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## Saudi Arabia And Expansionist Wahhabism

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SAUDI ARABIA AND EXPANSIONIST WAHHABISM

by

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B.A. Florida International University, 1992

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of Political Science  
in the College of Arts and Sciences  
at the University of Central Florida  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the development of Wahhabism as an ideology into a rapidly expanding, transportable, contemporary Islamic political system. Serving as the territorial foundation, individuals maintain allegiance to Makkah, the center of the Islamic world, through symbolic Islamic prayer. Along with a central, globally financed economic distributive mechanism, and Wahhabi social and educational institutions emerging from the traditional mosque, Wahhabism serves the demand for an Islamic political system in a late capitalist world.

Wahhabism is fluid within contemporary dynamic political systems and rapidly changing international relations. Wahhabism continues to expand at a global level, at times, providing a foundation for new forms of contemporary terrorism.

This thesis is dedicated to my three beautiful children  
Safiah, Maha, and Faisal; and to my loving husband Luigi.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This study will examine the development of Wahhabism from an ideology to a political system. Wahhabism is a term derived from a man named Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab ibn Suleiman ibn Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Rashid al Tamimi, born in 1703 AD, north of Riyadh in the small town of Uyayna, in the Arabian Peninsula (Wahhabism Exposed Sheikh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, 2004). The term Wahhabism is generally used to indicate radical Islamic movements or Islamic fundamentalism (Dallal, 1993). However, this study aims to demonstrate that although Wahhabism is a potent religious ideology, it is also a political system based on the ideology, and founded by Saudi Arabia's ruling family, the al-Sa'ud, and their political strategist, Abd al-Wahhab.

It is critical to demonstrate the difference between Wahhabism as an ideology and as a political system. Ideologies play a part in the development and operation of political systems and the ideological infrastructure influences a political system's institutions and techniques (Loewenstein, 1953). Within the dynamics of sociopolitical

power, Wahhabi ideology is the motive force and the subsequent political system's techniques and institutions are the mechanics or apparatus by which Wahhabism as an ideology transforms and reproduces itself into real political and social action. Wahhabi ideology provides the substructure for the institutionalized existence of Wahhabism as a political system. In much the same way, Wahhabism as an ideology creates and uses institutions and techniques commensurate to its ideological premises, in order to realize sociopolitical action. For the purpose of this study, Loewenstein's major premise applies, in that Wahhabism's underlying political ideology conditions the function and shapes the operation of the Wahhabi political system comprised of political institutions and techniques (Loewenstein).

Wahhabi ideology was an effective tool utilized to unite and control the masses in Saudi Arabia (Blanchard, 2005). Wahhabi ideology is elevated into the realm of mystical by denial of study and thorough comprehension of its foundations, empowering itself through lack of scholarly research, even of its perpetrators and perpetuators. Western and non-Islamic misrepresentation of

Wahhabism, through lack of knowledge of its foundation and structure, breeds prejudice from those who do not understand and contempt (demonstrated in the form of contemporary terrorism) from its followers worldwide.

Wahhabi political systems represent a comprehensive set of institutions-economic, government, and educational, and the relations between those institutions, accompanied by the rules and norms that govern their function. Wahhabi ideology evolved into a political system with key components based on Islamic and tribal economic, authoritative, and social practices and beliefs, providing the ruling authority, the al-Sa'ud, with a monopoly on the legitimate use of force and legislation. The study of Wahhabism as a political system demonstrates the historical significance of tribal groups in exercising political authority, alongside Islamic jurists and clergy.

Recent terrorist attacks against the United States, its interests overseas and those of its allies, including the bombing of the twin towers in New York, bombings in Europe, the explosions at the expatriate compound in Riyadh, and the beheading of foreign nationals and American citizens Johnson and Berg, necessitate a better

understanding of Wahhabism as both an ideology and a political system. Although many scholars are quick to employ the term Wahhabi in examining contemporary religious terrorism, there is a need for scholarly work that addresses the foundations and the real meaning behind the discourse.

This study aims to demonstrate that Wahhabism is an ideology that has developed into a political system. Before examining the life of the founder of Wahhabism, it is important to point out the historical precedence of Islamic territoriality in the Arab world.

Saudi Arabia is host to the two most sacred Islamic shrines in the world - the *Kaaba* (a house constructed in primitive days to worship one God) at Makkah and the mosque and tomb of the 'seal of the prophets,' Mohammed ibn Abd Allah (born 570 A.D.), at Medinah (Rupert, 2005). One of the mandatory five pillars of Islam (the five most fundamental aspects of Sunni Islam) is the pilgrimage or *hajj* to Makkah, Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia serves as the leading Sunni Moslem Islamic authority; its populations represent models of Islamic conduct and practices for Moslems around the world. Therefore, being the birthplace

of the founder of Islam as well as host to the two most sacred Islamic sites, Saudi Arabia is considered the spiritual leader of the Islamic world (Metz, 1993).

