

Has Wahhabi Islam played a part
in the rise of global terrorism?

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Abstract

The term 'Wahhabi' has been applied to a variety of forms of Islam, across various geographical locations, and is often associated with radical Islamic groups that actually have little or no connection to the ideology that Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab espoused. However, the involvement of Saudi nationals in the 9/11 attacks has led to Wahhabi Islam and Saudi Arabia coming under intense scrutiny, and requires us to have a greater understanding of the core tenets of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's teachings. The decade since 9/11 has been characterised by polemical discussions of Islam, and current representations of Wahhabi Islam are dominated by the 'clash of civilisations' attitude. Most accounts therefore reveal little about the true nature of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's doctrine, and leave no room for the possibility of his *dawa* being a peaceful or socially beneficial tradition. My aim is to explore the origins and development of Wahhabi Islam, comparing Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's interpretation of Islam to that of other Islamic thinkers, and examining its place in the modern Islamic milieu in order to evaluate the claims of those who say that it is, in whole or in part, responsible for the rise of global terrorism.

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1. Introduction

The term 'Wahhabi' is often associated with radical Islamic groups that actually have little or no connection to the ideology that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab espoused, and has been applied to a variety of forms of Islam, across various geographical locations. Most accurately, Wahhabi Islam in its purest form is the official Islam of Saudi Arabia, but financial aid and missionary effort originating from the Arabian Gulf has spread this ideology to all areas of the globe. The Saudi citizenship held by the majority of the September 11th, 2001 attackers has led to the attribution of this, and other terrorist acts to Wahhabi doctrine. This accusation requires us to have a deeper understanding of what Wahhabi Islam is, and what practices it sanctions, in order that we can make an informed decision about the supposed danger posed by this type of Islam. The involvement of Saudi nationals in the 9/11 attacks led Saudi Arabia to reaffirm its alliance with Western countries. Also considered an ally during the Gulf War of 1990-91, Saudi Arabia has backed the US-led 'war on terror' since its instigation in 2001, allowing many thousands of US troops to be based on its soil. However, Saudi organisations and charities have been connected with the financing of terrorist organisations, including Osama bin Laden's network¹, and Saudi-backed Wahhabi clerics have also been accused of targeting American Muslims for terrorist recruitment².

The decade since 9/11 has been characterised by polemical discussions of Islam, with religious and political opinions deeply rooted on every side of the debate. "If aggressive hyperbole is one journalistic mode commonly used to describe...Islam generally, the other is misapplied euphemism, usually stemming from ignorance but often deriving from a barely concealed ideological hostility"³. This antagonism and misinformation denies people on all sides the opportunity to reinterpret the issues for themselves, and to accept that the problems and their solutions are constantly evolving. The 'clash of civilisations' theory which has abounded in recent years is fundamentally flawed, and actually serves to justify the claims of those members of society, both Muslim and non-Muslim, who have a propensity for extremist thinking and even violent action. Current representations of Wahhabi Islam are dominated by

¹ Rashid (2002) *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* p.225

² Hamm (2009) 'Prison Islam in the Age of Sacred Terror', in *British Journal of Criminology*, p.667

³ Said (1997) *Covering Islam* p.114

this clash of civilisations outlook that cultivates prejudice and fear, and are recognisable as distinctly pre- and post-9/11. Most accounts reveal little about the true nature of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's doctrine, and leave no room for the possibility of Wahhabism being a peaceful or socially beneficial tradition.

As early as 1997, Said wrote about how, "the *jihad* (holy war) motif...has become the single most important motif in Western media representations of Islam"⁴. Yet the frequent translation of *jihad* into the phrase 'holy war', so often seen in popular media accounts, is reductionist as it ignores the depth of meaning conveyed by the word. *Jihad* represents a Muslim's struggle to live life according to God, and this effort can be internal or external. While *jihad* is a duty for every Muslim, perceptions of what this includes differ. In particular, the connection of such a struggle with physical force is something emphasised by terrorist movements, but rejected by the majority of Muslims. Since *jihad* is frequently made synonymous with terrorism⁵, it may be more helpful to think of terrorist action by Muslims as an act of *hirabah* (warfare) instead of *jihad*. Deriving from the Arabic root *harb* meaning war or combat, the term *hirabah* would free the non-violent language of Islam, including the word *jihad*, from co-optation by terrorists wishing to justify their acts⁶. Equally, the word *qital* (fighting) could be used in place of *jihad*.

Similar issues arise when trying to define terrorism itself. Fisk notes how the term 'terrorist' can be "as dangerous as it [is] misleading"⁷, since "... 'terrorism' no longer means terrorism. It is not a definition; it is a political contrivance. 'Terrorists' are those who use violence against the side that is using the word... To adopt the word means that we have taken a side..."⁸ Often attempts at a definition fall short of encompassing all forms of terrorism, or are so broad as to include acts which may not be considered terrorism by all parties. However, a common denominator in definitions is that terrorism is an activity which is politically motivated. As such, it can be seen as being used by those who are politically powerless and disenfranchised. It may occur within a country, or transcend state boundaries. It is also a premeditated phenomenon, as according to the European Union's definition,

⁴ Ibid., p114

⁵ Abualrub (2003) *Muhammad Ibn Abdil Wahhab: His Life-Story and Mission* p.324

⁶ 'Hirabah' in Esposito (2009) *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*

⁷ Fisk (1990) *Pity the Nation* p.435

⁸ Ibid., p.441

terrorist groups are structured and not randomly formed⁹. The new forms of global terrorism which have emerged since the beginning of the twenty-first century are marked by ‘spectacular’ events, where the aim, apart from to instil fear and alter political situations, is to capture the attention of the worldwide media.

One other use of terminology needs clarifying, and that is the use of the words ‘Wahhabi’ and ‘Wahhabism’ to denote the philosophies and intellectual heritage of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. The term Wahhabi was first used by opponents of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s *dawa* (call to Islam) to isolate his interpretation of Islam from other forms, and to denigrate his followers on the basis that they were considered followers not of Islam, but of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab himself. The term which Ibn Abd al-Wahhab preferred to use was *muwahiddun* (unitarians or monotheists)¹⁰, as this points to the most important characteristic of their belief¹¹. However, Algar is critical of this “self-awarded title” as he feels it implies the dismissal of all other Muslims as polluted by *shirk* (idolatry or associating other beings with God)¹². Indeed, the basis of Islam as a whole is *tawhid* (monotheism), and so the term *muwahiddun* does not adequately distinguish those who adhere to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s doctrine from other Muslims. Similarly, the word *salafist* (a follower of the pious ancestors of Islam) is too vague to be used in this context, since whilst Wahhabi Islam is *salafist*, not all *salafists* are Wahhabis. As the term had become commonplace by the early nineteenth century¹³, and due to its familiarity, ‘Wahhabi’ is generally accepted as legitimate¹⁴. “The term Wahhabi...has also become part of the Kingdom’s internal discourse,”¹⁵ so while not perfect, the descriptions Wahhabi and Wahhabism appear to be the best and most convenient terms to use.

This study will begin with an in-depth assessment of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s interpretation of Islam, examining his views on some of the most important aspects of Islamic theology and practice. I will evaluate how his ideas compare to other Islamic scholars, and how his works fit within the wider Islamic milieu. In Chapter 2 the relationship between Wahhabi Islam and the Saudi state is explored, and

⁹ Dumitriu (2004) ‘The E.U.’s Definition of Terrorism’, in *German Law Journal*, p.590

¹⁰ Zarabozo (2010) *The Life, Teachings and Influence of Muhammad Ibn Abdul-Wahhab* p.157

¹¹ Abualrub, op. cit., p.184

¹² Algar (2002) *Wahhabism: A Critical Essay* p.1

¹³ Zarabozo, op. cit., p.158

¹⁴ al-Uthaymin (2009) *Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab: The Man and His Works* p.xiv

¹⁵ International Crisis Group (2004) ‘Can Saudi Arabia Reform Itself?’, in *Middle East Report*, p.3n

important episodes in this history are discussed. The dissertation goes on to assess what happens when Wahhabi ideology is exported beyond the borders of Saudi Arabia, focusing in particular on the anti-Soviet *jihad* in Afghanistan which was to play a significant part in the development of global terrorism in later years. Chapters 4 and 5 will compare Wahhabi ideology to that of some of the most prominent terrorist groups, including analysing whether it is part of the philosophy of Osama bin Laden and *al-Qaeda*, as has often been suggested. A discussion of the present-day status of Islam in Saudi Arabia will follow, and I will look at how domestic terrorism and accusations of radicalism have affected the role of the Wahhabi *ulema*. I will conclude by summing up some of the most pressing questions regarding global terrorism, and consider whether Wahhabi Islam has played a part in its rise.

2. Literature Review

The fierce debate about Wahhabi Islam is often characterised by polarised and sometimes polemical views. Authors such as Sardar and Oliveti blame Wahhabi Islam for intolerance and even violence, while some, for example Lacey, believe that elements of Saudi society as a whole are in fact responsible for rigid and intolerant attitudes. Others, Commins and DeLong-Bas in particular, find few reasons for concern in Wahhabi ideology, believing instead that it can be a constructive and positive force in society.

Oliveti's book *Terror's Source: The Ideology of Wahhabi-Salafism and its Consequences*, aims to show how this form of Islam is liable for turning some Muslims to terrorism, yet I believe that he has understood much of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's teachings incorrectly. Oliveti states that Wahhabis diminish the role of the Prophet and reject traditional authority¹⁶, but their main focus is on returning Islam to the purity of the time of Muhammad, and the *Sunnah* and *hadith* are upheld as the primary sources of Islamic authority, along with the Quran. Similarly, Oliveti writes that Wahhabis do not respect rulers¹⁷, but Ibn Abd al-Wahhab taught loyalty to a leader in all cases, unless he should violate the tenets of Islam. What emerges from Oliveti's work is a very confused picture of what he understands Wahhabi Islam to be: on the one hand he asserts that the first step in preventing terrorism is to stop the spread of *salafi* forms of Islam, yet he also writes that Wahhabism "...does not, in its current form believe in, allow or encourage terrorism or the slaughter of innocent civilians. On the contrary, it bans these things strictly."¹⁸ This confusion seems to be typical in discussions of Wahhabi Islam, and is one of the main reasons why it is so important to study Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's teachings more closely.

Sardar is also deeply critical of Wahhabi Islam, since he believes that in its current form "[t]he history and culture of Muslim civilization, in all its greatness, complexity and plurality, is totally irrelevant; indeed, it is rejected as deviancy and degeneration", in favour of a constructed notion of Islam during the days of the Prophet¹⁹. Similarly, "...Wahhabism has stripped Islam of all its ethical and moral

¹⁶ Oliveti (2002) *Terror's Source: The Ideology of Wahhabi-Salafism and its Consequences* pp.33;43

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.34

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.77;43

¹⁹ Sardar (2004) *Desperately Seeking Paradise* p.145

content and reduced it to an arid list of dos and don'ts. To insist that anything that cannot be found in a literal reading of the sources and lore of early Muslims is *kufir* – outside the domain of Islam – and to enforce this comprehensive vision with brute force and severe social pressure for complete conformity spells totalitarianism.”²⁰ Sardar writes that modern Wahhabi Islam owes as much to Ibn Taymiyya as it does to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, and as such it is the basis for Islamism²¹. However, Islamism does not amount to terrorism, and many Islamists want to achieve their goals through peaceful means, for example as part of a state's existing political process. The assumption that if Wahhabism has influenced Islamism it is de facto responsible for political radicalism or even terrorism is a worrying trait of some studies.

Lacey feels that rather than Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's teachings, it is the peculiarities of Saudi Arabia itself that lead to the development of extremist attitudes: “If you subject a society to all those pressures – the rigid religion, the tribe, the law, the traditions, the family, the police and, above all, the oppressive political system in which you can't express yourself... And then if you present them with the doctrine of *takfeer*, the idea that all their problems come from outside themselves, and that you should try to destroy people who do not share your own particular view of God, then you are going to end up with some folks who are very dangerous indeed.”²² Yet Hegghammer points out that the tendency in the existing literature to assume that a combination of Saudi society and Wahhabi Islam turns people to terrorism does not explain why such a small minority of Saudi citizens have gone on to carry out terrorist actions²³.

Like Hegghammer, Commins questions whether Wahhabism can be blamed for the violent actions of a few Muslims. While stating that Saudi-funded publications, schools and mosques can be religiously intolerant and even xenophobic²⁴, he thinks that 9/11 and the legacy of Osama bin Laden are responsible for creating the impression that Wahhabi Islam foments terrorism²⁵. Commins' work reflects the

²⁰ Ibid., p.149

²¹ Ibid., pp.145;151. Knudsen suggests that most Islamist groups espouse a Wahhabi ideology – see Knudsen (2005) ‘Islamism in the Diaspora’, in *Journal of Refugee Studies*, p.226

²² Lacey (2009) *Inside the Kingdom* p.226-7

²³ Hegghammer (2006) ‘Militant Islamism in Saudi Arabia: Patterns of Recruitment to “Al-Qaida on the Arabian Peninsula”’, from *Paths to Global Jihad: Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terror Networks*, p.22

²⁴ Commins (2009) *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* pp.192;184

²⁵ Ibid., p.190

views of Abualrub, Zarabozo and al-Uthaymin, who also consider Wahhabi Islam to be primarily about calling Muslims to the correct beliefs and practices²⁶.

Alongside these studies stands *Wahhabi Islam* by DeLong-Bas. Her book attempts to “present for the first time in a Western language the themes of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s writings that are of greatest concern post-9/11: Wahhabi theology and worldview, Islamic law, women and gender, and *jihad*.”²⁷ Of particular importance is her analysis of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s views on *jihad*. Comparing them to the thoughts of other Islamic scholars and those of modern militants, DeLong-Bas finds that “...the reality is that violence is largely and notably absent. Although there are some calls for fighting those who are labelled *kuffar*, the use of this term is much more limited than has traditionally been assumed.”²⁸ Also, “if militant extremism is inherent to Wahhabism, then this theme should dominate the writings of its founder and ideologue,” yet “...Ibn Abd al-Wahhab *never* called for wholesale killing of people, not even apostates.”²⁹ DeLong-Bas directly questions the dominant perceptions about Wahhabi Islam and there is a lot of useful information and analysis in her work, but it is important to note that her work was produced with financial support from the King Abd al-Aziz Foundation for Research and Archives, and therefore may not be as impartial a study as would be the ideal.

What is clear from a brief summary of the available literature is that views on Wahhabi Islam tend to be polarised, and there is a great deal of contradiction among them. While some have found aspects of Wahhabi Islam troubling, many scholars take the stance of apologists and find that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s *dawa*, although strict, was simply a continuation of Islam in the Hanbali strain. I hope my research will go some way to bridging the gaps in the current scholarship, by examining Wahhabi Islam with specific reference to radicalisation and terrorism, but without the antagonistic stance which has dominated so many other studies.

