

**GATEWAY
TO JIHAD**

TABLIGHI JAMA'AT

By Ilana Freedman

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CONTENTS

Foreword.....	1
Introduction.....	5
Part I.....	9
Tablighi Jama'at in Context.....	9
History.....	9
Beginnings	10
The Call to Travel.....	13
Succession of Leadership	13
Global Growth.....	14
The Structure of Tablighi Jama'at	17
The Ideology and Culture of Tablighi Jama'at	18
Tablighi Jama'at Women	20
Jihad in San Bernardino.....	23
Part II	25
Tablighi Jama'at: An International Movement	25
Tablighi Jama'at in the United Kingdom	25
Tablighi Jama'at in America.....	30
Part III.....	35
As the World Sees Tablighi Jama'at.....	35
Under the Microscope.....	35
In the Eyes of Law Enforcement and the Intelligence Community	35
In the Eyes of the Analysts and the Media	37
Part IV	41
The Path from Non-Violence to Jihad	41
Part V	53
Conclusion	53
About the Author	57
Appendix.....	59
Index.....	71

FOREWORD

Violent jihadist groups and the horrific atrocities they inflict on innocent people generally grab headlines. But the far-less-visible cultivation of such jihadism via the indoctrination agenda of Islamic supremacist groups too often goes unremarked. The trouble is that, over time, the latter can pose a far more dangerous threat than the former.

Shrouded in secrecy, Tablighi Jama'at functions as both a missionary and Islamic revivalist organization with a following that numbers in the tens of millions worldwide. Its *modus operandi* relies on emissaries who, trained to share their knowledge of traditional Islam (often imperfectly learned), proselytize to non-observant Muslims and encourage their return to Islamic ideology. Tablighi Jama'at embraces a doctrinaire practice of authoritative Islam, bound by sharia law, although it inexplicably rejects violence as an acceptable expression of jihad.

Although largely devoid of formal organization, paid staff or official membership, Tablighi Jama'at nevertheless wields significant influence on a global scale. That influence is spread by its traveling missionaries, who go from mosque to mosque, promoting a message of doctrine-based Islam that adheres to the rigid ideology of the founders, even as they strictly avoid promoting or engaging in violence themselves.

The history of Tablighi Jama'at began in the early 20th Century when its founders emerged from the jihadist Deobandi School in South Asia. While unwavering in its support for sharia, the movement diverges from other Deobandi offshoots (notably, the Taliban) by strictly enjoining its missionaries from engaging in political action of any kind, including participation in violent jihad. The emphasis, rather, is on a renewal of Islamic morality in the everyday lives of ordinary Muslims – an approach to proselytization (*dawah*) that cultivates adherence to sharia, minus the traditional, at least implicit, threat of violence for failure to comply. Such needle-threading allows the Tablighis to get a pass from most security agencies in the West.

As those instructed by Tablighi Jama'at missionaries become increasingly immersed in the teachings of authoritative Islam, however, they typically exhibit a greater fidelity to its totalitarian sharia doctrine. Many become TJ missionaries themselves, one of the core requirements of Tablighi Jama'at membership. But some among them get restless with the non-violent approach and become fodder for recruitment by agents from

GATEWAY TO JIHAD: TABLIGHI JAMA'AT

terrorist groups like the Islamic State and al-Qaeda, who join Tablighi Jama'at mosques for the express purpose of identifying potential recruits and enlisting them to their cause.

For this reason, Tablighi Jama'at is sometimes likened to a “conveyor belt” or “gateway” to jihad. A close relationship with the Saudi Wahhabi clerical establishment affords a funding mechanism for the legions of Tablighi Jama'at preachers to support themselves in their itinerant mission, often far from home, and also provides a channel for Wahhabist ideology to permeate the Tablighi Jama'at's ranks. Although Tablighi Jama'at preaches that its emissaries pay for their own travel to fulfill their obligation to proselytize, Saudi funding supports their efforts and helps to establish Tablighi Jama'at mosques around the world, including in the West.

Mindful that jihadism is rooted in an indoctrination process that educates Muslims from childhood through adulthood in the supremacist obligations of their faith, the Center for Security Policy believes it is imperative for U.S. and allied national security, intelligence and law enforcement agencies to reconsider their typically benign view of Tablighi Jama'at. At the core of this position is the recognition that Tablighi Jama'at mosques serve as rich recruitment resources for jihadi operatives to lead restless Tablighi Jama'at acolytes to a more violent expression of Islam. Therefore, despite its historical position against political and violent jihad, Tablighi Jama'at poses a threat by serving as a fertile breeding ground for future terrorists. Its benign façade hides the dark, underlying role that Tablighi Jama'at plays in the world of Islamic jihad. It is this enigmatic but dangerous function that underscores the importance of this monograph.

In the interest of raising situational awareness upon the part of the American people and their representatives more generally, the Center for Security Policy is therefore pleased to present this analysis of Tablighi Jama'at's origins, ideology and mission.

As is made clear by author Ilana Freedman, a veteran intelligence analyst and author (including of other publications in the Center's “Terror Jihad Reader Series”), while Tablighi Jama'at may be largely unknown outside Muslim circles, it plays an enormously influential and dangerously subversive role as a rich recruiting resource for violent jihadi groups, including the Islamic State and al-Qa'eda. This dynamic requires close scrutiny and appropriate responses in the interest of America's national security. We hope this important new monograph, *Gateway to Jihad: Tablighi Jama'at*, will serve to illuminate the role that Tablighi Jama'at plays in the virulently hostile, Islamic supremacist agenda that

threatens America today. Whether what lurks behind this group's carefully cultivated image as non-threatening proselytizers is intentional, or, as the author suggests, largely naïve, it should remind us all that authoritative Islam's *dawah* always carries the implicit threat of violent jihad to follow.

Frank J. Gaffney, Jr.
President & CEO
Center for Security Policy
September 2016

GATEWAY TO JIHAD: TABLIGHI JAMA'AT

INTRODUCTION

Every year, millions of Muslim men from around the world gather by the banks of the Turag River in Tongi, Bangladesh, for a three-day celebration of Islam. The annual event, known as *Bishwa Ijtema* (Bengali for “world gathering”),¹ is organized and hosted by a group known as Tablighi Jama’at (Proselytizing Group).

Although the group is little-known outside the Muslim community, it has one of the largest followings in the world. In 2008, it was estimated that some two to three million people attended this celebration of Islam, and in 2010, local police estimated the number had reached five million.^{2,3}

Tablighi Jama’at is a Muslim missionary and revival movement that is as enigmatic as it is



ISLAMSSPIRIT.BLOGSPOT.COM

Gathering of Tablighis at the Bishwa Ijtema, 2012.

unique. Combining a strict, traditional approach to orthodox religious practice with loose, decentralized governance over those who follow it, the group is shrouded in secrecy. This makes Tablighi Jama’at highly controversial, and the study of its ideology and practices, as well as the web of its potential role in the world of jihad, difficult to unravel.

¹ “World Markaz”, <https://lilieprasyowidiyono.wordpress.com/2009/07/09/world-markaz/>

² Bishwa Ijtema: Five Million Muslims, 108 Weddings, One Australian Female Photographer. <http://jessicamudditt.com/2010/01/29/bishwa-ijtema-five-million-muslims-108-weddings-one-western-female-photographer/>

³ “Trains from Biswa Ijtema, Tongi, Bangladesh”, Published on Aug 4, 2013 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5a0lOlxO3k>

GATEWAY TO JIHAD: TABLIGHI JAMA'AT

In the years since its founding in the mid-1920s, Tablighi Jama'at has become the largest group of religious missionaries in the world, with a presence in some 80 countries from Bangladesh to the United States. Because there is no formal census of its members, who join and leave the group at will, its numbers are loosely estimated to be anywhere from 12 to 80 million followers.⁴ Its central mission is to send its emissaries around the world to proselytize to non-observant Muslims and help them return to the more orthodox traditions of Islam. They avoid contact with non-Muslims whenever possible.



[HTTP://DESENVOLTURASEDESACATOS.BLOGSPOT.COM](http://DESENVOLTURASEDESACATOS.BLOGSPOT.COM)¹

Arriving at Bishwa Ijtema by the thousands, 2014.

Yet despite its size, its global reach, its lack of strict, top-down controls on its millions of followers and the scope of its activities is a closely held (and for the most part, well-kept) secret.

⁴ "Inside the Tablighi Jama'at" by Ashwaq Masoodi, September 16, 2013.

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/nYJVwDC7IMtF8ZIDNGxAvI/Inside-the-Tablighi-Jama'at.html>

The organization reveals only the bare bones of its philosophy and its mission to the public.⁵ Its message is contradictory, at least from a Western perspective, and this has formed the basis for considerable speculation, not to mention a widely held suspicion about its possible connections to terrorism. The group professes to follow strict Muslim doctrine, but to shun violence. Tablighis claim to have no formal organization, no paid staff, no official membership, no property except that which is gifted to them, and sustain their global networks of followers through person-to-person contact.⁶

Whether they have ties to terrorism, directly or indirectly, is a topic of ongoing discussion. The indicators are ambiguous at best. Is this a coincidence or is it by design? Does it signify a deeper, darker mission, or are any connections to terrorist activity simply coincidental? The secrecy underlying Tablighi Jama'at's activities make these questions difficult to answer.

This monograph will try to clarify the ideology and activities surrounding this mysterious and powerful group.

⁵ "Inside the Islamic group accused by MI5 and FBI" by Paul Lewis. *The Guardian*, August 18, 2006 <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/aug/19/religion/terrorism>

⁶ "Traditionalist" Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis, and Talibs" by Barbara D. Metcalf, Professor of History, University of California, Davis. <http://essays.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/metcalf.htm>

PART I

TABLIGHI JAMA'AT IN CONTEXT

HISTORY

TABLIGHI JAMA'AT emerged in 1926 from the Deobandi⁷ school of Islam, leaving behind the hardline beliefs relating to jihad to which many in the Deobandi school subscribe.⁸ The Deobandi movement is the most commonly practiced form of Islam in South Asia,⁹ particularly the region of Asia that includes northern India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. Its practice of Islam is based on three principles:

1. A Muslim's first loyalty is to Islam
2. Recognition only of the religious frontiers of the global *Ummah*,¹⁰ not national frontiers established by non-Muslims
3. A sacred obligation to go anywhere in the world to wage jihad in order to protect their fellow Muslims¹¹

The Deobandi therefore have naturally close ties to the concepts related to violent jihad, and over time, the group has spun off a number of jihadi groups. Among them were the Taliban, which became the violent, jihadi nemesis in Afghanistan and the northwest region of Pakistan. Another organization that grew out of the Deobandi movement was Darool Ulum,¹² a group which practices a strictly orthodox form of Islam, and has consistently supported the Taliban. Prominent leaders in the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban have studied in Deobandi seminaries,¹³ raising

⁷ Muhammad Khalid Masud, ed., *Travelers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighi Jama'at Movement as a Transnational Movement for Faith Renewal* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), esp. "Introduction" and Chapter One, "The Growth and Development of the Tablighi Jama'at in India."

⁸ http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e522?_hi=1&_pos=2

⁹ https://www.stratfor.com/weekly/Tablighi_Jama'at_indirect_line_terrorism

¹⁰ *Ummah* is the Arabic word referring to the "Islamic community" as a people.

¹¹ "Deobandi Islam" Global Security. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/intro/islam-deobandi.htm>

¹² http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e522?_hi=1&_pos=2

¹³ "The Past And Future Of Deobandi Islam", by Luv Puri. Combatting Terrorism Center, West Point. November 3, 2009. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-past-and-future-of-deobandi-islam>

speculation that the Deobandi movement was a fertile breeding ground for new terrorist movements.¹⁴

Tablighi Jama'at, on the other hand, although a spin-off of the Deoband School, promoted a practice of Islam that was at once rigidly orthodox and dramatically aberrant in its belief in non-violent, apolitical principles. So important is the injunction against political action, that at the annual *Bishwa Ijtema*, attended by millions, as well as in many Tablighi Jama'at mosques, political discussion is strictly forbidden.¹⁵

BEGINNINGS

Tablighi Jama'at was founded in 1926 by Maulana¹⁶ Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandhlawi, the son of a distinguished family of Sufi¹⁷ scholars in India. It is said that his mother, Bi Safia, memorized the Koran and recited it every day during the forty days of Ramadan, a feat for which she was greatly respected.¹⁸ Ilyas was born in 1885 and spent the first 40 years of his life seeking an understanding of Islam. He received his early religious education at home, and later went to study with the Deoband, where he advanced his learning in the Qur'an, and the Prophetic traditions under some of the early Deoband scholars. After completing his studies, he went on to teach in the Deoband school of Islam.¹⁹



Maulana Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandhlawi

Over time, however, Ilyas came to believe that the only way to achieve a truly religious life was through the promotion of religious knowledge and familiarization with the rules and principles of Islamic law, but with the political aspect of Islam removed. He found the

¹⁴ This also lends credence, by extension, to speculation about Tablighi Jama'at's own connections to terrorism.

¹⁵ www.meforum.org/686/tablighi-jama-at-jihads-stealthy-legions

¹⁶ Maulana is a term of respect for those learned in traditional Islamic subjects.

¹⁷ Sufism is a mystical practice of Islam, often referred to as the internalization and intensification of Islamic faith and observance. It is not a sect, but rather it is considered to be the part of Islamic teaching that deals with the purification of the inner self.

¹⁸ Shaykh (Maulana) Muhammad Ilyas Kandhlawi. CentralMosque.com. <http://www.central-mosque.com/index.php/History/shaykh-maulana-muhammad-ilyas-kandhlawi-ra.html>

¹⁹ Ibid.

Deobandi way wanting, rejecting its emphasis on violent jihad, and founded the Tablighi Jama'at movement as a response to what he saw as the deteriorating morality of the Muslims around him and their neglect of traditional Islamic values.

Ilyas promoted a new path of Islam that encouraged the return to piety of Muslims who, he believed, had gone astray. His missionary movement was focused on the reversion of Muslims to devoutness and to religious ritual, rather than the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam. Instead of focusing his efforts on raising money to fulfill his vision, as most Muslim groups do, Ilyas emphasized a new approach to the practice of "da'wah."²⁰ He sent missionaries out into the Muslim world at their own expense to preach the importance of faith and prayer to other Muslims, so that they too could fulfill the religious requirements of Islam.²¹

Ilyas was convinced that by emulating the life of Mohammed (somehow minus the violence) and bringing wayward Muslims back to the "right path" of Islamic ritual and the practice of a holy life, they could achieve "the growth and expansion of Islam in its true form." He believed that it was important for his followers to remain apolitical, seeking the purity of life through piety and da'wah alone.²²

Thus, he insisted on "No controversial matter or points of secondary importance to be discussed at any time ... and confine all talk to the main points of Tabligh."²³ Ilya's goal was to create a view of the world through the lens of traditional Islam, as he saw it, that was so beautiful, peaceful, and meaningful that all Muslims would be attracted to it.

