iberian Peninsula in Europe with the Caliphate of Córdoba was no exception, albeit it will remain outside the focus of this essay. Often the Muslim elite ruled here over a considerable number of non-Muslim people. These states and empire replicated the same dichotomy between a normative, principled approach and a rich diversity in local interpretation and practice.

Also from a numerical perspective the non-Arabic regions of Islam can hardly be called peripheral. South Asia alone, including today's India, Pakistan and Bangla-desh, plays host to roughly 450 million Muslims, almost twice as many as in the Ara-bic-speaking world where approximately 250 million Muslims live. In addition, the largest Muslim country is Indonesia with a Muslim population of over 200 million. Also the vast expanses of territory inhabited by Muslims outside the Arabic-speaking world have to be considered. Here the Central Asian regions and Sub-Saharan Africa fig-ure prominently even though they host considerably less Muslims than South and South East Asia. Central Asia is home to centuries-old Islamic traditions symbolised in such revered centres of Islamic learning, piety and worship as Samarkand and Bukhara. Also Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa has substantially contributed to the world heritage of Islam.

At the same time the Asian and African Muslim regions symbolise the richness and diversity of Muslim cultures. The interpretation and practice of Islam there is strongly shaped by local cultural and religious influences. This influence has led to a stereo-type assumption about antagonistic conflict on the 'periphery' between 'local' Islam and Arabic-sponsored revivalist Islam. This assumption is based on a roughly similar

pattern of alignment of religious, political and social forces during the expansion of Islamic influences. Islam would have entered these regions of Asia and Africa with the help of traders, Sufi missionaries and scholars, but also invading armies. Local elders would often accept Islam because they expected advantages for the political and social stability and development of their communities. In this process they would 'localise' the interpretation and practice of Islam. Local religious leaders would often conveniently reconcile with the powers that be and become staunch loyalists, first of local rulers, and second, of new colonial masters. Revivalist trends started to oppose these practices more forcefully since the nineteenth century, although they had been noted before as well. This conflict between 'localised' and revivalist Islam played out in religious wars, in social and political upheavals, in educational and missionary movements. Those were not always directed against each other, but often against the ruler or the colonial state. The timing was much influenced by the expansion of colonial rule to which the later revivalist trends responded becoming a pre-cursor of an Islamic project of independence. But western colonial intervention led not only to oppression but also to the infusion of a western-dominated modernity strengthening capitalism, introducing scientific and technological innovations, secular politics, ideologies and education. Yet the colonial subjects were robbed of an equal and democratic share in this modernisation. This 'colonial modernity' helped to produce modernists among Muslim activists as a third element of this rough equation who wanted to embrace modernism and reconcile it with religious believes and practices. While the modernists were ready to adapt religious interpretation to fit scientific and technological progress, the revivalists wanted to adapt modern life to bring it into closer conformity with their interpretation of religious injunctions imposing a new-found and selective, often literalist orthodoxy on modern Muslims.

While it is certainly true that this triangular conflict between 'local', revivalist and modernist Islam played itself out on the Muslim periphery in strong ways, it was hardly as clear-cut as this division would suggest. And, the so-called heartlands of Islam, i.e. the Arabic speaking world, were by no means spared of this division. On the contrary, it was there where this division took hold contemporaneously with or even prior to its extension into Asia and Africa. And within the triangular contest for the souls of common Muslims in Asia and Africa, there where many overlaps and counter-currents between these three poles of contestation. Several trends of local

Islam developed reformist and revivalist pretensions producing local representatives of these leanings. Revivalism quickly localised, taking its cues not only from Arabic thinkers but also from classical Islamic authors of the region. Modernism often acquired both local flavours and revivalist dimensions.

This doctrinal and cultural diversity renewed and reinvigorated the debate about the 'true' Islam in Asia and Africa. Such discourse had long been polarised between what some regard as the tension between 'principle' and 'practice,' or text and its interpretation, on one side, and its implementation, on the other. However in reality this distinction was not nearly as neat. There were those who sought to defend and resurrect what they regard as the true principles of Islam often attacking current interpretations and practices deviating from those beliefs. Nowadays they are also called 'fundamentalists' a term which has more contributed to confusing the debate than clarifying it. It was inspired by a series of publications by the Bible Institute of Los Angeles explaining 'The Fundamentals' of the Christian faith in 1910-15 (Torrey and Dixon 1917).

The problem with using this term is that it suggests that the principles espoused by the 'fundamentalists' were a genuine and legitimate reflection of the essence of religion, in this case of Islam. Such assumption neglects that 'fundamentalists' emphasise only some principles selected from a larger body of texts and practice while neglecting others. For Islam the prime sources of reference are the Qur'an and the so-called Prophetic Traditions, Hadith, which in themselves are partly contradictory and allegoric and therefore in need of interpretation. It will therefore be preferable to avoid using the term 'fundamentalism' here. Instead we will focus on different trends in the interpretation and practice of Islam. Discussing and questioning the triangular conflict between 'local,' revivalist and modernist Islam we will highlight geographic regions and local cultures, doctrinal approaches and networks showing their gliding and overlapping shifts of emphasis. The selection of groups introduced here cannot be comprehensive but will serve to exemplify the argument.

Differentiation in interpretation and practice of Islam and the ensuing competition between such trends has long predated 'modernity' as introduced by the West and colonial domination. Debate was central to the law schools (*madhab*) seeking to find legal solutions to daily problems in consonance with the rulings of Islam. Also the

relationship between religious scholars and Muslim rulers was discursive in nature. These 'historical' forms were reconfigured under the impact of western thought and politics, largely in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. We will focus here on this reconfiguration of discourse and practice in relation to Islamic doctrine and interpretation. Since the topos of 'local' Islam more relates to geography and culture, we will prefer to use the term 'traditionalist' pointing to the relationship towards inherited forms of orthodoxy as practised mainly locally, but not only. It is against this background that we propose to restate the differentiation as between (1) revivalist, (2) traditionalist, and (3) modernist Islam on the understanding that this is a figurative orientation only.[2]

As revivalist we would consider here the desire and practice of renewing and purifying the faith. One important trend in this category was the movement of *iṣlāḥ* associated with the Egyptians Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) and, with a more conservative orientation, the Syrian Rashid Rida (1865-1935) making a strong impact on Asia and Africa outside of Arabia. The reformist trend of the Salafiyya looking for inspiration to the practice of the founder generation of Islam – *al salaf*, branched off from the *iṣlāḥ* movement and took on a life of its own. From the point of view of Islamic doctrine the revivalists have been critical towards the law schools rejecting blind adherence (*taqlīd*) to them, although they still favoured some form of conformity. Instead many revivalists looked favourably at 'independent reasoning' (*ijtihād*) to apply the Quran and the Sunna to new and current circumstances, mostly in a more literal reading. As traditionalist we will regard the diverse forms of interpretation and practice based on adherence (*taqlīd*) to legal opinion and established custom as they have been inherited in the historical process. This legacy was embodied in local rituals; saint and shrine worship; was transmitted through local mosques and Quranic schools. Anthropologists sometimes called it 'lived' or 'living' Islam (Ahmad/Reifeld 2004; Marsden 2005). Local scholars defended their approach as legitimate, i.e. being rightly guided by the Quran and the Sunnah, the tradition of the Prophet and his companions. Modernists we will call those scholars and trends seeing no inherent contradiction between the confirmation of the faith and the pursuit of rational, scien-

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[2] Other scholars debating such classification include Soares and Otayek (2007), Miles (2007) and Loimeier (2003a).

tific thought. They would share the method of 'independent reasoning' (*ijtihād*) with the revivalists. But their reading of the Quran and the Sunna was less literal and more allegorical and metaphorical. They applied this method to a 'rationalist' reading of the Quran, striving to bring it into consonance with modern scientific and technological thought. In consequence, many accepted the political and economic requirements of modern industrial and capitalist societies.