In the absence of a clear method of succession in the desert Kingdom, the al-Sa'ud have utilized the Wahhabi political system over the decades in order to maintain power over the increasingly vital, oil laden region of the world. Today, Wahhabi activists struggle to control Saudi Arabia, while the al-Sa'ud family, the proclaimed guardians of the Islamic world, maintain power over one of the largest petroleum reserves in the world, while also controlling the majority of the buying power in the Middle East.

This study will demonstrate that Wahhabism emerged in the Arabian Desert as an ideology and subsequently, was developed into a political system by the al-Sa'ud with the guidance and assistance of a political strategist named Abd al-Wahhab. Al-Wahhab's ideas, along with al-Sa'ud political ambitions, served to consolidate and strengthen political power and control over the vast, fragmented Arabian Peninsula and its tribes. That Wahhabi system, modified and adjusted throughout the decades by a tightening and

loosening of religious, economic, and political controls, allowed the al-Sa'ud tribal family to attain political power over all of the tribes of Arabia, consolidating them into what is known as present day Saudi Arabia.

For the past decade, Wahhabism has been predominantly classified in the news and academia as a form of radical Islam. Authors including Fuad Ajami, along with a multitude of rhetoricians, expound on Wahhabism in contemporary literature with little or no exposure to the Wahhabi-based system. Daniel Pipes, a published Middle East and Islamic analyst, calls Wahhabism a death cult in conflict with the rest of Islam, although Wahhabism does not advocate death, and most mainstream Moslems are not familiar with Wahhabism as a particular cult of Islam (Pipes, 2004) (Kaplan, 2004). The dearth of scholarly research on Wahhabism creates a vacuum whereby analysts form unsubstantiated conclusions, often leading to greater conflict through the misrepresentation of Islam to the world.

In this study I will deconstruct Wahhabism and examine its foundations and the historical contexts within which it evolved, together with the meaning of the term *Wahhabism*;

utilized to imply a variety of predominantly religious connotations within differing contexts.

The fluidity of its definition has led to a misunderstanding of the Wahhabi phenomenon. While the term Wahhabism can be used to symbolize a radical Islamic movement, it is in that particular context that we may lose the real significance of Wahhabism as a rapidly expanding political movement, rendering those threatened by it less capable of dealing with the potentially dangerous ramifications.

Labeling Wahhabism a religion or a component of the Islamic religion has also increased the movement's ability to recruit members into its dangerous and seemingly contagious war that aligns East against West and Islam against the infidels that are exemplified by Americans and American culture (Ambah, 2004). Disenfranchised and marginalized populations are attracted to Wahhabism as an answer to global problems.

Wahhabism can expand very rapidly under these conditions, resulting in the propagation of a more hostile religion-based ideological political system. Therefore, not only is the meaning of Wahhabism fluid within contemporary

dynamic political systems and rapidly changing international relations, but, as a political system, it continues to expand at a global level, giving rise to a new form of contemporary terrorism.

Wahhabism has spread to Eastern Europe, Central Asia, throughout the entire Middle East, as well as to large parts of Africa and the United States. Governments from all over the world are scrambling in attempts to prevent further establishment of the so-called Wahhabi dens or cells. Azeri newspaper Zerkalo in April 2005 noted that Wahhabism is deeply rooted in Azerbaijan (Azeri Paper Blames Spread of Wahhabism on Russia, 2005). The majority of the Wahhabi adherents in Azerbaijan perform their rituals in specific alternative mosques. Bosnian national security specialist Radoslav Gacinovic observed that up to tens of thousands of Wahhabis were granted citizenship in Bosni-Hercegovina from 1989-2002 (Bokan, 2005). Countries around the world are attempting to formulate laws and programs to counter Wahhabi ideas (Chechen Leader, 2005)

Comprehension of the evolution of Wahhabism is crucial to understanding that contemporary Wahhabism is not an Islamic fundamentalist ideology but a comprehensive Islamic

based political system. In order to grasp the concept of Wahhabism, one must have an insight into the Islamic religion and the context with which its practices were established in the Arabian Desert; in point, the political, economic, and social contexts within which the Wahhabi movement emerged along with the schools of Islamic jurisprudence.

Chapter two will examine the concepts of ideology and political system from a theoretical point. Next, it will focus on the birth of Wahhabism, a little explored, yet vital, component of the complex system it represents today. The al-Sa'ud has turned the birth of Wahhabism into a religious myth, promulgating its legitimacy. This and the absence of research have resulted in a lack of clarity in terms of the initial relationship between the al-Sa'ud and Abd al-Wahhab. An understanding of the birth of Wahhabism can only come from the decodification of historical texts, a number of which will be presented and discussed in this study.

Chapter three examines the different Islamic schools and political governance in relationship to Wahhabism. Fundamental knowledge of Islamic governance is very

important in an understanding of the evolution of the Wahhabi political movement. Since its inception, Saudi Arabia has endured multiple political systems ranging from tribal chieftains, to the sanctified Islamic prophet Mohammed, to the Caliphates, to the Bedouin al-Sa'ud, today's contemporary tribal leaders.

