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# Anti-colonial connectivity between Islamicate movements in the Middle East and South Asia: the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamati Islam

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## ABSTRACT

With almost every part of the Muslim world having suffered from European colonisation, the roles and relations of Islamicate movements in anti-colonial history cannot be ignored. And yet, despite intellectual overlaps, mutual opposition to British colonialism, and a shared spiritual worldview, little has been written within postcolonial studies on the historical relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jamati Islam in South Asia. I explore the link between both movements as an example of anti-colonial connectivity that transcended territory. Though disconnected by geography and language, both groups were nevertheless tied by the deep connection of a shared belief system and the common experience of British imperialism. In particular, I argue their theology was not incidental but fundamental to both their anti-colonialism and their connectivity. I consider how that connectivity and solidarity evolved through time and shifting locations, reflecting the rich inheritance not just of post-colonies, but also of diasporic communities in the imperial metropole, inhabiting liminal spaces of unbelonging who often found community via these transnational movements. The purpose of the article is a recovery of history and a recognition of (at times overlooked) anti-colonial struggles and solidarities that do not fit neatly within disciplinary postcolonial norms.

## KEYWORDS

Anti-colonialism; Al-Banna; Mawdudi; Islamicate; Ummah

## Introduction: anti-colonial connectivity via spiritual hinterlands

How did anti-colonial activity transcend the nation-state, and what function did and does that serve for anti-colonial movements and postcolonial thought? Second, what is the substance of that connectivity, if not material and embodied, and how is it retained? Finally, how does that connectivity and solidarity evolve through time and location?

In exploring these questions, this article seeks to contribute to a subversive anti-colonial archive. That is, to reinstate narratives that have been side-lined or forgotten (particularly in secular narratives of anti-colonialism<sup>1</sup>); and to remember the rich inheritance not just of societies in former colonies but also of diasporic communities who inhabit a

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liminal space of unbelonging – detached in different ways from both their ancestral homelands and current, colonial, metropolitan homes. This is a reminder of non-hegemonic history, i.e. History ‘from below’<sup>2</sup> or from the epistemic margins<sup>3</sup> – not only the margins of mainstream IR but also of secular postcolonial studies. Additionally, this article is a recognition of the vibrant and messy ways in which anti-colonial struggles and solidarities constitute (and are constituted by) global and local processes. Indeed, any archival exercise requires an avoidance of romanticization of their struggles or independence from the metropole.

I focus on two Islamic anti-colonial movements and their key intellectuals: the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt founded by Hasan Al-Banna, and Jamati Islam in India (later partitioned into India, West Pakistan, and East Pakistan - later Bangladesh) founded by Syed Abul Ala Mawdudi. Both groups were disconnected by territory, language, and even culture, but nevertheless, were tied by a deep connection of a shared belief system and spiritual worldview. Yes, they had a common enemy in the British empire, but their ‘connectivity’ was at times even more pronounced when juxtaposed with (secular) anti-colonial rivals. Their religiosity was not incidental but fundamental to both their anti-colonialism and their connectivity. Moreover, as the article will show, anti-colonial movements have their own politics amongst themselves, and cannot be characterized as homogenous; a part of recognizing their history and agency is to recognize their divergences and fractures. The importance of that discord, and the way it has shaped postcolonial societies, needs to be embraced rather than be minimized. Meanwhile collapsing the differences and portraying the anti-colonial movements of the twentieth century as ideologically uniform risks imposing a hegemony on the history of anti-colonialism.

In attempting to situate this article within theoretical discourse, a few scholarly projects stand out as relevant. Firstly, a growing body of Anglophone work is now engaging with the anti-colonialism from the broadly defined ‘Muslim world’ not merely as a subject of historical observation, but as a source of ideas.<sup>4</sup> This scholarship is concerned with the history, activities, and ideas that draw from Islamic concepts and involve Muslim communities, without seeking to make claims about Islam itself – the distinction is often maintained by using the term ‘Islamicate’ rather than ‘Islamic’ to reference this scrutiny on both ideas and communities. While there are clear and acknowledged overlaps, the subjects of Islamicate scholarship receive less attention within post- and decolonial scholarship, particularly in relation to postcolonial scholarship on the Middle East which predominantly focuses on secular anti-colonial movements.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, to situate the Islamicate in Anglophone postcolonial or International Relations scholarship, it is helpful to draw upon the concept of ‘deep connection’ that works beyond or in addition to territoriality.<sup>6</sup> Recognizing that material connectivity is not commensurable with a ‘rich relationality’ that transcends the material, Shilliam asks what are the cosmologies, the projects of self-determination, techniques of relating and the stories that buttress other forms of relationality that typically receive less attention in International Relations? What exists between two peoples who are geographically, territorially, separated, but nevertheless share a deep anti-colonial connectivity?<sup>7</sup>

If we take the non-territorial, non-material relationality as our starting point, we can then consider the *substance* of the non-material. Here Shilliam also explains regarding decolonial science: ‘Its greatest challenge is to bind back together the manifest and spiritual domains. For in the latter domain there exist hinterlands that were never colonized

by Cook and Columbus, and therein lie the supports of a global infrastructure of anti-colonial connectivity.<sup>8</sup> Of course this primarily applies to marooned or Indigenous communities who, via a physical removal, were able to develop degrees of autonomy outwith colonial exploits. But I want to also read this deep relation in a more intangible way, as the spiritual realm - it is there that I situate this article, to explain the primary connectivity between Islamicate movements in the Middle East and South Asia. Certainly, the 'colonial intrusion' is not irrelevant, but crucially it is not the only or even primary foundation of this deep connection either. This 'spiritual hinterland'<sup>9</sup> is oftentimes deemed strange, even dismissed by colonial forces for its 'backwardness', and this arguably acts as one of the greatest strength of these anti-colonial movements, initially unmonitored, and thus free to expand and provide an unfettered 'energy store for anti-colonial self-determination'.<sup>10</sup> Focusing on pre-existing deep relations supplied by a shared faith - in this case the concept of the Muslim *Ummah* - can help to break over-reliance on the colonizer as the intermediary of relationality, communication, and motivation. This does not negate the fact, as Sajed rightly argues, that '[t]he idea and experience of colonial difference is ... inextricable from an awareness of one's position within a global racial hierarchy'<sup>11</sup> and necessarily is a part of the consciousness that spearheads transnational mobilization. Excavating deep connections does not eliminate that consciousness or belittle that material reality, but it does mean that a world beyond that colonial difference is imaginable, and moreover facilitates a connectivity that may outlast colonialism. Related ways of thinking about this concept, such as 'side-ways connectivity',<sup>12</sup> or transnational solidarities<sup>13</sup> as an alternative to 'methodological nationalism'<sup>14</sup> collectively offer a framework of global, non-territorial, solidarities that are not (necessarily) dependent on colonialism and colonial frameworks to connect them, especially where in some cases, those solidarities precede the colonial timeframe. Thus, specifically when considering the 'Muslim world', use of the term 'Islamicate' or 'Ummah'<sup>15</sup> become meaningful ways to understand a more comprehensive connectivity within which anti-colonialism sits alongside other shared practices and aspirations. All such works are not merely focused on empirical examples of third world struggles for political autonomy; more than that, they are implicitly claiming *methodological* autonomy in the way one conducts history, or social enquiry, to avoid a narrative that limits the agency of colonized people, or one that suggests an inescapable dependency on their colonizers even in one's methods of history.

