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Antisemitism in the Muslim Intellectual Discourse in South Asia

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Abstract: South Asia (Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan) has produced some of the greatest Islamic thinkers, such as Shah Wali Allah (sometimes also spelled Waliullah; 1702–1763) who is considered one of the originators of pan-Islamism, Rahmatullah Kairanwi (1818–1892), Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938), Syed Abul A'la Mawdudi (also spelled Maududi; 1903–1979), and Abul Hasan Ali Hasani Nadwi (1914–1999), who have all played a pivotal role in shaping political Islam and have all had global impact. Islamism is intertwined with Muslim antisemitism. Some of the greatest Islamist movements have their bases in South Asia, such as Tablighi Jamā'at—the largest Sunni Muslim revivalist (*daw'a*) movement in the world—and Jamā'at-i-Islāmi—a prototype of political Islam in South Asia. The region is home to some of the most important institutions of Islamic theological studies: Darul Ulūm Deoband, the alleged source of ideological inspiration to the Taliban, and Nadwātu'l-'Ulamā and Firangi Mahal, whose curricula are followed by seminaries across the world attended by South Asian Muslims in their diaspora. Some of the most popular Muslim televangelists have come from South Asia, such as Israr Ahmed (1932–2010) and Zakir Naik (b. 1965). This paper gives an introductory overview of antisemitism in the Muslim intellectual discourse in South Asia.

Keywords: antisemitism; Muslim; Islamic; Islamist; Islamism; Jewish; Jews; South Asia; India; Pakistan

1. Introduction

Yulia Egorova's *Jews and Muslims in South Asia: Reflections on Difference, Religion, and Race* (2018) is the first ever monograph-length study of both Jewish–Muslim relations in South Asia and a comparison of their status in that part of the world. However, it only touches upon antisemitism among certain sections of Muslims there. Generally, scholars pay disproportionately far more attention to the Middle East when it comes to antisemitism than to South Asia, home to one-third of the global Muslim population. Faisal Devji points out the underestimation of the importance of non-Arab Muslims and of non-Arab Islam to the Middle East. He cites the example of Iraq in early 2005, when an Iranian, Ayatullah Sistani emerged as a great Shia authority there. He owes much of his authority in Iraq to the control and disbursement of funds raised by Shia populations elsewhere, particularly South Asia. Devji adds that the notion that the Arab Middle East is the original homeland of radical Islam is rendered nonsensical by the presence of large non-Arab working populations in the Persian Gulf countries, as well as by the domination of non-Arab Muslims in the formulation and spread of Islamic ideas across the world, especially in languages such as English (Devji 2005, p. 22). Given the numerical insignificance of Jews in South Asia, it does not surprise that antisemitism there is more often than not overlooked by scholars. However, this is not how it ought to be, given the fact that some of the major ideological roots of Islamist jihadist ideology, of which antisemitism is an integral part, lie in this region. The region is also home to some of the largest Islamist movements, such as Tablighi Jama'at, the largest Sunni Muslim revivalist (*daw'a*) movement in the world; Jama'at-i-Islami, a prototype of political Islam in South Asia; Darul Ulūm Deoband, the alleged source of ideological inspiration to the Taliban; and

Nadwātu'l-'Ulamā of Lucknow. Islamic revival (*ihya'*) is a response to Western and secular trends by supporting an increased influence of Islamic values on the modern world. The solution to all the ills of Islamic societies and modern society as a whole is viewed to be a return to Islam in its purest form.

There have also been occasions when the antisemitism in South Asia has led to attacks on Jews, such as the ones in Karachi, coinciding with the Arab–Israeli wars in 1948, 1956, and 1967; the attempt to abduct seven Israeli tourists in Kashmir in 1991, during which one of them was killed and three severely wounded (Weinraub 1991); the murder of Daniel Pearl in Pakistan in 2002 (Ansari 2004); the attack on Beit Chabad in Mumbai in 2008 (Sharma 2009); and the explosion of an Israeli diplomat's car in Delhi in 2012 (Singh 2012). The only country in South Asia to have a Jewish community is India, where the population is estimated to be around 5000–10,000. Precisely because of the fact that there is hardly any Jewish presence in the areas that house those who indulge in antisemitic rhetoric, they can do so uninhibited without any fear of being checked. South Asia is a “safe area for casual hatred”, as Aatish Taseer describes his father Salmaan Taseer's world, where people can voice ugly opinions about the weak and the marginalized, numerically or politically, without challenge, comforted by homogeneity. Taseer recounts in his memoir cum travelogue, *Stranger to History* (2009), how his father, who served as the Governor of Punjab, the most populous state in Pakistan, from 2008 to 2011, minimized the scale of the Holocaust (Taseer 2009). In 2009, *Aag* (2009) and *Rashtriya Sahara* (Qutubullah 2009), the two most widely read Urdu daily newspapers in Lucknow, a major center of Muslim scholarship, carried front-page stories denying the Holocaust with the aim of sabotaging an ongoing Holocaust film retrospective there, without any fear of legal action against them. In the latest example, during the Indian parliamentary elections in India in May 2019, Asif Muhammad Khan of the Indian National Congress party, a former member of the legislative assembly of Delhi, tried to depict Atishi Marlena, a contestant from a rival party, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), as Jewish, in spite of the fact that she is not. He believed that the Muslim voters of the concerned constituency would see it as a disqualifier, and thus, these insinuations would influence the election result. She eventually lost. According to Khan, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians are brothers to each other but not Jews. He was captured in a video that is available online proclaiming that a Jew has no place in India and that people have to spread this message to every household (Okhla Times 2019). Interestingly, the view that Jews are not a part of the Indian nation was also expressed by Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar (1906–1973) way back in the year 1939 in his book *We, or Our Nationhood Defined*. Golwalkar was the supreme director of the Hindu nationalist organization Rashtriya Swamsevak Sangh (RSS) from 1940 to 1973. He asserted that India is Hindustan, a land of Hindus where Muslims and Christians are invaders and Jews and Parsis are guests. It was absolutely clear to him as to what he wanted the invaders and guests to do:

... the foreign races in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no ideas but those of glorification of the Hindu race and culture ... or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges. (Golwalkar 1939)

Narendra Modi, the current Prime Minister of India, seen by many as a friend to Jews and Israel (Wald and Kandel 2017, p. 23), is a member of the RSS. In the imaginations of the Hindu right, Egorova explains, Israelis “thematized as Jews, are seen as the enemy of Palestinians, thematized as Muslims, and therefore as the friends of the Indian state, construed as the state of the Hindus” (Egorova 2018, p. 15). Indian Jewish scholar and novelist, Jael Silliman, who divides her time between India and the United States (US), recounts in her book *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames* (2001) how her Indian identity was once challenged by a progressive Indian friend. While attending a meeting in the US, during one session, Silliman doodled an intricate Indian design, which caught the attention of a colleague who complimented Silliman by saying, “Indians are so artistic”. Immediately, a friend of Silliman's interjected: “But Jael is not really Indian”. Silliman writes that the callous remark pained her, and she responded sharply: “Since when have you joined the Jan Sangh?” Silliman writes that both of them knew what it meant. Jan Sangh was a Hindu nationalist party whose contemporary avatar is

the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which currently leads the coalition National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government at the center in India. Both Jan Sangh and its successor, the BJP, are known for their anti-minority political rhetoric. Although her friend “backed off and shamefacedly mumbled an apology of sorts, her remark stayed with” Silliman “as a symbol of a larger phenomenon, the attempts underway to remake India into a Hindu nation.” To Silliman it displayed how a narrow view of who is Indian had gained ground over the decades, marking a decisive shift “from the inclusive rhetoric of the anti-colonial leaders after Indian independence” (Silliman 2001, p. 167).

Khan can be heard saying to a crowd in the aforementioned video that they may vote for the political party AAP, but he would find it objectionable if they voted for a Jew. The Election Commission of India took no notice of this antisemitism. Instead of condemning this blatant antisemitism, a senior leader of Marlena’s party, Manish Sisodia, Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi, tried his best to prove that she was a Hindu Rajput and not a Jew. Interestingly, Marlena did exactly the same. She condemned this false rumor of her Jewishness but not the inherent antisemitism in the accusations and went on to talk of her Kshatriya (Hindu warrior class) lineage. The Indian National Congress also did not bother to condemn what their former Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) said about Jews not having any place in India. In another video, Khan is heard saying, to great applause from his audience, that a Jew can never lead Muslims and that there is no place for Jews in the hearts of Muslims. “This is what our Qur’an says” (Zee News 2019). In an interview he gave to a television channel, he explains that the only people mentioned in the Qur’an are Jews, and based on the scripture, it is his belief that Muslims can never follow the leadership of a Jew. Hence, he was opposed to Marlena’s candidacy (Asif Muhammad Khan 2019). This clearly illustrates how Islamic scripture has been interpreted/misinterpreted or reinterpreted, particularly after the creation of the modern state of Israel. The impact of modernism and colonialism, the rise of Arab nationalism and Zionism, and the defeat of the Arab states at the hands of Israel in several wars provided conditions conducive for the enhancement of anti-Jewish hostility, the entrenchment of antisemitic perceptions, and their amalgamation or fusion with polemics in the scripture (Webman 2017, p. 190). There were calls for *jihad* against Israel/Jews across the Arab world, including the Maghreb, in 1948. In response to those calls thousands set off to fight. A strong dose of antisemitism accompanied the jihadism of 1948. In order to make the antisemitic quotient stronger, during the 1930s and 1940s, different variants of the following *hadith* were quoted in Islamic tracts: “The day of resurrection does not come until Muslims fight against Jews, until the Jews hide behind trees and stones and until the trees and stones shout out: ‘O Muslim, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him’” (Morris 2015, p. 403). There are a number of references to the religious and moral deficiencies of Jews in the Qur’an, but the Qur’an does not portray Jews solely in negative terms. However, matters changed with the rise of Zionism, the establishment of the state of Israel, and its repeated victories over Arab (“Muslim”) armies in the twentieth century. “These developments”, as Gudrun Kramer points out, “changed the frame of reference for Muslim authors writing with the explicit aim of presenting the Islamic position on Judaism and the Jews” (Kramer 2006, p. 268). It is a phenomenon that did not originate exclusively in the Arab world nor did it spread from there to the rest of the Muslim world, but rather, it emerged simultaneously in both the Middle East and South Asia, though it gained strength as a result of Arab influences. Mehnaz Afridi, an American Muslim scholar of Pakistani origin, gives us a rough idea of how deep-rooted antisemitism is now among Muslims in South Asia, with the exception of those Muslims, miniscule in number, who are in direct contact with Jews as neighbors in certain places in India:

Antisemitism is everywhere, like smog that hangs in the air—thick, dirty, and choking. Even in Karachi, where I was born, the Jews are everywhere, although they have not lived there as a community of any size in several hundred years. Hatred and suspicion of Jews is in the schoolroom, the pulpit, the media, and even at the butcher’s shop in the dense Karachi marketplace, where, as I recall, the butcher blamed the spread of bird flu on Jews on a poster as one walked into the Sunday bazaar. (Afridi 2017, p. 182)