²⁶ Ibid., p.190. See Abualrub, op. cit.: Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was a *da’iyah* (a teacher or caller), p.600; he was continuing the *dawa* of the early generations of Islam, p.681. Also Zarabozo, op. cit.: Ibn Abd al-Wahhab saw *dawa* as the noblest activity, p.111 and al-Uthaymin, op. cit.: Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s call to Islam led to greater security and unity in the communities of Central Arabia, pp.144;151

²⁷ DeLong-Bas (2004) *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad*, p.5

²⁸ Ibid., p.221

²⁹ Ibid., pp.194; 82 [original emphasis]

3. Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab: His Theology and Works

In order to understand the nuances of Wahhabi Islam's ideology and practice, one must briefly examine the context in which Ibn Abd al-Wahhab formulated his *dawa*. Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was born in 1703CE (1115AH), in Uyayna, Najd, to a Hanbali family. Society in the Najd in the eighteenth century was tribal, and Islam was practiced alongside other more ritualistic forms of religious tradition. Consequently, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab considered that even in Arabia, the very heartland of Islam, the religion was being corrupted by un-Islamic ideas and practices and was therefore impure. This led to his focus on a return to a pure Islam, which was unpolluted by innovations and polytheistic customs. Similar ideas would later be developed by thinkers including Muhammad Abduh, and would pave the way for the development of the *salafiyya* movement³⁰.

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab laid down a whole corpus of teachings from which Wahhabis draw their religious, social and political positions. The most important of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's works is *Kitab al-Tawhid* (The Book of Monotheism), which al-Uthaymin calls a "manifesto of Wahhabi doctrines"³¹. Backing his arguments up with Quranic verses, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab demonstrates to his followers how many of the practices which they considered to be commonplace are in fact inconsistent with pure Islam³². The book emphasises *tawhid* and condemns *shirk* in all its forms³³, and like most of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's works it is dedicated to correcting the beliefs and practices of Muslims, since *aqidah* (Islamic theology) was Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's focus³⁴. Similarly important is *al-Usul al-Thalatha* (Three Principles), where Ibn Abd al-Wahhab notes that the three most important aspects of a Muslim's life are to know about God, to work according to that knowledge and to pass one's awareness on to others through preaching³⁵. So the key concepts for Ibn Abd al-Wahhab were *tawhid* and the avoidance of *shirk*, and he believed it his duty to educate other Muslims through his *dawa*.

³⁰ The *salafiyya* movement emphasises the role of the *salaf* (the pious ancestors of Islam) as a model of Islamic behaviour.

³¹ al-Uthaymin, op. cit., p.77

³² Ibid., p.77

³³ Abualrub, op. cit., p.75

³⁴ Zarabozo, op. cit., pp.148; 143

³⁵ al-Uthaymin, op. cit., p.84

As a Hanbali, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's doctrine of *tawhid* was exacting, and it became the cornerstone of his teachings, leading to the designation *al-Muwahhidun* for his followers. Al-Uthaymin notes that the upholding of *tawhid* directs Wahhabis to three possible actions: the denunciation as infidels those who understand yet reject *tawhid*; the denunciation of those who practice or extol polytheism because of the influence or actions of the majority in a community; and the sanctioning of warfare against these two groups in order that Islam remains unadulterated³⁶. In other words, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's strict teachings on *tawhid* could be used to endorse attacks on unbelievers, hypocrites (those whose actions are un-Islamic despite their claims to be Muslim), and polytheists³⁷, in order to defend the purity of Islam. However, DeLong-Bas does not believe that *Kitab al-Tawhid* was a manifesto justifying physical fighting against those with different beliefs, since she feels that in the broader context of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's written works it was intended to edify the *ummah* (Islamic community), not vilify others³⁸.

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab believed that *shirk* was the biggest possible sin and he made a clear distinction between greater and lesser *shirk*³⁹, with lesser *shirk* being hypocrisy or personal glorification, and greater *shirk* being when another being than God is called upon⁴⁰. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's view of *shirk* was rigidly inflexible, and as such he has often been criticised for condemning other Muslims who did not adhere to his interpretation of Islam. Coulson writes that this intolerant interpretation of the notion of *shirk* can be used as the central justification for violent *jihad* on a global scale⁴¹, but Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's teachings focused on correcting the beliefs and practices of other Muslims, not attacking non-believers. In particular, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab has often been accused of strongly censuring Sufism, most notably for its saint worship, because the existence of shrines challenged Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's ideas about *tawhid*. However, DeLong-Bas finds that Sufis are rarely mentioned in Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's works, since he did not target them specifically, but rather targeted practices which he considered errant⁴². Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's desire to eradicate all

³⁶ Ibid., p.114

³⁷ Hiro (1988) *Islamic Fundamentalism* p.109

³⁸ DeLong-Bas, op. cit., p.57

³⁹ Zarabozo, op. cit., pp.355; 241

⁴⁰ DeLong-Bas, op. cit., pp.63-4

⁴¹ Coulson (2004) 'Education and Indoctrination in the Muslim World', in *Policy Analysis*, p.8

⁴² DeLong-Bas, op. cit., p.84

shirk even extended to opposition to the worship being carried out at Muhammad's tomb, since he believed that it was putting the Prophet on a level with God⁴³.

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab also strongly criticised any *bida* (innovations to Islam that appear as contrary to the Quran and *Sunnah*) as they have the potential to threaten the Islamic community by challenging *tawhid*⁴⁴, and because the Prophet rejected any embellishments to or deletions from Islam⁴⁵. This notion is characteristic of the Hanbali *madhhab*, but is also an established ruling in the other schools of Islamic jurisprudence⁴⁶. However, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab attacked the other orthodox *madhhabs* for what he viewed as compromise with Sufi *bida*⁴⁷, including the building of minarets on mosques, and the use of the *subha* (prayer beads)⁴⁸. As Ibn Abd al-Wahhab took the Quran and *Sunnah* as the only legitimate sources of Islamic law, thus the normative form of Islam, innovations could never become normative for him and would remain merely 'popular'⁴⁹. His grandson Abdullah wrote, "as regards *Bid'at*, our doctrine is that *Bid'at* is whatever has been introduced after the third generation from Muhammad is absolutely sinful"⁵⁰. Yet *bida*, although against *sharia*, did not cause Ibn Abd al-Wahhab to view a Muslim as an unbeliever⁵¹.

Kepel, deeply critical of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's call, has written that independent thinking and reasoning along the lines of *ijtihad*, is not allowed in Wahhabi doctrine, and solutions should be sought via the literal implementation of the sacred texts and the tradition of the Prophet⁵² (*taqlid* of the Prophet). However, this view is in sharp contrast to the actual teachings of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, which preferred *ijtihad* over *taqlid* (blind imitation), for any area where the Quran and *Sunnah* were unclear. Denny says that while Ibn Abd al-Wahhab preached a return to *ijtihad*, what he rejected was rational speculation⁵³, as this has no basis in the Quran and *Sunnah*. For the most part, Islamic reformers emphasise the believer's right to practice *ijtihad*, and here Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was no different, since he viewed a renewal of personal

⁴³ Hodgson (1974) *The Venture of Islam* p.160

⁴⁴ Esposito (2002) *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* p.118

⁴⁵ Abualrub, op. cit., p.160

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.33

⁴⁷ Gibb (1969) *Islam: A Historical Survey* p.114

⁴⁸ Denny (1994) *An Introduction to Islam* p.326

⁴⁹ Abualrub, op. cit., p.325

⁵⁰ Abdullah (2004) *History and Doctrines of the Wahhabis* p.35

⁵¹ Ibid., p.7

⁵² Kepel (2004) *The War for Muslim Minds* p.158

⁵³ Denny, op. cit., p.327

faith as necessary in order for Islam as a whole to be renewed and revitalised. Since the *hadith* were considered preferable to the intrinsic weakness of human reasoning⁵⁴, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab called for a return to the Quran and *Sunna*, and secondly to the *ijma* (consensus) of the time of the Prophet's companions⁵⁵, before accretions to Islam altered it.

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab considered *sharia* to be the ultimate form of law, which should be employed exclusively in place of any other system of law, whether secular or tribal in nature. Lambton writes that *sharia* has absolute authority, since it preceded the state and was its law⁵⁶; thus, any departure from *sharia* is to be regarded as innovation and consequently un-Islamic⁵⁷. The implementation of *sharia* also suited Ibn Abd al-Wahhab because it could act as a means of social control within a society which was tribal and fractured. Following the Hanbali example, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was conservative in his interpretation of *sharia*, but was in favour of a methodology that considered everything not explicitly forbidden in the Quran and *Sunnah* to be permissible⁵⁸.

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's 1744 relocation from Uyayna to Diriya was referred to by his followers as *Al-Hijra* (migration), because it was viewed in the same light as the Prophet's journey from Mecca to Medina⁵⁹; both men were forced to flee persecution for their beliefs and resettle elsewhere. Although *hijra* was not prominent in Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's writings, he considered it a duty for Muslims who were unable to practice their religion⁶⁰, and preferable to fighting others⁶¹. For converts to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's form of Islam, the '*hijra*' was both physical and spiritual: tribal law was replaced with adherence to *sharia*, and social bonds formed in one's previous way of life were replaced with membership in his Islamic Brotherhood (*Ikhwan*)⁶².

Many scholars have considered *takfir* (calling a Muslim an unbeliever), to be a core component of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's doctrine and practices. For example, Hiro and

⁵⁴ Kepel (2004) op. cit., p.159

⁵⁵ al-Uthaymin, op. cit., p.139

⁵⁶ Lambton, A. K. S. 'The Clash of Civilizations: Authority, Legitimacy and Perfectability', in Burrell (1989) *Islamic Fundamentalism*, p.39

⁵⁷ Hiro (1988) op. cit., p.109

⁵⁸ DeLong-Bas, op. cit., pp.110-1

⁵⁹ Hiro (1988) op. cit., p.110

⁶⁰ Commins, op. cit., p.35

⁶¹ DeLong-Bas, op. cit., p.236

⁶² Hiro (1988), op. cit., p.110

Algar both believe that any Muslim who did not follow Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's interpretation of Islam was regarded as an apostate⁶³, and Hodgson goes so far as to say that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab denounced other Muslims as infidels to be killed⁶⁴. Kepel writes that *takfir* was exercised zealously in the period following the 1744-45 alliance between Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Ibn Saud⁶⁵, and Fattah that "...the conviction that even 'orthodox' Muslims could be considered unbelievers in the context of the 'true' faith may have legitimized the notion that violence was a necessary tool in the pursuit of Islamic re-education."⁶⁶ This association of Wahhabi Islam with *takfir* is problematic because *takfir* can unquestionably lead to violence, and therefore Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's teachings have been linked with violence and intolerance towards other Muslims. However, Abualrub says that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab refuted the notion that any Muslim who was not a Wahhabi was automatically considered *kuffar*⁶⁷ (unbeliever). Whilst Ibn Abd al-Wahhab said that not everybody making the testimony of faith was a true Muslim, he was careful to distinguish between greater and lesser *kufr*⁶⁸ (unbelief). According to Zarabozo, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab would not declare anybody an unbeliever until they fully understood and yet continued to reject *tawhid*, preferring to continue with a life of *shirk* and *kufr*⁶⁹. Abdullah wrote, "we brand as *Kafirs* only those who having heard our call to the true faith, are deaf to it, and who having heard the proofs in its favour, obstinately reject it"⁷⁰. Zarabozo also states that for Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, unlike for the Khawarij and other extremist groups, committing a sin does not automatically make a person an apostate⁷¹. So Zarabozo demonstrates that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab did not employ *takfir* freely, and for Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, *dawa* meant changing society 'with the hand'; he aimed to do this through preaching and books, financial aid, mosque building and missionary activity⁷².

⁶³ Ibid., p.110; Algar, op. cit., pp.20-1

⁶⁴ Hodgson, op. cit., p.160

⁶⁵ Kepel (2004) op. cit., p.159

⁶⁶ Fattah (2003) 'Wahhabi Influences, Salafi Responses', in *Journal of Islamic Studies*, p.128

⁶⁷ Abualrub, op. cit., p.585

⁶⁸ Zarabozo, op. cit., pp.97; 241

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.99

⁷⁰ Abdullah, op. cit., p.33

⁷¹ Zarabozo, op. cit., p.100

⁷² Ibid., pp.285; 115

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab set down three conditions for launching *jihad*, which must all be preceded by an attempt to call the opponents to Islam⁷³. These were: when a Muslim force meets an enemy force, when an enemy force approaches Muslim territory, or when the legitimate Islamic leader deems it necessary⁷⁴. *Jihad* is therefore always a defensive military action, and always against adult male combatants, since Ibn Abd al-Wahhab rejected the killing of non-combatants, women and children⁷⁵. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab viewed *jihad* as a collective duty, and backed up his ideas on the subject with Quranic verses such as 8:61, which says that if an opponent inclines to peace, one should incline to peace also⁷⁶. As such, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab fits within Rudolph Peters' classification of a modernist *jihad* writer⁷⁷, since he emphasised the defensive qualities of *jihad*. Significantly, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab rejected *jihad* against people whose practices were simply not in keeping with his interpretation of Islam, and although *Kitab al-Tawhid* repeatedly condemns these people, it does not call for any form of violence against them⁷⁸. This is important because Wahhabis have frequently been accused of attacking other Muslims, but clearly Ibn Abd al-Wahhab did not sanction this kind of behaviour. Indeed, DeLong-Bas finds that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab emphasised *dawa* over *jihad* because the purpose of his mission was to change peoples' practices:

Someone who does not adhere to or believe in *tawhid* is necessarily categorized as a non-Muslim and is excluded from the Muslim community (*ummah*). It is important to note that exclusion from the *ummah* did not mean that such a person was necessarily and immediately subject to *jihad* as holy war. Rather, it opened the door to proselytization and pointed to the need to educate such a person. *Jihad* as holy war became a possibility in certain clearly defined circumstances, but it was neither a requirement nor a foregone conclusion.⁷⁹

⁷³ DeLong-Bas, op. cit., p.204

⁷⁴ Commins, op. cit., p.25

⁷⁵ DeLong-Bas, pp.241; 288; 204

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp.201; 219

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.242. Rudolph Peters (1996) *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam* (Princeton: Markus Wiener), p.150, quoted in DeLong-Bas p.228: Peters identifies 3 categories of *jihad* writings, traditionalist-classicist, modernist and fundamentalist. While fundamentalists struggle for the expansion of Islam and Islamic ideals, and can therefore be equated to many modern terrorists, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab took a modernist stance which sought *jihad* only when necessary to defend Islam or the *ummah*.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp.203; 251

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.59

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's *dawa* did not, therefore, differ significantly from other Hanbali thinkers; it did not represent a break with orthodox thought in Islam, or a new *madhhab* in itself. He emphasised the importance of the Quran and *hadith*, and permitted *ijtihad* for any area which was not explicit in the texts. He also, like other Hanbalis, accepted rulings from the other recognised *madhhabs* where his own was unclear⁸⁰. Consistent with the Hanbali school of thought, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab did not tolerate innovations or lapses in practice among Muslims, and when he censured other Muslims for what he viewed as corruption in Islam, he was following in the footsteps of other Hanbali scholars. It is understandable that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's ideas were criticised by those outside the Hanbali school, since each *madhhab* differs in their interpretations of the Quran and *hadith* and in the emphasis that is placed upon the various aspects of Islam. What can make Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's interpretation of Islam appear as different from other forms or even radical, is merely the prominence he placed on certain ideas and practices over others, most notably in his exacting doctrine of *tawhid*.