It is worth briefly contrasting this with the work of Cemil Aydin.<sup>16</sup> Aydin's argument is 'post-colonial' in that he gives substantial credit for transnational solidarities and non-national imaginaries to the colonial encounter, which in turn produced reactions in the global South to intellectual provocations from the west. This approach certainly has much merit when seeking to understand the anti-colonial timing of Islamicate projects in the Middle East and South Asia. But the role of the west as provocateur has already been extensively explored in postcolonial and Middle East histories.<sup>17</sup> The ideas that existed before, alongside, developed concurrently, and beyond the role of the west is therefore of greater concern to me here. While there are other transregional/continental Islamicate connections one could explore, I focus here on the relationship between Arab and South Asian Islamicate movements, disrupting the regionalization imposed on these communities, and their compartmentalization according to an 'Area Studies' formula. The article also highlights the messy nature of anti-colonial politics which produces

motivations and solidarities that stem from rivalries *within* the anti-colonial spectrum, once again not always motivated by the colonizer. And finally, the article will consider how anti-colonial solidarities and deep connections evolve and manifest when the relationship moves beyond an ideational and imagined one, to embodied encounters and shared spaces. Even if deep connections can also falter via the powerful pull of racialized and classed hierarchies, they nevertheless offer a potent site of creativity and energy between communities in their resistance to colonialism, racism, and indignity.

### Al-Banna and Mawdudi: Islamicate thinkers in British colonies

How does one define anti-colonial connectivity? Should this be measured by direct communication, or connectivity in terms of ideological affiliations, or the shared target of their anti-colonialism, or merely in their concurrent timings and overlapping ideas? All the above can be applied to understand the connection between the two cases explored in this article: Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimoon (the Muslim Brotherhood) in Egypt founded by Hasan Al-Banna in 1928, and Jamati Islam (the Group of Islam) founded by Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi in India in 1941, six years before independence and seven years before partition in 1948. Despite the geographical distance, different languages and different cultures between the two areas, three significant features connected these two movements: they both emerged under British colonial rule; they were both connected by Islam (and, it should be noted, quite a particular approach to the application of Islam); and they both drew upon their faith to oppose and instigate resistance against British colonial rule, but also to call for a *Tajdeed*, or revivalism, that went beyond an opposition to the British. *Tajdeed* in particular, and the way in which the existence of both movements nourished this concept in the imagination of the other, was a core ideational substance of connectivity between the movements.<sup>18</sup>

Before exploring the ideas within this 'deep relation', it is worth observing a number of similarities in the personal histories and local contexts of the two primary figures of the movements, who in contrasting ways acted as conduits of shared Islamicate ideas. Both Al-Banna and Mawdudi were born in the same year in 1903, a significant point which I shall come to later; both eschewed the path of formal religious scholarship but embarked on a rigorous process of personal learning of their religion; both believed in taking their message of religious reform and anti-colonialism to the wider public beyond the confines of the mosque or educational establishments; and both categorically opposed the separation between politics and faith in their resistance. However, one key difference can be identified between the two thinkers: records of their ideas vary based on the extent to which they personally did or did not commit their thoughts and vision to writing.

Hasan Al-Banna acknowledged that he could have written more, but deliberately sacrificed that platform of engagement in favour of his day job as a school-teacher, and, in whatever free time remained, constant travel between Egypt's cities, towns and villages to share his vision via public lectures, one-to-one meetings and close gatherings. When asked why he did not write more, Al-Banna was reported to have replied 'I write men instead',<sup>19</sup> meaning he saw his primary goal in nurturing, teaching, and mobilizing through personal communication, and not via the written word. In that sense, the oral testimonials and memories of those who personally met Al-Banna, or were mentored by those who had, become particularly important for historical record. It also explains

why Al-Banna's influence as an anti-colonial figure is recognized and asserted far more within Muslim, including diasporic, communities who received histories of the Ummah through familial, community, and seminary narrations, in comparison to his relatively minimal acknowledgement in postcolonial academic texts. Some transcripts of his speeches do exist, notably those delivered at significant *mu'tamars* (annual conferences), while his memoirs offer crucial insight into his personality, ideology, faith, and methods. I have also gleaned further insight from the UK foreign office archives (particularly the extensive files and documents on the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty from 1935 to 1948) which can be used to supplement Al-Banna's historical narratives, though from the British perspective.<sup>20</sup> While on their own the state archives contain many gaps because they elide much of the Brotherhood's activism by submerging it within the umbrella term 'nationalist movement', they can offer useful corroboration and comparisons of different narrations of events. Nevertheless, bringing the 'bottom-up' history of the Muslim Brotherhood into formal historical narrations remains a challenge.

Mawdudi on the other hand, being a journalist, constantly wrote, and via his voluminous collection of articles and books left behind plenty of detailed insight into his ideas (both religious and anti-colonial) and his strategic thinking. Moreover, Mawdudi's activism spans a longer period of time (since he lived longer than Al-Banna who was assassinated in 1949 by suspected government forces), and as such the evolution of those ideas and a greater effort to convene them in a more strategic form is evident. Al-Banna engaged with large public audiences through his speeches, while Mawdudi engaged with a vast readership of the newspaper, *Al-Jamiah* (and likely, therefore, appealing more to an educated class). Given Mawdudi's greater longevity in the public sphere in comparison to Al-Banna, his activism and ideas also overlap with the later, far more revolutionary and contentious thinker in the Muslim Brotherhood, Sayyid Qutb. In a sense, therefore, Mawdudi's writings helped to give strategic form to Al-Banna's underdeveloped ideas, which, given they were in written form and could thus travel across geographies, were then picked up by Qutb whose intellectual background as a literary critic made him far more cognizant of parallel Islamicate movements (and their writings) abroad.

Given the time span of the movements in question, in which their activism continued years after decolonization in both Egypt and India, one must ask whether they were indeed anti-colonial movements or just Islamic opposition movements – first against the British, but later against their local governments? Moreover, was there a concrete connection between their movements, or was their concurrence coincidental? In answer to the first question, they were Islamic movements first and foremost, but it was their interpretation of the obligations of Islam and the primacy of justice in Islam that made them necessarily anti-colonial (more of which I shall discuss below). Their anti-colonialism was situated within their interpretations of Islam. This should present questions for those of us conducting postcolonial historical enquiry as to who and what we define as anti-colonial, who gets to do the defining, and who or what we overlook because they have multiple objectives and ideologies. As for the second question on the concurrence of the groups: while shared ideas might not necessarily demonstrate connectivity and certainly do not entail collaboration, there is a clear fluidity of ideas between the key thinkers of these movements that as mentioned was encouraged via the spirit of *tajdeed*. It was this concept, and not just Islam on its own, nor only colonialism, that provided the deep relation between the groups.

## Synergy of ideas

The above section suggests a connectivity was possible and likely between the intellectual drivers of the two movements by dint of their timing and shared experiences under British colonization. This likelihood is strengthened by the fact the two thinkers' shared similar ideas that infused anti-colonialism with Islam. It is clear that during the remnants of British colonialism in Egypt and India in the first half of the twentieth century, both Al-Banna and Mawdudi were motivated by disgust and anger at the injustices that colonialism wrought on their societies. In particular, the theme to emerge was a revulsion against the *enslavement* of the native people – not just of their bodies but of their souls. By interpreting colonialism as enslavement, faith was necessarily implicated, and the possibility of separating politics and the material from Islam in any anti-colonial struggle became unthinkable for both Al-Banna and Mawdudi. This connection between colonial enslavement and spiritual jeopardy was reflected in both Al-Banna's and Mawdudi's speeches and writings. This can only make sense when one understands that Islam, and its declaration of faith (*'la ilaha illallah*), means (linguistically and in conceptual essence) submission to God; a submission moreover, that Muslims deem emancipatory from all other forms of bondage. Thus, physical and mental enslavement by colonial forces was understood as an attack on the primary submission to God, while territorial and political colonization was deemed a violation of the autonomy and sovereignty acquired via submission to God.