Critical components of Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab's teachings were derived from the Hanbali Islamic school of jurisprudence and the teachings of the Islamic scholar Ibn Taimiyah. Chapter three will address these knowledge systems cumulating in Wahhabi ideology, Abd al-Wahhab's belief system, which was employed to compose the aggressive ideology that fueled the rapid spread of Wahhabism to the tribes as a "way of life" or an "Islamic" political system.

Chapter four explores the historical elements that were instrumental in the evolution of Wahhabism into today's political system, by examining the tribal and Islamic contexts at the time of the emergence of Abd al-Wahhab as political advisor to the al-Sa'ud. The "Islamic contract" was one of strategy and calculation. It was unique at this time since the tribes of Arabia had previously experienced Islam, yet had abandoned its tenets only to have them

revitalized again through the al-Sa'ud Wahhabi Islamic contract. This chapter includes the distributive economic mechanisms present in the formative stages of Wahhabism and the importance of the integration of Mohammed Abd al-Wahhab's economic system into the al-Sa'ud political unification strategy.

This chapter also presents an analysis that highlights the al-Sa'ud utilization of the Wahhabi system in order to consolidate and maintain power over the tribes of the Arabian Desert. This junction is where the Wahhabi political system came into existence. Wahhabi ideology had gained the crucial element necessary for its propagation through the al-Sa'ud: a legitimate authority with a goal, to unite the tribes of Arabia and position themselves as the ruling tribe of tribes.

Chapter five of this study will take a closer look at Wahhabism as a political ideology and system since its foundation in the Arabian Desert. A comparison will be made between other Islamic movements including Jama'ai al-Islam, the Society of the Egyptian Brotherhood, Al-Qaeda, and Wahhabism. Relative highlights of the Wahhabi system will

be addressed and illustrated. Finally, I will address Wahhabi prophesizing, expansion and their implications.

This study represents a contextual analysis of select, predominantly primary source texts on Islam, Arabia, Saudi Arabia, and Wahhabism. A brief examination will be made of early Islamic texts such as the Quran and the *hadith*--the Islamic prophet Mohammed's traditions which expand on an early Islamic socio-political system--as well as texts and oral traditions that influenced the Islamic scholars Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, Ibn Taimiyah, and Hanbali. The study will enable the reader to understand key Islamic texts, considered fundamental to Wahhabism and critical to its adherents. Many of Abd al-Wahhab's teachings were not a distorted radical version of Islam but basic components of normal everyday Islamic practices. However, the context and emphasis of particular texts and practices over others has been extremely influential in the evolution of Wahhabism as a versatile and extremely powerful contemporary political system.

The lack of scholarly work on Wahhabism is mainly due to the environment in which it emerged. Wahhabism emerged in Saudi Arabia, a country in which contemporary,

scholarly, political research is generally prohibited, either by denying visas to foreign academicians or by denying passports and education to academicians who dare delve in politically sensitive issues inside the country (Saudi Arabia: A Secret State of Suffering, 2000). Those who remain inside the Wahhabi system or the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are not free to discuss or contemplate its foundations or socio-political mechanisms of the current regime. The punishment for those who reside within a Wahhabi system and criticize Wahhabism is death by execution (Three Saudis executed by beheading, 2005). Neither do such systems allow foreign individuals or those who are critical of Wahhabism to visit or maintain contacts with other members of or residents in Wahhabi systems, in order to obtain the statistical and analytical data necessary to conduct qualitative research and analysis.

By illustrating the historical foundations, development and implementation of Wahhabism as a political system and comparing it with other Islamic movements, this study's objective is to enlighten readers and provide them with a better understanding of the underlying mechanisms that are

contributing to the emergence of contemporary Islamic terrorism.

## CHAPTER TWO: IDEOLOGY, POLITICAL SYSTEMS, AND THE EVOLUTION OF WAHHABISM

In order to examine the development of Wahhabism from an ideology to a political system, we must first consider ideology and political systems from a theoretical position. Ideology is a ubiquitous concept that has been defined and redefined throughout history. Francis Bacon founded the term ideology in his investigation of idols otherwise known as prejudices and preconceptions which "impede the exercise of scientific method" (Mullins, 1972, p. 499). Subsequently, the *ideologues*, French post-enlightenment theorists, envisioned ideology as a science of ideas, allowing for further empirical examination. This study addresses ideology from the perspective in which it comprises a science of ideas.

However, the science of ideas must also be defined as to its basic theoretical issues in order for it to be made operational for empirical research. Ideology is politically significant in that it constitutes the power to communicate cognitions, ideals, evaluations, purposes, and logical

coherence among members of groups (Mullins, 1972). Mullins reminds us that the significance of ideology in the mobilization of group members is not so much that it is the cause of one's actions but that it provides a cause for one's actions. Ideology, according to Mullins, is a "logically coherent system of symbols" within a historical conception, which "links the cognitive and evaluative perception of one's social condition" in particular, its future prospects, "to a program of collective action for the maintenance, alteration, and transformation of society" (Mullins).