When we look at the reality of this triangular configuration of Islamic groups and trends in Asia and Africa, we will soon discover that such distinctions only hold relative value. With progressing 'modernity' movements share attributes of these orientations, combining different formats with various contents. The negotiation of the doctrinal format with social compulsions and cultural parameters produced a colourful variety of Islamic formations. These aspects are not unique to Asia and Africa, but their combination takes on a particular shape in these regions. Separate mention should be made here of reforming sects that offer a 'reformist' interpretation which is seen as heterodox by mainstream Muslims. The Southasian Ahmadiyya (Valentine 2008), Iranian Bahai (Smith 2008) or Turkish Alevi (White and Jongerden 2003) are cases in point in various degrees. They represent a combination of revivalism with orthodoxy while applying *ijtihād* at times literal and at other times allegorical and modernist. Global networks constitute another level of Islamic formations gaining increasing importance today. They would follow the main orientations in interpretation and practice while modifying them and giving them a new independent quality in a transnational direction.

This triangular contest with its various levels of formation and display provides ample ground for conflict which often is doctrinal, cultural, political and social at the same time.

Revivalist Varieties

While 'modern' revivalism is historically associated with the movement for *iṣlāḥ* started by Abduh and championed in a more pointed form by Rida, Asia and Africa gave birth to their own revivalist movements which were either contemporaneous to Arabic developments or sometimes even preceded them. They reacted to local and regional developments, to cultural and religious challenges, but also to colonial and western encounters just as their Arab brethren.

For South Asia, one prominent example was the tradition founded by the Islamic school of Deoband in north India in 1866. Its clerics championed a purified Islam that would position itself against western non-Muslim influences as much as against competing Muslim practices and sects, which proliferated taking advantage of religious liberalism and political legalism under British colonial rule. The Deobandi clerics responded to the perceived loss of religious knowledge and identity which derived to a significant extent from the minority position of Indian Muslims and the crisis of their old elites. Due to political and social shifts Muslim elite representatives lost their privileged position in landholding, cultural or religious patronage and administration. They were challenged by western-educated youth, by the Hindu majority and by a bewildering variety of Muslim interpretations that competed for public recognition and support. The Deobandis felt connected to the larger Islamic discourse through Rida who visited them in 1912 (Reetz 2006, 119). They relied on the revival of the study of *hadith*, the apocryphal traditions about the life of the Prophet and his companions. They combined those references with a strict adherence (*taqlid*) to their own Hanafi law school and the interpretation of Islam by their elders Muhammad Qasim Nanaotawi (1832-79) and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (1829-1905). In religious practice their main targets were certain elements of mystical Sufi Islam venerating saints, their shrines and also the shrine keepers. They contended that those rituals as they relied on intercession with God detracted from the monotheism of Islam (*tauḥīd*), which became the hallmark and battle cry of revivalist Islam (Metcalf 1982; Reetz 2006).

Since then the Deoband school managed to spawn an elaborate network of schools and institutions in the whole of South Asia, but also in other parts of the Muslim world (Reetz 2007. In more recent times they were aided in this by a missionary movement founded in 1926 by the Deobandi cleric Muhammad Ilyas, the Tablīghī Jamāʿat. (Masud 2000; Reetz 2004). It sought to reconfirm Muslim in their faith and practice through a six-point programme of essentials of the faith. Its new approach involved missionary walks and travel in groups of 8-12 lay preachers. Their rapidly expanding activities, although pietist and peaceful, generated controversy among dissenting Muslims and non-Muslims.

The Deobandis were equally successful in the realm of public associations. They created an organisation of clerics, the *Jamʿīyat-e ʿUlamāʾ-e Hind* (JUH) in 1919. The

JUH eventually turned into an influential political party when it split and one section relocated to Pakistan in 1944 becoming the *Jamʿīyat-e ʿUlamāʾ-e Islam* (JUI). The party was no stranger to political conflict as it sought to polarize public opinion on the Islamisation of society and politics. The Indian section continues under the old name JUH with a focus on religious and social issues of the minority Muslim community in India.

Southeast Asia saw the emergence of its own revivalist groups. But the formal ascription to the same categories meets with some difficulties, as we see a cross-gliding shift of paradigm in doctrine, practice and socio-political incarnations.
While it was the more strict and purist Rida who was seen as an inspiration by the Deobandis, it was Abduh whose ideas and students laid the foundation for Indonesia's most influential reformist movement, the Muhammadiyah[3] which came into being in the same year,1912 (Jainuri 1994). Its founder, the religious scholar Kyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan (1868-1923), strove to fight the influence of religious syncretism by establishing Islamic schools as he was concerned at Javanese practices not justified by Islamic scriptures. Since then the Muhammadiyah modernised its cultural style and socio-political aspirations. It could therefore nowadays very much be considered a modernist movement striving to reconcile the profession of 'correct' Islam with modernity. Such strivings are embodied in their emphasis on modern education and social welfare as they operate thousands of schools and health facilities across Indonesia, including 28 4-year colleges and 22 hospitals (Fuad 2002, 135).

The emergence of new groups and sects heightened differences on a sectarian basis. The drive for purism led the Deobandis to denounce almost all other groups as weak, imperfect or even un-Islamic. They attacked the Sufi-related Barelwi as much as other purists such as the Salafis (*Ahl-i Ḥadīth*), the political Islamists of the Jamāʿat-i Islāmī or non-Muslims such as Hindus and Christians. Revivalism at the modern stage thus was loosing direction and became fragmented in itself, where the parameters were less the Quran and the Traditions rather than aims and objectives (*ʿaqīda*) of the group concerned. Consequently, groups which had been regarded as convenient targets of revivalists and purists, such as the Sufi-related Barelwis and

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[3] www.muhammadiyah.or.id

the heterodox Ahmadis were running their own version of purification programmes denigrating all other interpretations in turn proclaiming their beliefs as the only true profession of Islam.

In Central Asia, it was the so-called Jadidis (Modernisers) who took it upon themselves to articulate ideas of Islamic reformism (*islah*) such as demands for the purification of Islamic practice by denouncing Sufi mystics and spiritual practices. Their writings around 1900 regarded many features of popular religion as impermissible innovations (*bid'a*) that would expose Central Asian Muslims to the risk of extinction as Muslims unless immediate measures were undertaken (Baldauf 2001, 82). Some where right under the influence of the Deoband school. In 1914 there were enough students from Bukhara and Kasan in Deoband to form an association (Khalid 1998, 100). Abdulqadir Sayyah published the magazine *al-islah* which argued on similar conservative lines as Deoband. But most Jadidis went in a slightly different direction. They combined the revival of canonical Islam with activities for the improvement of the Muslim community, particularly in education, of which the transfer of standardised Islamic knowledge was an important element. Similar to the other regions discussed here, the reformists never fully gave up on Sufism. Even though they rejected the veneration of saints and shrines they made public demands for keeping ancestral graveyards in good order (Baldauf 2001).