Thus, upon arriving in Ismailiyya for his first teaching post in 1927 Al-Banna increasingly spent time among the local labourers, listening to their grievances and offering religious lectures to inspire them in their malaise. After describing the British cantonment in Ismailiyya, the luxuries afforded to the colonial officers, and the degradation of Egyptian labourers just opposite the colony, Al-Banna went on to narrate the words of some of these labourers: 'We have heard your speech, pondered over it with heart and soul ... but we do not know what to do practically. We are disgusted with the present way of life. This is the life of captivity and disgrace.'<sup>21</sup> Al-Banna argued that the enslavement by the colonizers was not merely a product of physical subjugation and dispossession but an accumulation of British colonial attacks on Islam. Islam, along with native cultures and histories, produced a certainty of identity, history, self-knowledge, and independence; breaking down the attachment to such affirmations was a crucial part of a colonial campaign to instil an inferiority complex<sup>22</sup> and an oppressive relationality that forced the colonized people to look up to cultures and ideologies they could seek to imitate but never fully embody. These oppressive and alien attachments were identified by Al-Banna as false gods; and thus, at the heart of his anti-colonialism was a call to return to the authenticity of faith and reattachment to God. For Al-Banna, therefore, spiritual reawakening was thus equated to and indeed necessary for anti-colonial resistance. It was these meetings with the Egyptian labourers in Ismailiyya, their impoverished circumstances, and their complaints against the British, that inspired Al-Banna to set up the Muslim Brotherhood.

Mawdudi similarly was inspired by faith as a resistance to spiritual enslavement. Spiritual enslavement, he argued was more toxic and humiliating than physical enslavement where at least one's mind might be autonomous, and was the enduring



legacy of colonialism even after independence.<sup>23</sup> He devoted significant parts of his writing to labelling the importance of *Tawheed*, or the Oneness of God. Given he was speaking often to Muslim audiences who already believed in Tawheed, this only makes sense in the context of a perceived challenge to Tawheed posed by colonialism and what he described as the danger of becoming a ‘mental slave of atheism’.<sup>24</sup> He saw the British as directly interested in and implicated in the degradation of Islam and native ways of life in India stating that such mental enslavement ‘encourages the stronger to suppress the weaker, while externally it favours the rise of nationalism, imperialism, colonial opportunism and greed to grab the weaker nations’.<sup>25</sup> Accompanying this shared belief was the mobilization of the role of jihad as a personal and communal struggle for independence.

While these beliefs, of Tawheed, spiritual and physical emancipation, and struggle were mobilized against colonial forces, they of course preceded colonization, and therein lay the potency of Al-Banna’s and Mawdudi’s ideas – through their double claims to both modernity *and* authenticity. For Mawdudi and Al-Banna, the theological injunction for struggle was not only awakened and triggered by the need to resist ‘godlessness’ imposed by the British. In fact, they found justification and precedence in Islamic theology and pre-colonial Islamic history, drawing upo the examples of prominent religious leaders and scholars, such as Hussein bin Ali, Abu Hammad Al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn qayyim, Ahmad bin Hanbal, Rabiyyah Adawiyah, and Hasan al Basri, to name some, who challenged Muslim rulers via the religious injunction to provide *Nasiha* (advice to authority) and engage in *Muhaasabah* (holding others or oneself to account), often forfeiting their own lives or freedom in the process. Thus, despite the fact the two Islamicate movements were separated by territory, they, as with other Islamicate groups, considered themselves as part of a shared lineage of seeking justice that they considered to be rooted in Islamic history.

Additionally, and in marked difference to other contemporary Muslim intellectuals, and particularly in divergence from *some* of the sufi ulema that they in fact looked up to, Al-Banna and Mawdudi both advocated the totality of religion – one of the most controversial aspects of their ideology, and the primary facet that made their ideas most susceptible to ‘radicalism’. For example, Mawdudi called for primacy to be given to faith in one’s personal as well as one’s political life, and for God’s sovereignty to be reasserted in the moral, political and economic aspects of people’s lives. Al-Banna similarly placed totality as the first principle of understanding in his *Arkan Al-Bai’ah* (pillars of the pledge of loyalty that all members had to affirm). This ‘totality’ or comprehensiveness (*shumuliyya*) argued that their faith could account for all areas of life. While this is often acknowledged by scholars of Islamism as a symbol of the two groups’ radicalism, it is not historicized sufficiently by both opponents or advocates of Islamism. What is often overlooked is the way in which both thinkers believed a totalizing approach to faith was necessary to mirror and counter the totalizing and encroaching impact of colonialism.<sup>26</sup> Colonial promotion of the compartmentalization and ‘mosquification’ of religion, under the guise of progress and secularism, was viewed with suspicion and in fact taken as emphatic evidence of Islam’s threat to colonialism and its power of resistance; thus both Al-Banna and Mawdudi sought to harness that power in their anti-colonialism and to restore it to both private and public life in defiance of British (and their native colluders’) control.



In relation to their advocacy of Tawheed, both Mawdudi and Al-Banna posed challenges to local Muslim rulers, ulema, and their own communities, who they felt had stagnated in their interpretation of Islam, in their morality, and in their intellectual progress – notably they saw all three elements as being intertwined. This meant they challenged or were at times opposed by (to differing degrees) *sufi* (esoteric) and *tablighi* (apolitical focus on preaching) interpretations and practice that were sometimes seen as politically passive, and at risk of becoming inadvertent enablers of oppression.<sup>27</sup> Mawdudi and Al-Banna also differed from those Islamic scholars who operated a rejectionist model, in that they both refuted and challenged ‘westernisation’ but also accepted the notion of internal regional and political decline that needed to be tackled. Thus, they called for a ‘social order based not on modernist acculturation but on a “self sufficient Islamic alternative”’.<sup>28</sup> As a result, both advocated the use of *ijtihad* and *qiyas* (application and context) in their practice and usage of Islam, rather than a literalist interpretation, to restore the relevance of religious scriptures. This methodology in Islamic jurisprudence opened the door for Al-Banna and Mawdudi’s revivalist movements to provide intellectual and political responses to colonialism that challenged what seemed like disconnected religious pronouncements made by the institutional ulema. While these approaches to Islam, and the harnessing of religion as a political force may seem familiar today, they were initially considered as revolutionary and even dangerous interpretations by some religious establishments in Egypt and India at the time.<sup>29</sup> The revolutionary nature of their approaches in their local contexts of course highlight the significance of the intellectual connectivity between the two movements via their religious interpretations and their political applications. But it also highlights the shared religious backgrounds and societal traits between their two separate territorial locations, backgrounds that were important common factors in stimulating Al-Banna’s and Mawdudi’s responses in the first place. This acts as a reminder that long before colonialism, transnational and transcontinental religious connectivity already existed and was materially nourished by the Hajj, historical trade routes, and educational establishments (the latter two were often found to be mapped onto pilgrimage routes).

Another historical development that fostered and enabled greater connectivity between the two movements, was the growing familiarity with and teaching of particular schools of thought in jurisprudence and knowledge interpretation within the global Muslim scholarly community. The rise of *qiyas*, greater emphasis on *ijtihad*, and *maqasid* in the early twentieth century<sup>30</sup> clearly shaped Mawdudi’s and Al-Banna’s capacities to not just draw Islam into their political thought but to centre it. In terms of personal background, Lerman argues their lack of traditional religious education (i.e. via a *dar-ul Uloom*) enabled Mawdudi and Al-Banna to reach out to the ‘everyday person’, and meant their religious sermons and arguments were more accessible than those of the traditional Ulema.<sup>31</sup> While there is certainly truth in this, I would argue it is just as significant that both Mawdudi and Al-Banna still had a rigorous religious education – both were *hafiz*, i.e. they had memorized the Qur’an in its entirety; and both were well versed in *hadith* (recorded sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad) and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). Mawdudi in fact did attend a *dar-ul Uloom* as a child, and later gained certificates and diplomas in Islamic education, though he refused the title of Alim for himself. This meant they were also respected by the Ulema (a point Al-Banna conveyed in his memoirs when recalling his cordial discussions

with the Ulema, which nevertheless did not always lead to agreement). They were thus able to bridge the disconnect between the wider public and the religious establishments. This dynamic enabled both Mawdudi and Al-Banna to be critical and to step outside familiar frameworks to apply religion to the state and colonial oppressions; at the same time it enabled them to assert their authenticity and links to those parts of their people's heritage, identity, and history that were associated with Islam.