Tablighi Jama'at was created at a time when Britain "ruled the waves," during a period when revivalist movements were sweeping British India, creating serious problems for the ruling British. Tablighi Jama'at, however, was a form of Islamic practice so benign and non-threatening to the British in India that it was allowed to flourish. The white-robed missionaries traveled around India and preached a message of peaceful revival to more secular Muslims, encouraging them to return to traditional Muslim values. The benign neglect accorded the Tablighi Jama'at by the British enabled the sect to grow rapidly.

²⁰ *Da'wah* is an Arabic word meaning "to invite or summon" someone. This term is often used to describe the act of Muslims sharing their faith with others, to teach them more about Islam.

²¹ "Dr. Bilal Philips on Tablighi Jama'at" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DmvNPQYH0wI>

²² "Tableeghi Jama'at Exposed." Islamic Academy, Plano, TX. <http://www.islamicacademy.org/html/Articles/English/Tableeghee%20Jma%27at.htm>

²³ Ibid.



THENEWSTRIBE.COM

Tablighi men at prayer during Bishwa Ijtema, 2012.

The primary objective of Tablighi Jama'at was to convince Muslims to adopt the pious portion of the lifestyle that supposedly was practiced by Mohammed (again, somehow minus the violence), so that the rest of their lives could be harmonized with what they envision to be the holy path of Islam. To fulfill this, Muslims who joined the movement were encouraged to take time out of the routine of their lives to perform the Tablighi (proselytizing) activities through which they would share their way of life with others “who had strayed.”

As with many other Islamic sects, the Tablighi Jama'at followers believe that their view of Islam is the only true belief. “The book that is held by many among the Tablighi Jama'at to be as important as the study of the Quran itself is “Teachings of Islam,” in which it is written that there is “No way to gain honor, happiness, peace, and tranquility in this life other than to adopt and firmly hold on to the work and system of Tablighi.”²⁴ To other Muslims, this may sound like heresy, but millions of followers around the world believe it and follow it, albeit with varying degrees of passion.

²⁴ “Tableeghi Jama'at: On the scale of Qur'an & Sunnah” <http://www.central-mosque.com/index.php/Civil/tableeghi-Jama'at-in-the-scale-of-qur-aan-sunnah.html>

THE CALL TO TRAVEL

Closely tied to the belief in missionary work that is so deeply embedded in Tablighi ideology, there is implicit the view that travel – the nexus of time and space – is comparable to the concept of *hijra*,²⁵ traveling from worldly pursuits to religious concerns, from corruption to purity, from the profane to the holy.²⁶ The combination of transnationalism and travel is central to Tablighi Jama'at because it combines the universality of Islam and the idea that travel bring the inner self away from the trivial and into the realm of religious purity.²⁷

Over the years, Tablighi Jama'at became a powerful religious influence in the Muslim world. Apolitical in its culture yet unorthodox in its practice, it offered a path to conservative Islam without the baggage of violent jihad and political agendas that other groups promoted.

SUCCESSION OF LEADERSHIP

After Ilyas' death in 1944, his son Maulana Mohammed Yusef succeeded him as Tablighi Jama'at's second emir (leader), until his own death in 1965. He, in turn, was succeeded by Inamul Hassan, who transformed Tablighi Jama'at into a truly transnational movement. He also broadened its focus by adding the conversion of non-Muslims to the reversion of "lapsed" Muslims in returning to core beliefs and practices.²⁸ The result of this addition is that while most Tablighis remain true to the original concentration on "reversion" of lapsed Muslims rather than "conversion" of non-Muslims, a perceptible change has taken place within the group, that seems to have gone largely unchecked by the central surah council. (See "Tablighi Jama'at in the United Kingdom.")

By the time Inamul Hassan died in 1995, Tablighi Jama'at had expanded its reach to Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America. By 2008, Tablighi Jama'at had become the largest missionary movement in the world with a

²⁵ The *hijra* refers to Mohammed's flight from Mecca to Medina to escape persecution. It later came to also mean the migration of Muslims to further the cause of Islam.

²⁶ "Travellers in Faith" by Muhammad Khalid Masud.

https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/17447/ISIM_6_Travellers_in_FaithStudies_of_the_Tablighi_Jamacat_as_a_Transnational_Islamic_Movement_for_Faith_Renewal.pdf?sequence=1

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ "Hazratjee Maulana Inaamul Hasan; Third Ameer of Tableeghi Jama'at (RA)" <http://www.central-mosque.com/biographies/minaam.htm>

presence in nearly 80 countries.²⁹ Hazrat Maulana Zubair Hasan was selected as the fourth emir of Tablighi Jama'at after the death of his father. He himself died in New Delhi in March 2014 at the age of 61.³⁰

GLOBAL GROWTH

In the 1970s, the movement began a rapid expansion into non-Muslim areas of the world. The first foreign missions had been sent to the western part of Saudi Arabia known as the Hejaz, and to Britain in 1946.³¹ The next nation to receive Tablighi Jama'at missionaries was the United States, and during the 1970s and 1980s the Tablighi Jama'at also established a large presence in continental Europe, particularly France.

As it spread, it developed a synergistic relationship with the Saudis. While there was much about Tablighi Jama'at that the Wahhabi Saudis could not agree with, Sheikh 'Abd al Aziz Ibn Baz, one of Saudi Arabia's most influential religious leaders, began to encourage fellow Wahhabis to join the Tablighis' journeys in order to "guide and advise them."³² In a letter³³ to Falih Ibn Nafi Al-Harbi, he wrote:

"If our teachers and student brothers whom you have pointed to should have kept in touch with these (Tableeghi) people and participated in their work (of Tabeelgh) and guided them and tried to reform their deficiencies and shortcomings and guided them where they committed mistakes it would be of great benefit to Islam and Muslims. But, to hate them and to stay away from them and to warn people from mixing with them is a mistake and its harm is greater than its benefit."

This is significant because it was the beginning of the relationship between Tablighi Jama'at and the Saudi Wahhab leadership, and it

²⁹ "Starter Groups For Islamism: The Tablighi Jama'at; Asma's Iman Rauf And The Mosque At Ground Zero" by *Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury* <http://www.think-israel.org/choudhury.raufmosquegroundzero.html>

³⁰ "Tablighi Jama'at Chief Passes Away" By India Tomorrow News. <http://www.indiatomorrow.net/eng/tablighi-Jama'at-chief-passes-away>

³¹ Jenkins, Philip (2007). *God's continent* (illustrated, annotated ed.). US: Oxford University Press. p.340.

³² "Fatwa of Shaykh 'Abdul-'Azeez ibn Baaz regarding the Jamaa'ah at-Tableegh," *fatwa-online.com*, Safar 11, 1414 (July 31, 1993).

³³ [Letter from] "Shaykh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah bin Baz (HA) to Falih Ibn Nafi Al-Harbi" <http://www.central-mosque.com/index.php/Civil/investigative-reports-findings-of-saudi-scholars-on-tableeghi-Jama'at.html>

signaled the opening of the Saudi funding spigot for the Tablighis.³⁴ For what appears to be the first time, Tablighi Jama'at coffers were enhanced by a wealthy donor, whose funds supported an expanded mission for followers who could not themselves afford to travel.

Although the missionaries of Tablighi Jama'at were traditionally expected to pay their own expenses when they went on their proselytizing missions, Saudi funding subsidized transportation costs for thousands of the less affluent missionaries. And although Tablighi Jama'at's finances are highly secret, there seems to be little doubt that Saudi organizations, such as the World Muslim League, spend large sums to support the proselytizing activities of Tablighi Jama'at.³⁵

The relationship between the Tablighi Jama'at and the World Muslim League is notable. As early as 1978, the Saudi Arabian Pan-Islamic NGO based in Mecca was associated with a long list of ties to terrorist organizations, including Hamas, Abu Sayyaf, al-Ittihaad al-Islami, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Jamaat-al-Islamiyya, and al-Qaeda.³⁶ So in 1978, when they subsidized the building of the Tablighi mosque in Dewsbury, England, with a seating capacity of 4,000 worshippers, to be the headquarters of Tablighi Jama'at in Europe, it did nothing to ease the suspicions regarding Tablighi's possible ties with terrorism.³⁷

The Saudis have been in some conflict regarding the propriety of participating in Tablighi prayers and learning. Over the years, a variety of fatwas have been pronounced, denouncing Tablighi Jama'at and even prohibiting their members from proselytizing in Saudi Arabia.

The following report was written by Shaykh Salih Ibn Ali Al-Shawaymaan to his father, Shaykh Abdul-Aziz Ibn Abdullah Ibn Baz, regarding his participation in the Annual *Bishwa Ijtema* in 1979 in Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh.³⁸ In his letter, he makes recommendations based on his recent experience, which seem to have been nothing but positive. It sheds some light on both the *Ijtema* (worldwide Tablighi gathering) and on the nature of Tablighi ideology and practice, and dispels at least some of the controversy over the essential nature of the group:

³⁴ "Tablighi Jama'at: Jihad's Stealthy Legions" by Alex Alexiev *Middle East Quarterly* Winter 2005, pp. 3-1. <http://www.meforum.org/686/tablighi-jama'at-jihads-stealthy-legions>

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ As reported at <http://www.discoverthenetworks.org/printgroupProfile.asp?gpid=7347>

³⁷ *Financial Times*, Apr. 12, 1982.

³⁸ See Introduction, page 3.

"The secret is that this Jama'at has made Da'wa-Illallah and the work of reformation of morals (of people) its primary objective (of life) and it is not so that they have taken the work of dawah in their left hand and the (fame and enjoyments due to da'wa) in their right; rather this Jama'at has grasped the work of da'wa (itself) with both hands and these people are far from the greed of fame and popularity and to them praise and condemnation is equal until the life of this world has no value in their eyes. ...

"Recommendations:

"There are clear and apparent qualities and successes associated with this Jama'at (and its work) which we have highlighted and are accepted by friends and foe, alike. Subsequently, we deem it appropriate to present the following recommendations:

"1. For benefit and advantage, practical and sincere cooperation with the Jama'at should be done.

"2. We recommend that this movement (of Tableegh) should also be present amongst our students so that they may benefit from it and for them to benefit Jama'at. Our students are in need of this blessed Dawah compared to many other people.

"3. Jamia Islamiyya (Madina) should frequently (and in great numbers) attend these Ijtemaas and teachers and students alike should be represented here.

"We beseech Allah (SWT)³⁹ to make our actions pure and exclusive for His Benevolent Deity (SWT) and to keep show and fame away from us for surely He (SWT) is the most exalted and the one towards whom beseechment is directed.

Muhammad Amaan Ibn Ali Jami (HA)

10th of Rabiul-Awwal 1399 (8th of February 1979)

*In the name of Allah (SWT), the most beneficent,
the most Merciful*

*To my respected father respected Shaykh Abdul-
Aziz Ibn Abdullah Ibn baz (RA)⁴⁰*

³⁹ The letters (SWT) stand for the Arabic words "Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala," or "Glory to Him, the Exalted." Muslims use these or similar words to glorify Allah when mentioning His name.

⁴⁰ (RA) is an abbreviation that refers to *Radiallhu Anhu*, "May Allah be pleased with him." This phrase is commonly added after mentioning one of the companions of Muhammad.

The letter reveals that, although there are many in Saudi Arabia who are highly critical of Tablighi Jama'at, the movement has also struck a responsive chord with others.

Another curiosity about Tablighis is their presence and growth in Israel's West Bank, a stronghold of the Palestinian Authority (PA), whose animosity and official incitement of its populace to violence against Israelis have been open and explicit. By the early 1980s, Tablighi Jama'at was already among the largest Islamic movements there, yet its presence has been almost completely ignored both by the media and by studies of Islam carried out by the Palestinians.⁴¹ The mere fact that Tablighis have taken hold in such a violent and hate-driven culture has provided another consideration for those analysts whose mission it is to root out the sources of terrorism that threaten the world today.

THE STRUCTURE OF TABLIGHI JAMA'AT

The deep secrecy that shrouds Tablighi Jama'at has given the public few clues about the group's structure, its leadership, or its sources of funding. The Tablighi Jama'at claims to keep no records of its inner meetings and shares as little as possible to the outside world beyond their core beliefs and basic principles.⁴²

The organization, the leadership, and the internal activities are closely guarded secrets. In 2006, *The Guardian* published an article in which Dr. Patrick Sookhdeo, the director of the Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity in London and Chairman of the McLean, VA-based Westminster Institute, said Tablighi Jama'at "operates in every sense as a secret society in this country, as much as elsewhere. Its meetings are held behind closed doors. We don't know who attends them. How much money it has. It publishes no minutes or accounts. It doesn't talk about itself. And the senior figures have created a virtual barrier that is extremely difficult to penetrate."⁴³

⁴¹ Just 'A Religion' – For the Tablighi Jama'at, Islam is not totalitarian" by Yahya Sadowski, Summer 1996. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/1996/06/summer-islamicworld-sadowski>

⁴² "POSTCARD USA: Tableeghi Jama'at: all that you know and don't" by Khalid Hasan, Daily Times (Pakistan) August 13, 2006. <http://archives.dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/13-Aug-2006/postcard-usa-tableeghi-Jama'at-all-that-you-know-and-don-t-khalid-hasan>

⁴³ "Army of darkness" by William Langley, Roya Nikkhah, James Orr, David Bamber and Massoud Ansari in Islamabad. August 20, 2006. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1526793/Army-of-darkness.html>

According to some observers,⁴⁴ the leadership comprises the emir who presides over a *shura* council. The council plays an advisory role in this loosely organized group. Although the current emir is thought to be in the familial line of its founder, his identity is known only to those closest to him in the hierarchy.