Wahhabi ideology enables members to assess their political position, thereby facilitating the mobilization and direction of resources and energies for common political undertakings. The significance of ideology for Wahhabism rests in the ability to communicate the historical values and beliefs of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and Ibn Taimiyah and their subsequent interpretations of Islam to the group.

Despite the proliferation of news reports and articles about Wahhabism in its many different contexts, scholarly pieces that address the birth of Wahhabism as a political

system are scarce. One reason for the lack of record is that the creation of Wahhabism took place in Arabia among nomadic tribes, not sedentary peoples. Therefore, much of what we see written on the topic is derived from the writings of renowned adventurers such as Harry St. John Bridger Philby, also known as Jack Philby, T.E. Lawrence, also known as Lawrence of Arabia, or Gertrude Bell.

Western adventurers' analyses are recognized as invaluable research, yet lack local perspective on institutions and the relationship between Wahhabism as an ideology and Wahhabism as a political system. The remainder of writings occur in the form of religious texts as Islamic jurisprudence and guidance, rather than as historical narrative. It is necessary to decodify and deconstruct the texts, jurisprudence, and guidance in order to examine Wahhabism as an ideology which is the basis of the Wahhabi political system and its techniques and institutions.

Society is, according to Leowenstein (1953), a system of power relations. Political power represents the exercise of social control by those who maintain power. The Islamic community or Ummah as it existed in Arabia at the time of Wahhab was the political system. However, this system had

collapsed and its institutions had failed to maintain an exercise of social control. After Abd al-Wahhab introduced Wahhabi ideology, in connection with the al-Sa'ud, Wahhabism as a political system emerged, along with the agencies and instruments used to attain, exercise, and maintain political power, although in the case of Wahhabism, political power was camouflaged as Islamic power. In essence, Wahhabism as an ideology was the motive force, and its institutions and techniques are the tools by which the ideology transforms itself into social and political action.

The foundation of Wahhabism as a political system is comprised of a religio-state power institution, Islamic (Wahhabi) legal system, Islamic (Wahhabi) educational system, and mechanisms and institutions that protect the Wahhabi political system from attack. Unique, however, to this Wahhabi political system is a form of virtual government. The Wahhabi political system, unlike that of the traditional state, does not require actual physical territory. It can effectively control its members on a global basis, without necessitating their residence within the Wahhabi territory (Saudi Arabia), or more specifically,

the holy shrine cities of Makkah and Medinah. It is this form of virtual political system that is so different from traditional forms, which makes it ever more difficult to examine, comprehend, define, and predict.

Wahhabism as an ideology was significant in the formation and operation of the Wahhabi political system. Wahhabi ideology heavily influenced the political systems' institutions and techniques including constitutions, administrative procedure, courts, and elections in the Wahhabi political system. Another reason for the absence of scholarly analysis on Wahhabism as a political system is that it emerged in what is now the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia where such studies are prohibited (Bowers, 2004). In fact, to declare Wahhabism the existing political system in Saudi Arabia would be deemed treason, the penalty of which is death by execution by sword (Warraq, 2004).

Wahhabism as a political system is intrinsically linked to the control and power of the al-Sa'ud, Saudi Arabia's royal and ruling family. According to the al-Sa'ud, to question the birth of Wahhabism is to question the foundations of Islam, which originated from what is today's Saudi state. Wahhabism was initiated at the birth of

Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab, from whose name the term Wahhabism was coined and brought into being through a culmination of his training, teachings, and subsequent call for social reform among the Arabian tribes.

Born in Uyayna village in Nejd, Arabia, in 1703 AD, of the Bani Tamim tribe, little is recorded about the first thirty to forty years of Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab's life (Ahmad, 1993). His ancestors can be traced back 16 generations to the time of the Unitarian (*believer in one God*) ibn Taimiyah, the main source of Abd al-Wahhab's religious inspiration. Both Abd al-Wahhab's father and grandfather studied the works of Taimiyah who died in 1337 AD (Ibn Taimiyah Biography, n.d.). The teachings of Taimiyah, an Islamic revivalist, whose ideas were still very much alive during Abd al-Wahhab's time in Arabia, and his influence, will be presented in Chapter three.

Abd al-Wahhab's grandfather, Sheikh Suleiman ibn Ali ibn Mohammed ibn Ahmad ibn Rashid ibn Barid ibn Mushrif ibn Alawi ibn Wuhib, was a renowned ecclesiastic and judge in the town of Ayaina in 1668 AD (St. John Philby, 1955). Mohammed Abd al-Wahhab spent many days at his father's side learning Islamic jurisprudence. His father was well versed

in the Islamic traditions that were passed down through the years by the companions of the Islamic Prophet Mohammed. The traditions outline the Islamic way of life ordaining how men and women, boys and girls, merchants, students, mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers should live, even prescribing the method of brushing one's teeth (Elgood, 1962). His grandfather, father, and the Islamic scholars of his time not only taught these principles but the principles became Mohammed Abd al-Wahhab's way of life. He lived according to Islam in the Arabian Desert during a time when the populations had relaxed their practice of the often demanding Islamic religious traditions (Gibbons, 1776-1778).