In the present paper, I discuss how antisemitism figures in the Muslim intellectual discourse in South Asia, primarily in India and Pakistan. Antisemitism has emerged as an integral part of political Islam or Islamism in modern times. Bassam Tibi considers Islamism at its core a form of Jew hatred because of its belief that “the Jews” rule the world and hence are in conflict with Islam (Tibi 2012b, p. 226). In an approach of self-victimization, the ‘guilt’ of the misery of Islamic civilization is attributed to ‘crusaders and Jews’, and therefore, Islamists prefer to engage in polemics against them (Tibi 2012a, p. 154). Faisal Devji cautions us against understanding political Islam in a genealogical mode and questions its credibility. He points out that there are situations when participants in the *jihād* (against the Judeo-Christian West and those who are perceived as acting in the interest of the West) come from diverse national and religious backgrounds. It is something that is “either downplayed or erased outright” in the process in order to project a sense of purity on the lines of race, religion, and region while drawing a genealogy of political Islam. In such situations, the importance Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi (1903–1979), a South Asian Sunni, holds for both Shias, such as Ayatollah Sayyid Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini (c. 1900–1989), and prominent Salafi thinkers, such as the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), emerges as an inconvenient fact (Devji 2005, p. 24).

Islamist antisemitism emerged along with Islamic revivalism. The development of Islamic revivalism as a social movement and the life histories and intellectual contributions of particular individuals are intertwined. These individuals advanced the formative ideas. They were the ones who voiced the concerns of various social groups and molded public debates by selecting certain ideas while rejecting others. They produced an ideology that uses social impulses to make a new discourse possible. Some of the most important of these ideologues came from South Asia. They are critical to understanding Islamism and the antisemitism inherent in it (Nasr 1996, p. 3). In this paper, we look here at their ideological contributions one by one. We also try to understand their sources of inspiration and the impact they left.

2. Shah Wali Allah

Shah Wali Allah of Delhi (1703–1762) is counted as one of the three leading renewal advocates who are often considered the originators of pan-Islamism, with the other two being the Najdi Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792) and the Nigerian Uthman dan Fodio (1755–1816) (Aydin 2017, p. 32). Drawing inspiration from ‘Abd-Allah ibn ‘Abbas (c. 619–687 CE), the father of Qur’anic interpretation, Wali Allah stated that, in their exegesis of the Torah, the Jews made verbal *tahrif*, interpreting the original verses in an incorrect manner. He accused them of making interpolations, both of language and meaning, omitting some verses and adding others. He called the Jews fiercely bigoted, miserly, and greedy. According to him, the Jews cleverly followed only the principles sanctioned by their own kind rather than those approved by the founders of the Islamic Shari’a. Moreover, he asserted that they interpolated fabricated a *hadith* and offered senseless interpretations of the genuine rules of the Shari’a (Rizvi 1980, p. 238).

3. Rahmatullah Kairanwi

Maulana Rahmatullah Kairanwi (1818–1892) of Kairana of the Muzaffarnagar district of modern Uttar Pradesh in India in his famous book *Izhāruḥ Haq* (The Truth Revealed), written in Arabic in 1864 in Istanbul, endorses the view held by Shah Wali Allah, that the Jews falsified the sacred texts. A compilation of a debate between him and Christian missionaries, it aimed to prove the outstanding status of the Qur’an and the *Hadith* on the basis of their historicity and to prove the ahistorical nature of the Bible, the Torah, and other revealed books. Jewish and Christian literature are depicted as lacking scientificity and historicity and are thus downgraded on this basis. In its opening chapter titled “Bible mein Tahreef kei Dallael” (Evidence of Changes in the Bible), he mentions two types of changes: The first is a change of words, which is the addition of new words and the replacement of one word with another. The second is a change of meaning, which is the presentation of a variety of interpretations that deflect attention from the real meaning of the words (Alavi 2015, p. 169).

4. The Genesis of Islamism in the Colonial Experience

The colonial experience profoundly shaped nineteenth-century Islamic political thought. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in particular, when Islam “seemed to fall on evil days” as a result of the European colonization of the heartlands of the Muslim world, Muslims were told everywhere, from Morocco to Indonesia, to draw inspiration from the glorious Islamic past to form their identity and to unite. This ideology found expression in the adventurist and revivalist movements led by Mohammad ibn Abdul Wahhab (1703–1792) in Arabia; Syed Ahmad Barelvi (1786–1831) in India; Mohammad Ali ibn al-Sanusī (1787–1859), the founder of the Sanusiyyah Order in Libya; Usman dan Fodio (1754–1817) in Nigeria; and Mohammad Ahmad (1848–1885), the Mahdi of Sudan. All of them re-emphasized the requirement of political action for the socio-moral revival of Islamic society. By political action they implied an activism epitomized by *jihad*. They believed that Muslims should strive to realize God’s will through moral self-discipline and should not hesitate, indulging in military combat or warfare if required. On another level, they provided defense to Islam from the polemical and hostile attacks of nineteenth-century Western orientalis and tried to protect it from the intellectual and moral imperialism of the West, as they saw it. They put stress on the original message of Islam, in which, according to them, the eternally valid ideal pattern for traditional Muslim society could be found. They also emphasized that Muslims are fully equipped to respond to the political, cultural, and scientific challenges of the West (Hasan 1986, p. 1074). This happened more so in British India than anywhere else. The traditionalist school of Deoband considers itself to be a direct successor of Shah Wali Allah. Another movement, which is even more traditionalist, *Ahl-i-Hadith*, traces its genealogy from him, and beyond him from Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi ‘ash-Shahid (killed in 1831) as well as the Yemenite judge (*qādi*) Muhammad b. ‘Ali ash-Shawkani (d. 1832). Three movements emerged in opposition to these two strongly *Hadith*-centered movements mentioned above: the popular and integrationist Barelwiya movement (founded in 1885), Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh, and the Nadwāt al-Ulamā in Lucknow (founded in 1893). However, antisemitism was not absent in these three movements, nor in the other movements that developed in the twentieth century—a prominent example being Jama‘at-i Islami, founded in 1941 by Sayyid Abul-A‘la Mawdudi (1903–1979) (Hartung 2001, p. 190).