Individual country organizations are thought to operate somewhat independently and spread their doctrine through the voluntary and constantly changing activities of its missionaries. The organization of the Tablighi Jama'at movement is loose and lacks centralized control over its millions of followers. The "membership" is fluid, with worshippers and missionaries coming and leaving at will. This results in a great disparity in how the missionaries in various parts of the world operate, and may often make it necessary for individual groups to improvise rather than follow a standard, universal strategy.⁴⁵

THE IDEOLOGY AND CULTURE OF TABLIGHI JAMA'AT

"At face value, Tablighi Jama'at is a peaceful, egalitarian, and devotional movement that stresses individual faith and overall spiritual development."⁴⁶ Ilya's vision to bring Muslims who had "strayed" back to the core principles of Islam (as exemplified in the life of Mohammed, but excluding the plunder, rape and slaughter) led to a cult-like movement, defined by asceticism.

The men are encouraged to shave their mustaches and grow their beards long (as Salafi jihadis do), while the women live a cloistered life under *purdah*,⁴⁷ covering their bodies completely in public and observing a rigid code of separation from the men.

⁴⁴ "Tablighi Jama'at: Jihad's Stealthy Legions" by Alex Alexiev *Middle East Quarterly* Winter 2005, pp. 3-1. <http://www.meforum.org/686/tablighi-Jama'at-jihads-stealthy-legions>

⁴⁵ "Tablighi Jama't" Pew Research Center. <http://www.pewforum.org/2010/09/15/muslim-networks-and-movements-in-western-europe-tablighi-Jama'at/>

⁴⁶ "Tablighi Jama'at: An Indirect Line to Terrorism" by Fred Burton and Scott Stewart. January 3, 2008. Stratfor Global Intelligence https://www.stratfor.com/weekly/tablighi_Jama'at_indirect_line_terrorism

⁴⁷ According to Merriman-Webster, "a custom among Muslims and some Hindus in which women stay separate from men or keep their faces and bodies covered when they are near men."

Tablighi Jama'at's simple message is compromised of six basic principles, formulated by Muhammad Ilyas in 1934, which adherents were encouraged to follow:⁴⁸

1. *Kalimah*. An article of faith in which the *tabligh* accepts that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger
2. *Salaat*. Five daily prayers that are essential to spiritual elevation, piety, and a life free from the ills of the material world
3. *Ilm* and *Dhikr*. The knowledge and remembrance of Allah conducted in sessions in which the congregation listens to preaching by the *emir*, performs prayers, recites the Quran and reads *Hadith*.⁴⁹ The congregation will also use these sessions to eat meals together, thus fostering a sense of community and identity
4. *Ikram-i-Muslim*. The treatment of fellow Muslims with honor and deference
5. *Ikhlas-i-Niyat*. Reforming one's life in supplication to Allah by performing every human action for the sake of Allah and toward the goal of self-transformation
6. *Tafrigh-i-Waqt*. Devoting time to live a life based on faith and learning its virtues, following in the footsteps of the Prophet, and taking His message door-to-door for the sake of faith.

A principle part of this work for the millions of followers around the world is the missionary work that every Tablighi man is encouraged to undertake. The guiding directive for this, provided by the elders of Tablighi Jama'at, recommends a schedule that gives several options for how much time a Tablighi should devote to this work: "3 days a month; twice a week; 40 days a year; and/or 4 months in a lifetime."⁵⁰

"We must leave our houses, our businesses, our families, for a short period of time, and follow the path of Allah and practice the ways of the prophet, going from mosque to mosque. ... Then [the behavior] will

⁴⁸ "Islamist Networks: The Case of Tablighi Jama'at" by Nicholas Howenstein, United States Institute of Peace, October 12, 2006. <http://www.usip.org/publications/islamist-networks-the-case-of-tablighi-jama-at>

⁴⁹ "The term "ḥadīth" has acquired a very specific meaning in Islamic literature, referring to a collection of reports about what the Prophet said, did, approved, and disapproved of, explicitly or implicitly.

⁵⁰ "The Tablighi Jama'at Movement" <http://www.inter-islam.org/Miscellaneous/Jama'at.htm>

become second nature to us. We shall go to India and Pakistan for four months to follow these ways.”⁵¹

What Tablighi followers call "the effort," traveling around the country or in a foreign country for days or weeks to reach out to fellow Muslims and return them to core Islamic values, is key to the Tablighi movement. Ilyas' efforts to systemize the work of da'wah outreach to non-religious Muslims created what is likely the most powerful grassroots Islamic da'wah movements in the world.⁵²

When they arrive at their destination, Tablighis go to a local mosque, where they live for the period of time prescribed by their effort. This "camping out" within the mosque is not always welcome. "Uninvited, they take over the local mosques for days at a time, sleeping and eating in them and imposing their own program in complete disregard of the actual needs and on-going organization of the community concerned."⁵³

TABLIGHI JAMA'AT WOMEN



TALESOFTHEVEILS.COM

Tablighi women.

Tablighi women claim to consider the purdah a gift. "We must be grateful to God. We have been chosen by Allah among other Muslim

Tablighi women dress extremely conservatively in voluminous body-concealing clothing, including the niqab and in some parts of the world they even cover their hands and their eyes, so that no skin shall be showing at all. Women cannot go outside alone, but must be accompanied by a male relative.

By Western standards, such norms seem harsh and discriminatory, but many

⁵¹ "Inside the Islamic group accused by MI5 and FBI" by Paul Lewis. *The Guardian*. August 18, 2006. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/aug/19/religion.terrorism>

⁵² "The Tablighi Jama'at Movement" <http://www.inter-islam.org/Miscellaneous/Jama'at.htm>

⁵³ "Tableeghi Jama'at Exposed" Islamic Academy, Plano, Texas. <http://www.islamicacademy.org/html/Articles/English/Tableeghee%20Jma%27at.htm>

women.' Wearing the purdah immediately shows others that they belong among those chosen Muslims."⁵⁴

Barbara Metcalf, the author of a defining study of Tablighi women,⁵⁵ wrote that Tablighi women have more freedom in some ways than do their sisters in other orthodox Muslim groups. For example, as described below, Tablighi women are allowed to travel on missionary trips and to proselytize, but only to women.

Agnès De Féo describes how some try to put the best spin on things in her article "Behind the Veil, In the Ranks of the Tablighi Jama'at"⁵⁶ and illustrates it by quoting the explanation of a Tablighi woman:

According to the Tablighi women, the purdah gives respectability to the women who wear it. They interpret it as the self sacrifice of their own power of seduction in order to keep their body only for their husband. They renounce showing their beauty in exchange for the enormous rewards promised in the hereafter. They are convinced to have attained feminine perfection. This accords them a high value.

But purdah gives them more as I realized myself: the sensation of seeing without being seen is a very exciting experience. It also engenders a new relationship to the men of the community. When Rosezalina gave me my first purdah, she told me in a low voice: "The men will look at you the way they look at a beautiful woman in their imagination."

Within this context, Tablighi Jama'at "arose as a movement of social reform."⁵⁷ For example, when a group of men travel, they decide upon a route and time period of the journey through group counseling (*Mash'wara*). When a Tablighi returns from his journey, he is encouraged to incorporate what he has learned into his life, inviting others to join him in daily *Ta'alim* (teaching and learning), to be done at home so that the women and children can also benefit from what he has learned.

⁵⁴ "Behind the Veil, In the Ranks of the Tablighi Jama'at" by Agnès De Féo. World Religion Watch, October 12, 2009. <http://www.world-religion-watch.org/index.php/about-us-researchers-and-fellows-at-world-religion-watch/research-publications-and-working-papers/284-veil-tabligh-Jama'at>. Photo by Agnès De Féo.

⁵⁵ "Islam and Women, the Case of the Tablighi Jama'at", by Barbara Metcalf in *Stanford Electronic Humanities Review* (SEHR), volume 5, issue 1, February 27, 1996.

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ "Religious Discourse in Tablighi Jama'at A Challenge to Female Sexuality?" by Ambreen Agha *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, Vol. 2, No. 3, June 2015. Conflict Management Institute, New Delhi, India. www.ijmmu.com/index.php/ijmmu/article/download/5/12

But there is also a provision in the Tablighi code for women to join their men in da'wah. It is called a Masturat⁵⁸ Jama'at. While men must go on *khuruj* three days a month and forty days a year, the involvement of women is less: three days every three months, and two weeks each year. When the women join them, they travel as a mixed *jama'at* (group), composed of five to seven couples, although, to avoid any contact between the men and the women, a curtain divides the minivan in two, with the men in front and the women at the back.

When they arrive at their destination, the women do not enter the mosque, but rather they stay separately in the house of a well-known Tablighi worker, following full shariah rules regarding purdah, where they can also learn and teach the women of that locality who may come to join them. Likewise, the men do not join the Masturat Jama'at, but rather stay separately in a nearby mosque. Within the confines of their purdah, therefore, the women also have an important role to play in da'wah. This gives them a sense of both freedom and purpose, unlike the passive role played by their sisters in most other orthodox Islamic groups.⁵⁹



TALESOFTHEVEILS.COM

Tablighi couple.

⁵⁸ Mastura is the name given to women who hide their faces.

⁵⁹ "About Tabligh" <http://gotabligh.com/about>

One very interesting feature of the behavior of men and women during these travels is role reversal, as prescribed by Tablighi custom, which is considered by women to be an important part of that freedom. In Tablighi Jama'at, "men are required to behave like women by cooking and cleaning during khuruj,⁶⁰ exhibiting feminine qualities of modesty and sweetness. Women, on the other hand, are expected to show male qualities of socialization, proselytizing, discussing, and convincing outside people. Despite the appearances, with men all in white and women all in black, men and women are not completely opposite, they have also mixed their roles."⁶¹

While to the Western mind, women in purdah clearly appear to be diminished and demeaned within their culture, many of the Tablighi women nevertheless seem to feel a sense of pride in fulfilling their roles within the constraints of their faith.

JIHAD IN SAN BERNARDINO

Another Muslim revivalist group that appeared in the mid-20th century was the Al-Huda Welfare Trust. While Tablighi Jama'at is a male-led movement which incorporates women as accessories, Al-Huda is female-led and was founded exclusively for women.⁶² Further, its roots are in the Jama'at-e Islami Pakistan political party founded by Abul ala Maududi in Lahore in 1941 as a 'supra-sectarian,' Sunni but not Deobandi movement that teaches jihad yet eschews the actual practice of violent jihad itself. The Al-Huda network has no formal connections with either the Tablighi Jama'at or the Deobandi School.

Its website says, "Al-Huda International Welfare Foundation was founded in 1994 in Pakistan. It is striving to enlighten people with the knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW) while serving the people through diverse social welfare programs.

"Al-Huda International Welfare Foundation is a non-political, non-sectarian, and non-profit organization which is tirelessly serving humanity by promoting education along with numerous welfare programs for the needy and destitute. The organization does not have links to any

⁶⁰ *Khuruj* – the "going out" for Da'wa. In this case, it refers to the women joining the men to proselytize for Tablighi Jama'at.

⁶¹ "Behind the Veil, In the Ranks of the Tablighi Jama'at" by Agnès De Féo. World Religion Watch, October 12, 2009. <http://www.world-religion-watch.org/index.php/about-us-researchers-and-fellows-at-world-religion-watch/research-publications-and-working-papers/284-veil-tabligh-Jama'at>.

⁶² "Religious Discourse in Tablighi Jama'at A Challenge to Female Sexuality?" by Ambreen Agha

extremist regime and stands to promote peaceful message of Islam and denounces extremism, violence and terrorism of all kinds.”

The organization came into the spotlight in December 2015 when Tashfeen Malik and her husband, Syed Rizwan Farook, murdered in cold blood fourteen of his co-workers at a holiday party, and wounded 21 others in the name of Allah. The attack took place at a mental health facility in San Bernardino, California, in December 2015. It was later revealed that Tashfeen had studied at Al-Huda International’s Multan branch in Pakistan for a brief period between 2013 and 2014, although she left without completing her courses.

The questions raised as a result of this revelation included a) whether the orthodox ideology at Al-Huda played any role in Tashfeen’s Islamic indoctrination, and b) whether there was any connection between Al-Huda and Tablighi Jama’at that contributed to the events leading up to the massacre in San Bernardino. Because what is known of the ideology of both organizations rejects the practice of violent jihad, this was a reasonable question to ask.

According to Al-Huda’s website, “We firmly believe that any Muslim who is aware of the teachings of his/her religion, and truly adheres to the directives of the Holy Qur’an and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (saw), will never involve himself/herself in violent acts, because they invoke the anger of Allah Almighty and lead to harm and corruption on earth.”⁶³

Prior to the San Bernardino massacre, Farook had been attending the Dar al Uloom Islamiyah mosque of San Bernardino, not far from where he worked, where the speakers’ roster is full of Deobandi hate clerics.⁶⁴

Although the questions have still not been completely answered, considerable research has not revealed any formal relationship between Tablighi Jama’at and Al-Huda, or between either organization and the couple’s journey to Islamic devotion and jihad. There is still much to discover at the time of this writing about what led to the jihad attack in San Bernardino, but, so far at least, there is no indication that either Al-Huda or Tablighi Jama’at was connected to the attack.

⁶³ al Hudah Website <http://www.alhudapk.com/officialstatement>

⁶⁴ See YouTube video “US Imam preaching theft, rape and murder of Christians and Jews in the US “ of Yassir Qadhi, high on the list of speakers at Dar al Uloom Islamiyah, instruct that Christians are “filthy” and that their property (including women) can be taken by Muslims in jihad, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mXbp5sTiM0>.

PART II

TABLIGHI JAMA'AT: AN INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT

Although the movement began to establish itself in the United States in the early 1970s, Tablighi Jama'at developed a significantly larger presence in Europe during the two decades that followed, particularly in France. Then, in the first decade of the 21st century, the Pakistani community in France doubled to nearly 60,000 Muslims, many of whom followed the path of Tablighi Jama'at.

TABLIGHI JAMA'AT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

It was in the United Kingdom, as the South Asian population began to arrive in the 1960s and 1970s, however, that the number of Tablighi members began to grow exponentially. By 2007, according to several studies, Tablighis were controlling nearly 800 of Britain's 1695 mosques.⁶⁵ While this number is impressive, it may well be inflated, because many British analysts seem to confuse Tablighi Jama'at with the Deobandi and conflate them when assessing the size and power of the groups.

Mega-mosque Conflict

It has not always been smooth sailing for the Tablighi Jama'at in the UK. In October 2015, they lost their 16-year fight to build a 290,000 square foot “mega-mosque” in Newham in London’s east end,⁶⁶ not far from the 2012 Olympic stadium. Had it been approved, it would have had 190-foot minarets and three times the floor space of St Paul’s Cathedral.