As such, their anti-colonialism also diverged from secular anti-colonialists in not just some of their motives but also methods. This is not to say there are no overlaps between Muslim and their fellow non-Muslim or secular anti-colonialists – there were many, and they collaborated or shared spaces in periods of anti-colonial momentum. But the precise religious motivations and justifications used to give substance to their (Al-Banna and Mawdudi's) anti-colonial thought were not shared by some of their better known or celebrated secular anti-colonial counterparts. What this discussion demonstrates is that sharing the same faith, is, on its own, insufficient an explanation for the anti-colonial connectivity between the movements of the Arab world and South Asia, given the fact there were many Muslim thinkers, revolutionaries and 'laypeople' who differed in their interpretations of Islam, or differed in their views on methodologies or solutions; moreover, there were many secular or indeed non-Muslim anti-colonialists who drew upon Islamic history and culture in their narratives of resistance. Rather, what is of note here is the fact that understanding anti-colonial connectivity between different parts of the Muslim world cannot overlook the importance of common faith, and not merely as a shared aspect of identity. In these cases, there was important ideational substance in that shared faith (and shared interpretations) that shaped motivations, readings of the political landscape, interaction with followers and sympathizers, and methodologies. Bypassing this factor limits explanations of solidarities between colonized Muslim communities. However, for a nuanced and historicized understanding of that relationality, it is necessary to explore the material conditions and junctures that interspersed and combined with the spiritual, ideational connections. A more comprehensive reading of the connectivity between these two anti-colonial movements would enable us to better acknowledge and situate the role of faith within the relationship beyond binary explanations.

### **Connectivity in tactics and rivals**

Thus far I have sought to demonstrate the 'sideways connectivity' between the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamati Islam that was predicated on shared belonging to a Muslim Ummah – a belonging that both preceded colonialism and produced internal dialogues, concerns, disputes, and rationales that shaped their responses to colonialism rather than the other way round. But in this section, I give more attention to material and political conditions that forged a closer relationality between the two movements. In doing so, the first and most obvious direction to turn to would be the pervasive impact of European, in this case British colonialism in both Egypt and India. Cemil Aydin's work adopts this approach in which western colonialism is posited as the facilitator for the exchange of ideas and imaginations between the colonies. Of course it is true both Al-Banna and Mawdudi were part of the same empire, subjected to similar ideological, educational and bureaucratic impositions. Not only that, both were located in two of Britain's

colonial priorities – Egypt constituted its foremost territory in the Middle East, while India was the ‘jewel in the crown’ for British imperialism in Asia. Britain’s persistence in holding on to Egypt lay in the Suez Canal’s importance as an access route to India – this not only connected the two colonies via material goods, but also via the movement of labour, and subsequently facilitated the mobility of their anti-colonial grievances. Another important point to note is the class factor – arguably, Al-Banna and Mawdudi would not have demonstrated such connectivity if they did not both hail from the same economic class, with sufficient exposure to colonial ideas via their urban centres and access to similar educations. Timing mattered too – they were of the same age, witnessing epochal events in both of their regions. For example, the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924 directly led to the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood four years later; and while it ended the Khilafah movement in India led to the subsequent forming of the Muslim League in 1924. Furthermore, both the establishment of Israel and Indian Partition occurred in 1948, both attributed to the role of the British, and both events contributing to the two movements’ increased antagonism towards colonialism in their respective regions.

A chief imperative for colonizing the Suez canal was to maintain Britain’s vital trade routes with India, producing a very material and commercial connection between the two colonies. But this connection did not disappear after decolonization. To make up for the absence of the territorial conduit of ideas, it was the mutual awareness and knowledge that both Egypt and India were colonized by Britain, and both seen as cornerstones of empire, that reinforced an existing identity of *Ummah*. As Aydin<sup>32</sup> and Salman Sayyid<sup>33</sup> both argue, whichever way we look at it, Britain’s role cannot be minimized in the nurturing of anti-colonial imaginaries and affinity – this demonstrates the need to tread with caution, that we do not romanticize anti-colonial connectivity by overlooking or removing the colonial centre as the possible intersection between the movements in question. As Edward Said points out, by 1914, Europe held roughly 85% of the earth as ‘colonies, protectorates, dependencies, dominions and commonwealths’<sup>34</sup> and as a result, as McNeill states, ‘the world was united into a single interacting whole as never before’.<sup>35</sup> Therefore the cultural, political and social impacts on those colonized, especially when colonized by a common imperial power, would have had a bearing on the modes of resistance and what they sought to focus on. But to return to the initial argument regarding the significance of Islam in the connectivity between the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamati Islam, it was the perceived suppression and erasure of *Islam* that was a common factor in the colonial experience, producing a resistance in both Egypt and the India that centred and sought to preserve faith and Islamic traditions as a powerful form of anti-colonial power. This reiterates the way I am conceptualizing ‘Spiritual hinterland’ in this article, to foreground a notion of the Sacred that was evacuated as a result of the violence of colonialism and embraced and inhabited by the likes of Al-Banna and Mawdudi. Their rich engagement with the Islamic tradition reveals a form of solidarity and connectivity that cannot be reduced to nationalism, territorialism, or other colonial impositions; however, at the same time, the discourse of Al-Banna and Mawdudi reveal that Islam is a living tradition and their conception and engagement with it took place within particular contexts that were shaped by coloniality, but were not reducible to it.<sup>36</sup>

Even so, while there were clear overlaps and synergies produced by these common experiences, there were also important divergences in the emphases of their ideas

which were reflective of the *differences* in their colonial contexts. Exploring some of these divergences illuminate the ways in which anti-colonial connectivity does not equal sameness, but must always factor in the particularity of local conditions. So, for example, Mawdudi was far more antagonistic towards nationalism as a colonial, 'atheistic' ideology than Al-Banna. In part this can be attributed to differences in colonial experience. In India, Mawdudi saw nationalism as having contributed to partition - which he had opposed - and a devastating loss of life, heightening the fissures between the different religions and furthering ongoing inter communal suspicion. Furthermore, the multiplicity of languages attached to the nationalist movements as key features of difference was a more divisive factor in the Asian subcontinent, whereas, in contrast, common language across the Arab Middle East was successfully exploited by nationalist groups as a unifying factor for Arabs. Al-Banna thus had to compete with secular nationalist groups for claims to Arab unity, whereas Mawdudi sought to distance his organization from the divisiveness of nationalism in India. What this tells us is that the responses of Al-Banna and Mawdudi to the common factor of colonialism were mediated by domestic conditions and agents, in particular rival and competing domestic political movements. The relationships (or rather antagonisms) between the Islamicate movements and local political rivals had just as much bearing on their development and their anti-colonial connectivity as did their shared antagonism with the colonial metropole. This helps to disrupt the recentering of the metropole, as seems to be the case in Aydin's approach, and retains focus on political dynamics and relationships between and within the peripheries - a subplot in a sense that often, for the movements themselves, became the main story.

Thus the changing relationships with rival groups also meant that the Brotherhood's and Jamat's connectivity in terms of tactics changed and shifted according to the period of time and personnel. For example, Mawdudi explicitly called for revolution whereas Al-Banna was reticent about it and spoke of evolution and gradualism instead. In that sense Mawdudi's articulated views of revolution as well as the 'west' had greater similarities with the views of Sayyid Qutb who was to emerge as a prominent figure after the death of Al-Banna; indeed there were overall more parallels between Mawdudi and Qutb, than between Qutb and Al-Banna. Al-Banna and Qutb overlapped in their arguments that the Muslim world was in decline, that this had enabled colonizers to gain a foothold, and that it thus needed a native revival. However, despite the fact both Al-Banna and Qutb were in the Muslim Brotherhood (though not at the same time since Qutb joined the movement after Al-Banna's death), it is between Mawdudi and Qutb that we see a common refutation of the thesis that the west was rising and hence Islam needed defending - instead, both argued that the west was also in decay, that colonialism was the west's backlash, but that it would not last long.<sup>37</sup>

Very interestingly, Mawdudi's work reflected the impact of marxism as a powerful anti-colonial ideology in the region, as did Qutb's, whereas Al-Banna's work hardly speaks of it. For both Mawdudi and Qutb, marxism seems to have had a dual purpose: on the one hand it helped to provide a framework of critique against the west and (though they did not admit it) deepened Muslim anti-colonialists' epistemology for critiquing oppressive economic structures and weaknesses of liberalism. Thanks to marxist (including Arab marxist) critiques of the west, Al-Banna, but especially Mawdudi and Qutb, were under less pressure to demonstrate Islam's compatibility with the west and

liberalism, since a marxist-Islamic consensus had emerged that the west was supposed to be in decline. At the same time, and conversely, marxism appears in Mawdudi's writings to be viewed as an especially prominent antagonist of Islam.<sup>38</sup> His (and Qutb's<sup>39</sup>) fierce attacks on marxism are to some extent a reflection of its rise and potency in both the Middle East and the Asian subcontinent in this period.