After the infrastructure and practice of Islam in Central Asia were severely weakened during the rule of Communism, a new revivalist phase set in with the downfall of Communism in 1989-90. The number of mosques, Islamic schools and Muslim organizations multiplied in a short span of time. However doctrinal demands for purification were not at the centre of their activities. Rather it was the revival of the religious infrastructure and practice that consumed most of their energy. When religious conflict sharpened as in Tajikistan during the civil war in 1991-97 or in Uzbekistan and Kirghizstan, and in Chechnya during the wars, it was more political in nature and primarily directed at local political authorities. Doctrinal approaches on Islamization were low-key and more evolutionary than radical. After persecution and violence hardened the conflict in Chechnya and Uzbkistan, the actors involved also 'hardened' their doctrinal positions. In Chechnya radical reformists demanded the introduction of Islamic law. Members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan took to fighting as a

consequence of violent repression on behalf of the state. Many of their fighters operated in Tajikistan, Afghanistan and northern Pakistan (Walker 2003).

More recently here as in other parts of the Muslim world the pan-Islamic party Hizb-ut-Tahrir has captured the radical reformist platform, albeit as of yet peacefully (ICG 2005).

In Sub-Saharan Africa 'modern' reformist scholars and groups emerged since the middle of the nineteenth century in Senegal, Nigeria, on the East African Coast and in Zanzibar. Roman Loimeier discussed their evolution in a comparative perspective, likening their efforts to German reform of Lutheran Christianity (Loimeier 2003a, 240). But he also emphasised the dichotomy in their development. While they were influenced by reformist activities and leaders from Arabian North Africa, they emerged from a traditional background of respectable Muslim families socialised in revered Sufi Traditions. While they launched efforts to change the nature of Muslim life, they never really broke ranks with traditional leaders of Sufi background. Their concerns were heterogeneous and often local. In this they resembled the style of the Southasian Deobandis who accepted Sufi thought and practice as long as it did not contradict their interpretation of Islamic law, the Sharī'a. In fact, the Deobandis regarded the unity of Islamic law (*sharī'a*), and the mystical path of spirituality, or *ṭarīqa*, as one of their founding principles (Reetz 2006).

Reformist activity in Senegal was directed at public recognition of distinctive Muslim norms, customs and rites, as well as Islamic personal law in contrast to other African traditions. Muslims should be clearly recognisable in public as followers of their religion; they should be allowed to manifest those distinctions and should also be able to do so, having the knowledge, conviction and courage to show that they are Muslims. This critique aimed at those Sufi rituals which often borrowed heavily from local non-Muslim African traditions. In certain instances the saints they venerated and their spirituality were similar to African spirituality. As an example, Loimeier introduced Cheikh Touré (b. 1925) from Senegal who founded the 'Union Culturelle Musulmane' (UCM – al-Ittihād ath-Thaqāfī al-Islāmī, ITI) in 1953. He and his group championed a critical position against the French colonial administration and the Sufi brotherhoods and their religious leaders (*marabout*) who cooperated with it. At the same time he and many of his followers remained associated with the brotherhoods (*tariqas*) of the

Tijaniyya and Mouridiyya. In politics he supported structural reforms advocated by the Senegalese Prime Minister Mamadou Dia of the political party Union Progressiste Sénégalaise (UPS) which had come to power after the advent of independence in 1958. Those reforms would have undermined the power of the *marabouts*. They were stopped by the coup of President Senghor (1906-2001) in late 1962. In the 1970s Touré inspired new reformist groups such as the *Jamā'at 'Ibād ar-Rahmān* ( JIR) or the *Harakat al-Falāh* (HF). Their major concerns were 'un-Islamic innovations' (*bida'*) such as excessive spending for marriage ceremonies, burials, the practice of the *dhikr*, as well as the wearing of amulets (*gris-gris*) which are produced in Senegal in vast amounts (Loimeier 2003a, 244). Their concerns shifted to providing modern Islamic education since the late 1980s, tacitly accepting the continuing popularity of the brotherhoods. This re-orientation also reflected trends in other reformist movements worldwide.

Nigerian reformist efforts in the northern parts of the country were closely associated with Abubakar Gumi (1922-92). Since the 1950s he articulated a strongly anti-Sufi discourse even though he personally remained in close contact with the Qādiriyya brotherhood until the late 1940s (Loimeier 2003a: 246). He initiated a political movement known as the *'Yan Izala*[4] in Northern Nigeria in 1978.

The same pattern of reformist aspirations can be found in Hassan at-Turābī (b. 1930) and the *Ikhwān al-Muslimīn* in Sudan (since 1985 *Jabha al-Islāmiyya al-Qaumiyya* or National Islamic Front); and `Abdallāh Sālih al-Farsy (1912 - 1982) and the movement of the *Ansār as-Sunna* in East Africa. The latter had cultivated a distinctly anti-Sufi as well as anti-bida' discourse in the 1980s and early 1990s. Since the mid-1990s they more or less stopped such discourse for the sake of Muslim unity (Loimeier 2003a, 255). They embody what Loimeier calls an 'anti-spiritual turn of Islamic reform' that started taking roots in the fifties and sixties (Loimeier 2003a, 255; 2003b).

Across the regions the Tablighi Jama'at has grown into a strong contender of the revivalist project. With interesting social variations it has become an influential local

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[4] Jamā'at Izālat al-Bid'a wa-Iqāmat as-Sunna (Society for the Removal by Innovation and Reinstatement of Tradition, cf. for Nigeria Loimeier 1997, Kane 2003; for Niger also Masquelier in Soares and Otayek 2007).

force to be reckoned with in countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Niger, Mali, Senegal or on the East African Coast and in South Africa. At present they still stick to their rule book where they revive literal Islam in interpretation and practice, don't confront Sufi Islam and keep a distance from political and militant Islam, although many factions are vying for their support.

It is interesting to note how reformist leaders and groups followed a similar trajectory and agenda. Those leaders often rose from a local tradition of religious reform that originated from among Sufi scholars seeking a clearer definition of Islamic practice, organising Muslim pilgrimage (*hajj*) and opening 'classical' religious education to the wider Muslim public. At a later stage they got inspired by reformist writings from the Muslim 'north' – movements in Egypt, Algeria or Saudi Arabia, which they adapt to local conditions. They then confronted traditional scholars on the level of the purification of religious ritual, seeking to weed out what they see as 'reprehensible innovations' (*bida'*). They also opposed some of them politically for their cooperation with colonial authorities. Many used the freer political space provided to them after independence in the seventies and eighties to accentuate their anti-Sufi polemics against those traditional religious leaders (*marabouts*) and their practices. With the sharpening of political conflict in the late eighties and early nineties on the basis of religious differences they shift emphasis of their public activities to Muslim unity while concentrating on development and social issues such as modern (Islamic) education and uplifting the standard of girls and women. In this they reflect the increasing competition from non-Muslim religious groups, in Africa often Protestant sects (for Pentecostalism in Ghana, see Meyer 2005), but also rival minority groups such as the Ahmadiyyah (Fisher 1963).