At the time of the London bombings on Thursday, July 7, 2005, Tablighi Jama'at was in the process of proposing a giant mosque to serve as its headquarters and accommodate Muslims who would be attending the Olympic Games.

The proposed mega-mosque was designed to house as many as 70,000 worshippers and would be situated very close to the proposed Olympic

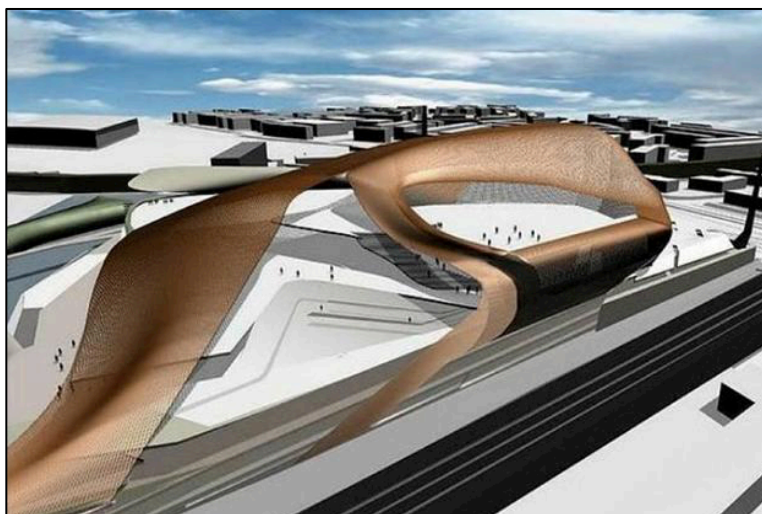
⁶⁵ “UK Mosque Statistics/Masjid Statistics as of 23/09/2015”

http://www.muslimsinbritain.org/resources/masjid_report.pdf

⁶⁶ “Islamist Networks: The Case of Tablighi Jama'at” by Nicholas Howenstein, October 12, 2006 United States Institute of Peace. <http://www.usip.org/publications/islamist-networks-the-case-of-tablighi-jama-at>

site in London. The Games required the compulsory purchase of part of the land earmarked for the mosque, reducing the maximum size of the project.⁶⁷ Tablighi Jama'at had been operating a temporary mosque with a capacity for 2,500 worshippers on the same 18-acre site, once a chemical plant, where it had owned and operated a “temporary” mosque since 1996.

The original design for the new mosque, the Abbey Mills Marqaz, was futuristic and was designed to hold between 45,000 and 70,000 people (only 10,000 fewer than the Olympic stadium itself), but the plan was scaled back in order to better meet conditions that would facilitate approval.



Original design of proposed Tablighi mosque.

When the formal decision of Greg Clark, the Secretary of State at the DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) finally came down, it was even firmer than expected. Not only was the request to build the mega-mosque denied, the mosque trustees were ordered to cease using their current facility on the site. They were also told they would have to demolish the existing wood-frame buildings they had been

⁶⁷ “7/7 bombings 'were aimed at Olympic bid,’” by Andrew Gilligan. *The Telegraph*. October 31, 2015. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/11968330/77-bombings-were-aimed-at-Olympic-bid.html>

using there as a temporary mosque within three months following the verdict.⁶⁸

Clark's cover letter to the Report to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government stated, "The Secretary of State also agrees with the Inspector that the appellant has not demonstrated a need for a mosque of this size on this site," as one of the many issues causing the rejection of its petition.

What is significant about this situation is that as the struggle to get approval for the mosque grew more heated, it also became highly politicized. In a surprising departure from the Tablighi Jama'at tradition of avoiding politics entirely, supporters of the mosque formed the Newham People's Alliance (NPA) and began a campaign of harassment and threats against the council. According to press reports, the NPA organized a particularly vicious campaign against the mayor of Newham, Sir Robin Wales, calling him "Dirty Robin," as well as a "Zionist" and a "racist."

Alan Craig, a former Newham councilor who led the campaign against the mosque, was subjected to death threats. A video obituary entitled "In memory of Councilor Alan Craig" was made featuring Craig, his wife and two daughters, and a link to the video appeared on the mosque's own website.⁶⁹ When councilors refused permission for the mosque, the NPA blockaded the council offices.



CHRISTIANVOICE.ORG.UK

Entrance to site of existing Abbey Mills mosque.

Another unusual aspect of this controversy was that opposition from other Muslim groups that characterize themselves as "moderate" was also very strong. Irfan al-Alawi, Europe director of the Center for Islamic Pluralism, was quoted by the *Times* (London) saying he was "extremely concerned" about the spread of Tablighi Jamaat. "Tablighi are not

⁶⁸ "MegaMosque: The End," by A. Alan Craig. November 23, 2015.

<http://www.alansangle.com/?cat=53>

⁶⁹ "Mega-Mosque: The End"

moderate Muslims, they are a separatist movement. If this mosque were to go ahead it will be strictly run by the Tablighis; there will be no room for moderates.”⁷⁰

The plan had been controversial from the beginning because, although Tablighi Jama'at professes to be apolitical and non-violent, it has been linked to some well-known terrorists.⁷¹ Another twist has been the accusation that radical groups from outside Tablighi Jama'at have co-opted the NPA and may be responsible for the attacks on local government figures.⁷² Altogether, the controversy was explosive and the negative publicity that arose from it cast a shadow over the Tablighi group as a whole.

These confrontations were so atypical of Tablighi Jama'at, that it was not surprising when reports surfaced about outside, left wing groups who had also joined the NPA to fight for the mosque.⁷³

The apparently shocking departure of Tablighi Jama'at from its consistent avoidance of politics, as well as the threats and physical confrontations, no doubt contributed not only to the rejection of their original petition and appeals to build a new mosque but to the decision to close their existing mosque in Newham as well.⁷⁴ The unexpected behavior also raised anew the questions of Tablighi Jama'at's possible affiliations with violent jihadi groups.

Tablighi or Deobandi?

In general, much of the research on British Tablighi is clouded by a tendency on the part of many who write about the group to conflate Tablighi Jama'at with Deobandi Islam, because the group has its roots in

⁷⁰ “The London Markaz” by Daniel Pipes. First posting, Nov 27, 2005; last updated Oct 25, 2015. <http://www.danielpipes.org/blog/2005/11/the-london-markaz>

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² “Islamic group blocked from building 'Britain's biggest mosque' in London” by Andrew Gilligan. *The Telegraph*, October 25, 2015. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/11953462/Islamic-group-blocked-from-building-Britains-biggest-mosque-in-London.html>

⁷³ “Islamic group blocked from building 'Britain's biggest mosque' in London”, by Andrew Gilligan. *The Telegraph*. October 25, 2015 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/11953462/Islamic-group-blocked-from-building-Britains-biggest-mosque-in-London.html>

⁷⁴ “Terror-Linked ‘Army Of Darkness’ Muslim Group Blocked From Building ‘Europe’s Biggest Mosque’” by Nick Hallett. Breitbart.com October 26, 2015. <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2015/10/26/terror-linked-group-blocked-building-europes-biggest-mosque/>

the Deoband school of Islam. The Deoband is the same school of Islam that spawned the Taliban, Darool Ulum, and other groups associated with terrorism. Those connections also link Tablighi Jama'at to terrorist groups and individuals, however indirectly. But the ideological differences are significant and should be obvious to even a moderately casual researcher.

Nevertheless, in Britain as well as elsewhere, the Tablighi Jama'at and Deobandi are frequently confused or linked interchangeably. Journalists and analysts alike align the Tablighi with openly jihadist groups. Here are several examples of this confusion:

- A press report that equated the Tablighi Jama'at with the Deobandi appeared in the *Daily Mail*: “The Deobandi-controlled mosques are predominantly found in the Midlands and the North – such as the Tablighi Jama’at mosque which 7/7 bombers Mohammed Siddique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer were known to attend.”⁷⁵
- In July 2015, Dr. Paul L. Williams authored an article that appeared on GlobalResearch.ca. In “The CIA’s Creation of ‘Islamic Terrorism’ on American Soil,” Williams connects Tablighi Jama'at with Dar Ul-Islam and Jama’at al-Fuqra, two shariah-adherent if not frankly jihadist groups with a strong presence in the US among the African American population. In referring to Tablighi Jama'at, he specifically mentions “their approval of jihad by sword,” something that, in fact, is contrary to its expressed ideology.

Williams also linked them to Sheikh Mubarak Gilani, founder of Jama’at al-Fuqra (known in the US as Muslims of America), which sponsors military training camps for Muslim converts, newly released from prison. The camps provide combat and weapons training to convicted felons and are located in several remote areas of the country.

- Patrick Poole, a respected expert in the field of Islamic terrorism in the US, authored an article, “The FBI’s Two Faces on US Terror Compounds,”⁷⁶ which appeared in *The Blaze* and listed Tablighi Jama'at as one of the potential terrorist actors about which the US needed to be concerned. He wrote, “Other predicted

⁷⁵ “Radical Islamic sect 'has half of Britain's mosques in its grip’” *Daily Mail*, September 7, 2007. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-480470/Radical-Islamic-sect-half-Britains-mosques-grip.html#ixzz3uvCYrgiq>

⁷⁶ “The FBI’s Two Faces on US Terror Compounds” by Patrick Poole. *The Blaze*, February 19, 2014. <http://www.theblaze.com/contributions/the-fbis-two-faces-on-us-terror-compounds/>

possible sponsors of attacks include Jama'at ul-Fuqra, a Pakistani-based group that has been linked to Muslims of America; Jama'at al Tabligh [sic], an Islamic missionary organization that has a presence in the United States; and the American Dar Al Islam Movement. Representatives for the organizations could not be reached Wednesday for comment or did not respond to telephone or e-mail messages.”

This lack of clarity in distinguishing Tablighi Jama'at from Deobandi and other openly jihadist Muslim groups contributes heavily to the belief that Tablighi Jama'at is also tied directly to terrorism.

TABLIGHI JAMA'AT IN AMERICA

In the United States, there may be as many as 50,000 Muslims affiliated with Tablighi Jama'at.⁷⁷ Tablighi's North American headquarters is thought to be at the al-Falah Mosque in Queens, New York, although some claim it is at the Masjid al-Noor in Chicago.⁷⁸ Tablighi mosques currently operate in several U.S. states, including California, Texas, Illinois, New York, and Hawaii.

According to Dr. Eva Borreguero, professor of political science at the University Complutense in Madrid, the Jama'at's unique approach to the practice of their religion “has enabled it to spread discreetly and peacefully all over the world, finding minimal resistance from foreign governments.”⁷⁹

Tablighi Jama'at is, however, far from universally accepted by other Muslims. The neutrality which the Tablighi professes on political issues has made the group anathema to many of the jihadist Muslim groups who see the political statement as fundamental to the practice of Islam.

⁷⁷ Pew Forum, “Muslim Networks and Movements in Western Europe: Tablighi Jemaat.” <http://www.pewforum.org/2010/09/15/muslim-networks-and-movements-in-western-europe-tableighi-Jama'at/>

⁷⁸ Thomas Gugler, “Parrots of Paradise—Symbols of the Super Muslim: Sunnah, Sunnaization, and Self-Fashioning in the Islamic Missionary Movements Tablighi Jama'at, Da`wat-e Islami, and Sunni Da`wat-e Islami,” July 2007, 1, <http://www.zmo.de/mitarbeiter/gugler/parrots%20of%20paradise.pdf>; See also “Fact Sheet on U.S. Treasury Endorsement of Sharia Compliant Finance,” n.d., <http://usastopshariah.wordpress.com/background/>.

⁷⁹ “Tableeghi Jama'at: All That You Know and Don't” by Khalid Hasan. Daily Times, August 13, 2006. <http://archives.dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/13-Aug-2006/postcard-usa-tableeghi-Jama'at-all-that-you-know-and-don-t-khalid-hasan>



EDM

Tablighi missionaries in Jamestown, New York, 2013.

The Darul Uloom Islamic Academy in Plano, Texas, for example, considers Tablighi Jama'at to be toxic. It has posted on its website⁸⁰ a long diatribe explaining why the group is deviant from true Islam:

“The Tableeghi Jama’at wants to be an exclusive sect of Muslims, which excludes all other Muslims who do not follow its peculiar definition of what it means to convey the message of Islam, a definition which is clearly erroneous and far removed from the one which Allah gives in the Quran. One can only conclude from this statement that all other Muslims are considered by them to be misguided. ...

“We declare that the Tableeghi Jama’at is, by its own admission, a deviant sect of Islam and that it is being used by the enemies of Islam to help them in their continuing battle to prevent governance by the laws of Allah from being re-established in the world.”

It also raises a host of questions about how they may be serving as a front for terrorists and terrorist groups – either intentionally or unintentionally.

⁸⁰ “Tableeghi Jama’at Exposed,” Islamic Academy, Plano Texas.
<http://www.islamicacademy.org/html/Articles/English/Tableeghee%20Jma%27at.htm>

Because they view Muslims as being under threat of becoming corrupted by the modern world, Tablighis do not collaborate with other religious groups with whom they disagree; neither do they fight with them. They do not support Islam's jihad obligation neither do they oppose it. They do not support violent terrorism; neither do they criticize it when it occurs. Such ambiguous positions raise serious questions about whether or to what degree the jihad and shariah threat is supported and facilitated by Tablighi Jama'at.

In America, the activities of the Tablighi have been under close scrutiny for number of years. The FBI believes that nearly 50,000 members of Tablighi Jama'at are active in the United States.⁸¹

But Abdul Rahman Khan, a leader of the group's North American leadership council who lives near New Orleans and has been involved with the group for 36 years, says that because followers of Tablighi Jama'at refuse to talk politics, people with jihadist tendencies soon get bored and move on.

"Anybody who has been active in our work, who spends at least three days, will have an understanding of our peaceful nature. ... From our experience, those people who have those intentions don't talk around us," he said. "If someone starts even one word, we cut him off. So he's going to go somewhere where he can get an audience."⁸²



TABLIGHIJAMA'ATIJTEMA.BLOGSPOT.COM

Proselytizing on the street.

The emphasis which Tablighis place on orthodox Islam provides a learning opportunity for Muslims who are attracted to the idea of returning to a more traditional Islamic lifestyle.

When a man first comes to Tablighi Jama'at, most often it is not to become indoctrinated with jihadist ideology,

⁸¹ "Army of Darkness" by William Langley, Roya Nikkhah, James Orr, David Bamber and Massoud Ansari in Islamabad. *The Telegraph*. August 20, 2006.