Given these parallels in historical context and personal situations, to what extent was there any sharing of ideas through each other's writings? On this front it would seem that Mawdudi was an important conduit of ideas between the two movements. A voracious reader, learned in multiple languages, and with fluency in Arabic, Mawdudi was not only conscious of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (this is a given) but we can assume he was closely following the work of Al-Banna and the writings of the Brotherhood. This is in contrast to Al-Banna who could not read Urdu or Hindi, in which most of Mawdudi's writings appeared at first. This, and his knowledge of Arab intellectual thought, suggests Mawdudi was influenced by the same Arab thinkers that influenced Al-Banna – chiefly Jamal al Afghani and Muhammad Abduh. At first glance, this fits the usual presumption in Muslim communities and among Middle East historians that any knowledge exchange occurred from the Arab world towards the Asian subcontinent. This assumption corroborates mainstream notions of the Arab world as the centre of Islam, and the Middle East as the presumed intellectual hub for Muslims given the regional location of the caliphate before its dissolution. Relatedly, when we think about connectivity, experts of Islam and the Middle East, and often Muslims themselves tend to assume it is a question of how other parts of the Muslim world tap into the Middle East as the epicentre of Islamic teaching. Do such assumptions about knowledge transfer stand, or do they need to be challenged? We need to bear in mind that this 'Islamic core' shifted over time, to Africa, to Persia, to Central Asia, to the subcontinent. Thus we should not only ask how far other movements across the globe tapped into the knowledge and praxis from the Middle East, but equally so, how much did Arab Islamic movements tap into the knowledge and anti-colonial repertoires of other Muslim geographies.

Only a handful of historians have pointed out that both Al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb must have and did read Mawdudi's works translated into Arabic.<sup>40</sup> To corroborate this point, I would point out that Al-Banna's idea of totality, *shumuliyya*, is first articulated in 1935–1938, while Mawdudi had already written extensively on this by 1932. Hartung similarly recognizes Mawdudi as the first prominent Islamic thinker articulating a totalist vision.<sup>41</sup> As for Qutb, the parallels are even more obvious, as mentioned above. Qutb seems to have directly followed in Mawdudi's footsteps in producing his own exegesis of the Qur'an, *Fi Zilal Al-Quran* ('In the Shade of the Qur'an' written between 1952–1965 while in prison), filled with explicit and implicit applications to and analogies from the contemporary Egyptian and global political context - a homage to arguably Mawdudi's most famous work, *Tafheemul Qur'an* ('Towards an Understanding of the Qur'an', first published in 1942), a six-volume Urdu translation and commentary on the Qur'an that spanned subjects of economics, sociology, history, and politics. Indeed, there was a lot more Arab learning from South Asian Muslim, anti-colonial ideas in the early twentieth century than tends to be acknowledged in contemporary, especially intra-Muslim, discourse.

Additionally, there is a tendency to inquire about the forerunners of Al-Banna's ideas, such as Muhammad Abduh and Jamal Afghani, placing Al-Banna within a genealogy of

Muslim intellectual thought. However, there are fewer such inquiries regarding Mawdudi's intellectual forerunners, with historians of Islamic political thought often resting on his access to Arab thinkers. However, Sheikh Jameel Ali in his book sheds a slight on Mawdudi's influences from within the Indian subcontinent.<sup>42</sup> Ali identifies significant scholars in South Asia who also would have shaped Mawdudi's thought, expanding the history and source of Islamicate thought that went beyond the Arab Middle East. Thinkers such as Sheikh Abdul Haqq Muhaddith of Delhi, Ahmad Sirhind, Shah Waliullah, Shah Abdul Aziz, Sayyid Ahmed Shaheed, Shah Ismail Shaheed were all notable influences on Mawdudi but are often omitted from genealogies of 'Islamist' thought. Jameel Ali argues these thinkers were the ones to 'rekindle the flame' of Islamic anti-colonial ideas for Mawdudi and the region, and start the process of *ijtihad*. In turn, these scholars did draw some of their own anti-colonial Islamicate thought from the likes of Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the flow of ideas between the regions and movements was by no means linear, was multi-directional, and borrowed from each other.

### **Decentring British imperialism: alternative sites and conduits of evolving anti-colonial connectivity**

Another way in which sideways connectivity can be explored, is to de-centre the primary and most-scrutinized imperial actor, Britain, while retaining a focus on the impact of other colonialisms that affected the Islamicate. While there is no doubt western imperialism had the most direct impact on Egypt and India, the way in which Soviet imperialism also shaped the Islamicate as a whole deserves far greater scrutiny than it is currently afforded. Thus, by the time Mawdudi and Al-Banna were formulating their ideas a significant historical, geographical interlocutor between the subcontinent and the Arab world was effectively removed from the process of incubation, reformulation and transference of religious and political ideas and practice between the two regions. Historically Central Asia provided a site where a melding of influences took place between the Middle East and South Asia; for example a lot of the intellectual work of the late mediaeval and early modern period attributed to the Arab world was in fact carried out by Central Asians (or Persians) who were erroneously identified as Arab by the west. Thus medieval and early modern scholars and artists from what is now Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan were carriers of knowledge that was shared from and by either sides of the region. Notably the subcontinent and Persia play a major role in contributing to and sharing those ideas via educational and dynastic connections and indeed slavery (it was common for Persian, Central Asian sultans to employ Indian servants in the royal court). This context is relevant because while British imperialism strengthened anti-colonial connectivity between Egypt and South Asia, Soviet imperialism fundamentally changed and curtailed their historical intellectual and political bridge in Central Asia. With the encroachment of the Soviet Union into Central Asia since the 1920s, it implemented a policy of erasure of religious tradition, practice and beliefs that strained any form of religious knowledge production and with that religious anti-colonialism. Mosques and ancient madrassas were turned into stables, barracks, or left derelict, and public religiosity was banned. Having considered the role of colonialism in facilitating and fostering anti-colonial connectivity, it is therefore also worth noting that it had a significant capacity to subvert and suppress that connectivity as well. Moreover, this



serves as a reminder that there was not only one empire that Islamicate movements found themselves in contention with, and which impacted their connectivity.

Recollecting the oft forgotten role of the Soviet Union in Muslim political thought and history returns us to the importance of marxism and socialism in the connectivity between the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamati Islam. I make this point with an acknowledgment that the Soviet Union was neither seen as the vanguard or teacher of socialist or marxist ideas by many leftists in the mid-twentieth century Arab world; indeed local Communist parties who did give their allegiance to the Communist party in the Soviet Union often had small followings in comparison to their Arab nationalist, socialist counterparts. But even so, the presence of a leftist global hegemon with military and political presence especially in the Middle East, gave impetus to leftist ideologies in the region. With the absence of the physical, territorial space that Central Asia could have provided as a conduit of Islamicate ideas, the shared *ideational* sphere became even more important. As a result, we ought to consider not just Islamicate connectivity but also the connectivity between socialist, marxist, and Islamic anti-colonial thought. This demonstrates the extent to which anti-colonial connectivity can cross the so-called, arguably false, religious-secular binary. It also demonstrates the extent to which there can be, and has been, learning between these groups, despite their apparent animosity, a point that also does not receive enough attention. The competition for the anti-colonial, anti-western ideological terrain between Islamic and socialist-nationalist movements in both Egypt and India brought the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamati Islam even closer together in their solidarity.