Salafi Reformism

Based on cultural, social and doctrinal bonding, the Salafis have come to constitute an important sub-milieu of the revivalist camp. The formation of this milieu in South and Southeast Asia betrayed interesting parallels. They allowed tracing yet another shift of paradigm. While these groups were also inspired by Abduh and Rida they turned out to be much more puritanical. Unlike Abduh and Rida who only wanted to go beyond the confines of one law school, they rejected the teachings of all the four law schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*madhab*) solely relying on the Quran and the

Hadith. In both regions they started through intellectual discussion circles advocating cleansing Islamic practice, particularly religious ritual and the surrounding law. This intellectual endeavour was started in South Asia by Siddiq Hasan Khan (1832–90) and Maulana Nazir Husain (1805–1902) as the movement of the Ahl-i Hadith (People of the Traditions) around 1864 (Reetz 2006). In Southeast Asia the respective counterpart was played by the Islamic Association (*Persatuan Islam*) or Persis founded in 1923 in Bandung (Indonesia) as a discussion group to explore new currents in Islamic thought. In their cleansing efforts they were pursuing a more radical rejection of local practice and thought directed against all forms of Sufism and reiterating textual literalism. As such they marked themselves off from groups adhering to legal tradition and accepting parts of the Sufi legacy which they deemed in consonance with Islamic law (*sharīʿa*).

In a similar fashion Salafism came to West Africa, albeit in the shape of 'Wahhabism' in the 1930s, via local clerics who had studied at the Egyptian religious university, Al-Azhar. They sought to eradicate what they perceived as the heresies(*shirk*) of the predominant forms of Islam in the region, the Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya and Mouridiyya Sufi orders. The saints, marabouts, and initiation into esoteric rites common to these Sufi orders were all considered heretical by them (Kaba 1974; ICG 2005).
Even though under early Soviet rule, a similar trend emerged in Central Asia in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Olcott described the circle of the followers of Shami domullah (d. 1932) in Uzbekistan. He was trying to replace local practice of religion, such as pilgrimages to holy sites, elaborate wedding and funeral rites with direct reference to the Quran and those Hadith that could reliably be linked directly to the Prophet. His work was continued by his students, some of which took to more legalistic positions within the dominating Hanafi law school, others closer to Salafi orientation. These students attended illegal private classes in Soviet times modelled on madrasa education. Many of them became the backbone of Islamic revivalism in the late 80s-early 90s (Olcott 2007).

While these intellectual endeavours inspired the creation of a whole network of Salafi schools (madrasas) following their interpretation, some also gave rise to political and militant intervention. In colonial India, the militancy of their militia groups was directed against British rule before independence. Since the late eighties of the twentieth cen-

tury they turned against India on the Kashmir issue and got involved in the Afghan war. The *Lashkar-e Taiba* (Pious Army, 1988) has been its most notorious jihadi group in South Asia till today.[5] In Southeast Asia it was the Persis school *Pesantren Persatuan Islam* set up in Bandung in 1936 later moving to East Java, that produced scholars and activists engaging in radical and militant mobilisation. From among the leading Salafi figures that studied there, it was Ja'far Umar Thalib who attracted public attention as the leader of the now defunct Lashkar-i Jihad (2000) in Indonesia. A few of the Bali bombers had a family background rooted in the Salafi network of Persis, most notably Imam Samudra.[6] In Sub-Saharan Africa the religious practice and political (anti-colonial) commitment of Salafis became intertwined from the 1940's onward.

While today Saudi-Arabia and Wahhabi theology is often credited with furthering a global Salafi movement (Roy 2004), these genealogies show much stronger influences of local and regional factors in their formation. The Salafis of South and Southeast Asia have more in common with each other in their evolution than with Saudi Arabia or Egypt, the legacy of Abdul Wahhab or Abduh and Rida. Family and clan networks were a major structuring element in their operation which tells these Salafi groups from their imagined centres of inspiration or inception.

In South and Southeast Asia and Africa Salafi activism became more influential since the 1970s. Partly in response to the Iranian revolution, young Muslim intellectuals who had graduated from Islamic universities and schools in Saudi Arabia and the wider Middle East returned to their home countries and openly emphasised the need for religious scholars and politicians alike to return to the theological precepts of the ancestors (Soares and Otayek 2007). The number of educational and cultural institutions run by them multiplied; occasionally they formed their own political parties. While they remained disparate internally, where one could clearly distinguish between a scholarly, a political and a militant milieu (Amghar 2007), the global impact of Salafi groups and views deepened and their networking becomes ever more distinct and recognisable (Wiktorowicz 2006).

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[5] Indonesia Backgrounder: Why Salafism and Terrorism Mostly Don't Mix. ICG Asia Report N°83, 13 September 2004, p. 5/6

[6] Ibid.

Traditionalist Reorganisation

Whereas Revivalists or Reformists wanted to change Islamic practice to bring it more into conformity with what they regarded as the essentials or the fundamentals of religions, other groups and schools of thought emphasised local practice and interpretation of Islam as inherited over the centuries from their forebears. Especially for the "outer" regions of Islam it is sometimes suggested that the reformist trends were "alien" to these regions and imported from areas such as the Middle East, and Saudi Arabia, Egypt in particular. The foregoing section showed that this assumption is far from the truth. Many varieties of reformism and revivalism are local to the wider Asia and Africa. They are sometimes more strict and stringent than their alleged models from Arabia. In some instances they even predated their Arabian colleagues or served as a reference for them which was the case with Abduh who regarded Jamaluddin al-Afghani (1838-1897) as a mentor, who in turn was influenced by ideas of Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-98).

Traditionalists following the interpretation and practice of their forebears had deep roots in the spiritual, devotional Islam of Sufi mystics, although not only. *Taṣawwuf*, or spiritual Islam, was a recognised discipline not only among the regular and irregular Sufi orders, but also in various literalist and reformist circles in Asia and Africa. Reformism had a strong impact on the self-definition of traditionalists and their formation as an 'autonomous' force. Traditionalists felt challenged by reformism attacking some of the traditional practices and interpretations. In response they also reorganised while defending and redefining their concepts and practices. Their groups, schools and activism took a much more formal shape. Also some Sufi orders took to reformist programmes purging rituals not seen in conformity with Islamic law (*sharīʿa*). As with the reformist groups, the traditionalist camp is far from homogeneous. The major distinction is between the 'organised' and the 'unorganised' sector of traditionalist activity. While traditionalists – in the shape of Sufi orders, local Quranic schools, and local clergy – joined the emerging Islamic sphere with their own associations, institutions and concepts, 'unorganised' local religious activity continued involving local clerics, preachers, healers, holy men and women.

While conflict between reformists and traditionalists sharpened in many regions their competition moved more to the sociocultural and sometimes political level. Doctrinally

their differences in fact narrowed on the basis of a restatement of orthodox beliefs and practices.