⁸² "A Muslim Missionary Group Draws New Scrutiny in U.S." by Susan Sachs. *New York Times*, July 14, 2003 <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/14/us/a-muslim-missionary-group-draws-new-scrutiny-in-us.html>

but rather to come closer to what's perceived as authoritative Islam, or what Tablighis believe is the true Islam. For example:

John Marshall McCormack Henshaw Mahboob was a New Englander, whose ancestors sailed on the Mayflower and fought in the Civil War. He was christened in the Episcopal Church and grew up in Dedham, Massachusetts. He attended St. Mark's School in Southborough, where he befriended a Muslim student from Kenya and found Allah. Two other boys also joined them and before the summer of Marshall's freshman year, they had all converted to Islam. As he explains it:

"The purpose of life was put into much starker definition. There is a hereafter, and this is how it happens, and then they explain exactly what happens on the Day of Judgment in great, great detail. It made a lot of sense to me, and the people's real belief had a strong effect on me."⁸³

Today, Mahboob wears a long beard and a skullcap. He dresses in a long shirt-dress worn over his pants, and he wears leather socks such as those that Mohammed wore. The special socks enable him to pray several times a day without having to repeat the ritual washing of feet. His approach to Islam has been deeply affected by Tablighi Jama'at. When he was attending Harvard, Mahboob went on proselytizing pilgrimages with other Tablighi Jama'at followers, not only to places in New England, but also to the Midwest, the UK, and even to India and Pakistan, carrying out the "efforts" to bring orthodox Islam to other Muslims.⁸⁴

Mahboob is insulted at the suggestion that being a conservative Muslim is somehow equivalent to being an "extremist." For him, fundamentalism is "practicing the fundamentals of the religion" and not a dangerous ideology dedicated to killing others.

"It's hugely problematic to say Islam encourages people to adopt extremism. We don't suggest that Christianity does that just because there are some guys going around killing abortion doctors," he says. "You can try to implement Islam in a traditional manner while still acting in a positive way in the world."⁸⁵

The odyssey of Mahboob underscores the ostensibly peaceful nature of Tablighi Jama'at and the non-violent, separatist ideology that pervades

⁸³ "Seeing the Light: John Marshall McCormack Henshaw Mahboob: A preppy WASP's conversion to Islam" by Beth Carney. *Boston Globe*, 11/16/2003.

http://www.boston.com/news/globe/magazine/articles/2003/11/16/seeing_the_light/

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

its activities. Nevertheless, his is only one story among millions of others, but one that conflicts with the indisputable fact that core, doctrinal Islam obligates the faithful to jihad against non-Muslims. In this sense, Tablighi Jama'at appears contradictory, hence difficult to understand – and perhaps deliberately so.

PART III

AS THE WORLD SEES TABLIGHI JAMA'AT

“Despite occasional suspicions about Jama'at at-Tabligh's possible involvement in terrorism, little evidence has ever been presented of the movement's involvement in extremist activism – although individual members may have been involved from time to time.”⁸⁶

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

It is this ambiguity that has led serious students of Islamic Jihad to question how sincere Tablighi Jama'at is with regard to its purported auto-exclusion from the Jihadi world. By not participating in political discussion or jihadist activity, Tablighis seem to prefer to separate themselves – at least overtly – from the world of violent jihad.

But by refraining from criticizing Islam's commandments to jihad as reflected in the violence of groups like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS), are the Tablighis lending it sustenance and support? The opinions of those who study terrorism and the path that leads people to it are divided when it comes to Tablighi Jama'at.

IN THE EYES OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY

Intelligence officials and analysts are no less skeptical than others about the role Tablighi Jama'at plays in the developing jihadi recruitment process. According to French intelligence, Tablighi Jama'at is “the antechamber of fundamentalism.”⁸⁷

In the United States, the FBI has gone on record several times:

- In 2003, Michael J. Heimbach, then deputy chief of the F.B.I.'s international terrorism section, said, "We have a significant

⁸⁶ “Talib or Taliban? Indonesian students in Pakistan and Yemen” by Anthony Bubalo, Sarah Phillips, Samina Yasmeen. The Lowy Institute for International Policy 2011. http://www.lowyinstitute.org/files/bubalo-phillips-yasmeen_talib-or-taliban_web_0.pdf

⁸⁷ “Suspects linked to hardline Islamic group” by Sandra Laville. *The Guardian*, Thursday 17 August 2006. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/aug/18/terrorism.world>

presence of Tablighi Jama'at in the United States, and we have found that al-Qaeda used them for recruiting, now and in the past.”⁸⁸

- On June 27, 2003 Larry A. Mefford, Assistant Director, Counterterrorism Division of the FBI, testified before the United States Senate Terrorism, Technology and Homeland Security Subcommittee in Washington, D.C. In his testimony about the 9/11 terrorists, he said, “Information indicates that in the spring and summer of 2001, these subjects attended religious Jama'at Tablighi training in Pakistan. They also attended an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan where they received training in mountain climbing, and were instructed in the use of firearms, including assault rifles, handguns, and long range rifles.”
- On February 16, 2005, Robert S. Mueller, III, then Director of the FBI, testified before the Senate Committee on Intelligence of the United States Senate in Washington, D.C.:

“We are also concerned about the possibility that individuals who are members of groups previously considered to be peripheral to the current threat, could be convinced by more radical, external influences to take on a facilitation or even worse – an operational role – with little or no warning. Individual members of legitimate organizations, such as Jama'at Tabligh [sic], may be targeted by al-Qa'ida in an effort to exploit their networks and contacts here in the United States.”

In short, authorities continue to suspect the group's susceptibility to infiltration and manipulation,⁸⁹ and there is considerable merit to these suspicions. The combination of apolitical ideology, the deep secrecy that surrounds its activities, and the loose control over who joins the movement, how long they stay, and when they leave, has created an understandable pall of suspicion over the Tablighis. And it is *because* they are apolitical and keep a low profile that they have been able to stay largely unnoticed as they have continued to grow exponentially in the West.

An Amended Investigative Statement to the Commanding Officer, Intelligence Division of the New York Police Department dated May 27, 2009, contains the following:⁹⁰

⁸⁸ "Dagestan: Focus on Pakistan's Tablighi Jama'at," by B. Raman, South Asia Analysis Group, Sept. 15, 1999.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ http://enemieswithinbook.com/documents/TEI_Tablighi%20Jama'at.pdf

The facts and circumstances reported in the prior Investigative Statements concerning this Terrorism Enterprise Investigation provided a reasonable indication that some members of, or persons associated with, the subject organizations were engaged in, or planning to engage in, unlawful conduct, including the provision of material support to organizations and individuals engaged in terrorism or other unlawful conduct, and are incorporated by reference herein.

These facts and circumstances included that

(i) Tablighi Jama'at has served as a recruiting ground for terrorists, and has included among its membership John Walker Lindh (also known as "American Taliban"), the Lackawanna Six (who were convicted of providing material support to al-Qaeda), the Portland Seven (who were convicted of aiding or attempting to join al-Qaeda), Mohammed Siddique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer (two of the suicide bombers from the July 7, 2005, London transit attacks that killed 52 civilians), Richard Reid (also known as the would-be "shoe bomber") and fourteen men arrested in Barcelona in January 2008 for allegedly plotting to attack the Barcelona transit system;

(ii) Al-Qaeda and affiliated groups are suspected of using Tablighi Jama'at membership as cover while traveling in order to appear as legitimate visitors;

(iii) a significant number of foreign nationals associated with Tablighi Jama'at or claiming membership in Tablighi Jama'at have traveled to the United States from madrasas in South Africa and Pakistan that are reported to be used as recruitment and/or training grounds for terrorism;

(iv) in December 2003, Suhail Teli, son of Masjid Al Falah member Dr. Iqbal Teli, was stopped by United States Customs and Border Protection ("CBP") and found to be in possession of an address book which included the names of 25 individuals associated with Al-Qaeda;

(v) Tablighi Jama'at, through its affiliated mosques, recruits young Muslims to go on local and international trips called Jama'ats during which they may be indoctrinated with Islamist ideologies that condone or encourage religiously motivated violence.

IN THE EYES OF THE ANALYSTS AND THE MEDIA

Reports from a growing number of journalists and analysts reflect perceptions that are widely divergent.

- Barbara Metcalf, a University of California scholar of South Asian Islam, calls Tablighi Jama'at "an apolitical, quietist movement of internal grassroots missionary renewal." In an article entitled "Traditionalist Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis, and Talibs", she compared the activities of Tablighi Jama'at to Alcoholics Anonymous, "which began about the same period, in its rejection of progressive era government politics in favor of individual bootstraps. And like AA, the heart of Tablighi Jama'at strategy was the belief that the best way to learn is to teach and encourage others."⁹¹
- "Completely apolitical and law abiding," is the way Olivier Roy, an authority on Islam at Paris's Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, described the Tabligh.⁹²
- On the other hand, an unidentified senior law enforcement officer described the group as "a natural entree, a way of gathering people together with a common interest in Islam. ... Then extremists use that as an assessment tool to evaluate individuals with particular zealotry and interest in going beyond what's offered."⁹³
- In a 2005 article, "Tablighi Jama'at – Jihad's Stealthy Legions," Alex Alexiev wrote, "The West's misreading of Tablighi Jama'at actions and motives has serious implications for the war on terrorism. Tablighi Jama'at has always adopted an extreme interpretation of Sunni Islam, but in the past two decades, it has radicalized to the point where it is now a driving force of Islamic extremism and a major recruiting agency for terrorist causes worldwide."⁹⁴
- British commentator Paul Lewis terms the Tablighi Jama'at a "fundamentalist Islamic movement, believed by western intelligence agencies to be used as a fertile recruiting ground by

⁹¹ Barbara Metcalf, "Traditionalist Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis and Talibs," Social Service Research Council, Nov. 1, 2004.

⁹² *Le Monde Diplomatique* (Paris), May 15, 2002.

⁹³ "A Muslim Missionary Group Draws New Scrutiny in U.S." by Susan Sachs, New York Times, July 14, 2003. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/14/us/a-muslim-missionary-group-draws-new-scrutiny-in-us.html?pagewanted=all>

⁹⁴ Tablighi Jama'at - Jihad's Stealthy Legions by Alex Alexiev *Middle East Quarterly* Winter 2005, pp. 3-11. <http://www.meforum.org/686/tablighi-jama-at-jihads-stealthy-legions>.

extremists.” He describes it as being “influenced by a branch of Saudi Arabian Islam known as Wahhabism.”⁹⁵

- Sandra Laville, writing in the same newspaper (August 18, 2006), quotes the French intelligence service as labeling the Tablighi Jama'at as the ‘antechamber of fundamentalism’. She mentions the deputy chief of the American FBI's international terrorism section as claiming that the al-Qaida network has been recruiting among Tablighi Jama'at activists.⁹⁶
- A team of journalists writing for *The Telegraph* in 2006 called Tablighi Jama'at the “Army of Darkness” and said of the group: “With increasing and alarming frequency, the name of Tablighi Jama'at is cropping up in the worldwide fight against terrorism.”⁹⁷
- Kyle Shideler, Director of the Center for Security Policy’s Threat Information Office (TIO), writing for *The Federalist* in November 2015,⁹⁸ referred to Tablighi Jama'at as an “Islamic proselyting group that al-Qaeda has used as a cover to facilitate moving across borders” and which U.S. intelligence has described as ‘willingly supporting terrorists.’” He also quoted an unnamed 2005 report on the Pakistan-based group [that] noted: Tablighi Jama'at has also facilitated other terrorists’ missions. The group has provided logistical support and helped procure travel documents. Many take advantage of Tablighi Jama'at’s benign reputation. Moroccan authorities say that leaflets circulated by the terrorist group Al-Salafiyah al-Jihadiyah urged their members to join Islamic organizations that operate openly, such as Tablighi Jama'at, in order “to hide their identity on the one hand and influence these groups and their policies on the other.”
- Taking the point further, the Indian ZeeNews, referenced Wikileaks when it accused “Delhi-based Islamic missionary movement, the Tablighi Jama'at” for having “been used by al-

⁹⁵ “Plane 'Plot': Media Targets Tablighi Jama'at” by Yoginder Sikand. The Milli Gazette Online, August 19, 2006. http://www.milligazette.com/dailyupdate/2006/20060819_Tablighi_Jama'_at_terrorism.htm

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ “Army of darkness” by William Langley, Roya Nikkhah, James Orr, David Bamber and Massoud Ansari in Islamabad. The Telegraph. August 20, 2006. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1526793/Army-of-darkness.html#>

⁹⁸ “U.S. Officials Can't Ask Syrian Refugees Key Questions”, by Kyle Shideler for *The Federalist*, November 23, 2015. <http://thefederalist.com/2015/11/23/u-s-officials-cant-ask-syrian-refugees-key-questions/>

Qaeda operatives as a cover to obtain travel documents and shelter, as per the latest documents released by WikiLeaks.”⁹⁹

The confusion and disinformation that run throughout the media and analyst community therefore paints a confusing picture of who and what Tablighi Jama'at really is, and translates to a public perception that is suspicious and fearful of the possible connections between Tablighi Jama'at and other Islamic organizations which are known to be involved in terrorism against the West.

When asked directly about the accusation of a connection with al-Qaeda, Maulana Yusuf Suleri, a senior Jama'at functionary in Tablighi Jama'at headquarters in New Delhi, rubbished all claims of any links with al-Qaida. His tone was cautious but it was obvious he was familiar with the allegations and that this was not the first time he had had to counter them. “You are bothered, we are not,” he said. “We are working here to enlighten people and help them become a good human being. This can only come through sincere religious practices and by following the rituals. Anyone is invited.”¹⁰⁰

What is clear to Suleri is far less clear to the media and many of the analysts who cover Islamic jihad in the world today. The host of Islamic jihad movements competing for conquest of the world, and the complexities of clashing ideologies with foreign and unfamiliar goals seem to increase almost daily.

⁹⁹ “Qaeda used Tablighi Jama'at as cover: WikiLeaks” by Zeenews Bureau, May 9, 2011. http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/qaeda-used-tablighi-Jama'at-as-cover-wikileaks_705155.html

¹⁰⁰ “Tablighi terror links rejected” by Durgesh Nandan Jha. May 12, 2011 muslimvillage.com <http://muslimvillage.com/2011/05/12/10148/tablighi-terror-links-rejected/>

PART IV

THE PATH FROM NON-VIOLENCE TO JIHAD

“We have a significant presence of Tablighi Jama’at in the United States, and we have found that al-Qaeda used them for recruiting, now and in the past.”