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab is often condemned as taking his ideology directly from Ibn Taymiyya, an Islamic scholar frequently criticised for having an intolerant approach which inspires violence and sectarianism. Ibn Taymiyya has been regarded as the key reference for the Sunni Islamist movement, as his works were cited to justify actions such as the assassination of Sadat in 1981, and even to censure the Saudi Arabian government and to call for it to be deposed in the mid-1990s⁸¹. One of the core principles of Islamism is loyalty to the *salaf*, something emphasised by the teachings of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Ibn Taymiyya but also by most Islamic revivalists throughout history. Kepel frequently refers to the similarities between the ideas of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Abd al-Wahhab⁸²; both men were Hanbali reformers who called for the renewal of Islam and the elimination of un-Islamic accretions, even when these innovations had gained the consensus of jurists, and Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine also opposed the cult of saints, *shirk* and the *taqlid* of jurists. Like Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, Ibn Taymiyya taught obedience to a ruler unless they violated sharia⁸³, but unlike Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, Ibn Taymiyya had quite extreme

⁸⁰ Hiro (2002) *War Without End: The Rise of Islamist Terror and Global Response* p.38

⁸¹ Kepel (2003) *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* p.72

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp.72; 220 and Kepel (2004) *op. cit.*, p.157

⁸³ Commins, *op. cit.*, p.115

views on *jihad* as armed struggle, and strongly praised martyrdom, something which Ibn Abd al-Wahhab never discussed⁸⁴. DeLong-Bas demonstrates how in *Kitab al-Tawhid*, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab referred to many other sources, and only cited Ibn Taymiyya three times out of a total of 170 references⁸⁵.

However, when Wahhabism moved beyond the boundaries of Najd and into the wider Muslim world in the nineteenth century, the conscious citation of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim by Wahhabi *ulema* increased⁸⁶. These new ideas were incorporated into Wahhabi doctrine at a time when Wahhabism found itself threatened by the Ottoman sultan: “Ibn Taymiyya provided a worldview and ideology that allowed for revolution against an unfaithful ruler by denying him his status as a Muslim on the basis of his failure to fulfil his responsibilities to Islam”⁸⁷. This fusion of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s and Ibn Taymiyya’s writings is not present in Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s original texts, and the aims of his *dawa* were very different to Ibn Taymiyya’s. Although Ibn Abd al-Wahhab himself adopted a little of Ibn Taymiyya’s thinking, he was influenced more by Ibn Hanbal⁸⁸, so much so in fact, that Wahhabis can be viewed as ‘neo-Hanbalis’⁸⁹. Yet DeLong-Bas finds this notion problematic, since she feels that Ibn Taymiyya’s membership of the Hanbali *madhhab* has coloured the entire school with a supposed propensity for intolerance which consequently affects views of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab as a Hanbali⁹⁰. Although Ibn Taymiyya espoused a fundamentalist attitude, his views did not dominate the Hanbali *madhhab* during Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s lifetime, so Ibn Taymiyya was only a small part of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s inspiration⁹¹.

Gätje considers Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and his followers to be the first Islamic reformers with a theological leaning⁹². In particular, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s criticism of the corruption of Islam by *bida* and *shirk* was to be a key component of almost all

⁸⁴ DeLong-Bas, op. cit., p.254

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.108

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp.278; 340n. Ibn Qayyim was a student of Ibn Taymiyya, and emphasised the *salaf*’s example as the ideal.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.245

⁸⁸ Hiro (1988) op. cit., p.41

⁸⁹ Gibb, op. cit., p.122

⁹⁰ DeLong-Bas, op. cit., p.249

⁹¹ Voll (1975) ‘Muḥammad Ḥayyā al-Sindī and Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab: An Analysis of an Intellectual Group in Eighteenth-Century Madīna’, in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, p.39

⁹² Gätje (1996) *The Qur’an and its Exegesis* p.23

subsequent reform movements in Islam. Indeed, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Wahhabism was the sole expression of the desire to return to the pure monotheism of early Islam⁹³, and even to the present day this is a tendency which can be seen in many Islamic movements. Gibb says it was the first assertion of the ‘Arab idea’⁹⁴, which was later followed by many Islamic thinkers. The apparent inflexibility of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s ideas can perhaps be attributed to the social and geographical conditions of Arabia during his lifetime, as Islam in the Najd did not have to contend with any other form of well-established religion⁹⁵. This changed with the infiltration of secular and modernist political, religious and social concepts from the end of the eighteenth century. One major result of this was the development of the revivalist *salafiyya* school of thought in the late nineteenth century. Calling for a return to the Islam of the *salaf*, key thinkers of the *salafiyya* have included Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida. Elias notes how Rida, an adherent of the Hanbali school, supported some of the ideas of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab⁹⁶. The main points of correlation between the two are their anti-Sufi stance, and the notion that the principles on which Islam is founded are fixed: “In defending the unchanging doctrines of Islam against all attacks [Rida] was to draw closer to the Hanbali interpretation of it, and later to Wahhabism...”⁹⁷

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s ideas and practices were shaped by the prevailing political and socio-economic conditions of the Najd in his lifetime. His ideology represented an internal challenge within Islam⁹⁸ because it aimed to change the way in which Muslims thought about and practiced their religion. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab succeeded in replacing tribal affiliations with loyalty to his interpretation of Islam, and so unified many Muslims in the Arabian Peninsula. Society came to be organised around Islam, and as such Ibn Abd al-Wahhab can be seen to have developed an *ummah*, with his doctrine as the core of that community’s existence. His interpretation of Islam was in line with that of the Hanbali *madhhab*, and represented a continuation of this school

⁹³ Gibb, op. cit., p.115

⁹⁴ Ibid., p.115

⁹⁵ Hiro (1988) op. cit., p.272

⁹⁶ Elias (1999) *Islam* p.89

⁹⁷ Hourani (2005) *A History of the Arab Peoples* p.308. See also Ling (1968) *A History of Religion East and West* p.385: under Rida’s leadership, the *salafiyya* movement approached the “puritanism” of Wahhabism. Also Adib-Moghaddam (2006) *The International Politics of the Persian Gulf* p.112: Rida allied himself with Ibn Saud, and thus turned into an advocate of Wahhabi Islam

⁹⁸ Gibb, op. cit., p.114

of thought, not a break with orthodox Islam. His use of *takfir* and *jihad* were far more limited than has been often assumed, and were restricted to very specific conditions; this is not something one would expect to find if his ideas have in fact been influential on global terrorism. In his search for a return to a pure, uncorrupted Islam, and his emphasis on *tawhid*, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab paved the way for reformers in later centuries, particularly those of the *salafiyya* movement.

4. Wahhabi Islam and the Saudi State

During Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's lifetime, he controlled the alliance that he had made with the al-Saud family, as the secular, military forces of the family were reliant on the religious unity that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab provided. When Ibn Abd al-Wahhab died in 1792CE, the al-Saud's began to dominate the union, and Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's followers were used to legitimate their grip on authority. In this way, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's religious ideology was transformed into a political tool. In 1913, Abdul Aziz began to set up colonies of *ikhwan*, referred to as *hijar* (migrant communities, from the plural of *hijra*), which became the religious, political, educational, administrative and military centres for Wahhabism⁹⁹. Authority in the *hijar* was hierarchical and mosque-centred, with the *ulema* playing a central role in everyday life. Religious police (*mutawwin*), trained in Riyadh, also played a prominent part in imparting Wahhabi doctrine to the colony members; those not performing the prescribed Islamic rituals, and those caught smoking, dancing or singing, or wearing gold or silk were punished by the *mutawwin*¹⁰⁰. The duty to command right and forbid wrong, as represented by the religious police, was not a central focus of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's writings, but became prominent in the early twentieth century¹⁰¹. By 1920, there were 200 *ikhwan* settlements, each with a population of around 2000, and they provided the vast majority of the personnel for Abdul Aziz's army¹⁰². His fervour for territory was combined with a pragmatic appreciation of the way in which Wahhabism could help him establish a state in the Arabian Peninsula.

Every military campaign Abdul Aziz instigated was expressed in Islamic terms, as a *jihad* to punish apostates and dissenters¹⁰³. This was in stark contrast to the military activities of Muhammad Ibn Saud in the mid-eighteenth century, when despite their mutually beneficial relationship, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab refused to legitimate all of Ibn Saud's campaigns as *jihad*, believing instead that *dawa* should be used before military force¹⁰⁴. Abdul Aziz was successful in expanding his territory, and hence the territory which was dominated by Wahhabi Islam, but by 1929, the *ikhwan* had surpassed Abdul Aziz's ability to control them, and after defeating them militarily,

⁹⁹ Hiro (1988) op. cit., p.110

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.110

¹⁰¹ Commins, op. cit., pp.94-5

¹⁰² Hiro (2002) op. cit., p.116

¹⁰³ Hiro (1988) op. cit., p.111

¹⁰⁴ DeLong-Bas, op. cit., p.35

the *hijar* lost both political sway and cultural importance. Although the *ikhwan* represented a revival of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's reformism, their beliefs and practices took a significant departure from his teachings. Commins notes how it is unclear where the *ikhwan* took their inspiration from, since their doctrine of separation was so extreme that even other Wahhabis were condemned by them¹⁰⁵. The *ikhwan* colonies represent one period of modern-day Saudi Arabia's, and consequently Wahhabi Islam's, history, but they were not exact replicas of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's interpretation of Islam or of social organisation in the Arabian Peninsula during his lifetime; rather, they represent the employment of aspects of his ideology by a secular force, for the purpose of state-building and social control. Despite the support they gave to Abdul Aziz during the last stages of the *ikhwan*, after the collapse of the *hijar* system the Wahhabi *ulema* were consigned to the supervision of morality and positions within education¹⁰⁶. This change in their role and status was to have a significant impact upon the situation in the kingdom in later decades.

In 1952, Nasser came to power in Egypt, and put in place a socialist regime in the country. His measures of repression, imprisonment, and the attribution of an assassination attempt to the Muslim Brotherhood forced a significant number of its members to flee Egypt. Many of these pious and educated Muslims sought refuge in Saudi Arabia and the influx of Egyptians continued throughout the 1950s. Immigration peaked around the time of Sayyid Qutb's execution in 1966, and was bolstered by Syrians and Iraqis fleeing the nationalist, Baathist regimes of their home countries too. The Saudi government viewed their arrival with favour, giving them leading positions inside the kingdom on the understanding that they were not allowed to preach their religious or political doctrines¹⁰⁷. For the Saudi state, the Muslim Brotherhood could be used to fill the vacuum between the Saudi monarchy's practical plans for development, and the intellectually stagnant Wahhabi *ulema*¹⁰⁸, which resisted attempts at modernisation:

In the melting pot of Arabia during the 1960s, local clerics trained in the Wahhabite tradition joined with activists and militants affiliated with the Muslim Brothers who had been exiled from the neighbouring countries of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq... This blend of traditionalists and

¹⁰⁵ Commins, op. cit., p.83

¹⁰⁶ Kepel (2004) op. cit., p.162

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p.171

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p.86

modern Islamist militants served the kingdom's interests well at first... But eventually this volatile mixture would explode in the Saudis' hands¹⁰⁹.

Some of these Egyptian migrants were heavily influenced by the radical Muslim Brotherhood ideologue, Sayyid Qutb. Qutb emphasised the need to change society through political action, of which a part included physical *jihad*. Qutb argued that revolution was acceptable in Egypt because the country's rulers were not true Muslims¹¹⁰. For Qutb, it was not just the Egyptian government which were un-Islamic, for he viewed Egyptian society as a whole as being in a state of *jahiliyya* (ignorance, particularly with regards to Islam), and by the end of his life he had come to view the entire world, including Muslim societies, as *jahiliyya*, since he felt that no true Islamic community existed anymore¹¹¹. While Ibn Abd al-Wahhab taught a doctrine of *hijra* in so far as he felt Muslims should not associate closely with non-Muslims or Muslims who shared different practices, for Qutb *hijra* was a literal physical withdrawal from society which enabled a person to prepare for their struggle for Islam. Related to the concept of *jahiliyya* are ideas about *takfir* and *istihlal* (considering that which is religiously forbidden to be acceptable): terrorism has been justified by some with the assertion that when society is in a state of *jahiliyya*, behaviour that is *haram* (religiously forbidden) can become *halal* (religiously permitted)¹¹², and thus acts of terrorism can be validated as a means of defending or establishing a true Islamic society. Another notion which Qutb emphasised was the idea that sovereignty belongs to God alone, and this view is cited by many contemporary terrorists when justifying attacks on governing structures in Muslim states. So Qutb's doctrine provides an explicit manifesto for revolutionary and even violent action. His thinking is a clear influence on many of today's global terrorists, and also influenced a number of Saudi youth when it was transmitted in Saudi Arabia's colleges by Muslim Brothers including Sayyid's brother Muhammad Qutb. This was to have a significant impact in later decades, when Saudi Arabia was the subject of calls for revolution, and even terrorist activity by its own citizens.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.156

¹¹⁰ Baker (2003) *Islam Without Fear* p.19

¹¹¹ Sardar, op. cit., p.35

¹¹² Baker, op. cit., p.20

In 1962, the Muslim World League (MWL) was established in Mecca, and Kepel says that “...this was the first coherent and systematic institution whose avowed interest was to “Wahhabize” Islam worldwide”, through the distribution of the works of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Ibn Taymiyya, missionary activity, and fundraising for building mosques and the subsidisation of Islamic associations¹¹³. Whilst it was no doubt hoped that the economic aid and social support the MWL provided would effectively translate into an ideological preference for Saudi Wahhabism among its recipients, there is no evidence to suggest that the MWL actively sought to exclude all other forms of Islam. The finance for its projects came largely from private donors and the royal family within Saudi Arabia¹¹⁴, and the League is managed by *ulema* from the Saudi religious establishment. By the late 1970s, the League had begun to open offices in Europe, primarily focused on working with local Muslim associations to build mosques¹¹⁵. Commins notes that the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, also led by Saudi Arabia, is essentially the same kind of organisation as the MWL, but says that its reading lists include far more of Sayyid Qutb’s works than Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s¹¹⁶; if true, then this is potentially worrying in terms of the radicalising influence that these texts may have over young Muslims throughout the world.