But we should not read the relationship between the ideologies and movements merely as thus, where marxism was only perceived as the enemy of Islam and vice versa. The often antagonistic relationship in shared political spaces nevertheless supplied useful ideas and frameworks and debating points for both sides.<sup>44</sup> Learning between marxists and Islamic thinkers is sometimes recognized in the biographies of certain notable individuals, such as Iran's Ruhollah Khomeini who is known to have read and developed some of his own ideas from marxists works. But one rarely comes across the argument that the learning ever occurred the other way round; there appears to be an inherent assumption that it cannot be the other way round, and one should ask why that would be. Indeed, it would be remarkable, unlikely in fact, if there was *not* a mutual exchange of ideas, however much both ideological movements might have denied or obscured it. Addressing this lacuna, Gerges (one of the few scholars to do so) explores the extent to which Gamal Abdel Nasser was influenced by the anti-colonial spirit and arguments expounded by the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1930s and 40s, suggesting he either affiliated or even took up membership in the Brotherhood – this explains the Muslim Brotherhood's early support for Nasser and the Free Officer movement.<sup>45</sup> There is even less work to excavate the cross-intellectual influence between Mawdudi and socialist movements in India. As mentioned above, Mawdudi appears to have strengthened his arguments regarding western decay (in contrast to earlier Islamist thinkers who were convinced of the rise of the West) and his explorations of Islamic economics as an alternative to western capitalist imperialism, via his readings of marxist and socialist thought.<sup>46</sup> But what do we know of the ways socialist and marxist anti-colonial groups borrowed from Mawdudi, Jamati-Islam, and its forerunner, the Indian Khilafat movement? What this discussion demonstrates is that we should not



only consider the ‘sideways connectivity’ of anti-colonial *solidarities* but also the ways in which sideways connectivity is also constituted by anti-colonial *rivalry*, which acts as an ideational site of mutual awareness, identity-building, and theoretical development.

If the above constituted a non-physical site of ideational connectivity, then a convening of diasporas in the British colonial metropole offers the opposite example of embodied connectivity that confirmed and gave new life to the solidarity between the two movements. While this does mean a geographical return to the colonizer in our study of anti-colonial connectivity, we retain the ethos of an analytical de-centering of the colonizer by focusing on the diasporas from Egypt and the Indian subcontinent, and their activism and dialogue from the bottom-up. Studying the changing legacy of these two movements, initially from different parts of the British empire but then converging in the metropole, offers opportunities to observe ways in which existing connectivity may increase or alter when those anti-colonial movements encounter each other. To understand Britain as a site of evolved anti-colonial connectivity, one needs to consider the dynamism of Britain’s post-war reconstruction and history of immigration. Notable students of Mawdudi, such as Khurshid Ahmed, Khurram Murad, and AKM Abdus Salam who came to study or work in the UK, contributed to an evolution of the concept of a western Islamic movement which combined facets of the anti-colonialism relevant to their homelands, with a broader remit of a pursuit of justice and survival for immigrant Muslim communities in the UK, especially in the face of racism and discrimination.<sup>47</sup> Founding Muslim organizations in the UK such as the Federation of Islamic Student Societies, UK Islamic Mission, Da’watul Islam, and the Muslim Student Society, that diverged from the quietist interpretations of Islam, these young, often student Muslims arriving in the UK in the late 50s, 60s and 70s spearheaded a more politicized expression of Muslim identity. Combining their close links to Muslim communities in the former colonies with their increasingly settled status in the UK, their writings and activism reflected a wide remit of concerns – international and domestic, from social justice to foreign policy – all brought together under the concept of *tajdeed*. Student newsletters produced by the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) and leaflets and magazines by other Muslim community organisations in the UK show an engagement with Nasserist thought, the legacies of Al-Banna, Qutb, and Mawdudi, and a grappling with contemporary questions of social welfare, inequality, capitalism, nationalism and racism, through the lens of Islam, and always considering the implications these issues had for individual and collective spirituality. Epitomising the evolution and expansion of Islamicate connectivity and solidarity, facilitated no less by its coalescence in the imperial metropole, FOSIS hosted Malcolm X for a speaker tour across UK campuses in December 1964, bridging the legacy of Muslim anti-colonialism in Egypt and South Asia with the civil rights movement in the U.S.<sup>48</sup>

Once again, it is clear we cannot take Britain, the colonizing antagonist, out of our understanding of this anti-colonial connectivity, but even though it is integral it was not always the primary subject of debate. It acted as a territorial hub to bring these various ideas and thinkers and imaginaries together in the same space far away from their indigenous bases of resistance, while the intellectual parameters of discourse went far beyond it. In another way, the embodied encounters in the metropole facilitated greater connectivity between the inheritors of the Egyptian (but now more broadly Arab) and South Asian Islamicate movements through an English lingua

franca. While language had not posed a barrier to cross-movement learning for Mawdudi and the South Asian movement in the mid-twentieth century, it had seemed to obstruct greater learning the other way round, with Arab communities far less likely to (seek to) understand Hindi, Urdu or Bengali. The shared medium of English within the metropole helped to circumvent the barriers that hegemony of Arabic posed between the connectivity between the colonial peripheries.<sup>49</sup> The consolidation of this connectivity was reflected by the alteration in terminology where the Islamicate diaspora often self-described neither as 'Jamati' or 'Ikhwani', but simply by the broad expression of 'Islamic Movement', especially between the 1980s and 1990s, indicative of their shared willingness to combine politics and justice with Islam. Recognizing the shared Islamic traditions and beliefs of these particular anti-colonial movements enables us to incorporate less recognized forms of resistance to coloniality within our anti-colonial archives. Their activism was (initially) less likely to be expressed on the streets or through engagement with formal institutions, and more likely to flourish within the relatively hidden or unmonitored spaces within mosques and *halaqahs* or 'study circles' within people's homes – not dissimilar to the methods adopted by their forerunners in Egypt and South Asia where Islamicate movements operated primarily in grassroots settings due to state repression.

Up to this point, I have considered the primary facilitators of connectivity between key Islamicate thinkers, Al-Banna, Mawdudi (and to a lesser extent Qutb), and their movements: their shared interpretation of their faith, historical networks and routes of pilgrimage, education and trade, timing, and language, rival anti-colonial ideologies such as marxism, and the British empire itself. I have also highlighted the way in which colonial repression, and the removal of historical interlocutors shape the trajectory of that connectivity as well. But while the arrival of diasporas in the metropole significantly contributed to a realization of the imaginary of an Islamicate solidarity, it is necessary to bear in mind that obstacles to greater connectivity and solidarity continued to exist, were heightened even, in the diasporic encounter. Varied access to economic privileges, education, socio-economic factors – or in other words, class, and sometimes constructions of race that produced hierarchies between Arab and South Asian communities, had an impact on which ideas, issues, and voices were given more weight. To some extent such hierarchies also arose from perceptions (even if misinformed) of who had greater access to the meaning of religious scriptures, ascribing greater authority to those who spoke Arabic from Arab diasporas (even if they might have had less experience of the local context due to later migration) compared to those who could not.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, despite claims to unity and anti-racism, other diasporas within the Muslim community, often those of African or Caribbean descent, were not sufficiently represented in these particular revivalist movements in the UK. The new proximity between these postcolonial communities places sharp focus on the fact that the dynamics of connectivity do not always, or continue to, operate 'sideways' (that is, in a horizontal manner), in which the terrain for intellectual and activist exchange is flat; rather this connectivity can morph into vertical relationships. Racial and class hierarchies on a global level, and perceived proximities to, or distance from, whiteness among diasporas, have the power to seep into the process of legitimation.<sup>51</sup> Such global patterns of race and class, intermingled with the politics within diaspora communities, can affect whose voices are heard, and who is bestowed leadership and power, even under the banner of *tajdeed*, anti-racism,

and anti-colonialism. As such, the archives of anti-colonial connectivity, and in this case the history of Islamicate movements in the global South and in the West, should encompass not just the solidarities but also the messiness and fractures that necessarily emerge in any movement for justice.