– Michael J. Heimbach, Deputy Chief
FBI's International Terrorism Section

Given the ease with which individuals are drawn into the movement and the strict orthodoxy that it preaches, the process by which they become indoctrinated is not difficult to understand.

Here is an example of how it works:

Mubin Shaikh was a young Canadian Muslim who turned toward jihad. It was only after 9/11 that he decided to turn his back on his prior commitment to a fuller level of Islamic devotion. He agreed to be interviewed about his journey on the pathway to jihad and his “a full cognitive shift” after 9/11. The following is an excerpt from his interview, published by U.S. News and World Report¹⁰¹ in January 2015:

Yes, [I was attending] a madrassa. And then I got out of that, got into high school, joined the [Canadian] Army Cadets at that time, and at this point I'm sort of moving away. ... I'm getting more of a western experience. And then at 19, I had an identity crisis. There was a lot of guilt. A lot of guilt-tripping by people in the community. And I got caught at a house party by my uncles and they made me feel really bad about myself. They're religious and they're telling me, "How could you do this? You're drinking, you're smoking weed, there are girls!"... Like it was anathema. So I convinced myself that I needed to get more religious. And [in order] to get more religious in the cultural construct from where I come from, [I connected with Tablighi Jama'at] but one of the things they provide is travel. They facilitate travel to India and Pakistan for four months.

¹⁰¹ “Mubin Shaikh: From Islamic Extremist to Government Informant” by Mary Cirincione. US News and World Report, Jan. 15, 2015.
<http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/01/15/mubin-shaikh-from-islamic-extremist-to-government-informant>

One of the places I went to in Pakistan was Quetta. But this is 1995, and unbeknownst to me, the Taliban are poised to take over Afghanistan. And so I don't know anything about them, but when I was in Quetta I had a chance encounter with a group of Taliban. One of the things you do with [Tablighi Jama'at] is you walk around the local areas. You go to a city, you take up shop at the local mosque. You also stay at the local mosque. You give announcements to the people who come there like, "Listen, a group has come from so-and-so, they have people from Canada." And then we have programs at the mosque and people give lectures.

Yeah, instructional. It's all apolitical, so there's no political element to [Tablighi Jama'at]. But you walk around the local areas just to meet local people and invite them to your program at the local mosque. So while I was walking around I came upon this group of young men who were sitting there with Kalashnikovs and ammunition belts. So I said, "Hey, let's go talk to these guys," and so we went and talked to them. I invited them to the local mosque and they listened to me while I was talking to them. And then they said to me, "The way to bring about change in the world is by jihad." And you know, I thought about it, and they came back to the mosque with us later on that evening. They stayed for a little bit and then they left. But while we were there I was struck by that — by the idea that the way to bring about change is through jihad, violent action. Coming from the Canadian army cadets, coming from an identity crisis, the whole idea of reclaiming the lost glory of Islam. I was, as I call it, bit by the jihadi bug.

[Then] I went back to Canada. These ideas were swirling in my head and I started to move away from the apolitical and become political. And this is where I really started to get involved with the conflicts that were happening in the world. The Chechnyan conflict had happened, and I think there was one initial Gulf War. So this is 1995, all the way to the Sept. 11 attacks, basically. And during that period I just became more and more extreme. It became [for me] that the West is the enemy, because that's who you're fighting. The West has gone and taken over Muslim lands and installed puppet governments in those lands. And I supported any jihadi group that was fighting the 'oppressor.'"

The story of Mubin Shaikh illustrates how easily young men can be drawn into the culture of violence and terrorism from the severe ideology of Tablighi Jama'at. Some, like Shaikh, can recognize at some point the evil that the terrorist ideology represents and some of them are able to escape from their harsh culture, although this often results in themselves

being targeted by the group which they had joined and now wanted to leave. This is particularly true of IS, which is notorious for executing deserters.¹⁰²

While Tablighi Jama'at offers a transitional gateway for potential jihadis on their path to jihad, and is therefore seen as a fertile recruiting ground for some groups, it is also deeply offensive to some other groups, who see it as a threat to traditional Islam, primarily because it rejects violent jihad as a path to the true Islam.

The Darul Uloom Islamic Academy in Plano, Texas, referred to earlier, used its website to “call on all Muslims to disown the Tableeghi Jama’at and to discourage its activities by refusing to give its members permission to sleep in mosques and to use them for their activities. And we call on all Muslims to reject the modernist perspective of Islam that they have been given to and respond to Allah and His Messenger (*sallal laahu alaihi wasallam*) by giving their wealth and lives to see the totality of Islam once again re-established on the earth.”¹⁰³

Many traditional Muslim organizations distrust Tablighi Jama'at because it does not subscribe to the values of militant jihad and does not challenge non-Muslims. As the Islamic Academy has written on its website:

“The thousands of members of the Tablighi Jama’at are utilizing all their energy exclusively inwards towards other Muslims and leaves the Ka’afir powers to pursue their Godless exploitation of the Muslims completely unimpeded. They have defined Jihad to be “spreading the Kalima of Allah and enforcing of Allah's Commandments.”

“No controversial matter or points of secondary importance to be discussed at any time ... and confine all talk to the main points of Tablighi.”

Thus, a program originally designed to ensure that the adherents of Tablighi Jama’at did not come into conflict with the British authorities in India has now been extended to include all aspects of Kufaar¹⁰⁴ domination in the world. The members of the Jama’at are actually forbidden to question it at all. No wonder the enemies of Islam are

¹⁰² “IS ‘executes 100 deserters’ in Syria’s Raqqa” by staff writer, *Al Arabiya News*, December 2014. <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/12/20/IS-executes-100-deserters-in-Syria-s-Raqqa-report.html>

¹⁰³ Ibid. This refers to the conquest of the world by Islam through jihad and subjugations of other religions under Islam.

¹⁰⁴ The Arabic word for “infidel.”

delighted. This is the reason why the Tablighi Jama'at moves freely in Kufaar countries in Europe and the rest of the world, while other Muslims are being imprisoned, tortured, and killed on a daily basis.”¹⁰⁵

In short, the Islamic Academy speaks for many orthodox Muslim groups which condemn Tablighi Jama'at for the very thing that has distinguished it from most other Islamic groups: its focus on non-violence – the ideological constraint that argues against its involvement with terrorism.

Nevertheless, the controversy continues. A first-hand report by Jessica Stern gives a more ominous account that brings Tablighi Jama'at closer to jihadi organizations, although her account attributes knowledge, not complicity, to them.

“A Pakistani Tablighi Jama'at member told me that jihadi groups openly recruit at the organization's central headquarters in Raiwind, Pakistan, including at the mosque. And Tablighi Jama'at members in Boston say that a lot of Muslims end up treating the group, which is now active in American inner cities and prisons, as a gateway to jihadi organizations.”¹⁰⁶

The Boston mosque in question, the Islamic Society of Boston mosque in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was the mosque of choice for the older of the two Chechen brothers, Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev, who exploded two “pressure cooker bombs” at the finish line of the Boston Marathon in 2013. Syrian-American Ahmad Abousamra, who has been charged with aiding IS with its social media, video campaign, and recruiting efforts also attended the same Boston mosque.¹⁰⁷

The mosque has also had connections to other terror-supporters, including its first president, Abdulrahman Alamoudi, a top U.S. al-Qaeda and Muslim Brotherhood operative, who was convicted in connection with an assassination plot against the then-Saudi Crown Prince, and with Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the senior jurist of the Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Qaradawi is well-known for his militant religious rulings and political commentary in support of acts of terrorism. He is the author of jihadist

¹⁰⁵ “Tableeghi Jama'at Exposed” The Islamic Academy.

<http://www.islamicacademy.org/html/Articles/English/Tableeghee%20Jma%27at.htm>

¹⁰⁶ “The Protean Enemy” by Jessica Stern. Council on Foreign Relations. July/August 2003.

<http://www.cfr.org/world/protean-enemy/p6146>

¹⁰⁷ “US Mosques – Command & Control Centers of Jihad” *BlastedFools.WordPress.com* December 11, 2015. <https://blastedfools.wordpress.com/2015/12/11/u-s-mosques-command-control-centers-of-jihad/>

fatwas, including one that which permitted suicide (“martyrdom”) terrorism and encouraged women to become suicide bombers.

Tracking people who have made the transition from Tablighi Jama'at to jihad is difficult at best, until after they have actually ‘gone public’ through an act of terrorism. Among these were two leading members of the cell responsible for the July 7, 2005, London bombings, in which more than fifty people lost their lives, and hundreds more were wounded.

Mohammed Siddique Khan, 30, leader of the 7/7 bombing in London, and Shehzad Tanweer, 22, were both from Leeds, and attended the Tablighi mosque in the British city of Beeston. They reportedly left the group, because although the Tablighi ideology was based on orthodox Muslim tradition, the elders forbade them to discuss politics in the mosque.

After leaving the Tablighi mosque, they started attending prayers and discussion at the Iqra Learning Center bookstore, also in Beeston. Here political discussions were welcome and it was here that they learned about the more hard core orthodox Islam that they had begun to seek. They were indoctrinated about Western ‘crimes’ against the Muslim world. In this environment, the two men were indoctrinated. They traveled to Pakistan where they received training in a terrorist camp, and returned to England to plan and implement the suicide attack on the London underground. The attack killed them both as well as two other terrorists, Germaine Lindsay, 19, from West Yorkshire, and Hasib Mir Hussain, 18, from outside Leeds.

Like Khan and Tanweer, many jihadis desire to travel to Pakistan for training, while others want to get to Afghanistan, Kashmir or other places to fight jihad. In the early 1980s, 747 jetliners were packed with jihadis from Saudi Arabia and other places as they flew from Pakistan to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁸ But in today’s post-9/11 world, terrorist travel is by stealth, walking across unprotected borders, using stolen or forged passports, or, as most recently, by hiding in a flow of refugees from a failed state like Syria.

Some commentators have put forward the thesis that the Tablighis are al-Qaeda-style “Islamists.”¹⁰⁹ Yoginder Sikand, who wrote his doctoral thesis on the Tablighi Jama'at at the University of London in 1998, suggests otherwise. In his book, *The Origins and Development of the*

¹⁰⁸ https://www.stratfor.com/weekly/Tablighi_Jama'at_indirect_line_terrorism

¹⁰⁹ “Plane ‘Plot’: Media Targets Tablighi Jama’at” by Yoginder Sikand. The Milli Gazette Online, August 19, 2006.
http://www.milligazette.com/dailyupdate/2006/20060819_Tablighi_Jama'at_terrorism.htm

Tablighi Jama'at: A Cross-Country Comparative Study (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2001), his basic argument was that the Tablighi Jama'at is not involved in promoting "terrorism" or militancy, but rather that he suggests that when indoctrination to jihad occurs, it is possibly without the knowledge of Tablighi Jama'at leaders.

"What this, therefore, means is that it would be grossly unfair, and also counterproductive, to target the Tablighi Jama'at as such for the alleged misdeeds of some individuals who claim to be associated with it in some way or the other."

"It is known that in Israel the TJ has been allowed to freely function, while Islamist groups protesting against the Zionist occupation have been fiercely suppressed. In India, the radical Hindu chauvinist group Shiv Sena actually went out of its way in order to arrange for a massive Tablighi Jama'at gathering in Mumbai some years ago. A book that I came across recently quoted a spokesperson of the Lashkar-e Tayyeba,¹¹⁰ a Pakistan based Islamist militant outfit, as denouncing the TJ as a tool in the hands of Jews and Hindus for allegedly denying the need for physical jihad, insisting instead that the divine rewards for that task could be had by simply participating in Tablighi preaching tours.¹¹¹

Tariq Pervez, former Director-General of National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) in Pakistan describes Tablighi Jama'at this way:

"Tablighi Jama'at attracts youth and brings them into the mosque, but, then, cannot control them. In the mosque people associated with jihad and sectarian groups, and, in some cases, their networks are also present. Most vulnerable are the new entrants to the Tablighi fold."¹¹²

In this manner, the Tablighi Jama'at organization functions as a recruiting resource for groups such as al-Qaeda. When they travel to Pakistan to receive their initial training, the Tablighi Jama'at intersects with the more radical groups. "We have received reports that once the recruits are in Pakistan, representatives of various radical Islamist groups, such as Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, the Taliban and al-Qaeda, are

¹¹⁰ This group was directly involved in the horrific Mumbai attacks that killed more than 180 people in July 2006.

¹¹¹ "Plane 'Plot': Media Targets Tablighi Jama'at" by Yoginder Sikand. *The Milli Gazette Online*, August 19, 2006. http://www.milligazette.com/dailyupdate/2006/20060819_Tablighi_Jama'at_terrorism.htm

¹¹² Muhammad Amir Rana, "Tablighi Jama'at: Discourse and Challenges", *Conflict and Peace Studies*, April-June 2009, Volume 2, Number 2, Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies, p. 79.

said to woo them actively – to the point of offering them military training. And some of them accept the offer.”¹¹³

Attracting Young Men to Orthodox Islam

So what is it about Tablighi Jama'at that attracts young Muslim? “It's kind of a rite of passage for practicing young Muslims,” said Mairaj Syed, a law student at U.C.L.A. who was briefly involved with the Tablighi Jama'at in high school in Arizona.¹¹⁴

In some cases, young Muslims who already felt an attraction to jihad would attend Tablighi congregations and be further radicalized because of the orthodoxy that they preach. Most come to the Tablighis and find that they are what they say they are - apolitical. If they have aspirations for more direct forms of jihad, then they are likely to either move on, or be recruited by al-Qaeda, IS, or another terrorist group that uses Tablighi Jama'at as a resource for new recruits.