The other Saudi-dominated organisation which is of importance is the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), created in 1969. Kepel notes how the installation of a general secretariat in Jeddah demonstrated the strong Saudi commitment to the OIC, an organisation whose charter promotes Islamic solidarity and aims to protect the Holy Places¹¹⁷. Initiatives implemented by the OIC include the pioneering Islamic Development Bank, which became operational in 1975 and was based in Jeddah. This finances development projects in the poorest Muslim countries, and the Islamic banking network which ensued enabled Saudi Arabia to gain support from the middle classes in much of the Muslim world. After the boom in oil prices in 1973, Saudi Arabia experienced a vast increase in its political power internationally; oil-producing states were now not only able to dominate the discourse between Muslim countries, but also had a commanding voice on the world stage. For Saudi

¹¹³ Kepel (2003) op. cit., p.52

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p.52

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p.194

¹¹⁶ Commins, op. cit., p.153

¹¹⁷ Kepel (2003) op. cit., p.74

Arabia, this meant increased opportunities to promote Wahhabism throughout the world.

In 1984, the King Fahd Holy Koran Printing Complex was opened, and millions of Qurans and Wahhabi texts have since been distributed throughout the world by the Saudi Ministry for Religious Affairs¹¹⁸. Eickelman and Piscatori estimate the number of Qurans printed in Saudi Arabia to be around 9.5 million a year, of which 3 million are not in Arabic; between 1980 and 1992, more than 50 million Qurans were sent outside the kingdom, and 5 million more were given to pilgrims during the *hajj*¹¹⁹. This meant that for the very first time in Islam's history, books, pamphlets and tapes with an identical doctrine could be found throughout the *ummah*, and so all forms of Islam except Wahhabism were excluded¹²⁰; this could potentially result in a decrease in pluralism within Islam. Saudi funding has also built more than 1500 mosques across the globe¹²¹, but according to Burke,

“The Saudis provide hard-line clerics... In Pakistan, money from the Persian Gulf has funded the massive expansion of *madrasas* (Islamic schools) that indoctrinate young students with virulent, anti-Western dogma. This Saudi-funded proselytism has enormously damaged long-standing tolerant and pluralist traditions of Islamic observance in East and West Africa, the Far East and Central Asia... And many of the mosques known for radical activity in Germany, the United Kingdom, and Canada were built with donations from private and state sources in Saudi Arabia.”¹²²

Some people feel that through this distribution of capital, “the Saudi government is actively abetting the radicalization of Islamic education”¹²³. Yet if what is being taught follows the teachings of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, there should be little reason for concern if the analyses of Commins, Abualrub and DeLong-Bas are to be believed. However, it is more likely that aspects of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's *dawa* have been combined with the radical ideas of Qutb and several modern jihadist thinkers, as these would provide the anti-Western doctrine which researchers such as Burke find to be prevalent in Saudi-funded institutions.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p.72

¹¹⁹ Eickelman and Piscatori (1996) *Muslim Politics* p.173

¹²⁰ Kepel (2003) op. cit., p.72

¹²¹ Ibid., p.72

¹²² Burke (2004) ‘Al-Qaeda’, in *Foreign Policy*, p.24

¹²³ Coulson, op. cit., p.12

Alongside the newly settled migrants, the vast increase in oil wealth during the 1970s quickly brought change to the Arabian Peninsula. Growing outside influence, particularly from Western nations, and a society which was becoming increasingly fractured internally, led the Saudi monarchy to implement a gradual process of change with regards to state institutions, economics and religion. For example, in 1970, the Office of Grand Mufti was replaced with a Ministry of Justice. This meant that instead of being an independent religious authority, the head of the *sharia* courts was now subordinated beneath the political authority of the King¹²⁴. The era of King Faisal (r. 1964-1975CE) also saw attempts at reform in education, with programmes for the mass education of girls as well as boys being introduced. Religious institutions such as the Islamic University at Medina were able to attract many non-Saudi students because they represented a religious alternative to the secular higher education institutes which were dominating the rest of the Arab world¹²⁵. These religious universities offered funding which made them attractive to lower class students, but in many cases they served to widen the cultural and economic divide between the devoutly religious and comparatively secular aspects of Saudi society, since job prospects for graduates from these institutions were poor¹²⁶. Those sectors of society dissatisfied with the monarchy subsequently grew, as did the popularity of dissident religious trends which were opposed to the al-Sauds. Forcible relaxation of the *ulema*'s grip on their traditional areas of supervision changed their standing in society, and ultimately led to dissent among those clerics unhappy with this reduction in their power. So it was not just some Saudi-educated youth who became radicalised, but some of the establishment *ulema* too.

One radical influence on the Saudi *ulema* was Muhammad Surur, a Syrian Muslim Brother, who settled in Burayda, Saudi Arabia in 1965. Here he taught at a religious institute where he extended his influence over different generations of Saudis¹²⁷, including Salman al-Awda, who was to become a leading member of the *ulema*¹²⁸. Surur's salafist ideology was consistent with the Muslim Brotherhood's, in that his ultimate goal was to seize political power in order to enforce *sharia* via the authority

¹²⁴ Hiro (2002) op. cit., p.124

¹²⁵ Commins, op. cit., p.126

¹²⁶ Ibid., p.128

¹²⁷ Kepel (2004) op. cit., p.177

¹²⁸ Lia (2008) *Architect of Global Jihad* p.134

of the state¹²⁹. However, his methods for achieving this aim became gradually more extreme. Although opposed to a violent revolutionary struggle, Surur's preaching threatened the stability of Saudi Arabia because it combined Muslim Brotherhood activism and some of the revolutionary thinking of Sayyid Qutb with Wahhabi theology¹³⁰. In 1973 he was asked to leave the country, largely because his writings were denigrating the Wahhabi *ulema* for the concessions they were making to the monarchy¹³¹. Although Surur was a critic of the jihadist trend which arose in the 1980s, his blend of Qutbist aspects of the Muslim Brotherhood's thought with official Wahhabism went on to influence the *sahwa* (awakening)¹³², a revival of Islam in Saudi Arabia which began after the Grand Mosque seizure of 1979.

On November 20th, 1979, the Grand Mosque in Mecca, *al-Masjid al-Haram*, was seized by a group of militants who wished to overthrow the Saudi monarchy and end Saudi allegiance to Western powers. Their leader was Juhayman ibn Saif al-Utaybi, a former member of the National Guard, where military discipline, strong anti-Western rhetoric and fierce piety prevailed¹³³. He also studied under Ibn Baz, a leading ideologue of establishment Islam, at the Islamic University of Medina¹³⁴. Al-Utaybi took Ibn Baz's instructions to return to the pure teachings of the Quran and *hadith*, and combined this traditional Wahhabi concept with a non-Wahhabi, physical *hijra* to Qasim, where he set up a network of cells into which he imparted a militant piety in his disciples¹³⁵. In 1976, he moved to Riyadh where he published a pamphlet entitled 'Rules of Allegiance and Obedience: the Misconduct of Rulers', in which he lambasted the Saudi monarchy for wrongs including corruption and greed, deviation from the *sharia*, and association with unbelievers¹³⁶. Al-Utaybi also explored and developed the concept of the *mahdi*¹³⁷, thus creating a hybrid ideology with the capacity for revolution. Kepel calls this doctrine "ultra-Wahhabi" or "extreme Wahhabis"¹³⁸, showing that it is not part of orthodox Wahhabi Islam.

¹²⁹ Kepel (2004) op. cit., p.177

¹³⁰ Lia, op. cit., p.135

¹³¹ Kepel (2004) op. cit., p.177

¹³² Lia, op. cit., p.93

¹³³ Hiro (1988) op. cit., p.128

¹³⁴ Ibid., p.128

¹³⁵ Ibid., p.129

¹³⁶ Ibid., p.129

¹³⁷ Ibid., p.129

¹³⁸ Kepel (2003) op. cit., pp.212; 119

The Mosque seizure lasted two weeks, during which time hundreds of pilgrims making the *hajj* were taken as hostages, and at least 200 people were killed. It significantly affected Saudi Arabia's standing in the Muslim world, not just because it occurred at Islam's holiest site, but because Saudi Arabia had to call for outside help to end the siege. More worrying still for the Saudi leadership was that the militants came mainly from Najd, the traditional power base of the monarchy and Wahhabi Islam. A large number of the militants were also theological students trained in Saudi colleges, but not all were Saudi citizens¹³⁹. This kind of attack was new, since it came from inside the Islamic fold, and it brought considerable ramifications for the Saudi leadership. It demonstrated to the Saudi government for the first time that their centres for religious education were no longer teaching just the approved Wahhabi syllabus, but that other ideologies were influencing a whole generation of students. The attack on the Grand Mosque represented an attack on the legitimacy of the al-Saud's grip on power, but it was not just the monarchy whose legitimacy was challenged. For the *ulema*, the seizure was a direct threat to their authority too, as it threatened their standing not just in the eyes of the Saudi rulers but in the eyes of Muslims worldwide. Since the event brought the entire Wahhabi establishment under scrutiny, and led to government aims to introduce alternatives to the Wahhabi *ulema*¹⁴⁰ in order to reduce its influence, they were quick to denounce the militants' actions.

Although Kepel believes that al-Utaybi was directly influenced in his theology by Ibn Baz, the cleric condemned al-Utaybi on the basis that his actions encouraged *fitna* (disorder and discord) within an Islamic country, yet he refused to pronounce the militants apostates¹⁴¹. During the seizure, Ibn Baz made a series of proclamations, including the statements that a true Wahhabi state should not associate with any non-Muslims, and that only one version of Islam is permitted¹⁴². These views reflect a *fatwa* (legal opinion) which he issued in the 1940s in which he declared that no non-Muslim should be employed in the Arabian Gulf; this *fatwa* was still in circulation in 2004¹⁴³. Ibn Baz was viewed as relatively independent by both the Saudi royal family and the Wahhabi *ulema*, and his influence was therefore

¹³⁹ Hiro (1988) op. cit., p.132

¹⁴⁰ Kepel (2004) op. cit., p.179

¹⁴¹ Ibid., pp.164; 166

¹⁴² Sardar, op. cit., p.149

¹⁴³ Kepel (2004) op. cit., p.165

sought by both parties; the government wanted Ibn Baz to temper the radicalism of dissident thinkers and buttress government policy, while radical Wahhabi militants sought his lenience¹⁴⁴. As a reaction to al-Utaybi's attempted revolution, the government attempted to reclaim religious authority and legitimacy. Despite implementing greater social controls, they found it necessary to allow religious opposition voices to be heard, in order that they could try and temper its radicalism and prevent people turning to more extreme doctrines.

Directly inspired by the Grand Mosque seizure, the *sahwa* which began in the early 1980s brought new ideas to establishment Wahhabism. *Sahwa* thinkers were more activist than their traditional counterparts, and taught a hybrid of their native Wahhabi Islam and imported Qutbist ideas. Safar al-Hawali and Salman al-Awda were known as the standard-bearers of this *sahwa* movement, but a number of young, radicalised Saudis such as al-Qami, al-Awaji and al-Qasim also preached their doctrine widely. For al-Hawali, sovereignty lies with Allah alone and therefore cannot be assumed by men, and this is the sole criterion which differentiates an Islamic state from a *jahiliyya* state¹⁴⁵. Al-Hawali's opinion on this matter came straight from the ideas of Qutb and Mawdudi, and is foreign to Wahhabi ideology¹⁴⁶, since it represents a direct challenge to the Saudi monarchy. He contended that the monarchy governed according to their own interests, politically and financially, and therefore did not rule in line with divine *hakimiyya* (sovereignty)¹⁴⁷. A more severe accusation is the claim that those who fail to govern in accordance with Allah's commands are *kuffar* (unbelievers), and this line thinking assumed greater importance when al-Hawali wrote a dissertation on the subject¹⁴⁸. Al-Hawali used sermons and cassettes, and later the internet, to spread his teachings throughout the Kingdom, becoming a figure of opposition against the Wahhabi *ulema* who remained in control of official Islam in Saudi Arabia. Despite their often destabilising messages, the *sahwa* preachers were allowed to continue their teaching as long as they supported the Saudi government when called upon. Tellingly, when the Saudi leadership needed to restore moral order and political calm in the mid- to late-80s, it

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p.166

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p.183

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p.183

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p.183

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p.183

was the *sahwa* preachers rather than the Wahhabi ulema that they turned to¹⁴⁹, as this new generation of religious teachers had considerable influence over the population.

Sahwa preachers gained followers from the wide swathes of young Saudis who had become alienated by the economic and ideological disparities of Saudi society at the end of the twentieth century. Boosted too by the success of the jihad in Afghanistan, they were outspoken critics of the decision to allow US troops onto Saudi soil during the Gulf War. Al-Hawali saw this as an attempt to control and destroy Islam¹⁵⁰, and both he and al-Awda openly supported Osama bin Laden's condemnation of the monarchy for allowing this¹⁵¹. Al-Hawali said of the decision, "to defend ourselves we have invited the help of our real enemies... The point is that we need internal change. The first war should be against the infidels *inside*. Then we will be strong enough to face our external enemy"¹⁵². So al-Hawali's stance against the monarchy during the Gulf War demonstrated just how deeply the religious nationalism of the Muslim Brotherhood had penetrated Saudi society, in particular through the higher educational institutions which had employed foreign Muslim Brothers¹⁵³. Al-Awda preached along slightly less revolutionary lines, but the impact of Muslim Brotherhood ideology was clear on him too, when he proposed a religiously-based, non-Saudi identity for Saudi Arabia's citizens, that took as its primary focus the notion of Arabia holding a special place within Islam¹⁵⁴. In September 1994, both men were arrested, and Osama bin Laden cited this event as convincing him of the duplicity of the al-Saud dynasty¹⁵⁵. Although their doctrines seemed to make any compromise with the monarchy unworkable, the main figures of the *sahwa* were eventually co-opted by the Saudi government, and when they needed religious support in the late 1990s, the *sahwa* acted as a bulwark against criticism for them. Both al-Awda and al-Hawali turned against bin Laden when his attitude became more extreme; al-Awda was to abandon his former Qutbist thinking and become sympathetic towards the government, condemning the 9/11 attacks on his own website and identifying himself as an opponent of terrorism, and al-Hawali also denounced terrorism as an unacceptable departure from the just struggle between

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p.179

¹⁵⁰ Lacey (2009) op. cit., p.151

¹⁵¹ Roy (2004) *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* p.255

¹⁵² Lacey (2009) op. cit., p.150 [original emphasis]

¹⁵³ Commins, op. cit., p.181

¹⁵⁴ Lacey (2009) op. cit., p.152; Commins, op. cit., p.182

¹⁵⁵ Lacey (2009) op. cit., p.178

Islam and *dar al-kufr* (the land of disbelief), but did not give up his more radical discourse completely¹⁵⁶.