The Islamists presented the agenda of de-Westernization as a quest to establish *Hakimiyyat Allah* (‘God’s rule’), replacing democracy with this new totalitarianism. ‘Jews and crusaders as evil-doers’ are particularly targeted by this so called ‘liberation theology’ (Nasr 1996, p. 148). The Islamists see their campaign against globalization and their uprising against Western imperialism as a revolt against ‘world Jewry’ (Tibi 2012a, p. 148).

5. Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Mawlana Mawdudi (1903–1979), considered as important to Islamism and its antisemitism as Ayatollah Sayyid Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini (c. 1900–1989) and Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), addressed the concerns of the intellectually perplexed and politically anxious Muslims of South Asia during the twilight of the British Raj. According to him, the source of the political rise of Hindus and the simultaneous political decline of Muslims lay with the equation between Islam and the colonial culture, which, he argued, had determined the distribution of power in Indian society. This explains why, in spite of being conscious of the apprehension the Muslims had come to have about the ascendance of the Hindu community, which gave his writings a sense of urgency, he remained focused on liberating Muslims from the colonial influence of the Judeo-Christian West (Nasr 1996, p. 53).

Mawdudi’s rise to prominence, as one who could most effectively stimulate new Muslim political consciousness and express it, was greatly aided by the creation of Pakistan as a distinctive homeland for Indian Muslims at the end of British colonial rule. Assertion of a distinctive Muslim political identity and an assumed divinely mandated political agenda was called for, from the perspective of certain Muslim political activists, as compensation for the loss of the caliphate and the political power of Muslims across the world (Afsaruddin 2007, p. 323).

Mawdudi is considered to be in league with individual thinkers, such as Taqi al-Din ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab (1703–1792), and Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), who offered new understandings of the religious texts that challenged the dominant interpretations. However, subsequent thinkers often stretched these new understandings to their logical conclusion in a manner that increased the scope of permissible violence (Wiktorowicz 2005, p. 77).

Mawdudi drew heavily from Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyya—the best known medieval Salafi scholar—particularly from his writings on the sovereignty of God. Although there are precedents to Mawdudi’s views in the classical sources, it is safe to say that he arrived at them independently (Nasr 1996, p. 68). Mawdudi expounded the view that the Covenant of Medina brought into existence an alliance between Jews and Muslims just for a particular period of time and that immunity for the Jews and other non-Muslims was revoked once Muhammad conquered Mecca. Mawdudi was the first to stress that *jihād* was imperative for contemporary Muslims. Nobody before him had ever held armed struggle as central to *jihād*, and unlike any major Muslim thinker before him, he was the first to call for a universal *jihād* (Mamdani 2005, pp. 55–56). It is doubtless that Mawdudi is the most influential of the contemporary Islamic revivalist thinkers, influencing revivalism from Morocco to Malaysia, leaving a strong impact on thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb and on events such as the Iranian revolution of 1978–1979. His views and thoughts influenced the spread of Islamic revivalism in Central Asia, North Africa, and Southeast Asia (Nasr 1996, pp. 3–4).

Al Qaeda has its ideological roots in the writings of Mawdudi, among a few others. Mawdudi created the ideological template for the modern Islamic state around the same time as Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood. Mawdudi’s importance for the Egyptian movement lies in his impact on Sayyid Qutb, often seen as the godfather of revolutionary Sunni Islam (he was executed by Nasser in 1966) (Wiktorowicz 2005, pp. 77–79). Mawdudi is considered “second to Qutb among the founding fathers of Islamism, but of much the same calibre”. Mawdudi’s thought was elaborated by Qutb and taken to a more radical conclusion that made a clear distinction between modernity and Westernization. It called for an embrace of modernity but a rejection of Westernization (Mamdani 2005, pp. 55–56). A more direct connection came to exist through one of Mawdudi’s most important protégés, Abul Hasan Ali Hasani Nadwi (1914–1999), a central figure in the dissemination of Mawdudi’s theories across the Arab world. In August 1940, Mawdudi had requested that Nadwi, an Arabist at the Nadwātu’l-’Ulamā of Lucknow, translate his writings on *iqamat-i din* for the benefit of the Arab world (Nasr 1996, p. 40). Mawdudi’s theory of modern *jahiliyya* was popularized by Nadwi through his Arabic publication *What Did the World Lose Due to the Decline of Islam?* (1950). The very next year after its publication, Nadwi traveled to the Middle East for the first time, where he met Qutb, who had already read his book. Qutb’s *In the Shade of the Qu’ran* (1953), contains lengthy quotations from both Mawdudi and Nadwi (Wiktorowicz 2005, pp. 77–79). Robert Wistrich found the writings of Qutb, especially his essay “Our Struggle with the Jews”, which was first published in the early 1950s, to be a good example of the synthesis of polemics in the ancient Islamic sources and Western antisemitism, produced to demonstrate to Muslims that Zionism was a Satanic evil that they had to combat. In this essay, Qutb presents Jews as “a metaphor and symbol for the danger of Western domination and immorality, as well as a continuing threat in their own right to the integrity of Islam which they compulsively seek to destroy” (Wistrich 1991, p. 225). Hence, according to the Islamist ideology of Qutb, it is incumbent on Muslims to die in a “cosmic” war against the Jews, and Muslims have no choice in this regard, because they have been under attack from the Jews since the birth of Islam (Tibi 2013, p. 31). Hannah Arendt clearly differentiates between traditional Judeophobia, which is a type of evil, and antisemitism—a greater evil that endorses genocide. She argues that antisemitism is not merely the hatred of Jews, but it is genocidal in nature, because it projects the Jews as an “evil” that must be eradicated (Tibi 2012b, p. 54). Tibi believes that this “distinction between Judeophobia and antisemitism is pertinent to the study of the place of Jews in Islam” (Tibi 2012b, p. 54). Qutb was certainly under Mawdudi’s strong influence when he wrote this essay, considering how Mawdudi interpreted the Qur’an as illustrated by his commentary on chapter 3 (*Al Imran*), verse 112. According to Mawdudi, if the Jews had ever