Yet at the same time local trends of traditionalism have tended to resist the pressure of reformism and revivalism. Those are often connected with Sufi practices, with local scriptures, languages and elites.

In South Asia it was the Barelwi movement that took upon itself to defend local religious practice. It was founded by Ahmad Raza Khan (1856-1921) in the late 19th century. He hailed from the north-Indian town of Bareilly from which the movement took its name. It responded to the revivalist critique mainly voiced by the Deobandis. The reformists targeted practices such as the worship of shrines and the veneration of their shrine keepers as un-Islamic. Also the exuberant and spiritual reverence for the Prophet as it was expressed in rituals such as celebrating his birthday (*mīlād-un-nabī*) and singing his praise in spiritual verse (*n'āt*) was frowned upon. This custom was seen as chipping away on the single devotion to God, *tauḥīd*. It was feared that such devotion to the Prophet would bestow on him God-like attributes and therefore diminish the role of God. It would therefore subtract from the 'fundamental' belief in the unity of God.

The Barelwis took a defiant stand against this criticism. Ahmad Raza not only defended these practices as wholly Islamic. He and his family also formalised and expanded the movement's influence organising it in modern ways. His sons launched political, social and educational organisations and other activities for this purpose (Sanyal 1996). The Barelwis could rely on doctrinal ambiguity that was inherent in the basic texts of Islam. Reports about spiritual beliefs and miracles can be found right in the Qurʾān and the oral and written traditions, the Sunna and the Hadith, forming the basic sources of Islam. To a certain extent the institutionalisation and modernisation of the movement took it into directions where it started resembling the reformist groups. It also developed formal and regular Islamic schools (*madrasas*) with a fixed curriculum, employed teachers and hostels. It had scholars debating the textual correctness of Islamic practice and it spawned extensive publishing efforts for the propagation of its beliefs. It ventured into politics through its own party of clerics (*Jamʿīyat-e ʿUlamāʾ-e Pakistan*, JUP, 1948). More recently the Barelwis copied the

reformist groups by creating various pietist and missionary outlets, such as the *Daʿwat-i Islāmī* (1981).

It also has to be noted here that while the Barelwis defended Sufi beliefs and practices (*taṣawwuf*), Sufism was by no means absent from reformist groups such as the Deobandis as long as it could be seen to be in consonance with Islamic law (*sharīʿa*). The Barelwis proudly regard themselves as orthodox, as strictly and wholly following the Hanafi school of Islamic law. But the Deobandis follow Hanafi precepts no less meaning that the label orthodox can also apply to the reformists when and if they observe formal Islamic law.

But the Barelwi groups are not the only actor in the larger field of popular, Sufi-related Islam. Sufi scholars have also continued to build translocal and transnational networks in an individual capacity. This applied as much to 'older' Sufi orders as to new Sufi scholars, or Shaykhs. It is interesting to note that their base extends both outward and inward from their own region of origin. Taking South Asia as an example we will find a Sufi scholar and Shaykh as Hakeem Muhammad Akhtar from Karachi who can count on followers not only in his own city but in faraway regions such as India, the UAE, South Africa, or the UK.[7] He is a disciple of the venerated Deobandi scholar and Shaykh Ashraf ʿAlī Thanawī (1863-1943). In Karachi, he runs the hospice Khanqah Imdadiyyah Ashrafiyya the name of which refers not only to Thanawī (by way of Ashrafiyya), but also to another Deobandi Shaykh and common inceptor of the Sufi strain in Deobandi activism, Hajji Imdadullah (1817-1899) who migrated to Mecca in the nineteenth century (Reetz 2006). Other religious scholars of South Asian descent who reside outside South Asia come back to visit their followers in their former home country to attract them with spiritual events and missionary congregations, but also to collect donations (*chanda*). Maulana Abdul Hafiz Makki, who is a teacher of Prophetic traditions (Hadith) at a Deobandi school in Mecca, would regularly travel to Pakistan but also to other countries to meet with followers and disciples (Reetz 2007).

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[7] Cf the websites featuring the Sufi hospice by Akhtar: http://www.voiceofkhanqah.com/, www.khanqah.org; and a blog of his followers: http://www.khanqahakhteria.blogspot.com/

But groups from the traditionalist milieu have not only been impacted by the reformists, they have also been influenced by the modernist agenda. Modernist incarnations of the Sufi sector in South Asia have sought to combine adherence (*taqlīd*) with providing arguments for worldly knowledge and education. Modern educational networks such as the *Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān* (1980) have created secondary schools, cultural and religious centres in Pakistan and abroad.[8] Its schools offer the regular school curriculum along with religious education. Its cultural and religious centres service the growing community of Pakistani migrants and their descendents all over the world, but with special focus on Western Europe and North America. Together they form part of the sprawling transnational Barelwi network that is closely interwoven with local Pakistani businesses and relies on spiritual and ancestral leadership by Barelwi scholars, politicians, and Shaykhs. The movement relies on *taqlīd* as far as religious doctrine and cultural custom are concerned, and it pursues *ijtihād* as far as its followers are seeking religious sanction for their modern, middle-class life styles.

Another Barelwi-inspired, yet thoroughly modernised religious ministry with revivalist pretensions drives the International Deedat Islamic Propagation Centres with headquarters currently based in South Africa. They were founded by Ahmad Deedat (1918-2000), a lay theologian hailing from Surat in Gujarat, India, in 1957 (Westerlund 2003, Hansen 2003). He specialised in the refutation of the bible from a Muslim perspective. While his clan-like family network still keeps contact with the traditional Gujarati Barelwi families in South Africa his missionary movement has inspired new forms of religiosity in Africa fusing reformist, traditionalist and modernist elements. Chanfi Ahmed showed how the East African movement of street preachers, Wahubiri wa Kislamu, followed the model and discourse of the Deedat Centres and the heterodox Ahmadiyya in its efforts to convert Christians to Islam and shore up the faith among local Muslims (Ahmed 2008).

In Southeast Asia the preservation of local Islamic practice was commonly associated with the indigenous Islamic schools, the *pondok* and the teachers there, the 'traditionalist' *kyai*. They focused on a series of local Islamic texts, which have been inherited and passed down the generations over the centuries, the Yellow Books (*kitab kuning*). Bruinessen in his study showed that schools on the islands of Sumatra,

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[8] Cf. its website http://www.minhaj.org/.

Kalimantan and on the Malaysian mainland to some extent still give precedence to religious books originally written in Malay by such *'ulamā'* as M. Arshad al-Banjari, Da'ud bin `Abdallah al-Patani and `Abd al-Samad al-Palimbani over classical Arabic works and their 19th century Arabic commentaries (cf. Bruinessen 1990). Few of these schools comprised solid buildings. Students stayed at nearby village houses, 'huts' (*pondoks*) attending lectures of teachers without much formal structure or compulsion. The cultural and social tradition of the *pondoks* manifested itself in movements such as the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Established in 1926 in response to Muslim Brotherhood reformism, it claims a membership of 35 million at least. Socially it remained with the 'traditionalists' and was led by the local religious scholars (*kyia*). As compared to South Asia, doctrinally and politically the NU was probably closer to the Deobandi school, whereas culturally more akin to the Barelwi milieu. The original *pondoks* have been gradually phased out, upgraded or expanded to include regular curriculums. Several of them also took to the teaching of worldly school subjects. But as with South Asia, here too we have an 'organised' sector of the traditionalist approach, the institutions of the NU, and an 'unorganised' sector consisting of unaffiliated local schools and scholars, who however broadly identify with the NU system even if they are not formally affiliated.