The history of Saudi Arabia is inextricably linked with the history of Wahhabi Islam. Since its inception, the Saudi state has called upon Islam to legitimate its leadership, and as such Wahhabism has been transformed into a political tool. In the latter half of the twentieth century, immigration and a greater amount of transnational interaction meant that Islam in Saudi Arabia could not escape external influences. Immigrants to the country, particularly those from Egypt and Syria who were members of the Muslim Brotherhood, brought with them a more activist worldview. Some aspects of these new ideologies, especially Sayyid Qutb's notions of *jahiliyya* society and the need for a literal, physical *hijra*, went on to influence both national and global terrorists from the 1980s onwards, but these extreme ideas were never part of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's teachings. With the boom in oil wealth, the Saudi government were able to establish the MWL and OIC, and these organisations continue to play an important role in international politics in the Muslim world. Increased prosperity also allowed Saudi Arabia to undertake mosque-building projects and distribution of Islamic material worldwide. Yet at home, the Saudi monarchy still had to contend with dissatisfaction from among the *sahwa*, the establishment *ulema*, and some Saudi youth.

¹⁵⁶ Kepel (2004) op. cit., pp.189-90

5. Wahhabism Islam and the Afghan Jihad

Aside from supporting the *sahwa* and employing the *ulema* to their advantage, another way in which the monarchy restored calm in the 1980s was to back the anti-Soviet *jihad* in Afghanistan. For Saudi Arabia, the conflict represented a golden opportunity to send the most outspoken critics and potentially disruptive Saudi citizens to a foreign field, where the *jihad* could divert their attention from domestic issues¹⁵⁷. This was a convenient way for the Saudi monarchy to be seen to be upholding their Wahhabi values, and supporting fellow Muslims. With the new oil wealth and financial networks in place, Saudi Arabia was also able to heavily finance the *mujahedeen*, and so keep radical Sunni militants sympathetic to Saudi causes and Wahhabi Islam. The *jihad* was viewed as an instance of *dar al-Islam* versus *dar al-kufr*, and so led to a period of cooperation between Wahhabi groups and others, which was fuelled by the *jihad* and did not last after its end. The Afghan war superseded the Palestinian struggle in the eyes of many Islamists, both moderate and radical, denoting the move away from nationalism to Islamism¹⁵⁸ by those with politically active tendencies. In many cases, proselytising was seen as the way to substitute Islam for the assorted nationalist movements which were waning rapidly¹⁵⁹. In particular, uprooted Afghan youth appeared as a good target for Wahhabi proselytising¹⁶⁰, which was often transmitted through Saudi-sponsored *madradas*. Supported by the United States, Wahhabism became a liberation theology which could deliver Afghanistan from the grip of communism¹⁶¹.

In the short term, the Afghan *jihad* had considerable benefits for the Saudi leadership, but the competing ideologies which fighters encountered there led to a hybridisation of some of the most extreme doctrines of Sunni militancy. Those fighting in Afghanistan included members of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, and Muslim Brothers and salafists from various countries. In particular, Ayman al-Zawahiri's doctrines spread to many of the jihadists. He rejected any notion of political participation:

¹⁵⁷ Lacey (2009) op. cit., p.65

¹⁵⁸ Kepel (2003) op. cit., p.8

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p.70

¹⁶⁰ Roy (1990) *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* p.226

¹⁶¹ Kepel (2004) op. cit., p.154

...for Muslims to found a party was an act of heresy, elections were blasphemous and democracy was tantamount to unbelief. As a result, anyone even remotely involved in politics was a heretic who had strayed from the path of the Prophet. The only way to get rid of the tyrants, the infidels and the apostates was *jihad*.¹⁶²

His emphasis on armed struggle led to a polarisation of beliefs among the jihadists. Those who agreed with al-Zawahiri's ideas turned against the traditional Islamist parties, including the Muslim Brotherhood and even HAMAS and the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) of Algeria, since they had ambitions to participate fully in the political processes of their respective countries. Another important ideologue of jihadism was Abdullah Azzam, and he was to become the leading figure of the *jihad* movement of the 1980s. Kepel places Azzam within a tradition of *jihad* which can be traced through the Hanbali school, and to Ibn Taymiyya in particular¹⁶³. While his ideas may not have been new, he put them into practice and popularised the concept of armed Islamic struggle that was later developed by other radical activists in the 1990s¹⁶⁴. Azzam then is the key link between an ideological conception of *jihad* and the actual implementation of physical struggle. As a professor of Islamic philosophy at King Abdul Aziz University, he was a crucial connection between the 'Afghan Arabs' and Wahhabi interests in Saudi Arabia¹⁶⁵.

As members of the *mujahedeen* returned to the wider world, they took their extreme and often violent worldviews with them; this accounts for the dramatic rise in terrorist activity after the end of the Afghan *jihad*. Having moved away from their *mujahedeen* allies, these terrorists were disconnected from social reality and from their traditional networks of support and assistance. Ultimately, those returning from Afghanistan were beyond the control of any government, and were isolated from society and social norms. They viewed the world through a prism of religious dogma and armed violence, and went on to inspire new, hybrid Islamists whose principle ideology was to justify the existence and behaviour of these militants; these were the "jihadist-salafis"¹⁶⁶. According to Kepel, they held al-Hawali and al-Awda in high regard, combining their proclivity for literal interpretations of the sacred texts with

¹⁶² Tawil (2010) *Brothers in Arms: The Story of Al-Qa`ida and the Arab Jihadists* p.45

¹⁶³ Kepel (2003) op. cit., p.147

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p.144

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p.144; Aslan (2005) *No God But God: The Origins, Evolution and Future of Islam* p.86

¹⁶⁶ Kepel (2003) op. cit., p.219

an absolute commitment to *jihad*¹⁶⁷. Any group with political aims was rejected out of hand, and the Muslim Brotherhood was especially condemned for its moderate and gradualist approach. Even Sayyid Qutb's philosophies were abandoned by some of the jihadist-salafis, because his personal interpretations of the Quran were not viewed as authoritative canonical commentary (*tafsir*)¹⁶⁸. Unlike some terrorist groups such as *Jamaat al-Muslimin* (The Muslim Group, commonly known as *Takfir wal-Hijra*, Excommunication and Exodus), jihadist-salafis focused upon engagement with, rather than rejection of, society. Physical withdrawal from a *jahiliyya* society is discounted in favour of an active struggle against that society. Yet many of the jihadist-salafis are both isolated and isolationist in their outlook; the world in which they inhabit cannot be penetrated by outside ideas and influences. So a gradual process of 'privatisation' of *jihad* occurred, since the militants now had no state-approved outlet for their jihadist tendencies; this was to lead to the new and devastating forms of terrorism of the 1990s and beyond. People whom the Saudi monarchy had previously viewed as harmless suddenly became real and direct threats to Saudi stability.

While the Afghan jihadists were unable to win over large numbers of new recruits to their cause, or to successfully instigate the overthrow of rulers in Muslim-majority states, most of these militants continued to focus on the enemy within, the governing structures in the Muslim world¹⁶⁹. However, the most radical switched their target from this 'near enemy' to the 'far enemy', making their struggle a truly global one for the first time. These then became the global jihadists, and would go on to wage their terrorist campaigns in numerous countries, both with a Muslim- and non-Muslim-majority. Although initially backed by Saudi funding, Wahhabi doctrine did not supply the philosophies of the Afghan *jihad*. These came most notably from al-Zawahiri and Azzam, and it is the hybridisation of these extreme doctrines of Sunni militancy which paved the way for the development of global jihadism.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p.220

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p.220

¹⁶⁹ Hellyer, H. A. 'Ruminations and Reflections on British Muslims and Islam Post-7/7', pp.247-262 in Abbas (2007) *Islamic Political Radicalism* p.249

6. The Ideology of Osama bin Laden and *Al-Qaeda*

Obviously, one of the most important figures in the global jihadist movement of the last two decades was Osama bin Laden. Despite being a Saudi citizen, bin Laden's ideology was informed by more than his Wahhabi upbringing. When he attended King Abd-al-Aziz University, bin Laden's course of Islamic Studies was taught by Muhammad Qutb¹⁷⁰. It was here that he also first encountered Abdallah Azzam. By the time he had left the university, his worldview was heavily influenced by both his native Saudi Wahhabism, and by the doctrine and philosophy of the Muslim Brotherhood¹⁷¹, in its more radical, Qutbist sense. In 1982, bin Laden travelled to Afghanistan to participate in the anti-Soviet *jihad*, and made a name for himself through his fund-raising activities. Kepel notes that bin Laden's trigger to take part in the Afghan *jihad* was the psychological and cultural dissociation he felt, typical of affluent Saudi youth, whose piety tends to be strongest whilst at home in Saudi Arabia¹⁷². Through primarily Saudi donations and with the help of Azzam, he was able to open a house for Arab jihadists in Peshawar in 1984, and by 1986 he had opened training camps for *mujahedeen* fighters¹⁷³. The database of jihadists which he started to keep after 1988 was to put in place the beginnings of the structure for *al-Qaeda* (The Base). In Afghanistan, bin Laden also came into contact with al-Zawahiri, and began to adopt his view that *jihad* as armed struggle was the only way to rid Muslims of 'apostate' leaders. Although Fandy claims that bin Laden believed himself to be the legitimate heir of al-Wahhab, DeLong-Bas finds no evidence of this since bin Laden frequently quoted Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim, but not Ibn Abd al-Wahhab¹⁷⁴. Ruthven also points out that bin Laden's language resonates with the ideas of Ibn Tumart, not Ibn Abd al-Wahhab¹⁷⁵. It is clear that during his time at university, bin Laden's worldview was shaped by the ideas of the Qutb brothers and Abdallah Azzam, and not by traditional Wahhabi teachings.

The Gulf War of 1990-91 significantly altered Saudi Arabia's standing in the Islamic world, and fundamentally changed the way in which Osama bin Laden viewed the

¹⁷⁰ Kepel (2003) op. cit., p.314

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p.314

¹⁷² Kepel (2004) op. cit., p.83

¹⁷³ Kepel (2003) op. cit., p.315

¹⁷⁴ DeLong-Bas, op. cit., p.342n

¹⁷⁵ Ruthven, M. (afterword) in Hourani (2005) op. cit., p.470. Ibn Tumart's doctrine of *tawhid* is similar to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's, but he preached revolution against leaders which Ibn Abd al-Wahhab did not condone.

Saudi monarchy. When Operation Desert Shield was carried out in August 1990, more than half a million US troops were stationed on Saudi soil. Just as it had during the Grand Mosque seizure, Saudi Arabia appeared reliant on outside, Western forces. The reinforcing of ties with the West added to the murmurings of dissent in the country, and led bin Laden to revise his opinion that the monarchy was legitimate but mistaken in their rule, to the view that the monarchy was wholly illegitimate. It was this abhorrence of the Saudi monarchy which was to turn bin Laden away from state-sanctioned Islamist activism and jihadist activity to terrorism. The religious legitimacy of the Saudi leadership was unable to withstand the criticism heaped upon it by internal and external sources; Saudi Arabia had reached the limits of its ability to control opinion in the Islamic world. The only factor which helped protect the monarchy from wider disapproval during and immediately after the Gulf War was their record of financial assistance across the Muslim world¹⁷⁶. So the Gulf War led to a division within Saudi Arabia between those loyal to the monarchy and those who favoured the new Islamism that had emerged in the country, which was claiming to act on behalf of Wahhabism but was actually directed against the royal family¹⁷⁷. Those now opposed to the dynasty, including some members of the liberal middle classes, began to call for more political openness and strongly condemned the Westernisation of the country¹⁷⁸. The Saudi monarchy had to turn once more to their Wahhabi *ulema* for support. In 1993, Ibn Baz proclaimed that it was the duty of Muslims everywhere to obey their ruler and the *ulema*, and strongly denounced the denigration of the Saudi leadership on the grounds that it could engender the destabilisation of society and thus would amount to ‘revolt’, something unacceptable in Islam; only when the government acted ‘un-Islamically’ could people offer criticism and advice to the ruler¹⁷⁹.

For Osama bin Laden, the Gulf War was the trigger to put into practice the jihadist ideology which he had cultivated in Afghanistan. Aware of the possible dangers of his teachings, the Saudi government revoked his citizenship in April 1994, preventing him from returning to his native country. On November 13th, 1995, a car bomb was detonated inside the National Guard training centre in Riyadh, killing 7

¹⁷⁶ Kepel (2003) op. cit., p.70

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., pp.212; 208

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p.212

¹⁷⁹ Hiro (2002) op. cit., pp.164-5

people and injuring about 60 mostly US citizens. The terrorists on this occasion were young Saudis, whose affiliated groups had previously warned that US and UK military personnel would become legitimate targets if they remained on Saudi Arabian soil after June 1995¹⁸⁰. Three of the terrorists were veterans of the Afghan war, including one, al-Shamrani, who had been a member of Osama bin Laden's Farouq Brigade, and another was a student of the writings of bin Laden and the ideologies of *Al-Gamaat al-Islamiya* (The Egyptian Islamic Group) and *Al-Jihad*¹⁸¹. Although bin Laden praised this, and the later Khobar Towers truck bombing, he had no direct connection with either attack¹⁸².

Until the mid-1990s, bin Laden was viewed by the American government as an opposition figure of the Saudi regime. However that changed in 1996, during what Kepel terms as the "hinge year" for *al-Qaeda*, since it was when ideological and strategic decisions were made that would ultimately culminate in the attacks of September 11th, 2001¹⁸³. On August 23rd, 1996, bin Laden changed the focus of his *jihād* when he issued the 'Declaration of Jihad against the US', making his primary objective the expulsion of US forces from Saudi Arabian soil. The first of *al-Qaeda*'s spectacular international attacks came on the eighth anniversary of the arrival of US troops in Saudi Arabia; the 1998 bombings of the American embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam killed over 220 people, and injured more than 4500. However until the end of the twentieth century, the Saudi dynasty remained the primary focus of bin Laden's struggle, with his main contention being that the Saudi leaders were not governing in accordance with Islam, and therefore should be deposed. His attempts to mobilise large numbers of Saudi citizens to revolt failed, because just as it had been during the Gulf War, the Saudi monarchy and the official *ulema* were protected from criticism due to their record of financial assistance to Muslims across the globe.