In some of the most notorious terrorist attacks in recent years, the jihadis involved have been associated, however peripherally, with Tablighi Jama'at. Among the best known of these are:

- “American Taliban” **John Walker Lindh**, an American, is now serving 20 years in federal prison for treason for his role in aiding the Taliban in Afghanistan. His road to jihad began in California in 1999.¹¹⁵ He converted to Islam and, shortly afterward, joined a group of Tablighi missionaries on a proselytizing tour to Pakistan. He stayed with them only a short time, and soon left them behind to join the Taliban in neighboring Afghanistan. One year after his Tablighi Jama'at mission, Lindh contacted one of his visiting Tablighi preachers and asked to be enrolled in a madrassa¹¹⁶ in Pakistan. Lindh later said that it was there that he became convinced that he should help the Taliban and signed up for a military training camp that sent him to fight American and Northern Alliance

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ “A Muslim Missionary Group Draws New Scrutiny in U.S.”, by Susan Sachs. Published July 14, 2003 <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/14/us/a-muslim-missionary-group-draws-new-scrutiny-in-us.html?pagewanted=all>

¹¹⁵ “A Qaeda facilitators operate openly in Pakistan” by Saba Imtiaz. *The Express Tribune*, May 12, 2011. <http://tribune.com.pk/story/167238/al-qaeda-facilitators-operate-openly-in-pakistan/>

¹¹⁶ A madrassa is a Muslim religious school.

forces in Afghanistan. He was captured there by U.S. forces and convicted for aiding the Taliban and carrying explosives.¹¹⁷

- Federal prosecutors have suggested that the Tablighi Jama'at was also seen as a springboard by at least one of the defendants in the terrorist group known as the "**Portland Seven**." In this Oregon terrorism case, six men and one woman were accused of plotting to fight with the Taliban and al-Qaeda against American forces. The Portland Seven also conspired to bomb a synagogue and were charged with providing material support to al-Qaeda.¹¹⁸
- The "**Lackawanna Six**" were convicted of providing material support to al-Qaeda from Lackawanna in upstate New York. Lured by al-Qaeda jihadi Kamal Derwish, Mukhtar al-Bakri, Sahim Alwan, Jaber Elbaneh, Faysal Galab, Yahya Goba, Shafal Mosed, and Yasein Taher went to Afghanistan for jihad training in Afghanistan. The group kept the trip a secret, however, and told their friends and family that they were going to Pakistan to study with the Islamic evangelical group Tablighi Jama'at as part of a search for their Islamic faith.¹¹⁹
- **José Padilla**,¹²⁰ a Brooklyn-born convert to Islam and al-Qaeda operative was arrested in 2002 at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, after authorities accused him of being on an al-Qaeda mission to detonate a radioactive dirty bomb in a major U.S. city.¹²¹
- Two of the London 7/7 bombers, **Mohammed Siddique Khan** and **Shehzad Tanweer** (seen in the photo, below, approaching the station with third bomber Germaine Lindsay), reportedly attended the Tablighi mosque in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, where the Tablighi Jama'at has its base in the UK. Tanweer was said to have left university to study at the madrassa run by Tablighi mosque in the west Yorkshire town.¹²² David Videcette, a former officer with the London Metropolitan Police Anti-Terrorism squad, suggested a link between the bombing and a

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ "Chronology: The Lackawanna Investigation" WGBH, Boston. October 2003.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/sleeper/inside/cron.html>

¹²⁰ Alexiev, "Tablighi Jama'at."

¹²¹ Jose Padilla Gets 4 Years Added To His 2007 Sentence" NPR, September 9, 2014.

<http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/09/09/347127580/jose-padilla-gets-4-years-added-to-his-2007-sentence>

¹²² "Suspects Linked to Hardline Islamic Group", by Sandra Laville. *The Guardian*.

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/aug/18/terrorism.world>

plan to build a Tablighi Jama'at mega-mosque next to Olympic Stadium, should the UK win its bid for the Olympic Games.¹²³ He believed the bombing was intended to disqualify Britain from winning the bid.



London 7/7 bombers Mohammed Siddique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer approach the station with third bomber Germaine Lindsay.

- “Shoe Bomber” **Richard Reid** converted to Islam and began on his path to jihad by joining a Tablighi mosque. He was arrested when he tried to blow up American Airlines Flight 63 from Paris to Miami by igniting his sneakers, which were packed with explosives. Reid's plan was foiled when he was seen by a flight attendant when he tried to light a fuse coming out of his shoe. After he was subdued by passengers he was sedated by two doctors on board the flight.¹²⁴ Reid was sentenced to 3 life terms plus 110 years in prison without parole and is serving his sentence in super maximum security prison in the United States.
- **The Bottle Bomb Plot** was hatched in London, where 23 suspects were arrested for their role in a plot to blow up

¹²³ 7/7 bombings 'were aimed at Olympic bid' by Andrew Gilligan. *The Telegraph*. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/11968330/77-bombings-were-aimed-at-Olympic-bid.html>

¹²⁴ “Shoe-Bomber Has 'Tactical Regrets' Over Failed American Airlines Plot”

transatlantic airliners with “bottle bombs.” Several of them are reported to have participated in Tablighi events. Ali, 27, for example, was a computer student who became increasingly drawn to orthodox Islam as a teenager after a representative of Tablighi Jama'at visited his mosque. In 2003, he went to Afghanistan and later Pakistan where he met al-Qaeda recruiters.¹²⁵

There has been no shortage of jihadis who are eager to do damage to the US and the American people. On a more ominous note, the Pakistani Express Tribune published a particularly damning indictment of Tablighi Jama'at in May 2011¹²⁶:

“The Tablighi Jama'at is based in Raiwind, also home to the Sharif family of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, and holds annual conventions under security and patronage. However, the Tablighi Jama'at provided a cover story for scores of fighters transiting through Pakistan on their way to Afghanistan. Affiliation with the Tablighi Jama'at was believed to be an al-Qaeda cover story and several detainees mentioned that they were recruited by Jama'at members.

“One detainee’s file, citing a US Naval Criminal Investigative Service Special Analytical Report, says that the Tablighi Jama'at was linked to the July 11, 2006 attacks in Mumbai. However, its role in al-Qaeda or militancy has never been fully explored in Pakistan, even when Lashkar-e-Jhangvi leader Riaz Basra evaded arrest by taking shelter in the Jama'at’s annual congregation in November 2000. ...

“The Tablighi Jama'at is defined as a proselytizing organization, which has been supporting Islamic terrorist groups in south and Southeast Asia under the cover of conducting religious activities.”¹²⁷

Following this line of thinking, one of the most interesting and enlightening findings as reported in Zee News (India) was the following disclosure made as the result of interviews with Guantanamo Bay

¹²⁵ “Airliner bomb trial: How MI5 uncovered the terror plot” by Duncan Gardham and Gordon Rayner. *The Telegraph*, September 9, 2008
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2709379/Airliner-bomb-trial-How-MI5-uncovered-the-terror-plot.html>

¹²⁶ “A Qaeda facilitators operate openly in Pakistan” by Saba Imtiaz. *The Express Tribune*, May 12, 2011.
<http://tribune.com.pk/story/167238/al-qaeda-facilitators-operate-openly-in-pakistan/>

¹²⁷ Ibid.

detainees. According to documents released by WikiLeaks in July 2003 and November 2004¹²⁸ at least three hardcore inmates at Gitmo had stayed at Tablighi Jama'at facilities in and around New Delhi, where the organization has its Indian headquarters. The reports, which were based on the interrogation of 779 inmates, stated that Tablighi Jama'at has been used by al-Qaeda operatives "as an al-Qaeda cover story" to obtain travel documents and shelter.

The US cables identify "Jama'at Tabligh" (as the name appears in its records) as a "proselytizing organization that willingly supports terrorists." Al-Qaeda used the Jama'at to facilitate and fund the international travels of its members. Most surprisingly, the report says that Tablighi Jama'at was linked to the 2006 terrorist attacks in Mumbai in which at least 180 people were killed and hundreds injured.¹²⁹

Somalian Muhammad Sulayman, a key financier of al-Qaeda, was also identified as having used Tablighi Jama'at to get travel documents for Pakistan. "He was denied UN refugee status in India, but he obtained a visa to travel to Pakistan under the sponsorship of Jama'at Tablighi. Detainee stated he had no intention of performing missionary duties or serving with the Tablighis; he just used the group to get a visa."¹³⁰

In the WikiLeaks documents, other important al-Qaeda-linked operatives reported to have used the Tablighi Jama'at to travel undetected are Sudanese Lashkar-e-Taiba recruiter Amir Mohammed, and Abdul Bukhary, a Saudi Arabian al-Qaeda member. Bukhary is said to have stayed at the Jama'at headquarters in Delhi for a month, before travelling to Pakistan to join a terror camp.

Tablighi Jama'at has denied any involvement with terrorist groups or their operatives, or that they offered help to al-Qaeda in any way, while also adding "everybody knows that Guantanamo detainees' statements are made under duress."¹³¹

The troubling implications here lie in the fact that while Tablighi Jama'at leaders and members claim to reject terrorism or any type of political activity, they have not denounced the terrorism that not only is rampant throughout much of the world today, but which reflects so badly on them.

¹²⁸ <https://wikileaks.org/The-Unknown-Prisoners-of.html>

¹²⁹ "Qaeda used Tablighi Jama'at as cover: WikiLeaks." Zee News (India) May 9, 2011. http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/qaeda-used-tablighi-jama-at-as-cover-wikileaks_705155.html

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

PART V

CONCLUSION

Despite many efforts to understand the underlying ideology and practice of Tablighi Jama'at, it remains clouded by controversy. The underlying question is this: were the terrorists who attended Tablighi Jama'at mosques actively involved *with* the mosque congregation in building their terrorist plots? Or were the mosques simply way-stations for them as they searched for more dramatic means of expressing their developing commitment to Islam and jihad? Is Tablighi Jama'at no more than what it professes to be – an apolitical, non-violent, proselytizing, loosely organized group that reaches out to Muslims who have left the path of orthodox Islam? Or are they complicit in an underlying agenda that invites jihadi recruiters into their midst to introduce them to violent jihad?

That Tablighi Jama'at serves as a ready recruiting ground for organizations like al-Qaeda and others seems undeniable; however, most analysts carefully avoid implicating Tablighi Jama'at directly in actual misdeeds, but only of being a resource for jihadi recruitment.

It should be noted that Tablighi Jama'at has not been officially accused of committing any crime or of supporting terrorism in any way. But the fact that a surprisingly large number of known terrorists have made their way through the Tablighi community on their path to violent jihad is probably the clearest contribution that Tablighi Jama'at has made in the support of terrorism around the world. And while they are vehement in maintaining that they are non-violent and abhor terrorism, it is worth noting again that they have never condemned it either. Indeed, Islamic doctrine cannot be divorced from jihad, which is an integral obligation of the faith. Thus, any who teach the authoritative tenets of Islam must teach the obligation to jihad as well, whether or not they encourage active participation in violent jihad.

The openness of the Tablighi community, the lack of screening for new 'members', the secrecy surrounding its core operations, and the access which it provides to jihadi recruiters, all make Tablighi Jama'at an ideal breeding ground for jihadi recruits. It is understandable that they may be ultimately convinced that the violence and power that comes with a commitment to jihad is more exciting and spiritual than the quiet life of a missionary.

Moreover, the exclusion of politics and violence in the basic ideology of Tablighi Jama'at, and its failure to follow the progress of its own members, provides an opportunity for jihadi recruiters to lead them in a new direction. Tablighi Jama'at attracts Muslims who are interested in exploring a 'return' to traditional Islam, including the daily rituals of orthodox Islam and purdah for its women. Clearly, violent jihad is the most basic and essential function of traditional Muslim faith. Organizations such as al-Qaeda have made good use of this dynamic, first taking advantage of the Tablighi Jama'at message to return young Muslims to Islam's orthodox roots, and then exploiting Tablighi *laissez-faire* attitude to recruit young Tablighi followers who want something more.

Although the piety and strict belief system of the Tablighis provide a magnet for jihadist recruiters who can freely scout for potential recruits among the missionaries, there is no evidence that the Tablighi acts willingly as a global jihadist recruiting arm. Rather, such activities appear to be carried on without the knowledge or consent of Tablighi Jama'at leaders.

There are three possible ways in which Tablighi Jama'at can be understood amidst this apparent confusion. The first is that the group is exactly what they say they are: a group of non-violent, Islamic missionaries whose only duty is to "revert" Muslims who have left the path of "true Islam" to the traditional, orthodox practice of Islam.

The second possibility is that Tablighi Jama'at is a front for more nefarious activities and that they use the pacifist, missionary façade as a cover for spreading the whole of Islamic tradition, including violent jihad, in order to gain access and approvals in many parts of the world where known terrorists cannot. This line of thinking suggests that they provide a safe haven for other organizations, such as al-Qaeda, to operate in countries where they might not otherwise have such open access.

The third possibility, and one this study supports, is that while the ideology that Tablighi Jama'at professes is strictly orthodox – and thus by definition at a minimum tacitly supportive of jihad – by eschewing the actual performance of violence, it seeks to avoid appearing a serious threat to the West.

The threat to America comes not from the non-violent or possibly pre-violent Muslim missionaries, as they travel the world and preach the return to traditional Islam, but from the pool of resources that they willingly provide for terrorist groups. When the Tabligh sends its students to Pakistan on their 40-day journey to learn about traditional

Muslim values, it also exposes them to jihadi “spotters,” who join them for the purpose of recruiting them. Once the Tablighi students have been introduced to the fundamentals of orthodox Islam under shariah, they are ready for the next step – the message of “jihad by the sword.” For young men who may find the Tablighi doctrine bland, it is only a short step into the world of violent Islamic jihad.

The loose control that Tabligh exerts over its far-flung acolytes has made the group a prime and willing target for jihadi recruitment. The progress of their followers is not tracked and the group’s leaders either don’t know or even seem interested in knowing what actually happens to their followers. By welcoming among their students men whose motives are to recruit Tabligh students away from their teachings of non-violence, they open the door to a different calling for their students – violent jihad. By refusing to speak out against terrorism in the name of Allah, they in fact tacitly endorse it.

To say that Tablighi Jama'at serves as a “useful idiot” for terrorist organizations may be too simplistic. Far too little is known about the group to say definitively that it has no connection with terrorist organizations or that it has not knowingly assisted in the recruitment of its own students to violent jihad.

Analysts seem to agree, however, that if this is indeed occurring, it is on a local level, and possibly without the knowledge of the Tablighi leadership. It may also be that local groups have succumbed to a more pro-active approach to violent jihad. Both possibilities would be the result of the loose control that the Tablighi leaders exert over the outcome of their teaching, and the deep levels of secrecy that isolate the Tablighi Jama'at leaders from their followers.

As their acolytes travel from place to place, they preach to strangers without knowing what the motives of their targets may be. Perhaps the most fault can be found with the elders for not providing the guidance to their followers, for not screening their recruits or preparing them for the possibility of further recruitment to terrorism. Tablighi Jama'at is, one might say, the “gateway drug” to jihad, and therein lays the danger.