In Central Asia and Russia the local interpretation and practice of Islam have been taken care of by the Shaykhs and the Sufi orders since long. Particularly in response to Russian colonization of Asia these efforts sometimes took on militant forms. In the North Caucasus region Sufi orders facilitated popular resistance against the advancing Russian army in the 18th century. With their vast networks the Sufi brotherhoods of mostly but not only the Naqshabandi school proved to be an important unifying factor and a formidable military foe for Russia. (Hunter 2004, 11) Their political and religious leader, Sheikh Mansur (1732-93), a Chechen who had been initiated into the Naqshbandi Sufi rite, ultimately succumbed to Russian military might and died in prison in 1793.

Sufi orders shaped the face of Islam in Chechnya and much of other Muslim regions of Russian-dominated Central Asia. In the tussle for power and influence the Czarist regime repeatedly suppressed various Muslim groups and practices, in particular Sufi orders. (Ibid., 15)

On the other hand, loyalist orthodox scholars have closely cooperated with the Russian administration and have in turn been promoted by the Russians (Baldauf 2001).

In Africa conflict as derived from doctrinal differences was mainly played out between the representatives of Sufi Islam as embodied in the Sufi orders, and the Islamic reformists as represented by various Islamic groups and political parties. Islamism in this context is seen as a process of mobilisation in the name of Islam, but also as a process in which the norms of the foundational texts are re-imposed on local Muslims. Some scholars also call it the 'Islamisation of tradition' (Rosander and Westerlund 1997, 6). Others see the traditional sector of Sufi brotherhoods go through very much the same process of differentiation, partial reformation and modernization (Loimeier 2003a; Soares and Otayek 2007).

Sufi orders have been highly influential in North and Sub-Saharan Africa for centuries. Their religious leaders (*marabouts*) have often cooperated with pre-modern political leaders, the Sultans of Muslim states and communities, as well as with the colonial administration of the French and the British. Yet their influence was spread unevenly. In some African countries (Mali, Niger, South Nigeria, Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire) their impact was less prominent than in others (Mauretania, Senegal, North Nigeria, Northern Sudan and Somalia) (Soares 2004; Loimeier 2003). While many followed highly localised traditions and preserved rituals marked among others by the worship of saints, the invocation of spiritual intercession, the extensive and specific performance of *dhikr*[9], the performance of miracles and the wearing of amulets, others took interest in reforming ritual, making Muslim worship and identity more uniform, normative and public. Where reformist groups championed the modernization, improvement and expansion of Islamic education, some orders followed up by updating and expanding their own networks of Quranic schools. Where much of the research literature highlights the focus on ritual and practice by the orders, it cannot be denied that they also produced influential scholars, holding formal positions such as Islamic judges (*qadis*).

Loimeier describes two exemplary leaders (2006). Nasiru Kabara (1925-1996) from northern Nigeria established himself as the leader and paramount scholar of the

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[9] Ritual prayer invoking God's names.

transnational Qādiriyya order in West Africa (ibid, 26). Sayyid 'Umar 'Abdallāh (1918-1988) headed his own Qādiriyya branch in Zanzibar. Shaykh Uways b. Muhammad al-Barawī (1847-1909) as a leader of a ritual reform movement in the late nineteenth century had already turned the Qādiriyya order into a religious mass movement in the coastal areas as well as in the East African hinterlands (Loimeier 2006, 22). He cultivated excellent contacts with a number of Sultans of Zanzibar.

Both in their own ways contributed to updating 'traditionalist' Islam making reformist claims while organising themselves in modern ways. Soares stressed that there existed substantial agreement between reformists and traditionalists that Muslims should practice a more standardized Islam, as regards regular prayer, fasting, and the hajj. They were in frequent agreement about the rejection of certain 'traditional' 'magic' or spiritual practices, in West Africa most notably on spirit possession and the use of 'un-Islamic' spiritual objects such as amulets. They occasionally united in their opposition to the secularism of the post-colonial state. (Soares, 2004, 216; 2005)

Gliding shifts of paradigms can also be observed where forms of spiritual worship are being extended to new reformist preachers and modernist scholars. Soares describes saint-like veneration of the new religious personalities acting in a post-modern setting where they conduct a media ministry through CDs, cassettes and internet videos. This veneration also extends to more orthodox reformist scholars. The leadership of their missionary groups and school networks often follows the hereditary lineage of the founder leaders. For Mali, Soares quotes as examples Chérif Ousmane Madani Haïdara (b. 1955), the 'spiritual guide' of Ançar Dine (in Arabic Anṣār al-dīn) one of the more successful new Muslim organizations that formed in Mali after 1991 (Soares, 2004, 218). The shifting paradigm can also be noted in the Sufi orders themselves. Villalon discusses how they are changing in Senegal under the influence of reformist tendencies (Miles 2007).

Modernist Aspirations

Whereas the reformists sought to tackle modernity by active intervention in social practice in the name of religion, traditionalists by separating and preserving a ritual realm from modern-day pursuits, the modernists believed Islam itself needs to adapt and integrate modernity into its concepts and practice. Religious laymen and activists asked religious scholars to give new answers in the name of Islam to the challenges

of modern society such as democracy, worldly education, technological development, or scientific research.

Most famously and most poignantly they sought to reconcile reason and belief. As Sayyid Ahmad Khan, the founder and most prominent representative of South Asian Muslim modernism stated, God can't have given reason to man without wanting him to use it (Reetz 1988). For most of the allegorical and miraculous passages of the Qurʾān he was looking for 'natural' explanations. His critics of the Deoband school referred to his belief in the power of nature by calling him '*nechārī*' ('naturist') as a jibe. To implement his programme he founded the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh (North India) in 1875, raised to the level of a university in 1920 (cf. Reetz 1988). Here young Muslim students had access to high-standard worldly education while also being instructed in their religion. They would live in hostels under conditions observing regular prayer, Muslim dietary restriction and gender separation. The graduates would form a significant part of the Muslim elite of politics, business and administration of colonial India, and later Pakistan.

The gliding shift of notions and paradigms across regions can be exemplified here again with reference to the Egyptian scholar Abduh. While he was seen as the founding father of Islamic reformism (*iṣlāḥ*) seeking the re-instatement of the original power and meaning of Islam, his intentions were closer to Sayyid Ahmad Khan's. He was seeking to reconcile Islamic teaching and practice with modernity as it had taken hold in Egypt under Ottoman and Western colonial influences.
Characteristically the representatives of Muslim modernism were men who had received both religious and worldly education. The teacher of Arabic and Persian at the Aligarh College, Shibli Numani (1857-1914), was another prominent scholar and activist from India on this platform. He helped bringing into being a new organisation of religious scholars that was meant to bridge the gap between various Islamic interpretations, the Council of Religious Scholars (Nadwa, 1893), which he chaired between 1905 and 1913. The council also opened a new Islamic school in its name, the Nadwatu'l-ʿUlūm. Numani was critical of the religious scholars of his time (*ʿulamāʾ*) who should develop religion further to meet the requirements of the day (Numani 1965: 13-18). According to him, *ijtihād* should restore direct access to Qurʾānic knowledge

in order to enable the modern world to be interpreted in Qurʾānic categories (Malik 1997).