Bin Laden's activities have frequently been associated with Wahhabi Islam, yet this cannot be correct for the fundamental reason that his fight was directed at the Saudi monarchy and Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's doctrine explicitly forbade any form of revolutionary activity or civil disobedience aimed at those that govern. Just as when

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p.172

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p.173

¹⁸² Lacey (2009) op. cit., p.176

¹⁸³ Kepel (2004) op. cit., p.91

the *Ikhwan* fought Abd al-Aziz, and when al-Utaybi and his followers seized the Grand Mosque, bin Laden felt that the Saudi leadership had breached Islamic ideals and was therefore a legitimate target for revolutionary action. This conviction had its basis not in pure Wahhabi ideology, but in a hybrid of Islamic beliefs. Most obviously, *al-Qaeda* built onto a Wahhabi framework a combination of revolutionary Qutbist thought, and jihadist activism from Afghanistan. This jihadist doctrine originally came from Abdullah Azzam and al-Zawahiri, and members of Egyptian Islamic Jihad¹⁸⁴, not from bin Laden's Wahhabi background. The doctrines of *al-Qaeda* and its associates differ significantly from the teachings of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, yet similarities with Wahhabi ideology are to be found in two key areas. Firstly, in the concept of *din wa-dawla* (religion and state), the idea that religion is inseparable from the state, since the state is based on and operates according to Islam¹⁸⁵. Therefore, a ruler must act in line with Islam, upholding its values and protecting Islam from that which threatens it. Secondly, both Wahhabism and *al-Qaeda* view their members as the elite, the epitome of an Islamic society, and Kepel believes that the archetype of the 'vanguard' in bin Laden's propaganda was the devoutly religious yet activist community immediately after the Wahhabi-Saudi alliance¹⁸⁶.

The clear distinction between one's own followers and other people, both Muslim and non-Muslim, and the perceived necessity to separate oneself from them enables easier categorisation of the 'other' and helps justify violence, whether this is as part of a movement of conquest in the history of Saudi Arabia, or as terrorist activity in the modern, wider world. The demarcation between Wahhabi and non-Wahhabi, alongside the notion of an external enemy, helped to create and maintain the modern state of Saudi Arabia, and allowed its form of Islam to flourish. While the separation of believers and non-believers was a distinct part of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's ideology, it can be seen as playing an important role in many communities, religious and non-religious, across the globe. The creation of the 'other', whether done consciously or unconsciously, is a normal part of identity formation for individuals and groups; the very notion of a community requires that boundaries are constructed which separate it from those around it, and inside which a certain identity is shared by all. So

¹⁸⁴ Tawil, op. cit., p.154

¹⁸⁵ Eickelman and Piscatori, op. cit., p.46

¹⁸⁶ Kepel (2004) op. cit., p.160

Wahhabi Islam is by no means uncommon in upholding a group identity with a defined 'other', and while there is no doubt that a strongly delineated notion of this 'other' is a major part of any terrorist group's philosophy, the establishment of the sense of internal and external does not automatically mean that violence will occur as a result. For Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and subsequent generations of his followers, the 'other' is merely a tool which strengthens the conception of the *ummah* and so enables Wahhabi Muslims to identify with one another and form a strong community bond, even if they are thousands of miles apart.

Osama bin Laden's extreme views developed after he came into contact with Qutbian ideology, and later the ideas of Azzam and al-Zawahiri. The revocation of his Saudi citizenship in 1994 was a measure designed to protect the Saudi government from his revolutionary calls, but it also demonstrates how far removed from Wahhabi doctrine his ideas were, since they were condemned by Ibn Baz and the leading *ulema*. However, the close relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States during the Gulf War significantly damaged the Saudi monarchy's standing in the Islamic world, something they would struggle to restore in the coming years.

7. Terrorist Ideologies

So while the doctrines of Osama bin Laden and *al-Qaeda* share little in common with Wahhabi Islam, is there an overlap between the ideologies of any other terrorist organisations and Wahhabism? Here I will briefly discuss some of the most significant groups of recent years and any key similarities or differences with Wahhabi Islam, but do not have the space to examine their philosophies in depth. Firstly, *Jama'at al-Muslimin*, or *Takfir wal Hijra*, which was formed in Egypt in the 1960s and was active throughout the latter decades of the 20th century. The group advocated total withdrawal from society and thus takes a different approach to that taught by Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, which chooses to engage with society in order to change it through *dawa*. Also, the founder of the group, Shukri Mustafa, was not a *salafi* since he interpreted the Quran in such a way as to fit his own ideologies, rather than vice versa¹⁸⁷.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, *Boko Haram* and *Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen* (*Mujahideen* Youth Movement) are currently waging terror campaigns in their own countries. For the last decade, *Boko Haram* has preached against Nigeria's Muslim establishment and any interaction with the western world, yet it is only since 2009 that it has transformed itself into a salafist jihadist organisation which has adopted terrorism as a routine practice. Other than its "tenuous"¹⁸⁸ links with Saudi missionaries and its desire to implement *sharia*, *Boko Haram's* ideology has no connections with that of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and its focus is on Nigeria rather than a global terror campaign. Similarly, *al-Shabaab* of Somalia, a *takfiri* salafist jihadist organisation, bears little doctrinal resemblance to Wahhabi Islam. The group has many foreign fighters, predominantly from Egypt and Libya, and counts some Saudis among its ranks too, but this does not mean it advocates a Wahhabi worldview. Indeed, in recent years it has drawn its ideology close to that of the Taliban and *al-Qaeda* in order to appeal to a wider audience outside Somalia itself¹⁸⁹. The *Abu Sayyaf Group* (Bearer of the Sword), based in the Philippines, aims to form an Islamic state in the Philippines and worldwide. Its founder, Abdurajik Janjalani, spent time fighting in the Afghan *jihād*, and expressed *salafi* views and

¹⁸⁷ Kepel (2003) op. cit., p.221

¹⁸⁸ Bagaji, Etila, Ogbadu & Sule (2012) 'Boko Haram and the Recurring Bomb Attacks in Nigeria', in *Cross-Cultural Communications*, p.38

¹⁸⁹ Shinn (2010) 'Al-Shabaab Tries to Take Control in Somalia', Foreign Policy Research Institute

support for the Taliban¹⁹⁰. Unlike the inclusive politics of the Moro National Liberation Front in the Philippines, *Abu Sayyaf* advocates an exclusivist and sectarian worldview¹⁹¹ that could be compared to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's but that could equally come from a number of other sources.

Several groups in Pakistan have been accused of terrorism, among them *Lashkar e-Taiba* (The Army of the Pure). Founded in 1990, this group recruits educated Muslims, including some from Saudi Arabia¹⁹². Its ideology has been associated with Wahhabi Islam, but I believe this is because of purported links between *Lashkar e-Taiba* and *al-Qaeda*, and the superficial similarities of *al-Qaeda* and Wahhabism. It may also be because *Lashkar e-Taiba* has veterans of the Afghan *jihad* as members of its organisation, some of which may of course be from Saudi Arabia originally. *Lashkar e-Jhangvi* (The Army of Jhangvi) has links to the Taliban, *al-Qaeda* and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, but other than its anti-Shia stance, has no connection with Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's teachings; indeed the majority of Pakistani extremist groups are radical Deobandis not Wahhabis¹⁹³. *Sipah-i-Sahaba* has also perpetrated violence against Shias, and is so extreme that it considers Shias to be non-Muslims¹⁹⁴. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's anti-Shia stance is clear, yet other people and groups espouse an anti-Shia stance too, and it is not in itself a progenitor of terrorism. Most of these groups have no declared interest in global *jihad*, and are focused instead on regional struggles. Combined with their differing ideologies they thus neither fit beneath the Wahhabi or global terrorist labels.

Other groups have been connected with global terrorism whilst not perpetrating terrorist acts themselves. *Al-Mujahiroun* (The Emigrants) glorifies terrorism as the way to achieve its goal of a universal caliphate, and is banned in both Saudi Arabia and Britain. Its main aim has been described as the establishment of Islamic states through military coups¹⁹⁵, and its proscription by the Saudi government indicates that this is not an ideology familiar to or supported by those with a Wahhabi

¹⁹⁰ 'Abu Sayyaf Group', F. R. von der Mehden, in Esposito (2009) op. cit.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Zahab & Roy (2004) *Islamist Networks* p.36

¹⁹³ Nasr (2000) 'The Rise of Sunni Militancy in Pakistan: The Changing Role of Islamism and the Ulama in Society and Politics', in *Modern Asian Studies*, p.179

¹⁹⁴ Esposito (2003) 'Sipah-i-sahaba', in *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*

¹⁹⁵ Fair (2007) 'Review of Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West, by Quintan Wiktorowicz', in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* p.137

worldview. With similar aims to *al-Mujahiroun*, *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (Liberation Party) also wants the re-establishment of the caliphate and the widespread implementation of *sharia*. Rashid says that they view the physical seizure of power as the only way to implement *sharia*, and that this view comes from a hybrid Deobandi-Wahhabi tradition¹⁹⁶. Whilst Ibn Abd al-Wahhab called for the execution of *sharia* he preached against revolutionary action, and when al-Utaybi and his followers seized the Grand Mosque in 1979, the Wahhabi establishment widely condemned his actions. I would therefore question Rashid's assertion that physical seizure of power can come out of a reading of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's teachings. Although professing a policy of non-violence, the connection of *Hizb ut-Tahrir* with terrorism has led to it being banned in some countries. Certain aspects of its ideology, in particular the enforced segregation of the sexes and the rejection of non-Islamic influences, overlap with that of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, yet as discussed earlier none of these are in themselves a precursor to terrorist activity. It is however likely that *Hizb ut-Tahrir* and groups like it could act as conduits to more radical groups, particularly for younger followers.

The groups mentioned above are some of the most significant terrorist groups of recent years, yet there are few connections to be found between them. Although there is very little ideological information available about many of these groups, there seems to be little or no Wahhabi influence on them. However there are two groups with terrorist associations, about which more information is obtainable and which both have alleged links with Wahhabi thought and practice; these groups are important in the history of Wahhabi Islam and Saudi Arabia.

Firstly, the Taliban in Afghanistan, an organisation which has been called "Saudi-sponsored"¹⁹⁷, and which Shughart says attracted the support of some of the Saudi royal family, due to its "rejection of modernity" and the overlap of its core tenets with Wahhabism¹⁹⁸. Although they were the eventual heirs of Saudi Arabia's financial and military support during the anti-Soviet *jihad*, the Taliban represented an ideology which was based on Hanafi Deobandism, not on Wahhabi Islam. With its traditional *madrassa* training, the Deobandi school could potentially mobilise

¹⁹⁶ Rashid, op. cit., p.122

¹⁹⁷ Ruthven, M. (afterword) in Hourani (2005) op. cit., p.471

¹⁹⁸ Shughart (2002) 'September 11, 2001', in *Public Choice*, p5

hundreds of thousands of students in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and so could be a fertile breeding ground for jihadist theories¹⁹⁹. Yet the Taliban had no international political or religious agenda until they began to adopt the ideology of Osama bin Laden and his associates from around 1996 onwards. It was the jihadists who based themselves in Afghanistan after the end of the Soviet occupation who were to shape the global vision that the group adopted at the very end of the twentieth century. The Taliban came to depend on these foreign fighters just as exiled groups and individuals turned to the Taliban for asylum. Ultimately, bin Laden and his closest allies became an intrinsic part of the Taliban's decision-making process²⁰⁰, and by 2001 the Taliban's domestic political aims had been surpassed by the internationalist agenda of the Arab jihadists. Although certain aspects of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's *dawa* overlap with Deobandism, the Taliban's radicalism can be understood as a fusion of Deobandism, jihadist ideology and traditional Afghan concepts of tribal norms and social justice; Wahhabi Islam plays little or no part in their worldview. Indeed, when the Taliban refused to hand Osama bin Laden to Saudi authorities, Saudi Arabia ended their official relations with the Taliban, and removed their diplomats from Kabul in 1998²⁰¹.

Secondly, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which is allegedly funded by Saudi sources. Rashid compares the IMU to the Taliban, since he says both are global jihadist groups which ignore greater *jihad*, and adopt lesser *jihad* as a complete social and political philosophy²⁰². Viewed as one of the biggest threats to stability in the region, the IMU aims to seize power in Uzbekistan and replace it with its own *sharia*-centred Islamic state. Rashid writes that, "[t]he Pakistani extremist groups *Lashkar-i-Jhangvi* and *Sipah-i-Sahaba*, initially funded by Saudi Arabia, have militants fighting with the IMU"²⁰³. He goes on to say that Saudi Arabia is viewed as a serious risk to Central Asian states, as "Saudi Arabia has consistently backed the most extremist Islamic groups in the region... and the Saudi regime has made no attempt to stop the lavish funding of the IMU from the Saudi-Uzbek diaspora in Mecca and Medina"²⁰⁴. The issue of Saudi funding and Wahhabi

¹⁹⁹ Kepel (2003) op. cit., p.3

²⁰⁰ Rashid, op. cit., p.211

²⁰¹ Lacey (2009) op. cit., p.213

²⁰² Rashid, op. cit., p.2

²⁰³ Ibid., p.215

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p.224

influence in Central Asia is a contentious one, and can be traced back to the end of the Afghan *jihad*. Saudi funds were then being transmitted not just to the Wahhabi leaders of the *mujahedeen* in Afghanistan, but also to leaders in Central Asia, as many had been trained in Saudi-funded *madrassas*²⁰⁵.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, power vacuums arose in many former Soviet states, and years of civil war, political repression and economic hardships provided a receptive audience for new ideas. Kepel notes that once the *mujahedeen* had seized Kabul in April 1992, around 4000 humanitarian organisations, mostly Saudi Arabian, turned their attentions to Bosnia²⁰⁶. The MWL was also employed in sending financial assistance to the country. Wahhabi charities have sent missionaries and Islamic literature to other Central Asian states too, including millions of Qurans translated into native languages, but it is possible that with this comes a wish to turn Central Asian Muslims towards Wahhabism²⁰⁷. The type of charity most often provided by Saudi organisations is based on *dawa*, propagating the Wahhabi version above native forms of Islam; this in itself is not dangerous, but could result in a decrease in local variations within Islam, as Wahhabi teachers will naturally lean to developing a Wahhabi religious identity among the Muslims under their instruction. The distribution of books and pamphlets based on *salafi* doctrine, and the financial and methodological aid from Islamic foundations in the Gulf States has resulted in the penetration of salafism into the local Islamic educational structure in the Volga-Urals²⁰⁸. Similarly,

In [Bosnia Herzegovina], the Saudi-funded King Fahd mosque complex has...been associated with small groups of Islamic militants and with the missionary efforts of the Saudi Wahhabi version of Islam. Some of the same Gulf groups that financed the King Fahd mosque have also financed the destruction of some of the major traditional Islamic centres...with the aim of replacing these traditional buildings with large, Gulf-style structures.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p.45

²⁰⁶ Kepel (2003) op. cit., p.249

²⁰⁷ Rashid, op. cit., p.223

²⁰⁸ Yemelianova, G. M. 'The Growth of Islamic Radicalism in Eurasia', pp.83-98 in Abbas, op. cit., p.86

²⁰⁹ Sells (2003) 'Crosses of Blood', in *Sociology of Religion* p.328

In many of the former Soviet states, all forms of Islam which are considered to be potentially dangerous or disruptive are referred to as *salafi* or ‘Wahhabi’. Social unrest and the failure of states has fuelled the rise of more radical forms of Islam in Central Asia, as opposed to the traditional, often Sufi-dominated state-sponsored Islam of these regions. In particular, in the northern Caucasus, violence and even terrorism attributed to Islam has occurred as radical Islamists seek to overthrow existing state structures and replace them with Islamic ones. Some of these militants fought in the anti-Soviet *jihad*, adopted the jihadist attitude which they encountered in Afghanistan and have translated it to other states, in particular Chechnya. There is no doubt that radical Islam has had a significant and sometimes deadly impact in Central Asia since the early 1990s, but to label this form of non-native Islam as ‘Wahhabi’ is misleading and uninformed. The ideologies of militants active in the region have often been informed by the jihadist attitude, and while Saudi foundations provide financial assistance to Muslims in Central Asia, Wahhabi Islam does not supply the revolutionary tendency or the propensity for violence which is prevalent among the radicals. Regarding the IMU specifically, its programme of action and methodologies, particularly the use of terrorism as a political tool, are not reflective of a Wahhabi worldview. In fact, the veterans of the Afghan *jihad* who later fought for the Taliban, the IMU and in Chechnya, actually posed a significant threat to Saudi security²¹⁰. Having adopted the rejection of political participation from al-Zawahiri, and the concept of violent revolutionary *jihad* from Azzam, these radicalised jihadists turned their attentions to Saudi Arabia and its monarchy.