### Conclusion: the role of the Islamicate in anti-colonial history

When considering anti-colonial solidarities or connectivity, it is necessary to recognize the multifaceted ways in which that connectivity occurs. When anti-colonial movements were able to gain sufficient power to control state and foreign policy (such as with the Free Officer movement under Nasser in Egypt, or the Ba’th party in Syria), they were able to manifest their solidarity through diplomacy, public statements, even military aid. In the process of anti-colonial archiving, there is increased attention given to the importance of anti-colonial solidarity between newly independent states across the Global South, through bilateral relations or in significant collective settings such as the Bandung conference. But what kind of connectivity is possible when anti-colonial movements do not succeed in positions of government, and continue to face barriers to resources and mobility imposed by the colonizing power, or are later muscled out by rival anti-colonial forces? Such was the experience of Islamicate movements which, though ideologically unconventional in the contemporary anti-colonial imaginary, nevertheless played an important part in early galvanization of their local communities and in providing traditional and religious legitimation to the broader anti-colonial movement. This article focused on the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Jamati Islam in India, with particular scrutiny of the synergy of ideas between Hasan Al-Banna and Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi,<sup>52</sup> to demonstrate the ways in which, even in the absence of territorial or embodied encounters or direct communication, anti-colonial groups can cultivate transnational intellectual inspiration and validation. Such intellectual and ideational connectivity, fostered through a cognisance of simultaneous and sympathetic struggles in other parts of the world, can travel through rival ideologies and movements (such as marxism and socialism in this case); or may meet in the colonial metropole, in this case Britain, to concretize that solidarity and expand the connectivity to reach new terrains and movements, as seen through the connections developed between Islamicate movements in Britain and Muslim civil rights campaigners in the U.S. Finally, without diminishing the importance and successes of such connectivities, it is always worth remembering the insidious potential for global structural hierarchies and inequalities – of race and class – to infiltrate, disrupt and fragment those solidarities, emphasising the importance of constant introspection and reflexivity among anti-colonial movements.

### Notes

1. See Anupama Ranawana, ‘Persistent Becoming: Women’s Religious Thought and the Global’, *International Politics Review*, 8, 2020, pp 100–127.
2. History from below ‘seeks to take as its subjects ordinary people, and concentrate on their experiences and perspectives, contrasting itself with the stereotype of traditional political history and its focus on the actions of “great men”’ (definition provided by the Institute for Historical Research, see ‘Making History at <https://archives.history.ac.uk/>

makinghistory/themes/history\_from\_below.html). Historians who have focused on this approach include C L R James (*Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, London: Vintage, 1938); Marcus Rediker (see 'Narrative Resistance: A Conversation with Historian Marcus Rediker', in *Workplace Presents: Scholactivism*, No. 30 (2018)); E P Thompson (*The Making of the English Working Class*, New York: Vintage Books, 1980); Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, New York: Autonomedia, 2004; Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2015. By using this term 'History from Below', I seek to highlight the way in which firstly, religious, specifically Islamic motivations in anti-colonial movements in the twentieth century have received less attention in postcolonial literature, especially in International Relations; secondly, it is an acknowledgement that those who supported the Islamic movements I discuss in this article were often from poorer working classes or rural areas, who typically would not have had their voices heard within secular anti-colonial spaces, and certainly not within academic institutions. These institutions typically in both Egypt and South Asia are classed spaces that have also inherited European modernist notions about the separation of knowledge and reason from religion. Thus I situate my article in the category of 'history from below' both epistemically and in view of the social history of Islamic anti-colonial movements.

3. Robbie Shilliam, *Decolonizing Politics*, Medford: Polity Press, 2020; Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987.
4. Salman Sayyid, *Recalling the Caliphate: Decolonisation and World Order*, London, Hurst and Co, 2014; S Alatas, 'On the Need for an Historical Study of Malaysian Islamization', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 4(1), 1963, pp 68–81.
5. For examples of excellent postcolonial scholarship on the Middle East with focus on secular movements see Alina Sajed, 'Re-Remembering Third Worldism: An Affirmative Critique of National Liberation in Algeria', *Middle East Critique*, 28(3), 2019, pp 243–260; Alina Sajed, 'How We Fight: Anti-Colonial Imaginaries and the Question of National Liberation in the Algerian War', *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 21(5), 2019, pp 635–651; Sara Salem, *Anticolonial Afterlives in Egypt: The Politics of Hegemony*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020; Reem Abou Al-Fadl, 'Neutralism Made Positive: Egyptian Anticolonialism on the Road to Bandung', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 42(2), 2015, pp 219–240; Reem Abou-El-Fadl, *Foreign Policy as Nation Making: Turkey and Egypt in the Cold War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
6. Robbie Shilliam, *The Black Pacific, Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections*, London: Bloomsbury, 2015.
7. Shilliam, *The Black Pacific*, pp 2–3.
8. Shilliam, *The Black Pacific*, p 13.
9. Shilliam, *The Black Pacific*.
10. Shilliam, *The Black Pacific*, p 20.
11. Alina Sajed, 'Fanon, Camus and the Global Colour Line: Colonial Difference and the Rise of Decolonial Horizons', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 26(1), 2013, pp 5–26, p 15.
12. Alina Sajed, 'Insurrectional Politics in Colonial Southeast Asia: Colonial Modernity, Islamic "Counterplots", and Translocal (Anti-colonial) Connectivity', *Globalizations*, 12(6), 2015, pp 899–912.
13. Timothy Seidel, "'Occupied Territory Is Occupied Territory": James Baldwin, Palestine and the Possibilities of Transnational Solidarity', *Third World Quarterly*, 37(9), 2016, pp 1644–1660; Maha Nassar, "'My Struggle Embraces Every Struggle": Palestinians in Israel and Solidarity with Afro-Asian Decolonization Movements', *Arab Studies Journal*, 22(1), Spring 2014, pp 74–101.
14. Debra Thompson, 'Through, Against, and Beyond the Racial State: The Transnational Stratum of Race', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 26(1), 2013, pp 133–151.
15. See work by Sayyid, *Recalling the Caliphate*; Sayyid, 'The Homelessness of Muslimness: The Muslim Umma as a Diaspora' 2010 in Special issue of Human Architecture: Journal of a