Western and foreign influences in Arabia contributed to the evolution of Wahhabism as an ideology and political system. Makkah was a central focal point for many pilgrims and a trade route where foreigners gathered to take advantage of the lucrative business opportunities that existed along the caravan routes (Mortel, 1995).

Makkah had a long history of sanctified importance as the site of the Kaaba, a house with unique, acclaimed spiritual powers (Gibbon, 1776-1778). The call for

spiritual blessings upon visiting the house in the Arabian Desert spread throughout the region. This attracted people from far reaching places to take advantage spiritually or materialistically of the famous site (Ibrahim, 1982).

Edward Gibbon, another Western adventurer, described the Kaaba and its existence before the Christian era in his writings:

...Each tribe, each family, each independent warrior, created and changed the rites and the object of this fantastic worship; but the nation, in every age, has bowed to the religion as well as to the language of Makkah. The genuine antiquity of Kaaba ascends beyond the Christian era: in describing the coast of the Red Sea the Greek historian Diodorus has remarked, between the Thamudites and the Sabeans, a famous temple, whose superior sanctity was revered by *all* the Arabians; the linen of silken veil, which is annually renewed by the Turkish emperor, was first offered by the Homerites, who reigned seven hundred years before the time of Mohammad (Gibbon, 1776-1778).

During Abd al-Wahhab's youth, the Arabian Desert was undergoing a period of social, economic, and political transition. Nomadic tribes were becoming scarcer as trade and populations grew. The period of the great Islamic scholars had passed, and there was no longer a strong central leadership, nor political or otherwise ideological discourse, binding the peoples together. This vacuum resulted in apathy among many, abuse among others, and the

potential for social resistance to the existent social system.

Prior to this apathetic time, in general, there was not much of a class system under Islamic rule. With the decreased reliance on Islamic jurisprudence to govern the masses there emerged, according to available Islamic knowledge and research, a growing differentiation among the tribal and immigrant people (Lewis, 1970). Those of the lower classes tended to adhere to and promote Islamic principles, allowing for them to transcend tribal class barriers based on authority, wealth, and physical strength. Sheikh Abdullah bin Ibrahim al Saif, the religious scholar of the holy city of Madinah, bestowed the young adult Wahhab, now in an elevated position holding the title of Sheikh, with the honor of reciting traditions (Hidaayah, n.d.). The traditions that they studied were most often those associated with a particular Islamic school of thought. Just as the tribal poet was granted high positions of honor and respect, so was the Islamic scholar, in particular one who memorized Islamic traditions and texts such as the Quran.

During Abd al-Wahhab's youth, his father was said to have had to hold back his son's passion for Islamic practices because, at that time, the environment throughout Arabia was not one of strict adherence to Islamic tradition. The society was not, as Philby noted, "ripe for conversion from the easy going ways of the time" (St. John Philby, 1955). Islamic practices were taken lightly, not least within the realm of sexual relations. In fact, the social environment was such that not adhering to the strict Islamic rules was not condemned but simply ignored. Superstitious belief in sacrifices, the worship of some tombs and the ability of inanimate objects, including charms, trees and rocks, in order to speed up the gratification of human desires was the norm. In his youth, Abd al-Wahhab struggled to reject these un-Islamic practices.

At home, Abd al-Wahhab's family life was also filled with uncertainty in terms of economic and socio-political stability. His father, Abdul Wahhab, was removed from his seat as Qadhi or judge in 1726 AD - a position he had acquired following his grandfather Sheikh Suleiman's death, by a man named Mohammed Kharfash (St. John Philby, 1955).

Although little is reported in terms of his father's removal from this powerful position, in times of absolute tribal influence and politics, such an event would have been very traumatic in terms of maintaining tribal honor and respect. Abd al-Wahhab's whereabouts, during the time of his father's removal from one of the most prestigious offices of the period, are not known. However, it is anticipated that this event could have served as the catalyst that thrust Abd al-Wahhab into the reform movement that essentially began with his Islamic discourse.

Nevertheless, Abd al-Wahhab quickly rose to be one of the few respected Islamic scholars in the Arabian Peninsula (Kechichian, 1986). An important note about his methodology and perhaps one of the most significant contributions he made to the formulation of the Wahhabi movement is that he is known to have based much of his discourse on a form of classification based on creed. He divided believers and non-believers into two separate and distinct camps; most of his actions appear to be predicated upon this classification (Brief Outline, 1930).

To some degree, the Nejdi versus Hijazi environments may demonstrate this classification system (Cook, 1992).