²¹⁰ Rashid, op. cit., p.224

8. Wahhabi Islam in Present-day Saudi Arabia

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, bombings in Saudi Arabia have been a fairly frequent occurrence. Until 2003, these were mostly small and directed at individual Westerners, but the suicide car bombings carried out on May 12th, 2003, which killed about thirty-five people and wounded hundreds more, forced Saudi authorities to crack down on terrorist activity in the kingdom. Hundreds of raids and arrests followed and the most radical of clerics were silenced, but major attacks continued throughout 2004. These included the killing of twenty-two people at the al-Khobar residential complex, which an offshoot of *al-Qaeda* claimed responsibility for. Tawil writes:

Bin Laden's organisation had relied all along on a bedrock of Gulf support, money and manpower. It was, therefore, no surprise that *al-Qaeda*'s first franchise to emerge after the fall of the Taliban appeared in its leader's home country, Saudi Arabia. *Al-Qaeda*'s conflict with the security services encompassed the entire Gulf region, but it was in the Saudi kingdom that the organisation carried out most of its attacks and suffered the worst of its setbacks.²¹¹

It was perhaps predictable that after the destruction of their infrastructure in Afghanistan after 2001, many jihadists would seek another base for their operations. Indeed, Hegghammer writes that the reason for the upsurge in terrorism in Saudi Arabia was the returning Saudi Afghan Arabs who wanted the liberation of the Arabian peninsula from US occupation²¹². Saudi authorities had clearly failed to either co-opt jihadism, or to curb its violent activism²¹³; their sponsorship of the Afghan *jihad* and policy of accommodation towards radicals had backfired. However, Saudi citizens largely condemned this terrorism on their own soil, particularly when Muslims were the victims of attacks, and would-be terrorists found they were unable to mobilise large numbers of people to their cause. Establishment *ulema* were also quick to denounce the attackers, and terrorists found it increasingly hard to legitimate their actions. Indeed, as early as 1988, the Board of Senior Ulema issued a *fatwa* which deemed terrorism a capital crime. "The Board's *fatwa* included 'blowing up houses, mosques, schools, hospitals, factories, bridges, storehouses of arms or water, sources of public revenue such as oil wells, or by blowing up or

²¹¹ Tawil, op. cit., p.186

²¹² Hegghammer (2006) 'Militant Islamism in Saudi Arabia: Patterns of Recruitment to "Al-Qaida on the Arabian Peninsula"', *Paths to Global Jihad* p.27

²¹³ Kepel (2004) op. cit., p.191

hijacking airplanes’.”²¹⁴ Without mass support, terrorism became far more decentralised, and many of the attacks from 2005 onwards were from individuals not affiliated with *al-Qaeda*. This was also, in part, due to the success which the Saudi authorities had in killing or capturing high-ranking members of *al-Qaeda* in Saudi Arabia, and as a coherent organisation inside the country it has now largely been destroyed. During 2004 alone, security services arrested or killed twenty-three of their twenty-six most wanted terrorists²¹⁵. Yet young Saudi men inclined to armed jihad have found a new outlet for violence in Iraq: “Unlike the *mujahidin* who fought in Afghanistan in the 1980s, today’s militants do not benefit from official support; indeed, the Kingdom openly condemns foreign *jihad* and has been pressuring clerics to denounce it.”²¹⁶ These militants, like their jihadist predecessors, developed their worldview through a combination of ideas and philosophies, not as a direct result of Wahhabi Islam in Saudi Arabia. Ironically, the domestic attacks of the last decade have reduced the authority of traditionalists and hard-liners within the Saudi establishment, and have actually handed more power to those who wish to modernise the kingdom. As Lacey notes, “9/11 finally settled who ruled whom in Saudi Arabia... [The] monarchy decided ‘Rulers must rule, and the religious must go along with that’.”²¹⁷

Anxious to augment establishment Wahhabism against radical clerics, the Saudi authorities gave the *ulema* greater powers after the Grand Mosque seizure, especially in education and over public morality. Often criticised for spreading intolerance and even ideas which lead to terrorism, Coulson believes that “the message of hate, suspicion and intolerance delivered by Saudi Arabia’s schools appears to have been internalized by a considerable segment of the population ... [and] the Saudi education threat is substantially magnified by the country’s aggressive campaign to export it around the world”²¹⁸. Yet Commins finds that Saudi school textbooks actually espouse a Muslim Brotherhood-oriented vision of the West as a direct threat to Muslims, not a purely Wahhabi worldview²¹⁹. Aware of the criticisms regarding education from outside Saudi Arabia, and provoked by instances of domestic

²¹⁴ Commins, op. cit., p.121

²¹⁵ Lacey (2009) op. cit., p.247

²¹⁶ International Crisis Group (2005) ‘The Shiite Question in Saudi Arabia’, *Middle East Report*, p.12

²¹⁷ Lacey (2009) op. cit., pp.235-6

²¹⁸ Coulson, op. cit., pp.6-7

²¹⁹ Commins, op. cit., p.201

terrorism, the government has made some alterations to textbooks since 2001, and as part of its programme of modernisation, control of state education institutions has passed from the *ulema* to the secular Ministry of Education. However, the education system in Saudi Arabia has been influenced by external sources since the arrival of Muslim Brotherhood members in the 1960s, and since then state education has embodied a substantial departure from traditional Wahhabi instruction²²⁰. Therefore, the terrorists responsible for 9/11 and domestic attacks in Saudi Arabia are not representative products of exposure to a wholly Wahhabi education; their worldviews have been influenced by a complex set of ideas and practices of which their Wahhabi background is only a small part. Moves to eradicate intolerant teachings from textbooks, and secular oversight of education by the government can be seen as good first steps to reducing radicalisation among Saudi students.

The impact of Muslim Brotherhood teachers, *sahwa* clerics, and non-Wahhabi inspired Islamic revivalism spread through new communication technologies, have all deeply altered the religious outlook in Saudi Arabia since the 1980s. Wahhabism is no longer the only Islamic voice in Saudi Arabia, and as such its hegemony over Saudi religious life has been affected. In turn, the *ulema* are now more dependent than ever before on government policy for the maintenance of their income and social standing. However, Hiro believes that Saudi *ulema* still have a far higher status and far greater influence than the *ulema* of any other Sunni country²²¹. Unlike political opposition parties and Islamic movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and *Jamaat-i Islami*, the Wahhabi *ulema* have never believed in mass political participation, since Ibn Abd al-Wahhab preached loyalty to a ruler upholding *sharia*; consequently they provide a relatively stable safeguard against political dissent.

The Saudi government therefore has to tread a careful line between Wahhabi traditionalism and the need for modernisation in politics, economics and social life. Any changes made are done so slowly, so as not to disrupt the fragile balance of Saudi society, yet this excuse can also be used to explain away the monarchy's reluctance to introduce much-needed reforms. Pressure for these reforms frequently comes from the more Westernised, and perhaps more secular, upper and upper-middle classes, but there is pressure too from traditionalists who struggle with many

²²⁰ Ibid., p.122

²²¹ Hiro (2002) op. cit., p.125

aspects of modernity, particularly the increasingly permeable nature of both national and religious boundaries. In order to accommodate both sides, the government often couches its reforms in religious language and symbolism. As Hourani points out, “in Saudi Arabia, the principles of Hanbali jurisprudence were invoked in order to justify the new laws and regulations made necessary by the new economic order”²²². The Saudi monarchy is acutely aware of the need to adapt to changing domestic and global situations, whilst retaining its Islamic credentials. A very slow process of secularisation in some areas of government, like education, has helped the monarchy to retain control, and in 2009 the most conservative of *ulema* were removed from the government²²³. Initiatives such as the National Dialogues, in which leaders from all areas of society are able to participate, are an unprecedented step in Saudi Arabia, since the inclusion of Shiites and Sufis, as well as non-Wahhabi Sunnis, admits to the pluralism which is actually present in modern Saudi life. However these have not been universally popular, and al-Hawali refused to attend the forum of June 2003 because of the presence of non-Wahhabis²²⁴. Paradoxically, the threat of terrorism can be seen to have prompted conciliations between these diverse sectors of Saudi society. Despite the changes to their realms of authority, modernisation does not appear to have undermined the importance of the Wahhabi *ulema* in Saudi Arabia, since they remain the sole institution which confers legitimacy on the House of Saud’s leadership. This leadership encompasses not only the governance of Saudi Arabia, but also the guidance of the global Islamic community.

Saudi Arabia is in a unique position in the Islamic world because of its guardianship of Mecca and Medina. Since the *hajj* is a journey which symbolises the unity of the *ummah*, Saudi management of the pilgrimage was to become one of the most important areas of influence for Wahhabi Islam. Indeed, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s *dawa* was able to have a far greater impact on the Muslim world after Saudi forces conquered Mecca and Medina in 1803²²⁵. Pilgrims inspired by Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s ideas and practices helped to spread his interpretation of Islam beyond Saudi Arabia’s borders. To emphasise his religious credentials, in 1986 King Fahd adopted the title “Custodian of the Two Holy Places”, underlining this position of hegemony

²²² Hourani, op. cit., p.453

²²³ Lacey (2009) op. cit., p.334

²²⁴ International Crisis Group (2004) op. cit., p.16

²²⁵ Abualrub, op. cit., p.636

over Islam²²⁶. The Saudi monarch can therefore be seen as the head of the *ummah*, in both religious and political terms. Since 1979, at least one and a half million pilgrims have made the *hajj* each year²²⁷, so having control of Islam's holiest places allows not just the Saudi government, but also the Wahhabi *ulema* to have a great deal of authority and influence within the Islamic milieu. The Holy Places are thus an intrinsic part of Saudi and Wahhabi power, and are even used as a political tool to gain favour in the Muslim world. Through the *hajj*, Saudi Arabia presents itself to other Muslims as a united Islamic community, whose laws and standards of social organisation are based on the Quran. The government and *ulema* also aim to present Wahhabi models of thought and behaviour as the correct ones for the wider Muslim world to follow, and, aided by the *hajj*, Wahhabi Islam can be propounded as the ideal.

The *hajj* is not the only method which is used to propagate Wahhabi Islam throughout the world; the flow of migrant labour in and out of the Gulf States, and Saudi funding and proselytising activities have helped Wahhabi Islam to gain followers not just in Muslim-majority countries, but in Western countries too. This has been particularly true within newly-settled immigrant communities, where Wahhabism can provide a stable identity and fixed social norms in an uncertain time. By propagating Wahhabi Islam across the globe, Saudi Arabia offers a chance for Sunnis to create for themselves an identity which emphasises their religiosity and religious unity with fellow Muslims. Differences in language, nationality and geographical location are thereby reduced, with religion becoming the over arching means of identification.

Investment in charity projects also provides the Saudi government with greater legitimacy and influence, yet some charitable organisations have been proscribed by the United Nations Security Council for alleged links to terrorist groups. The UN Security Council and the US Office of Foreign Assets Control have frozen the material assets of some branches of the International Islamic Relief Organisation of Saudi Arabia (IIRO) for having links with *al-Qaeda* and the Taliban²²⁸. Similarly, *al-Haramain* Islamic Foundation, based in Saudi Arabia, has purported links with

²²⁶ Kepel (2003) op. cit., p.75

²²⁷ Ibid., p.75

²²⁸ Winer (2008) 'Countering Terrorist Finance', in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, p.118

Osama bin Laden, so it was jointly designated by the US and Saudi Arabia in March 2002²²⁹. As a result of *al-Haramain's* connections, Saudi Arabia has increased its oversight of charitable foundations based in the Kingdom.

Perhaps the primary way in which Wahhabi Islam is spread is through Saudi-funded mosque-building projects. Since mosques have always been places of instruction and socialisation, Saudi Arabia can hope that these mosques will educate Muslims along Wahhabi lines, and even replicate certain aspects of Saudi social and religious life outside that state. These missionary activities and financing can appear as aggressive and imperialist since they promote Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's doctrine as the best interpretation of Islam, but Saudi Arabia has also funded a variety of other Sunni groups. Despite heavy criticism for what has at times seemed indiscriminate subvention of Islamic groups, it is probable that Saudi involvement has frequently been exaggerated²³⁰.

In Saudi Arabia itself, Islam is the core of identity formation, religiously and culturally, and Islam in the Wahhabi interpretation remains the unifying factor for the majority of Saudi citizens. Adherence to Wahhabi norms and practices affects social, economic, educational and political aspects of Saudi society, and they are inseparable from governance in the country. Wahhabism is the basis of legitimacy not just for the monarchy, but for all of their political institutions, since the first article of the Basic Law of Government states that the Quran and *Sunnah* are the constitution of Saudi Arabia. The government and *ulema* maintain the *sharia*, but efforts have been made in the last two decades to slowly adapt this into a legal system more fitting for the contemporary situation²³¹. Despite the constitutional claims, to some extent the monarchy demarcates limits around its authority and that of the *ulema*²³², and these restrictions of the *ulema* have become more obvious in recent years as certain areas of traditional authority have been removed from the Wahhabi clerics. Yet the role that religion plays in public life has not been reduced; the lack of secular sources of authority means that the religious foundations of the country are ipso facto relied upon. Wahhabism still appears as a form of social

²²⁹ Aufhauser (2003) 'The Threat of Terrorist Financing', *United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Technology and Homeland Security*

²³⁰ Eickelman and Piscatori, op. cit., p.151

²³¹ Hourani, op. cit., p.446

²³² Eickelman and Piscatori, op. cit., p.62

control since it is still the normative form of Islam, and Wahhabi beliefs and practices are enforced, sometimes physically, by the *mutawwin*. Islam remains the core legitimising factor for the monarchy, and is appropriated by them as a commodity and for use as a political tool.