- Sociology of Self-Knowledge, titled 'Islam: From Phobia to Understanding – Proceedings of the International', Mohammad H Tamdgidi, Ramón Grosfoguel, Gema Martín-Muñoz (eds), p 129–145; Fouzi Slisli, 'Islam: The Elephant in Fanon's the Wretched of the Earth', *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, 17(1), 2008, pp 97–108.
16. Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017.
  17. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London: Pantheon Books, 1978; Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991; Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004; Nazih Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1995; Fred Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
  18. Gudrun Kramer, 'Making Modern Muslims: Islamic Reform, Hasan Al-Banna, and the Modern Muslim Brotherhood', in Sven Trakulhun and Ralph Weber (eds), *Delimiting Modernities: Conceptual Challenges and Regional Responses*, London: Lexington Books, 2015, p 198; Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, Oxford: OUP, 1996, p 4.
  19. I have heard this relayed by different (often elder) members of the Muslim Brotherhood on several occasions.
  20. UK National Archives – Foreign Office Series 371, files from FO 371/45918 – FO 371/45927 (1945) 'Anglo-Egyptian relations: treaty revision: election results: political situation'; 1946 'Negotiations for Anglo-Egyptian Treaty revision: political situation: Anglo-Egyptian relations: internal situation in Egypt: Egyptian evacuation protocol and plan relating to the withdrawal of British Forces from Egypt', Files from FO 371/53282 – FO 371/53306; 1947  
     'Withdrawal of British Troops from Egypt', files from FO 371/62950 – FO 371/62955; 1947  
     'Breakdown in Anglo-Egyptian Treaty Negotiations' files from FO 371/62960 – FO 371/62966; 1947  
     'Unrest in Egypt: anti-British demonstrations and incidents' files from FO 371/62990 – FO 371/62993. In response to a query put to me about Al-Banna's alleged collaboration with the British at a conference where this paper was previously presented: not one of the many UK government documents (including specific British archival files on the Muslim Brotherhood), nor Brotherhood documents, nor any credible Middle East scholarly study, has provided plausible evidence for this assertion. I found one document within the FO 371 series which contained a letter from Hasan Al-Banna to the Foreign and Colonial Office. In it Al-Banna called for an audience with the British in order to convey the complaints of the Egyptian people - clipped to the bottom of this letter was an internal British FO memo, providing instructions to British officials to ignore Al-Banna's letter to avoid giving the impression that the Muslim Brotherhood was regarded with any seriousness or credibility. At the same time, the British were in extensive covert negotiations with the official nationalist opposition party in Egypt, the Wafd party, while publicly maintaining an image of antagonism with the nationalists. The strength of disdain and antipathy amongst the British towards Al-Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood in the archives was in stark contrast to the language used towards the secular Wafd, the Egyptian government, and even the Egyptian monarch King Farouk with whom the British were at regular loggerheads. The history of the Muslim Brotherhood is contested, coloured by multiple ideological subjectivities, both in favour of and against the organisation; this needs to be taken into consideration in any scholarly discourse about the Brotherhood, and those subjectivities routinely interrogated.
  21. *Memoirs of Hasan Al-Banna*, Karachi: International Islamic Publishers, 1982, p 141.
  22. There are strong connections to Frantz Fanon's work here in *Black Skin White Masks*, London: Pluto Press, 2008; as well as the power of native culture and consciousness to challenge mental colonization in *Wretched of the Earth*, Penguin, 2001. Also see

- Jasmine K Gani, 'Escaping the Nation in the Middle East: A Doomed Project? The Muslim Brotherhood and Fanonian Decolonisation', *Interventions, Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 21(5), 2019, pp 652–670; Jasmine K. Gani, 'Racial militarism and civilizational anxiety at the imperial encounter: From metropole to the postcolonial state', *Security Dialogue*, 52(6), 2021, pp 546–566
23. Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, *The Islamic Movement: Dynamics of Values, Power and Change*, Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1984, p 25.
  24. Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, *A Short History of the Revivalist Movement in Islam*, Delhi: Markazi Maktaba Islami, 1973, p 16.
  25. Mawdudi, *A Short History*, p 18.
  26. See Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, New Jersey, US: Princeton University Press, 2005.
  27. Al-Banna mentioned the polite opposition to his ideas and activism from eminent Sufi scholars in his memoirs, some of whom were won round after he explained his thinking – see *Memoirs*, pp 74–78 and 113; Mawdudi's objections to Sufi practices that he considered 'innovations' to the correct practice of Islam are discussed in 'A Short History', pp 111–113; the Tablighi opposition to Mawdudi's ideas has been corroborated by oral testimony from subcontinent scholars I have spoken to whose teachers were of Tablighi or Sufi inclination and who consistently warned them against following the path of Mawdudi. The legacy of these dynamics can be seen in continued coolness between the different groups of adherents, both in Egypt and South Asian contexts.
  28. Sheikh Jameel Ali, *Islamic movements of the Twentieth Century*, Karachi: Independent Publisher, 2010, p 6.
  29. It is important here not to draw from this statement a false binary between Al-Banna's and Mawdudi's revolutionism and so-called traditionalism among the religious establishments – for a more nuanced approach to the term, see Talal Asad's 'Thinking about Religion with Wittgenstein', *Critical Times*, 3(3), 2020, pp 403–442. Traditionalism is sometimes used to mean literalism, or sufism at the other end of the spectrum. Al-Banna and Mawdudi did not denounce either, even embraced elements of both approaches, and yet posed a challenge to them too. Hence I avoid using the term 'traditional' in this article. Nevertheless, some of the juristic methods preferred by both Mawdudi and Al-Banna had been revived relatively recently at the end of the nineteenth century and were considered unconventional by different elements of the scholarly/juristic spectrum.
  30. Mostahfiz Gani, 'Ibn Ashur and the Development of a Sustainable Islamic Legal Theory', Unpublished Essay, University of Exeter, 2006.
  31. Eran Lerman, 'Mawdudi's Concept of Islam', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 17(4), 1981, pp 492–509.
  32. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*.
  33. Sayyid, *Recalling the Caliphate*.
  34. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1996, p 6.
  35. William McNeill, *In the Pursuit of Power*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013, p 260.
  36. My thanks to the anonymous reviewer for their reflections and for encouraging me to explore this further.
  37. Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones (Ma'alim fi al-Tariq)*, Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1964, pp 3–4.
  38. Mawdudi, *The Islamic Movement*, p 44ß.
  39. See Qutb, *Milestones*, Birmingham, England: Maktabah Booksellers, 2006, pp 12, 23–24.
  40. Phillip Jenkins, 'Clerical Terror', *The New Republic*, 24 December, 2008.
  41. J-P Hartung, *A System of Life: Mawdudi and the Ideologisation of Islam*, London: C. Hurst and Co., 2013, pp 22, 196.
  42. Jameel Ali, *Islamic movements of the Twentieth Century*.
  43. Jameel Ali, *Islamic movements of the Twentieth Century*, p 4.
  44. Fawaz Gerges' excellent study of cross-ideological learning and borrowing in Nasserite Egypt is one of the few examples that shed more light on this relationship (*Making the Arab World*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).
  45. Fawaz Gerges, *The Making of the Arab World*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018.



46. Elisa Giunchi, 'The Political Thought of Abul A'la Mawdūdi', *Politico*, 59(2), 1994, pp 347–375.
47. For more on Muslim activism on issues of civil rights and equality, see Khadijah Elshayyal, *Muslim Identity Politics*, London: IB Tauris, 2018.
48. See Special Issue of *Critical Muslim*: 35, Summer 2020, 'Mapping the Muslim Atlantic', ed. Ziauddin Sarwar, published by Muslim Institute and Hurst Publishers; Daniel Nilsson DeHanas and Peter Mandaville, *Mapping the Muslim Atlantic: US and UK-Muslim Debates on Race, Gender, and Securitization*, London: King's College London, 2019.
49. Of course, translations can be fraught with problems, not least as Talal Asad states 'translation might begin a process of deritualization by treating translation as essentially a move from one set of signs to another' (see Talal Asad, *Secular Translations: Nation-State, Modern Self, and Calculative Reason*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2018, p 64). Here I am not referring to translation of scriptures from Arabic into English, rather I am simply referring to communication and shared knowledge between the communities.
50. While there may be more complex issues at play regarding the translatability of the sacred, everyday communications and interactions between Arab and non-Arab (in this case South Asian) Muslim communities are unlikely to explore these depths. Ultimately simplistic perceptions about proximity to the origins of Islam and who represents authentic practice among embodied relationships have a bearing on the way these communities interact and view each other. Lived experiences and narrations from South Asian Muslims corroborate these unwritten codifications that reflect racialised hierarchies that are mapped on to language. My thanks to the anonymous reviewer for inviting me to explain this point.
51. See Gani, 'Escaping the Nation'.
52. Given the limitations on space I have chosen to focus on the insights we can glean from the biographical information and works of Al-Banna and Mawdudi. But a rich scholarship exists on the processes, character, and tensions that the actual movements embodied – see for example Richard Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969; John Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism*, London: Hurst Publishers 2010; Geroges, *The Making of the Arab World*; Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013; Peter Mandaville, *Global Political Islam*, London and New York: Routledge, 2007.

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