The Hijaz region was on one of the major trade routes and it was there that many foreign people passed through, mingling with the local tribes. Power was concentrated in Medinah, Makkah and Jeddah, the major cities of the region, and was subject to exposure to those diverse and foreign cultural differences (Ibrahim, 1982). Nejd society was outside the realm of the strong foreign influence, therefore, the Nejdi religious *ulema*--the body of Muslim scholars trained in Islam and Islamic law--were less likely to accept change or deviation from Wahhabi influenced Islamic traditions. An incident in the early nineteenth century, involving the Hijaz and the Nejdi peoples, illustrates this form of classification when the ulema in Makkah criticized the Nejdi ulema for declaring non-Wahhabi Moslems among the infidels (Al-Ghafur, 1964).

Abd al-Wahhab was a traveller and there exists a conspiracy theory related to his travels that describes his meeting with a British spy named Hempher, in Basra (now in modern day Iraq) around 1723 AD (Pasha, 1306). This spy reportedly befriended him and educated him in a strategy to consolidate the tribes under al-Sa'ud's rule, through their adoption and application of Abd al-Wahhab's system. Other

reports note that the people of Basra banished him from the city because of his extreme religious views (Dallal, 1993). From Basra, Abd al-Wahhab travelled to Syria where he wrote many books in response to the Arabia in which he lived, condemning practices such as worshiping the dead and other animistic beliefs prevailing amongst the tribal people of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Arabian Desert.

Wahhab returned to the Nejdi town of Huraymila in the Arabian Peninsula in the late 1730s, to see that people were worshiping the dead Islamic Prophet Mohammed instead of God or *Allah* (Dallal, 1993). He vowed to fight such practices amongst the Shiite and local tribes and continued to write and preach against them. One could point to this intersection as key to the formation of the Wahhabi system in that the populations codified the call for social change. At this time, Abd al-Wahhab also began calling himself a reformer, putting him in a position of religious and political authority.

Abd al-Wahhab's movement was labelled *ad dawa lil tawhid*, the call to unity, with those following his movement also known as the family of the unity or *ahl al tawhid* (Glossary: Saudi Arabia). This call for unity or the

oneness of God was also a clear method of identification for those who became members of the Abd al-Wahhab social reform movement. The idea of worshipping one God was not new or different but Abd al-Wahhab attached political importance to the idea by attacking, in particular, the Shiite and condemning their practices and the influence that such practices had on the local populations. As a result, anyone who did not ascribe to the Wahhabi teaching was deemed not of the true Islamic believers in one God; therefore, they were cast into the opposite group, the polytheists, or those who were guilty of *Shirk* (idolatry or ascribing others to God) (Sirriyeh, 1989). Abd al-Wahhab's followers began calling themselves *Muwahhidun* (Unitarians - of one God) and subsequently, those outside called his following the Wahhabis. This distinct form of classification is a critical key in the foundation of the Wahhabi political system and aided the rapid spread of the movement.

[Insert Table 1 here]

The classification of Wahhabis versus practitioners of *Shirk* was a founding principle of Wahhabi ideology and a key factor in propelling the movement to the forefront of social and political change. The concept of "the other" is not new to international relations or political science and it serves as an excellent tool toward accomplishing alienation as well as to strengthen group identity. The Abd al-Wahhab interpretation of Islam was that of either belonging to the group and ascribing to the beliefs set forth by him or being alienated as "the other" whether an individual was a fellow Muslim, Christian, or Jew; an interpretation that is against the teachings of Islam which calls for respect for all "people of the book" which included Christians and Jews as well as all Muslims.

During the time of Abd al-Wahhab and within the tribal environment, survival was part of everyday life. In order to survive, a sense of collective identity must exist. In pre-Islamic Makkah, there are even reports of men taking their entire families to the desert and committing suicide because of financial disaster. This ritual suicide or

*I'tifad* resulted in starvation and death to avoid burden being placed on the relatives or clan (al-Qurtubi & al-Quran, 1967). If a tribal community embraced Abd al-Wahhab's teachings, then those who did not would not have been able to survive without the support of the collective group. Even today, individuals who dare step outside the group risk death, either through severe forms of alienation (such as abandonment in the desert) or execution.

The political support that Wahhab sought was not forthcoming in Huraymila, so he traveled back to his home town of Uyaynah, where he managed to garner some support from local leaders--not least Uthman bin Hamd bin Muammar (Sa'ud Family, 2005). Mohammed Abd al-Wahhab was able to transform his discourse on Islamic practice to discourse in practice. He expanded the one God message to include a call for strict adherence to Islamic law or Shariah (Sa'ud Family). Therefore, those who adhered to the proclaimed Wahhabi beliefs and values were tested on their belief by their adherence to the practices put forth in Hanbali and Ibn Taimiyah interpretations of the Quran and hadith or Prophet Mohammed's traditions.

[Insert table 2 here]

Following the death of his father in 1740 AD, who had often argued against some of his ideas, Wahhab asked the tribal people to refrain from invoking dead or living spirits to assist them in their daily lives. Next, he asked them to stop associating other people or objects, whether they were a prophet or angel, with God or *Allah*. These two ideological premises of Wahhabism are extremely important in its socialization practices: the stripping away of an individual's identity, first by taking away other vices that may or may not provide comfort in times of trouble, and secondly, by taking away the importance of any other human or object in an individual's life which because of an attachment may be considered an association with someone or something other than God.