Modernists in Central Asia were equally focused on the modernisation and well-being of their fellow Muslims with education being a major focus of their attention. With the gliding shifts of paradigms, however, the composite elements of modernism created a slightly different spectre. Loyalism was less pronounced here whereas religious-reformist intentions played a slightly larger role than in South and South East Asia. In Central Asia the modernist part was played by a group of Muslim activists and intellectuals in the late nineteenth/ early twentieth century, the Jadidists, derived from "*jadid*", modern (in Arabic). Their intentions and activities were somewhat disparate. But their common denominator was to combine the 'modernisation' of Islam with its purification. They regarded local practices and interpretation of Islam as backward and obscurantist with little or no legitimation by the Qurʾān and the early Traditions (Hadith). They were seeking to revitalize Muslim civilization by doing away with 'outdated' ideas and policies. Russian colonial administrators were accused of supporting conservative leaders and practices of Islam in order to keep the region backward and dependent. Their efforts of revitalizing Islam were equally aimed at modernising their communities by introducing modern forms of teaching. The name of the movement derived from their objective to introduce 'new rules' (*uṣul-ul-jadīd*) in the maktabs, the Islamic schools. A leading figure was the Crimean Tatar Ismail Gasprinskiy (1851-1914), whose newspaper *Tercüman* (interpreter) was a major organ of Jadid opinion. Raising the educational level and standard of Muslims in Central Asia was seen as posing a significant barrier against Russification and Russian schools (Baldauf 2001, Khalid 1998).

The Jadids were treated with suspicion by the Russian Government, which disliked their connections with similar Muslim reform movements in the Ottoman Empire and British India, and suspected them of having Pan-Turkic and Pan-Islamic aims. As with the other modernists, the Jadids had many opponents amongst the ʿulamāʾ as well, normally known as Qadimists or devotees of the old. However the beliefs of so-called Qadimist thinkers have often been stereotyped and distorted, and their beliefs and aims were often not very different from those of the Jadids, who normally came from similar backgrounds and also counted many of the ʿulamāʾ in their ranks (Khalid 1998).

Regarding political Islamism in Central Asia and Russia, one could probably argue that the two segments of Muslim public activism, the modernists and the traditional clergy, worked together there. Also nationalist sentiments of the diverse Muslim communities played an important role. The affinity of political Islamism with conservative nationalism is later to resurface in other regions, as in Pakistan for the Jamāʿat-i Is-lāmī and in Malaysia for the PAS with regard to Malay nationalism.

In Muslim Central Asia several autonomist movements emerged in the early twentieth century, partly also as a reaction to the Russian Bolshevik revolution. In the south Caucasus Muslim nationalists declared the independence of the state of Azerbaijan in 1918. Kazakh nationalists proclaimed the autonomy of the Kazakh people in December 1917. Right in November 1917, the Ittifaq-al-Muslimin (Union of Muslims) declared the national autonomy of the Muslims of Turkestan. (Hunter 2004, 23-24) The Muslim party was formed by the merger of the Shura-i-Islamiya (the Islamic Council), which was comprised mostly of the Jadidist clergy, and the Ulema Jama'ati, which was dominated mostly by the conservative scholars.

It was partly in response to these autonomist movements that the treatment of Muslims by the Bolsheviks hardened which in turn provoked the outbreak of the Basmatchi revolt which began in 1918 and was gradually suppressed by 1928. (Hunter 2004, 24) It had been presaged by the elimination of the autonomous unit of the Tatar nationalist Idel-Ural Republic and the arrest of most of the Tatar nationalist leadership.

After the downfall of communism in 1990-91 across the former Soviet Union Islamic reformism as well as Sufi orders revived their activities. While traditional religious clerics had almost disappeared, a new generation of modernised and partly radicalised Islamic leaders ceased the opportunity of the hour to lead mobilisation in the name of Islam. The conflicts in Chechnya, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan became the most prominent flashpoints of a reconfiguration of Islamic identity. In a way Muslim activists returned to their nationalist antecedents and felt called to guard and shape the national identity of the new Central Asian nation states and of the Muslim community in Russia.

In Sub-Saharan Africa the 'Islamic field' has been predominantly structured by reformists and 'traditionalists'. Modernism made its appearance more recently in the

Nigerian conflict over the introduction of Islamic law (*sharīʿa*) in the northern states. It was there were some of the actors involved were called modernists, although they would not call themselves by this name, which their opponents prefer to associate with secularist and western orientation.

In Nigeria a banker with a background in Islamic education, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi (b. 1961), attracted much public attention to his arguments.[10] With reference to the introduction of Islamic law in Nigeria, he stressed that other Islamic thinkers and politicians had made the application of Islamic law contingent on circumstances.[11] Partly those circumstances related to the application of Islamic law – that people were to poor and ill-educated in religion that they could be justly awarded the stringent punishment for theft or adultery. Partly the argument of circumstance was also linked with the situation or timing in which the Quranic verses or the Prophetic Traditions were revealed. While Sanusi rejected the 'modernist' label, he nevertheless supported the adaptation of Islamic knowledge to modernity.[12] Salafi-oriented writers would attack Sanusi for his worldly pursuits in potentially 'un-Islamic' activities – since as a banker he might or might not approve loans with usury interest and for prohibited activities such as gambling or drinking alcohol. They would also reject his recourse to Islamic thinkers from the margins and outside the recognised law schools and the orthodox mainstream (Mohammed 2002). Sanusi's line of interpretation, historicising, allegorical and comparative, had also been shared by a small number of Muslim African politicians and intellectuals before him, such as the former Sudanese theologian and republican Mahmoud Mohamed Taha (1909-1985) (Taha 1987), or the former Sudanese Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi (b. 1935) (cf. Schöne 2001).

Political Pretensions

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[10] For Sanusi's biography see the UK NGO website Zamyn run by academic, social and political activists on the cultural effects of globalisation: http://www.zamyn.org/162-Lamido-Sanusi.html. He holds degrees in economics from the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria, and in Shari'ah and Islamic Studies from the International University of Africa, Khartoum, Sudan. Currently he is the Executive Director in charge of the Risk and Management Control Directorate of First Bank of Nigeria.

[11] Sanusi Lamido Sanusi. "Shariat and the Woman Question". *Weekly Trust* (Kaduna), 18 September 2000, http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/34a/081.html.