enjoyed any measure of peace and security anywhere in the world, it was not due to their own might but because of the goodwill and benevolence of others. They had either been granted asylum by Muslim states or extended protection by non-Muslim powers, which had enabled them to live in peace whenever they could in the past. The state of Israel came into existence only because of the support it received from the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), and the Soviet Union (USSR), and just as in the past, when the Jews emerged as a power, “it was due not to their intrinsic strength but to the strength of others” (Mawdudi 2012, p. 86). In his commentary on chapter 62 (*Al Jumu’ah*), verse 6 of the Qur’an, Mawdudi frowns upon the Jewish love for life and juxtaposes it with the Muslim love for martyrdom. He believed that the Muslims prevailed upon the Jews of Arabia, their equal with respect to numbers and strength and far more resourceful, only because, instead of being afraid of dying, the Muslims yearned to lay down their lives for the cause of God. In sharp contrast to them, the Jews were only concerned with the continuity of their existence, irrespective of their quality of life. They were not fully committed to any cause, neither that of God nor that of their nation. They were not ready to die fighting for any cause or for their honor or property or life. Their excessive love for life had turned them into cowards (Mawdudi 2012, p. 854).

Mawdudi aspired to transform society as a whole through centralized revolutionary leadership based on the Leninist model. Islam was explicitly defined by him as a universalist *jihad* for the welfare of humanity. He took the Prophet Muhammad as his charismatic model of a revolutionary leader. The seizure of power by a vanguard Islamic party was essential, according to Mawdudi, for the implementation of a world revolution that transcended any national boundaries as envisaged by Islam. The mobilization of the masses by the Islamist revolutionary elite was considered necessary by Mawdudi for achieving their aims. It is a lesson that was thoroughly absorbed by the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran. In his own ideology, Khomeini drew his inspiration not only from Mawdudi but also from the Iranian Islamo-Marxist Ali Shariati (1933–1977), the leading theoretician of “Red Shiaism” (Wistrich 2013, p. 406). Shariati was a direct legatee of the Indian poet and philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) as far as the notion of the “self” was concerned. This was in spite of the fact that they never met, for Shariati was just five years old when Iqbal, who was reverentially called Allama, died. He politicized the notion of *khudi* (self), Iqbal’s legacy, with his own emphasis on the notion of *khud-āgahi* (self-awareness) and built upon it his own idea of *khistān* (return to the self) (Chatterjee 2011, p. 172). Pakistani columnists regularly cite Iqbal, for his anti-Jewish statements and couplets such as, “the veins and life of the English (people) are in the clutches of Jews”. It is done with the aim of strengthening antisemitism (Ahmad 2013). Iqbal is revered as the ideological father of Pakistan.

An important protégé of Mawdudi was Maryam Jameelah nee Margaret Marcus (1934–2012), an American Jewish convert to Islam, who settled in Pakistan in her youth, married a Pakistani, and had children with him. She published all her books in Pakistan, where she lived for the rest of her life. Her influence far exceeds that of Jama’at-i-Islami when it comes to articulation of an “internally consistent paradigm” for Islamic “revivalism’s rejection of the West”. In this respect, she played an important role in the spread of revivalist thought across the world. She writes:

God tells us in Holy Qur’an that for the sake of nationalism and racist pride, the Jews were guilty of the unpardonable sin of deliberately distorting their scriptures and interpolations and false interpretations and persecuting every prophet who was sent to redeem them. When the Jews of Medina rejected the mission of our Holy Prophet with an intense vehemence because they could not accept as their religious guide an unlettered Arab, the Holy Qur’an warns us that together with the idolaters, they will always be the fiercest and most treacherous of all our enemies. Holy Qur’an then curses them with exile, persecution and every kind of wretchedness until Resurrection Day when the disbelievers among them will be condemned to eternal punishment in Hell! Holy Qur’an furthermore warns (5: 51) that Muslims must not take the Jews or Christians for friends; they are the friends of each other and that whoever takes them for a friend has become one of them! God has punished the Muslims today

(particularly in Zionist-occupied Palestine) with one calamity after another for shamelessly flouting this crucial injunction! (Jameelah 1983, p. 16)

She also writes: “It was the wife of a slain Jewish warrior of Khaybar who put poison into the food of the Holy Prophet which caused the illness eventually resulting in his death (*Ibid.*)”.