Wahhab was adamantly opposed to constructing buildings over graves and their decoration, to performing pilgrimages to mosques other than the three proposed in Islam, and to anything that associated others with God, including celebration of the Prophet Mohammed's birthday (Karawan, 1992). With Uthman Muammar's assistance, Wahhab managed to cut down trees worshiped for their spirits and destroy the dome, which stood over the grave of Ziad ibn al-Khattab.

Wahhab also had an adulterer stoned to death, a rarely executed punishment (Familiarity, n.d.). These acts symbolize Abd al-Wahhab's intent to implement the complete Islamic legal system as a way of maintaining law and order in the tribal societies that existed during his time.

[insert table 3 here]

In exchange for the support of Uthman, Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab "expressed hope" that the *Nejdi* people would obey Uthman (Familiarity, n.d.). The alliance with Uthman was a unique moment in the birth of Wahhabism. Uthman received Wahhab with honor and respect and provided him with the material means to continue his revivalist journey to the extent of reportedly giving him a woman by the name of Jauhara. Wahhab is quoted to have told Uthman one day, "I hope that, if you rise in support of the one and only God, God Almighty will advance you, and grant you the Kingdom of Nejd and its Arabs" (St. John Philby, 1955). Therefore, the order of the day became condemning vice and commending virtue with many common folks, Philby reported, joining the ranks with enthusiasm (St. John Philby).

Wahhab did this discreetly at first, attempting not to draw attention to himself by sending others to cut down trees of veneration or giving a man his shirt in exchange for his permission to cut down a tree. He gained a reputation of courage and sincerity, and he became one that many tribal people soon followed.

The Islamic duties and responsibilities that Abd al-Wahhab promoted, with the exception of the birthday celebrations for Prophet Mohammed, are existent amongst all of the Islamic schools of thought, not solely within Hanbali jurisprudence (Dallal, 1993). Neither did al-Wahhab's calling differ from that of the Prophet of Islam, Mohammed. Abd al-Wahhab did not differ in his discourse from the original texts found in the Quran and *hadith* (a report of the sayings or actions of the Prophet Mohammad or his companions, together with the tradition of its chain of transmission).

The town of Uyaynah was close to Al-Hufuf, one of the eastern Arabian Twelver Shiite hubs, and their leaders were troubled by the anti-Shiite tendency in the Wahhabi message (The Sa'ud Family and Wahhabi Islam 1500-1818, 1992). Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab's call and reputation grew until it reached Suleiman bin Mohammed bin Urair, the Shiite governor of the affluent desert oasis Ahsa. Urair told Uthman Muammar that Wahhab must be killed or else he would cease giving him his *kharaj* or revenue. Uthman feared Urair and the potential loss of sizeable revenue and ordered Wahhab to be banished from Uyayna. Wahhab fled the town,

travelling through the desert to Diriyah, near Riyadh, a then impoverished town where the people lived in destitution (Familiarity, n.d.). Although Wahhab had managed to barter political support for his ideology in exchange for obedience to the ruler, he still lacked the economic institutions to turn his ideology into a legitimate, fully accepted, self-supporting political system.

Abd al-Wahhab resided in Diriyah as a guest of Abd al-Rahman bin Suwailim, who was paid a visit by Prince Mohammed bin Sa'ud's brothers. Through the brothers, al-Wahhab was introduced to the Prince Mohammed bin Sa'ud (Hidaayah, n.d.). People came in great numbers to hear Wahhab speak and though some accepted the call, others adamantly opposed it, establishing many adversaries to Abd al-Wahhab's Islamic position. By now in alliance, Abd al-Wahhab and Prince Mohammed ibn Sa'ud, who was also the Prince of Diriyah, had no choice but to use physical force and their army of followers to defend the movement and ward off the strong opposition.

Mohammed ibn Sa'ud died in 1765 AD, and he was succeeded by his son Abd al Aziz ibn Mohammed ibn Sa'ud

(The Sa'ud Family and Wahhabi Islam 1500-1818, 1992). Abd al-Wahhab and Abd al Aziz continued the unique political alliance, and they captured the capital city of Riyadh in 1773 AD (Rentz, 1972).

Abd al-Wahhab died in Dhul Qa'dah in 1791 AD. In order to further examine Abd al-Wahhab's discourse and its transformation into political action, it is necessary to explore the foundations of Islamic government their relationship to the founding Wahhabi ideology.

Table 1.

Main Premise of Wahhabism as Ideology: Those Who  
Ascribe Through Belief and Practice versus Those Who Do Not

UNITARIANS <i>Muwahhidun</i>	POLYTHEIST <i>Those Committing Shirk</i>
Those who practice Hanbali form of Islam and Ibn Taimiyah Interpretation	All others: those who practice any other form of Islam, any other religion, or no religion at all.