As an increasing number of jihadis infiltrate into the US, or are indoctrinated here from birth, their open availability to the Tablighi missionaries increases. And because Tablighi Jama'at is not known yet to have broken U.S. laws, and has been neither accused nor convicted of any crime, it remains free to continue its proselytizing, approaching all Muslims, including those seeking recruits for jihad.

American law enforcement and homeland security officials must therefore be watchful and aware that Tablighi Jama'at, for all its ostensibly peaceful intentions, is undoubtedly providing an opportunity for would-be terrorists who, leaving them, run into the waiting arms of IS, al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and other terrorist organizations determined to finish what Tablighi Jama'at started when it first brought them back to orthodox Islam.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ilana Freedman is a veteran intelligence analyst specializing in Islamic terrorism and its impact on the Middle East and the West. Trained in Israel, where she lived for sixteen years, she is author of several hundred articles published in the national and local press and on her blogs at GerardDirect.com and FreedmanReport.com.

APPENDIX

LOCATIONS OF TABLIGHI JAMA'AT CENTERS IN THE UNITED STATES¹³²

Dearborn Mosque

9945 West Vernor Highway
Dearborn, Detroit
+1-313-8429000

Markaz New York

425 Montauk Avenue, Apt. 1
Brooklyn, NY

Markaz, Masjid Falah

42-12 National St.
Corona, NY
(Loqman Abdul Aleem)
+1-718-4767968

Abdur Raqeeb

130 69th St.
Guttenberg, NJ 07093
+1-201-86.. , +1-718-8587168

Markaz

820 Java Street
Los Angeles, CA
(dekat Arbor Vitae St.) +1-310-
4199177 (Dr Abd Rauf)

Farouq Toorawa

Los Angeles
+1-310-6755456

Masjid Al-Noor (Markaz),

1751 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA
+1-415-5528831

Vallejo Mosque

727 Sonoma Boulevard
Vallejo, CA
+1-707-6452024

Naser Sayedi

1777 East West Road
P.O.B. 1703
Honolulu, HI

Islamic Centre

1935, North Eo Place
Manoa, Honolulu, HI

¹³² <https://TablighiJama'at.wordpress.com/2008/05/13/worldwide-Tablighi-markaz-address/>

**WORLDWIDE TABLIGHI
MARKAZ ADDRESSES¹³³**

(As of May 13, 2008)

Abu Dhabi

Kaleem Razal, Al-Musaffah, Abu
Dhabi. 971-2-721- ..

Afghanistan

Haji Md Meer, Sarai Nelam
Farrush, Shahbazar, Kabul.
155-23798

Afrika Selatan

Markaz, Bait-un-Nur, 17, 11th
Avenue Mayfair, Johannesburg.
011-8392633

Kirk St Masjid, 12 Kirk St, 2001
Johannesburg. (G. M. Padia) 27-
31-923-841, faks 27-11-852-4011

Albania

Dr. Abdul Latif Saleh, Tirana.
+355-42-25440/25438

Seshi Avni Rustemi, Tirana.
+355-42-23038

Dr Skender Durresi, Tirana.
+355-42-32710

Aljazair

Masjid An-Najah, Al-
Mohammedia, Algeria.
(Belqasim Merad 213-2-750)

Amerika Syarikat

Dearborn Mosque, 9945 West
Vernor Highway, Dearborn,
Detroit. +1-313-8429000

Markaz New York, 425,
Montauk Avenue, Apt. 1,
Brooklyn, New York

Markaz, Masjid Falah, 42-12,
National St., Corona, New York.
(Loqman Abdul Aleem) +1-718-
4767968

Abdur Raqeeb, 130, 69th St.,
Guttenberg, NJ 07093. +1-201-
86.. , +1-718-8587168 (faks –
Faqir)

Markaz, 820 Java Street, Los
Angeles. (dekat Arbor Vitae St.)
+1-310-4199177 (Dr Abd Rauf)

Farouq Toorawa, Los Angeles.
+1-310-6755456

Masjid Al-Noor (Markaz), 1751
Mission Street, San Francisco.
+1-415-5528831

Vallejo Mosque, 727 Sonoma
Boulevard, Vallejo, California.
+1-707-6452024

Naser Sayedi, 1777 East West
Road, P.O.B. 1703, Honolulu.
+1-808-735..

L/Cpl Chaudary, Hawaii. +1-
808-2575721

Islamic Centre, 1935, North Eo
Place, Manoa, Honolulu

¹³³ <http://gotabligh.com/tabligh-markaz/worldwide-tablighi-markaz-addresses.html>

APPENDIX

Angola

Comunidade Islamica em
Angola, Caika Posta 2630,
Luano.

Arab Saudi

Abdul Ghaffar Noor Wali,
Jeddah. 966-2-6371607

Ghassan 6823041 Dr Ahmad Ali,
P.O. Box 22310, Riyadh 11495.
966-1-6023679

Argentina

Ahmad Abboud, Centro
Islamico, Av. San Juan 3049/53,
Buenos Aires. 54-1-973577

Australia Markaz, 90 Cramer
Street, Preston 3074,
Melbourne. Sheikh Mo'taz El-
Leissy, Melbourne. 61-3-
94784515

Markaz, 765 Wangee Road,
Lakemba, Sydney. 61-2-
97593898

S. Hamid Latif, Lakemba
Mosque, 63/65 Wangee Road,
Lakemba 2195, Sydney. 61-2-
759-3899, 61-3-470-2424

Markaz, 427 William Street,
Perth. Abdul Wahab, Perth. 61-
9-4596826

Austria

A. Khaleque Qureshi, Masjid
Belal, Diefenbachgasse 12/12,
1150 Wien. 43-1-9387615, 43-1-
7366125

Azerbaijan

S. Uzair M. Ali,
Orzhenigidzetskoy, Noboy
Gumarbel M3/2F (?)

Bahamas

Jama'at ul Islam, P.O. Box
10711, Nassau.

Bahrain

A Aziz Baluch, P.O. Box 335,
Manama. 953-256-707

Bangladesh

Maulana A Aziz, Kakrail Masjid,
P.O. Ramna, Dhaka. 88-02-239-
457

Barbados

Maulana Yusuf Piprawala,
Kensington New Road,
Bridgetown. 1-809-426-8767

Belanda

Moskee Arrahman (Markaz),
Van Ostade str. 393-395, 1074
Amsterdam. (Tram no. 4 dari
stesen keretapi) (Al-Kabiri) 31-
20-764073

Belgium

Masjid Noor, Rue Massaux 6,
Gemeente Schaarbeek, 1030
Brussels. (Mostafa Nooni) 32-2-
219-7847

Masjid Van Slambrouck, Fortuin
St. 6, B8400 Oostende

Belize

Md Riaz, 3132 Kraal Road,
Belize City.

Bermuda

Md Mosque, Basset Bldg Court,
St. Ram, Hamilton.

Biera

Omar Osman, P.O. Box 382 (?),
Biera. 23260

Bolivia

Biab Khalil, P.O. Box 216, La
Paz. BX 5418 (teleks)

Brazil

A Aziz Alinani, Imam, Centro
Islamica, Ax W-5 Norte, Brazil.
55-11-278-6789

Britain

Markazi Mosque, South Street,
Saville Town, Dewsbury. (Hafez
M Patel) 44-924-460760, 44-924-
46685? (faks)

East London Markazi Masjid, 9-
11 Christian St, Off Commercial
Road, London E1. (Zulfiqar) 44-
71-4811294

Brunei

Hj Jamili Hj Abbas, 647 Kg
Lumapas. 673-8-810480, 673-2-
337488.

Hj Mahadi, Bandar Sri
Begawan. 332148

Bulgaria

Mufti Basri Osman, Plovdiv.
359-2-233-109

Cad

Masjid-e-Noor, Share Namer, N
O'Jamina. (Adam Yusuf Amin)

Cecen

Dudaeb Shakmarze, Ul.
Khakalskaya 90/2/42, Grozni

Chile

Taufiq Rumie, Eduardo Castillo
Valesco 1160, Nunoa, Santiago.
56-2-496-081, 56-2-294-182

China

Hilal D. C. Guangyun, V. C.,
Stand Comm, East Dist. Peoples
Congress, ..

Dagestan

Habibullah, Sk Mohuddin,
village Gubdan, Lewanshowski

Denmark

Makki Masjid, Brikegade 4
KLD, N Kobenhavn
(Copenhagen). 45-43-(35)-361-
513

Centre Mosque, Morbaerhaven
Block 18 c/4, 2060 Albertslund.
02-454368

Dubai

Shaikh Hamdan, Masjid al
Kasis, Al Kasis No. 3, dekat
Umm Kulsum Che..

APPENDIX

Ethiopia

M. M. Kechia, Abu Bakr Masjid,
Kwas Maida, Addis Ababa.
251-1-130-208, 135-823 (Ibrahim
Sufra)

Feringgi (Portugal)

Abu Bakar Sulil, Masjid
Odiv eas, Rua Thomas de
Anunciacao 30 R/C Esq, Odiv eas
2675, Lisboa

Fiji

Noor Ali, Raki Raki Jama
Masjid, P.O Box 15, Raki Raki,
Fiji. 679-24440, 679-94002

Filipina

Masjid Abu Bakar, Marawi City,
Lanao del Sur, Mindanao

Finland

Omar Nizamuddin,
Puutarhankatu 18A, Helsinki.
358-21-513-572

Masjid, Fredrinkatu 33B, 00120
Helsinki 12. 358-0-643-579, 358-
0-149-6395

Masjid, Abrahaminkatu

Gambia

Abdul Wadood, Arabic
Madrassa, Serekunda

Ghana

T. Osang, P.O. Box 170A, Rock
of Islam Mosque, Labadi, Accra.
233-21-663-443, 665-06

Guinea

Md Boye, P.O. Box 12294, Barry,
Conakary

Guinea Bissau

Abayu Bayo, Jamia Kabir,
Bissau

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APPENDIX

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INDEX

A

Abbey Mills Marqaz · 26
al-Alawi, Irfan · 27
Alamoudi, Abdulrahman · 44
Alexiev, Alex · 38
al-Falah Mosque, Queens, NY · 30
Al-Harbi, Falih Ibn Nafi · 14
Al-Huda International Welfare
Foundation · 23
al-Kandhlawi, Maulana Muhammad
Ilyas · 10
al-Qaeda · 2, 15, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40,
41, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 53,
54, 56
al-Qaradawi, Yusuf · 44
Al-Shawaymaan, Shaykh Salih Ibn
Ali · 15
American Dar Al Islam Movement ·
30

B

Bangladesh · 5, 6, 9, 15, 61
Baz, Shaykh Abdul-Aziz Ibn
Abdullah Ibn · 15
Baz, Sheikh 'Abd al Aziz Ibn · 14
Bishwa Ijtema · 5, 10, 15
Borreguero, Dr. Eva · 30
Bottle Bomb Plot · 49

C

Center for Islamic Pluralism · 27
Center for Security Policy · 2
Centre National de la Recherche
Scientifique · 38
CIA's Creation of 'Islamic Terrorism'
on American Soil, The · 29

Clark, Greg · 26
Craig, Alan · 27

D

Da'wa-Ilallah · 16
Darool Ulum · 9, 29
Darul Uloom Islamic Academy · 31
Dawah · 1, 3, 11, 16, 20, 22
De Féo, Agnès · 21
Deobandi · 1, 9, 11, 23, 24, 25, 28,
29, 30
Deobandi School · 1, 23

F

Farook, Syed Rizwan · 24

G

Gilani, Sheikh Mubarak · 29

H

Hadith · 19
Hamas · 15
Harkat-ul-Mujahideen · 46
Hasan, Hazrat Maulana Zubair · 14
Hassan, Inamul · 13
Heimbach, Michael J. · 35
hijra · 13

I

India · 9, 10, 11, 20, 33, 41, 43, 46,
50, 51, 63, 66

Institute for the Study of Islam and
Christianity · 17
Islamic Society of Boston mosque ·
44
Islamic State · 2, 35

J

Jama'at ul-Fuqra · 30
Jami, Muhammad Amaan Ibn Ali ·
16
jihad · 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 11, 13, 23, 24, 29,
32, 34, 35, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 46,
47, 48, 49, 53, 54, 55

K

Khan, Abdul Rahman · 32
Khan, Mohammed Siddique · 29, 37,
45, 48

L

Lackawanna Six, The · 37
Lahore, Abul ala Maududi · 23
Lashkar-e Tayyeba · 46
Laville, Sandra · 39
Lewis, Paul · 38
Lindh, John Walker · 37, 47
Lindsay, Germaine · 45, 48

M

Mahboob, John Marshall
McCormack Henshaw · 33
Malik, Tashfeen · 24
Masjid al-Noor, Chicago, IL · 30
Masturat Jama'at · 22
Mefford, Larry A. · 36
Mega-mosque Conflict · 25
Metcalf, Barbara · 21, 38
Mohammed (Islam's Prophet) · 11

Moro Islamic Liberation Front · 15
Mueller, Robert S. · 36
Muslims of America · 30

N

Newham People's Alliance (NPA) ·
27

O

Olympic Games · 25

P

Padilla, José · 48
Palestinian Authority · 17
Palestinians · 17
Pervez, Tariq · 46
Poole, Patrick · 29
Portland Seven, The · 37
Purdah · 21

Q

Quran · 12, 19, 31

R

Reid, Richard · 37, 49
Roy, Olivier · 38

S

Salafi · 18
San Bernardino · 1, 23, 24
Saudi Arabia · 14, 15, 17, 45
Saudi Wahhab leadership · 14
Sayyaf, Abu · 15

Shaikh, Mubin · 41
Sharia law · 1
Shideler, Kyle · 39
Sikand, Yoginder · 45
Sookhdeo, Patrick · 17
Sufi · 10
Sulayman, Muhammad · 51
Suleri, Maulana Yusuf · 40

T

Ta'lim (teaching and learning) · 21
Tablighi mosque · 15
Tablighi women · 20
Taliban · 1, 9, 29, 42, 46, 47, 48, 56
Tanweer, Shehzad · 29, 37, 45, 48
Teli, Dr. Iqbal · 37
Teli, Suhail · 37
Turag River · 5

U

United Kingdom · 1, 13, 25

V

Videcette, David · 48

W

Wahhabi · 2, 14
Wales, Sir Robin · 27
West Bank, Israel · 17
Westminster Institute · 17
Wikileaks · 39
Williams, Paul L. · 29
World Muslim League · 15

Y

Yoginder Sikand · 39, 45, 46
Yusef, Maulana Mohammed · 13