6. Syed Abul Hasan Ali Hasani Nadwi

Another protégé of Mawdudi, Syed Abul Hasan Ali Hasani Nadwi (1913–1999), mentioned above, who also served as the rector of the Darul Ulūm Nadwātu'l-'Ulamā, a highly prestigious institution of Islamic theological studies in Lucknow, came to enjoy the position of the founding chairman of the trustees of the highly prestigious Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies. His writings are full of antisemitic rhetoric. According to him, exposure to “injustice, oppression, chastisement, extradition, troubles, hardships” and domination by other nations is the destiny of Jews. A typical racial character had emerged in them because of “political serfdom, oppression and anguish suffered indefinitely”. They were globally infamous for being excessively proud of their genealogy. While they were “meek and submissive in distress, they were tyrannical and mean when they had the upper hand”. “Hypocrisy, deceit, treachery, selfishness, cruelty and usuriousness” had become integral to their nature (Nadwi n.d., pp. 22–23). Nadwi points out how the Qur’an repeatedly refers to “the extent to which they had sunk into degradation in the sixth and the seventh centuries”. The Jewish heritage, according to Nadwi, was primarily composed of “intrigue and crime, violence and high-handed tactics”, “their inborn tendencies which could clearly be discerned at any time or place where they have happened to reside, like a pivot on which their entire intelligence and endeavours have always revolved for the satisfaction of their ulterior motives”. “Every insurrection and revolution, conspiracy and intrigue, lawlessness and anarchy” had been the brainchild of the Jews. They had triggered “every movement designed to foment social, political, economic and moral disintegration of the non-Jewish people”. The characteristics of Jews, according to Nadwi, were exultingly summed up by an eminent Jew, Dr. Oscar Levy, who described them as “the rulers of the world; mischief mongers who foment every trouble and turmoil, wherever it might be” (Nadwi 1967, pp. 8–9). He did not even spare the non-proselytizing nature of Judaism. He believed that the Jews have failed to give any message of salvation for humanity. The reason for this, Nadwi explains, is that, according to the Jews, salvation is determined by birth, irrespective of one’s belief or action. This notion of the superiority of the Jewish race “signally incompatible with the spirit of any universal message of brotherhood and equality of mankind. . . . Such an idea, naturally, delimits even the scope of divine guidance and salvation and places restriction on its dissemination beyond the closed circle of one’s blood kin” (*Ibid.*, pp. 9–10). This, according to Nadwi also explains why Judaism can never become a universal religion and why it remains a non-proselytizing faith. He adds:

The logical result of such an attitude was that the Jews should discriminate against other nations and evolve such norms of virtue and vice, right and wrong, which should make allowance for the superiority of one race over the other. And, then, nothing more is required to justify and persist in the cruelest (sic) injustice against the non-Jewish people. The holy Qur’an alludes to this very attitude of the Jews when it says: “That is because they say: We have no duty to the Gentiles. (*Ibid.*)

According to Maulana Saeed-ur-Rahman, the current rector of Nadwātu'l-'Ulamā, the advent of Islam rendered Judaism and Christianity obsolete, because Islam covered all their teachings. “Therefore, we invite Jews to join our ranks as Muslims . . . Qur’an mentions as to how they falsified the sacred texts” (Saeed-ur-Rahman 2011).

7. Israr Ahmad

The internet and television have enabled ideologues who are alumni of Islamist seminaries and associated with prominent Islamist movements to reach the South Asian Muslim diaspora across the

world, as illustrated by the case of Israr Ahmed (1932–2010), a prominent Islamic theologian. He joined Jama'at-i-Islami in 1950 but left it when its leader Mawdudi decided to participate in electoral politics in 1957, which according to him was incompatible with the revolutionary ideology of the Jama'at as adopted in the pre-1947 period. Pakistan conferred its third highest civilian award, *Sitara-i-Imtiaz* (Star of Excellence), upon him in 1981. He regularly appeared on Peace TV, which was banned in India and Bangladesh in 2016.

In a YouTube video dedicated to Israr Ahmad's references to Jews in his discourses, the show's host mentions that Israr Ahmad called the Jews the agents of *Iblīs* (the arch-devil in Islam). Following this, a discourse by Israr Ahmad is broadcast in which he calls the Jews "agents of Satan among both, djines and human beings". He says that the Jews have been the most prominent among those agents for the last fourteen centuries. He explains this by saying that the Jews became extremely jealous of Muhammad when he became a prophet. The Jews believed that they had a proprietary right to prophethood, as for 2000 years prophets had only been Jewish. Since then, the Jews have been the biggest agents of Satan. "And for about four or five hundred years Christians have been agents of all Jews. Although the Jews were persecuted by Christians for a long time in history yet the Jews gradually managed to gain control of them just as one tames a horse" (Khilafat Forum 2014). They look down upon non-Jews and believe they can and should be used for the benefit of Jews, just as animals are domesticated, horses for transportation, bulls for ploughing fields—all for the benefit of humanity. Thus, the Jews are enemies of all of mankind. "They believe no matter what they do, God is never going to question them for any of their misdeeds, for they are His chosen people" (*Ibid.*). Then, show's host reappears to point out that it has been four years since Israr Ahmad passed away. He draws attention to the fact that Israr Ahmad told us that there is a prophecy that the Jews are cursed to be killed in large numbers at the hands of Muslims before the apocalypse. Then, Israr Ahmad's discourse is played in which he blames the Jews for trying their best to kill Jesus. He says that Jesus will return to ensure that not a single Jew survives. Then, he goes on to talk about how he was labelled an anti-Semite when he said this in America and how, in response, there was a call to boycott his books and website. In his rebuttal, he points out that the editor of *The Trumpet*, a journal of Christian Zionists, himself has written that "eighty per cent of the Jews will be killed and the remaining twenty per cent would be those who will accept Jesus as their lord" (*Ibid.*). The show host appears again on the screen to introduce the next discourse of Israr Ahmad by pointing out how Israr Ahmad used to explain the complete agenda of Jews:

Until some time ago they used to say that they were not against Islam the faith, but only against political Islam. But now they have started saying that the root of all evil is Islam, the religion, itself. Now their writers and their benefactors have started saying that the Qur'an in itself, Islam in itself, Muhammad himself is evil. So it is a war against Islam and Muslims. (*Ibid.*)

He adds that he is absolutely sure that the attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon was the handiwork of Israel, for he believes nobody else was capable of executing it. Israel's agents are omnipresent in America. Both print and electronic media are in their control (*Ibid.*). He uses the terms Israelis and Jews interchangeably, which is not uncommon in the South Asian Muslim discourse. Although the video has been viewed by only 294,934 people since it was published on YouTube on 28 July 2014, the number of people who saw it on television when it was broadcast was much greater, as is the case with most such videos published on the internet. A far greater number of people in South Asia watch television than have access to the internet.

8. Zakir Naik

Peace TV, on which Israr Ahmad used to appear regularly until his death in 2010, is owned by Islamic televangelist Zakir Naik, whose "underlying message about Jews can be summed up as follows: Jews are the most powerful group of people in the world—and the Qur'an warns that they

are Muslims' 'staunchest enemies'," as pointed out by Shehnaz Haqqani. According to Haqqani, Naik was deeply influenced by Ahmad Deedat (d. 2005), a South African Muslim televangelist of Indian origin, whose organization Islamic Propagation Centre International (IPCI) is said to have been heavily funded by the Bin Laden family. He only had praises for Osama Bin Laden, whom he is said to have met in person (Haqqani 2016).

9. Hafiz Muhammad Saeed

Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba and the current leader of its successor organization, Jama'at-ud-Dawa, published a commentary in Urdu on Surah at-Taubah, which is widely believed to be one of the last chapters of the Qur'an to be revealed: *Tafseer Surah at-Taubah* (2006). The book was compiled from the lectures he gave at the Lashkar-e-Taiba summer 2004 training camp. It was translated into English just two or three years later by his organization's in-house press Dar-ul-Andlus (White 2015, p. 57). In the book, he identifies four categories of people: (1) infidels and polytheists (2) Jews and Christians (3) the true believers, and (4) the hypocrites (*munāfiqīn*). Surprisingly, Jews and Christians, who fall in the second category, are criticized more severely than those who belong to the first category. It explains that there is no doubt that the people of the scriptures (Jews and Christians) had "mutilated the Shariah" and "devoured others' wealth and property as a right," and that these activities were continuing "even today" (White 2015). Mutilation of the Shariah implies falsification of scriptures. In this particular commentary, Jews and Christians are depicted as the preeminent threat to the Muslim community. Saeed interprets 9:29 as Allah's order to the believers to continue killing the people of the scripture, *Ahl-e-Kitab*. Such killing is not considered unreasonable and unlawful (White 2015).

10. Pirzada Muhammad Raza Saqib Mustafai

In another antisemitic video that appeared on YouTube in June of 2012, Pakistani cleric Pirzada Muhammad Raza Saqib Mustafai argued that a prerequisite for world peace was the total annihilation of the Jews. In the video titled "*Yahodi Islam Kay Aur Aman Kay Asal Dushman Hain*" (Jews Are the Real Enemy of Islam and Peace), Muhammad Raza Saqib Mustafai states the following: "And all the troubles that exist around the world are because of the Jews. When the Jews are wiped out, then the world would be purified and the sun of peace would begin to rise on the entire world". He delivered the speech as part of the *Fikr-é-Īmān* (Concern for Faith) series of lectures (Peerzada Raza Saqib Mustafai 2012).

Mustafai is a prominent cleric belonging to the Bareilvi School of Sunni Islam and is also the founder of Idarat-ul-Mustafa Pakistan, which is described as a spiritual movement for the enforcement of Islamic shari'a in Pakistan. He is a cleric at the Markazi Jamia Masjid Gulzar-e-Madinah, Gujranwala, Pakistan. He said the following in a speech:

And a time is about to come when Allah would bestow such a success on Islam that there would not be a single Jew left on the face of the earth. Hazrat Eisa [Jesus] would come; the warriors of Imam Mahdi [according to Islamic traditions he is the last Imam] would march into the battlefield; the pig would be killed and the symbol of cross would be broken. And it has been described in the books of *Hadith* [sayings of Prophet Muhammad] that Allah would provide such aid to the followers of Islam that if a Jew would be hiding behind a tree branch or a stone, then that stone would call out for the Muslim *mujahid* [to come] towards it and would tell him that a Jew is hiding behind me. And when the last Jew will be killed from this world, then peace would be established in the world—so much so that snakes would roam among people but would not bite. Wolves and goats would drink water from the same quayside and goats would not have any fear from wolves. It is the guarantee of world peace when the last Jew is slain. As long as there are Jews in this world, peace cannot be established in the whole world. Muslims are being called terrorists, as the cause of the destruction of world peace; but it is not the reality; Muslims are fighting the war of their survival. Muslims are not terrorists; they are the lovers of peace and preachers of peace. And all the troubles

that exist around the world are because of the Jews. When the Jews are wiped out, then the world would be purified and the sun of peace would begin to rise on the entire world (MEMRI 2012).