9. Radicalisation, Islamism and Terrorism

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the Islamist movement predominated amongst politically active Muslims, largely because of an increased awareness in the severe inequalities between the richest and the poorest in many Muslim states. Most successful in the 1970s and 1980s, by the last decade of the twentieth century Islamism was failing to mobilise large numbers of Muslims to its cause. Kepel believes that the repeated violence of the Islamist movement during the 1990s, for example in Chechnya and during the Algerian civil war, was an indication of the movement's core weakness, rather than its growing strength²³³. Combined with ideologies which came to prominence during the anti-Soviet *jihad* in Afghanistan, Islamism, with its focus on active struggle, helped to inspire some Muslims with violent tendencies to terrorist action.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, we have seen an increase in the role that Islamic language plays in politics and political discourse. The main reason for this has been the effect of globalisation, and in particular the globalisation of communications, on Muslims. On the one hand, increasing access to, and speed of communication technologies allows the *ummah* to unite across time and space. However, rapid changes in the roots of identity formation, such as those caused by globalisation, can cause a dislocation in identity; Islam could be used as a tool to connect with others, and to maintain a stable identity in a swiftly changing world. Unable to live in isolation from either non-Muslims or other forms of Islam, many Muslims found that the *ummah*, and the shared values, practices, and even sometimes language that it epitomises provided a framework for their Islamic identity. Although the notion of the *ummah* has a distinct religio-political significance, the reality is that the *ummah* is not a single, uniform entity. Rather, due to the pluralism of Islam countless forms of Islamic community exist, and these are diverse in their religious and political beliefs. Alongside this, for Islamists who were European citizens a change was required in the way in which they referred to their countries. Rather than living in the *dar al-kufr*, where a non-Muslim ruler made it impossible to call for the implementation of *sharia*, Islamists began to view Europe as the *dar al-Islam*

²³³ Kepel (2003) op. cit., p.207

domain of Islam)²³⁴, allowing them to function fully in these non-Muslim majority states.

Furthermore, Silvestri notes the importance of language for terrorists: while the perpetrators of the attacks of 9/11, and those in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005 claim to be acting in the name of Islam, and explicitly place themselves within the salafist tradition of political Islam, Silvestri is unwilling to define these acts as ‘Islamic terrorism’, preferring to clarify that we are living in a time when terrorists assume and subvert the politically powerful language and symbols of Islam²³⁵. For European states, this form of terrorism which has emerged in the last decade, where recruitment strategy depends upon such Islamic symbols and terminology²³⁶, is particularly worrying and hard to combat. Kepel believes that young European Muslims can follow one of two distinct paths when exposed to such radical ideas. Firstly, they may present an alternative to increasing religiosity which is often used to mask authoritarianism, and turn to mainstream Islamist activity to enable dispossessed populations to have a voice²³⁷. Alternatively, they may reject integration into European society and adopt a culturally separatist attitude which espouses an extremist, rigid Islamic identity²³⁸. Of this latter group, most will explicitly reject violence and will become pietistic in their isolationism from the West joining the ranks of the ‘sheikhists’; this term is used because the Islamic path followed mirrors that of the non-violent teachings of the establishment *ulema* and *sheikhs* (leaders) in Saudi Arabia, who demonstrate no hostility to the monarchy²³⁹. The small minority which remains may come to advocate offensive *jihad*, and will likely condemn the regimes of both Muslim and non-Muslim states. But reflecting Silvestri’s opinion, Patel believes that Islam cannot be held responsible for the violence of certain Muslims, just as generalised violent political reactions to political stimuli should not be blamed on Islam²⁴⁰. Some individuals will always go outside accepted norms in order to implement their own forms of social justice, and

²³⁴ Ibid., p.197

²³⁵ Silvestri, S. ‘Europe and Political Islam: Encounters of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries’, pp.57-70, in Abbas, op. cit., p.68n

²³⁶ Ibid., p.65

²³⁷ Kepel (2004) op. cit., p.249

²³⁸ Ibid., p.250

²³⁹ Ibid., pp.250-1

²⁴⁰ Patel, I. A. ‘The Scales for Defining Islamic Political Radicalism’, pp.42-53, in Abbas, op. cit., pp.51; 48

instances of this can be found not just within an Islamic setting, but in other situations too, both religious and secular.

Baker notes that it is usually accepted that terrorism cannot be fought by military means alone²⁴¹, since military operations can create more enemies than they get rid of. This is particularly true today, where the *dar al-Islam* is no longer restricted to a specific geographical region. Unlike during Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's lifetime, differing interpretations of Islam, including Wahhabi Islam, now have more means than ever before to find followers across the globe rather than just in their native geographical areas. Indeed, the importance of the globalisation of communications, especially the internet, means that the *dar al-Islam* occupies just as important a space in the virtual world than it does in the physical world. This has meant that official *ulema* are increasingly losing control of Islamic education and knowledge transmission. The dynamic nature of many terrorist networks, which employ these most modern of technologies is especially difficult to tackle. Websites dedicated to spreading the message of terrorist groups are almost impossible to regulate, since when one is removed another can merely take its place. Modern terrorism is therefore much harder to track down and eliminate, since it relies far less on a physical presence in the world, and depends instead on a virtual one. The abundance of radical material on the internet, written by unqualified and often misinformed people, is one of the most worrying issues in the fight against terrorism. One solution may be for mosques to reclaim their traditional place as educational and socialising institutions, particularly in urban areas with large populations of young and disaffected Muslims. Providing a mainstream alternative to an internet-focused Islamic education, and tackling head on the issues on radical websites could help to demonstrate to young people how the majority of these most extreme views have no sanction in Islam. Engaging with the radicals' debate, rather than shying away from it, should be the first step to refuting their claims and thus loosening their hold on the discourse.

Another equally important primary stage of eliminating terrorism is to try and stamp out the initial causes of radicalism. These underlying issues may be social, economic or political in nature. Whereas the terrorist acts carried out in the 1980s and 1990s, by groups such as Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria

²⁴¹ Baker, op. cit., p.269

(GIA), were economically and politically motivated, terrorism in the last decade has moved away from being the domain of the socially oppressed and economically deprived. The majority of the terrorists on September 11th, 2001, were university-educated young men from economically comfortable backgrounds. Economic reasons, often suggested as the primary radicalising factor, are not then the only motivation for some turn to terrorism. Political dissatisfaction can be far harder and take far longer to alter than disparities in wealth or social standing, and issues which have dominated politics in the Islamic world for decades continue to be a key incentive for how Muslims align themselves politically today. Most notably, the conflict between Israel and Palestine continues to remain a source not just for violent activity and sometimes terrorism in the name of religion, but it also affects how the wider world is viewed. Its unflinching support for Israel is one reason why the United States is frequently named as a target for terrorism. So terrorism can be caused by both internal and external factors, but it is the external ones that cause it to become a global rather than domestic phenomenon.

10. Conclusion

This study has examined the ideology of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, and asked whether it can be seen to have been a part of the rise and expansion of terrorism on a global scale. While Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's *dawa* followed certain aspects of Ibn Taymiyya's teachings, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab also looked to a variety of other sources, including Ibn Hanbal. Many of the ideas which Ibn Abd al-Wahhab promulgated as part of his creed were not new in Islam; rather, they were core components of Islam for the majority of Muslims, and he aimed to take his teachings directly from the Quran and *hadith*. His doctrines can be placed firmly within the Hanbali school, and as such did not represent any form of deviation from orthodox Islam: "Ibn Abdul-Wahhab brought about change by emphasizing the very basics of the faith. The basis of the religion is the true monotheism (*tauheed*)"²⁴². Along with the prominence of *tawhid*, Hiro believes that the socio-religious equality of its followers is one of the key characteristics of Wahhabi Islam²⁴³. Although Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's *dawa* drew on Islam's early years for inspiration, it was by no means a backward-looking *dawa*; he did not call for the literal return to the time of the Prophet and his companions.

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's interpretation of Islam has been attractive to a wide range of Muslims because of its simplicity, and it has been successful outside Saudi Arabia because of the combined impact of Saudi wealth and the apparent westernisation and secularisation spread through globalisation. These things have affected not only Wahhabism, but Islam more generally, inspiring various movements of Islamic revivalism, particularly in the *salafi* strain, since the second half of the twentieth century. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was just one of many important thinkers who have called for Muslims to return to the Islam and *ummah* of the *salaf*, and others who have shaped contemporary salafism include Muhammad Abduh, al-Afghani, Sayyid Qutb and Mawdudi. Some scholars believe that Wahhabism gave rise to Islamic fundamentalism²⁴⁴, and even that Wahhabism and salafism provide the ideological basis for global jihadism²⁴⁵, but there seems to be little within Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's teachings to suggest that it could inspire terrorism. Indeed, a search on the website

²⁴² Zarabozo, op. cit., p.374

²⁴³ Hiro (1988) op. cit., p.109

²⁴⁴ Denny, op. cit., p.347

²⁴⁵ Awan, A. N. 'Transitional Religiosity Experiences: Contextual Disjuncture and Islamic Political Radicalism', pp.207-230, in Abbas, op. cit., p.219

*Minbar of Tawhed and Jihad*²⁴⁶, one of the largest collections of jihadist literature online, returns no results where Ibn Abd al-Wahhab is referenced as a source of inspiration for jihadist activity. Similarly, when the vast majority of Wahhabis and *salafis* eschew violence, one must come to the conclusion that there are other factors which result in people resorting to terrorist activity.

Migrants to Saudi Arabia during the 1960s and 1970s brought with them radical and even revolutionary thinking, in the shape of Qutbian ideology. This activism was taught in some Saudi institutions from the 1970s onwards, and appeared in contrast to the Wahhabi *ulema*, who were not only political quietist but rejected any form of mass political participation. While the aims of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Qutb were broadly the same, their methods varied considerably. For Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the most important aspect of theology was to develop a correct understanding of *tawhid*, while for Qutb it was to establish a social and political order in conformity with *sharia*²⁴⁷. While both men felt that Islam was in a state of *jahiliyya*²⁴⁸, in Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's lifetime this ignorance and corruption was caused by the influence of tribal practices on Islam, but for Qutb it stemmed from western influence on Muslim societies. Since Ibn Abd al-Wahhab did not insist on the classical distinction between *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-kufr*²⁴⁹, a key component of Ibn Taymiyya and Qutb's doctrines, he believed that *jihad* should be strictly defensive in nature and begin with neighbouring areas. Qutb called for *jihad* on a global scale, since the very existence of *jahiliyya* societies necessitated a permanent state of *jihad* until *sharia* was implemented everywhere and peace would follow automatically²⁵⁰. Here then can clearly be found the intellectual roots of global jihadism. The need to fight both the near enemy in the guise of un-Islamic rulers of Muslim states, and the far enemy in the form of political, military and civilian targets, is characteristic of the *al-Qaeda*-style terrorist organisations. Another key difference is that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab decreed that only a ruler may instigate *jihad*, whereas modern terrorists assume the right to declare *jihad* themselves. Wahhabi attitudes towards *jihad* also tend to follow the classical model that only allows armed *jihad* in defence of religion

²⁴⁶ *Minbar of Tawhed and Jihad*, <http://www.tawhed.net>

²⁴⁷ Commins, op. cit., p.149

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p.148

²⁴⁹ DeLong-Bas, op. cit., p.230

²⁵⁰ Ibid., pp.261; 265

or religious freedom, and strictly condemns any attacks on civilians²⁵¹. Elements of the conservatism of Saudi society and modern Wahhabi Islam, and the apparently extreme interpretations of *tawhid* and *shirk* could perhaps, in combination with other ideas, turn some Muslims to a more radical and exclusivist worldview. Yet it is most likely that the majority of these radicals would reject terrorism, preferring instead political dissent and non-violent activism. The ideologies of most contemporary terrorist groups are based on an amalgamation of Qutbian revolutionary thinking, the global jihadism of al-Zawahiri and Abdullah Azzam, and the anti-Westernism and media-awareness of Osama bin Laden.

When examining any links between Wahhabi Islam and violence, the context of Wahhabism's development must be taken into account. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's alliance was with a military force which wanted to expand its control across the Arabian Peninsula, and inter-tribal fighting was also part of life in Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's time. DeLong Bas has concluded that Wahhabism today is not about expansionism, since it follows Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's teaching that *jihad* should be defensive in nature²⁵². The violence of the *Ikhwan* and of al-Utaybi and his followers did not stem from pure readings of Wahhabi Islam; in both cases there were revolutionary characteristics which came from outside Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's doctrine, as well as aspects of tribal justice and *mahdi* theology. In the modern state of Saudi Arabia, Wahhabi Islam has actually been used to condemn violence and terrorism, both within and outside Saudi borders. Reflecting Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's assertion that guiding people to Islam is the most important and worthwhile of activities²⁵³, Olivier Roy points out that "the priority of *dawah* over *jihad* is the watershed between mainstream neofundamentalists and radical groups. Most of the Wahhabi *ulama*...consider that *jihad* is not on the agenda, except for defense"²⁵⁴. While a few aspects of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's doctrine overlap with those expounded by some terrorists, these same ideas have also been present in the philosophies of many so-called 'moderates' as well as radicals, and no group has an ideology which is comprehensively the same as Wahhabi Islam.

²⁵¹ Hegghammer (2008) 'Orthodoxy and Radicalism in Saudi Arabia', *CSIS Congressional Forum on Islam*, p.1

²⁵² Abualrub, op. cit., p.593

²⁵³ DeLong-Bas, op. cit., p.198

²⁵⁴ Roy (2004) op. cit., p.255

Islam is not monolithic, and neither are its followers, and as such there is no single form of Islam which can be held accountable for the violence of a very small minority. Rather, the extremist ideologies of a few key thinkers seem to inform the worldview of most terrorist groups, but Ibn Abd al-Wahhab is not one of these. In modern Wahhabi Islam, which has not escaped the effects of globalisation, variations in belief and practice occur when external influences meet traditional Wahhabi ideas. Therefore, as both Islam and Wahhabism evolve, so too must our models of understanding; without an acceptance that Wahhabi Islam is not the static phenomenon it is often presented as, we will be unable to understand its relationship with other forms of Islam, and the complex role it has to play in both the Islamic milieu and the wider non-Islamic world. The continuing expansion of Wahhabi Islam, achieved with mainly Saudi financial backing, may potentially decrease pluralism within Islam if it takes the place of other, native forms of Islam. However, if as I believe, the theological ideas of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab are not inherently violent then they do not contribute to violent radicalisation or terrorist activity, and comparisons between Wahhabism and terrorist organisations demonstrate that Wahhabi theology has little or no connection with terrorism, on a global or domestic scale.

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