Glossary
GLOSSARY

Ahmadiyya

A group established in the late nineteenth century in the Punjab region of India by Ghulam Ahmad, who proclaimed himself to be a “renewed” of religion; the Christian messiah, and the Islamic Mahdi. In most majority Muslim societies, the Ahmadiyya tend to be regarded as heretical. However, because of their active missionary programs and emphasis on distributing English translations of the Qur’an, they have sometimes had got more success in spreading their message in some majority non-Muslim societies, including the United States, than have other Muslim groups.

Ayatollah

A title for high-ranking Shi’ite clerics in Iran. During the twentieth century, the term came to be used to distinguish rank among the growing population of Shi’ite mujtahids, or authorities on Islamic law. In earlier times, this title was accorded to various individuals through informal consensus among both clerics and their followers. Since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, however, the government now reserves the sole right to officially determine those allowed to bear this title. The Arabic term literally translates as “sign of God”.

Constitution of Medina

An Arabic document preserved in an early biography of Muhammad. It purports to record the original agreement signed between various segments of the population of the oasis town of Yathrib (later Medina) in accepting the leadership of Muhammad over their community.

Da’wa

The call to Islam in the form of preaching and internal Muslim proselytizing. These calls for Muslims to deepen their faith are formulated and pursued in a wide diversity of forms in modern cultural settings ranging...
from Southern California to Southeast Asia. The Arabic term *da’wah* literally translates as “call” or “summons”.

**Fiqh**

Muslim jurisprudence as a field of study and legal practice, Sunni Islam has traditionally recognized four major schools of thought (*madhhab*) in this area: the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi‘i, and Hanbali. The Arabic term *fiqh* literally means “understanding”.

**Hanafi**

One of the four established Sunni schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Its adherents trace their origins to the renowned Muslim jurist Abu Hanifa (d. 767).

**Ijtihad**

The practice of independent jurisprudential reasoning by a qualified Muslim scholar (*muejahid*). For Sunni Muslims, this is pursued through the established processes of legal reasoning in light of principles derived from the authoritative sources of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). In the modern period, agendas for reform have often been cast as exercises in *ijtihad*.

**Ikhwan al- Muslimin**

Often referred to in English as the Muslim Brotherhood (or Society of Muslim Brothers), an organization founded by an Egyptian schoolteacher named Hasan al-Banna (d. 1949). The Ikhwan grew rapidly in the 1930s and 1940s and spread beyond Egypt to other Arab countries, where it has founded hospitals, schools, and other social service organizations. The Ikhwan has also actively promoted agendas for the further Islamization of the governments of countries where they are active, sometimes through political activism and at other times through more violent means.
Jadidism

A General Asian Muslim reformist movement that arose in reaction to loss of sovereignty to Russian rule and the perceived threat of cultural and economic marginalization. Jadidism rejected the authority of traditional ulama to interpret Islam, arguing instead for a direct return to the primary textual sources of Islam.

Jama’at-i Islami

An Islamic revivalist political party founded in 1941 by Sayyid Abu al-A’la Mawdudi. Since the partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947, it has played a particularly important role in Pakistan’s domestic politics. The party's fundamentalist ideology aims to transform Pakistan into a Muslim theocratic state. Although Jama’at-i Islami has historically never done well at the ballot box, since the end of the twentieth century its profile has increased dramatically. In October 2001, Jama’at-i Islami and a coalition of five other conservative religious political parties made unprecedented gains in the general elections. This alliance now forms the third-largest political group in Pakistan's National Assembly.

Jihad

A term today often popularly glossed as “holy war.” jihad has become one of the most hotly debated words in Muslim societies as well as in the West during the modern period. Some Muslims, basing themselves on Sufism and other religious traditions within Islam, have reemphasized dimensions of the inward focus of the “greater jihad” as a struggle for self-mastery. However, in popular discourses throughout the world, jihad is more often used with reference to armed struggle pursued in the defense of Islam against various perceived threats. The term jihad comes from the Arabic root for “exertion.”

Supervisor

Chairman
Department of Islamic Studies
A.M.U., Aligarh
Khilafat Movement

A movement (1919-1924) that crystallized anti-British sentiments among Indian Muslims who rallied behind an attempt to preserve the Ottoman sultan as the spiritual and temporal leader (caliph) of Islam. Drawing the support of Mohandas Gandhi and his noncooperation movement, it marked the height of Hindu-Muslim cooperation and the promise of a unified Indian nationalist movement. Its eventual failure, however, furthered the rise of communal politics, which culminated with the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947.

Mahdi

A figure who Muslims believe will return at the end-time to reestablish a just community before the end of the world. Ithna’ashari Sh’ites believe the twelfth Imam to be the Mahdi. Throughout history, Sunni Muslims have recognized various figures as the Mahdi, most notably in a series of modern millenarian movements directed at least in part toward the opposition of European colonial control in Muslim countries ranging from the Sudan to Indonesia. The name comes from the Arabic for “the guided one.”

Muhammadia

An Indonesian Muslim modernist organization founded at Yogyakarta, Central Java, in 1912 by Kyai Ahmad Dahlan (d. 1923).

Salafis

A term usually used to refer to the original companions of the Prophet. “Salafi” has also become the name for a range of movements in modern Islam that promote the further Islamization of society through an agenda of restoring Islamic values and practices to their “pure” state that is, as they are imagined to have been during Muhammad’s lifetime. Since the late nineteenth century, various groups espousing such positions have been active in various parts of the

Chairman
Department of Islamic Studies
A.M.U., Aligarh
Arab world as well as in more distant Muslim societies. In Arabic, *salaf* literally means “forefathers” or “ancestors.”

**Tablighi Jama’at**

A modern Muslim organization founded in 1926 by the Deobandi scholar and Naqshbandi Sufi, Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhlawi (1885-1944). It has rapidly expanded into a global Islamic movement that promotes an agenda of “purifying” Islam through a strict adherence to the *sunna* of the Prophet and the dictates of the *shari’a*. It considers itself to be an apolitical movement whose primary mission is one of *da’wa*.

**Tajdid**

An Arabic term, literally meaning “renewal,” used in a number of Muslim societies to refer to a considerable range of different programs for religious and social reform.

**Tanzimat**

The reordering or reforms, of the Ottoman administration in the eighteenth century. These reforms set the stage for a comprehensive revision in traditional methods of legal and religious training and thus had a considerable impact upon the Middle Eastern lands of the Ottoman Empire.

**Velayat-e faqih**

The *Ithna’ashari* doctrine that clerics, rather than secular rulers, should have religious and political authority in society while the twelfth Imam is in occultation. In the modern period, Ayatollah Ruhullah Khomeini (1900-1989) reinterpreted this doctrine in light of modern political institutions. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, he established a modern government based upon his own radical reinterpretation of the doctrine of *velayat-e faqih*. This Persian term comes from the Arabic for “guardianship of the jurisprudent.”
Wahhabism

A movement of scripturalist reformism initiated in the Arabian peninsula by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792). He called for a radical reform of society to free Islam from what he viewed as the accretion of ignorance and paganism and to return the faith to what he imagined was its purest form. The Wahhabi movement gained significant political and military support through an early alliance with the Sa’ud clan, and as a result of their occupation of Mecca (a center of scholarship as well as a destination of pilgrimage), Wahhabi doctrine spread beyond the Arabian Peninsula to nearly all parts of the Muslim world. Today it is the dominant interpretation of Islam in Saudi Arabia.