11. Conclusions

Contemporary Islamist Judeophobia has textual roots in the Qur'an and the *Hadith* (Webman 2017, p. 161). According to Reuven Firestone, "a latent anti-Judaism or antisemitism is embedded in the Qur'an, as in the New Testament" (Firestone 2007, p. 249). However, it is noteworthy that, until the modern era, Jews lacked the "demonic qualities attributed to them in patristic and medieval Christian literature" (Stillman 2010, p. 214). One does not find obsessive emotional hatred in the negative representation of the Jews in Islamic sources. The polemic against the Jews and the Children of Israel in the Qur'an, explains London-based Palestinian scholar Suha Taji-Faruki, "serves as a basis for the negative reconstruction of the Jewish character" and provides "an explanation for the Zionist successes, the offense in Palestine, and the political and economic domination in other parts of the world" (Taji-Farouki 1998, p. 15). New studies and religious verdicts constantly reinforce such polemics (Webman 2017).

Most Muslims in South Asia, as in most of the world, except a few countries in the Middle East and North Africa, know the Jews only through secondary sources and not as a result of any direct contact. Their perception of them is largely shaped by the religious-based history they are taught within the confines of their local religious schools and mosques. In modern times, Arab antisemitism, which is a synthesis of Western antisemitism and polemics in Islam, has found its way into South Asia through the South Asian Muslim expatriate population settled there and via seminaries in South Asia financially supported by Salafi regimes in the Middle East. South Asian Muslims have readily absorbed the Arab antisemitic propaganda because of their deference to Arabs on Islam. Islamist Judeophobia fused with genocidal European antisemitism has become part of contemporary Islam because of this (Mansur 2016, p. 72). Bassam Tibi has described the phenomenon as the Islamization of European/Western antisemitism. Some of the ideological roots of Islamist antisemitism lie in South Asia, to which it returned in a far stronger form via the Middle East. All of the above-mentioned South Asian scholars played a crucial role in the rise of Islamism. Antisemitism is an element common to their writings. Some of the recurring themes are the following:

- (1) Jewish antagonism towards Islam since its advent;
- (2) The depiction of racism, jealousy, stubbornness, arrogance, treason, and deceit as traits of Jewish character;
- (3) The accusation of the falsification of sacred texts.

The impact of their writings was felt far and wide. Mawdudi inspired both, Khomeini, the leader of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and Qutb of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Nadwi played a pivotal role in spreading Mawdudi's ideology across the Arab world. Video recordings of Israr Ahmad's discourses continue to reach millions of Muslim homes globally everyday through television broadcasts and the internet. Ali Shariati, a source of ideological inspiration for the Islamic Revolution in Iran, was influenced by Iqbal's philosophy.

It would be utopian to think that there will ever be a complete end to Muslim antisemitism or even a declaration from Muslims along the lines of *Nostra Aetate*, as Mehnaz Afridi points out:

The Qur'an represents itself as a universal teaching; hence its rhetorical style appears to refer negatively to Jews in general terms. Since for Muslim believers the Qur'an is inimitable scripture (the inimitability of the Qur'an is an absolute dogma of Islamic theology), the negative portrayal of Jews represents a level of truth that is extremely difficult to question. As scripture, the Qur'an is a powerful foundation for the worldview of Muslims around the globe. The kind of intercommunal conflicts we witness today may be only a few years old, but the verses of scripture have an eternal quality to them. (Afridi 2015, pp. 346–56)

Afridi admits that “it is a challenge to teach scripture that at certain points discusses mistrusting and/or killing Jews” (Afridi 2017, p. 150). She adds that “Interpretation of such verses by extremists” has “challenged” her own “thinking about sacred text and how to receive revelation as a Muslim” (Ibid.). For her, “the approach cannot be literal, but has to be contextual and encompass the many positive meanings that the religion upholds to procure understanding from a humanitarian point of view” (Ibid.).

No matter how dismal it may seem, scholars such as Mehnaz Afridi give us reasons to be optimistic, provided we do not cease to confront extremist interpretations of scriptures and try to avoid literal interpretation of polemics wherever possible. South Asian Muslim attitudes toward Jews can be broadly classified as indifferent, hostile, and amiable. Almost all synagogues and Jewish cemeteries in South Asia are looked after by Muslims because of the Jewish exodus from there following the creation of the modern state of Israel. Most of the students in the Jewish-owned schools in Kolkata and Mumbai are Muslim. Jews in India, except those belonging to the Judaizing movements, generally live in Muslim areas with their Muslim neighbors in a peaceful and conflict-free environment. Even the Arab–Israeli conflict has failed to dent the cordiality of their relations. However, Muslims who know Jews only through secondary sources and not as a result of any direct contact, as is the case with most South Asian Muslims because of the small number of Jews there, are susceptible to Islamist antisemitic propaganda. Since the November 2008 attack on the Chabad House in Mumbai, the security of the synagogues in Mumbai has been tightened, which has, in turn, made the boundaries between the Jews of European and Indian descent even more prominent. Some sections of Indian Jewry are keen to dissociate themselves from “white”, Western Jews—and their security concerns—which, these Indian Jews feel, are intimidating to their Muslim neighbors, and add to the visibility of their perceived connection with the state of Israel. However, Egorova is careful to point out that it may not be prudent to think of any perceived threat from local Muslims as baseless, for a plot by alleged agents of Lashkar-e-Tayyiba to attack Americans in Hyderabad and Jewish families in Guntur was uncovered in 2004, four years prior to the attack on the Chabad-Lubawich Center in Mumbai (Egorova 2018, p. 46). “The ignorance about Judaism and Jewish history is, of course, a particularly fertile breeding-ground for antisemitism . . .”, as Robert Wistrich cautioned us (Wistrich 1991, p. 166). The remedy to the menace of antisemitism lies in education and in an educational revolution. The study of Jewish history should be part of the curriculum at the secondary level of education, and Islamic seminaries should certainly take stock of how the Jews are presented to their students. Sadly, little has been done in this direction.

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