[12] Sanusi Lamido Sanusi. The Muslim woman and family law: Philosophising the debate (I)". *Weekly Trust* (Kaduna), 15 March 2002, http://www.gamji.com/sanusi/sanusi24.htm

A group that branched off from the modernist project were the political Islamists. Represented most prominently by the Indian Muslim Maulana Abu'l Ala Maududi (1903-1979), they believed that Islam had all the answers to effect the modernisation of their societies. Maududi founded the Islamic Party (*Jamā'at-i Islāmī*–JI) in 1941 for this purpose. Here the political Islamists took the cue from Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949), the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (1928). Maududi believed that the attainment of political power was a pre-requisite to establishing the hegemony of Islam and an Islamic society (Nasr 1996, 2001). Even more, the political Islamists wanted to islamise modernity through the 'Islamisation of knowledge' project championed by the Malaysian scholar Syed Muhammad Naqib al-Attas (b. 1931). It was aimed at reformulating especially western-dominated social sciences and humanities in religious, Islamic terms bringing them into consonance with teachings of the Quran and the Prophetic traditions (Hadith) (Attas 1978).

From the point of view of Islamic doctrine they were much closer to the orthodox views of the reformists, since they also supported the views of revival. Yet, many political Islamists were religious laymen and critical of religious scholars, the *'ulamā'*, who were championing the cause of reformist thinking. They also criticized their reluctance to get involved in activist politics. The *'ulamā'* in turn attacked them for overtly relying on modern western institutions such as the state and institutional politics which reformist scholars saw as a deviation. It was in this spirit that the JI attacked Muslim groups such as the TJ for their lack of political involvement. And Deobandi scholars denounced Maududi's views (Zakariyya 1975).

The political Islamists in turn criticized the 'regular' modernists as deficient in religious conviction and practice. They particularly regarded the modernist preference for a non-literal, allegorical interpretation of the Quran and its language as highly problematic, which opened the doors to a gradual liberalisation of interpretations. While the modernists would also view the traditions (Hadith) critical which contradicted Quranic injunctions, the political Islamists would defend most traditions, especially where they appeared to sanction their views on Islamic law, or public appearance and conduct. The modernist views of Ghulam Parvez (1903-1986) from Pakistan strongly opposed by JI representatives exemplify this conflict. Parvez regarded the Quran as the prime

source of guidance and denied the authority of those Hadith, which are seen as contradicting the Qurʾān and which he considered as fabricated.[13]

In the political area the modernists and the political Islamists would end up in different political camps and parties which sometimes opposed each other bitterly. In South Asia politicians shaped by the modernist convictions of the Aligarh school would more likely be found in the Muslim League or even the People's Party of Pakistan and perhaps the Congress Party of India, whereas the Jamaʿat-i Islami was the arch-typical representative of political Islamism. In Indonesia it was the Muhammadiyah standing for the modernists and the PKS (1998/2003)[14] for the political Islamists, in Malaysia the UMNO[15] and the PAS (1956),[16] representing this form of polarisation of Islamic forces. Again here as mentioned earlier, ideological loyalties and convictions between the parties and camps would rather overlap and not be as clear-cut as the names suggest.

Part of this conflict is also played out in the new Islamic Universities. The Islamic parties of Pakistan and Malaysia, JI and PAS, have a strong influence in the respective educational institutions in Islamabad and Kuala Lumpur. Islamist teachers there, especially in the departments of Islamic studies, frequently rent against the 'anti-Hadith' intellectuals accepting the Qurʾān but criticizing the Hadith literature.

Summarizing Contestation and Change

The triangular contest of revivalism, traditionalism and modernism can only serve as a rough estimation of the reconfiguration of the inner-Islamic discourse. Positions overlap and enter the territory of other discursive fields. Yet still they could not be fully dispensed with. These polarities are not only used by analysts, social or cultural studies experts. They are not only attributed from outside, but also self-ascribed by the Islamic actors and institutions, within their concepts and debates.

While it is justified to use them as markers to make sense of the inner structure of the Islamic field, it is more important than ever to trace their shifting nuances, meanings and accents. The revivalist trend outside Arabia formed only partially in response to reformist trends in the Arabic heartlands of Islam. Revivalism took up on historical

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[13] For his views and the movement he initiated to propagte them see the website www.tolueislam.com.

[14] PKS

[15] UMNO

[16] Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party – Parti Islam Se-Malaysia, www.pas.org.my

inputs from Islamic scholars – Arabic and non-Arabic – through the centuries. It responded to local religious and social configurations. In South Asia it was the weakening of Muslim culture and politics after the downfall of the Moghul Empire, in Southeast Asia the emphasis was on the prevalence of local Sufi-related customs, in Sub-Saharan Africa it was the conservatism of local Muslim leaders, the marabouts, which triggered or fired reformist responses with many local variations. But the practice and interpretation of Islam were only one factor in many that reconfigured the Islamic field in the direction of reformism and modernism. Other reasons that cut across this triangle of reformism, modernism and traditionalism were social, cultural and political. For instance, generational conflict was an important stimulus, as both the reformist and the modernist activists were often young and sought to replace leadership positions in society taken by older, often conservative and traditionalist scholars or functionaries. In other cases – Central Asia and Russia - the quest for cultural and political identity strengthened nationalist motives for religious reform.  There the search for the true religion merged with their longing for independence or autonomy. Resistance against foreign domination by British, French and Russian colonial rule motivated religious radical reformers objecting to Muslim loyalists in Asia, Africa and Central Asia. This latter battle partly fused with the rejection of the 'materialist' and 'secularist' culture of western societies. It was this double and triple-pronged contestation of colonial rule and western influence which shaped the oppositional style of Islamic reformism that can be observed in its reflexes and automatisms until today. Traditionalism organised itself in response to the reformist pretensions. While it defended its cultural and social 'territory' it moved towards revivalism in the doctrinal field. While traditionalist scholars defend local custom and practice, many of them also agree with reformist scholars on the need of a more orthodox interpretation and practice of Islam. If revivalism stands for a certain literalist approach towards the founding texts of Islam, traditionalism does not reject the founding texts but accepts also (later) local variations both oral and written.

While modernists often rely on circumstantial, historical and cultural interpretation of Islam to suit their interest in the economic, social and political features of modernity, such as wealth, status or power, many of them do not discard the foundational texts. As many classical Islamic thinkers and jurists, including the founders of the law schools relied on interpretation of Islamic texts, they also considered the social, political and cultural conditions of their time. Circumstantial rulings on the application of

the Sharia by medieval jurists can therefore be found with modernists as well as with revivalists.

Following Bourdieu, these overlaps create contestations of the 'Islamic field' over religious, cultural, political and social capital (1993). They have produced conflict and tension between Muslim groups that were argued and conducted with reference to revivalist, traditionalist and modernist arguments. We see such conflict in the political struggle of Islamic parties in Malaysia, Indonesia or Pakistan for a larger say in politics, having recourse to both revivalist and modernist arguments and networks. Similar mechanisms drive the contestation of the public sphere in post-Soviet Central Asia, less at the level of formal politics and rather more at the level of civil society and public mobilisation. We observe such conflict over the introduction of Sharia law in the northern states of Nigeria, which was accompanied by a tense debate between revivalists and modernists.

The conflicts argued with Islamic references can therefore be understood only if read at various taxonomic levels simultaneously. They can be seen as doctrinal and religious conflict over the interpretation and practice of Islam, but can be equally understood as social, political and economic change. It is this multi-factor approach that will make inner-Islamic conflict more accessible to analysis and understanding, on the Asian and African 'periphery' with its multitude of differentiations, but not only.

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