Table 2

*Foundation of Wahhabi Political System Backed by the  
Main Premise of Wahhabism as Ideology*

<b>UNITARIANS</b> <i>Muwahhidun</i>	<b>POLYTHEIST</b> <i>Those Committing Shirk</i>
1. Those who practice Hanbali form of Islam and Ibn Taimiyah Interpretation  2. Those who practice strict adherence to Wahhabi interpretation of Islamic law or Shariah	1. All others: those who practice any other form of Islam, any other religion, or no religion at all.  2. Those who practice any other form of Islamic, tribal, or foreign law.

**Table 3**

*The Muwahhidun Versus the Other: An Alienation of Peoples*

<b>UNITARIANS</b> <i>Muwahhidun</i>	<b>POLYTHEIST</b> <i>Those Committing Shirk</i>
<p>1. Those who practice Hanbali form of Islam and Ibn Taimiyah Interpretation</p> <p>2. Establish political norms and rules-strict adherence to Wahhabi interpretation of Islamic law or Shariah</p> <p>3. Those who abandon earthly representation and relationships; destruction of statues, trees, etc.</p> <p>4. Legitimization of use of force based on Wahhabi interpretation of Islamic law</p> <p>5. Acceptance of ideological leader as judge capable of enforcing legislation by force</p> <p>6. Ideological movement establishes proxy rule</p> <p>7. Political support provided in exchange for support of and adherence to ideological premises which form basis of government</p>	<p>1. All others: those who practice any other form of Islam, any other religion, or no religion at all.</p> <p>2. Those who practiced any other form of Islamic law or Shariah</p> <p>3. Those who create, build and worship earthly representations including statues, icons, stones (as are used in Shi'ite religious practices).</p> <p>4. No use of enforcement of Wahhabi interpretations. Freedom of Islamic practices.</p> <p>5. Acceptance of other leaders or cooperation between ideological leader and other leaders.</p> <p>6. Invalidation of proxy rule.</p> <p>7. Alienation from society.</p>

### CHAPTER THREE: ISLAMIC GOVERNMENT AND WAHHABISM

As noted in the previous chapter, one of the differences between Wahhabism as an ideology and Wahhabism as a political system is the practice and enforcement of Wahhabi ideological beliefs. This chapter will examine those beliefs and their use in formulating government institutions that are thus required for a political system to function, including those institutions necessary to exert some form of social control. Wahhabi social control is achieved when the members of a society or community believe in the Wahhabi version of Islam and Islamic jurisprudence and consequently, accept the enforcement of those beliefs.

Islam differs from other major religions in that its texts stipulate a form of politics whereby there exists no separation of state (*dawla*) from religion (*din*), nor is there a division of religious and political organization (Mortimer, 1982). It has no church in terms of a corporate body with distinct, defined leadership separate from the

state (Brown, 2000). The ruler of the Islamic community or state is the religious and political leader. Islam is a political religion; the Islamic community (ummah) is a political and religious conception with an ongoing significance within Islamic society (Cudsi & Dessouki, 1981).

Islamic ideology pre-dated Wahhabism; however, an analysis of the relationship between Islam and Wahhabism will demonstrate how the latter is a form of the revival of the Islamic political system with strong roots in class relationships that often exist within religious ideologies.

Certain aspects of Islamic governance are very important in understanding the evolution of the Wahhabi political system. The Arabian Peninsula has been host to several very diverse political systems ranging from tribal chieftains to the sanctified Islamic prophet Mohammed's rule; and, following his death, to the Caliphates; finally, there are the Al-Sa'ud, today's contemporary, settled, yet Bedouin, tribal leaders. This chapter will examine the different Islamic schools and their relationship, if any, to Wahhabi ideology and political governance.

Wahhabi ideology promotes the formation, existence and resilience of the Islamic community or *Ummah*. The Islamic community represents the embodiment of the laws of God with the Islamic ruler having authority over the people to enforce those laws (Saudi Arabia, n.d.). The Islamic community stresses the virtue of consistent and constant fulfillment of the laws of God (*Shariah*) (Brown, 2000).

The origins of the word *Shariah* signify the path to the watering place, also symbolic of the way to reach the heavens, the main life goal of every Muslim. The Quran dictates, "O you who believe obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority amongst you" (Quran, 4:59). Therefore, it is the duty of all Muslims to obey the leader of the Islamic community: the one who, through his enforcement of the *Shariah*, assists the community in its path to heaven, hence, the watering place. It is only then that the individual can attain his or her identity in oneness with Allah or God.

Wahhabi ideology emerged within the Arabian tribal society. Initially, mobile tribesmen with Islamic fervor conquered what became the Muslim world. These tribesmen were also instrumental throughout the years in keeping the

activist tradition moving. Islam, and subsequently Wahhabism, can be considered successful ideologies of tribal mobilization (Cudsi & Dessouki, 1981). Wahhabi ideology developed following a series of conquests into a form of religious orientation combined with political authority. Customarily, Islamic traditions did not allow for the sustenance of tribal activism, since many of the Bedouin traditions were not compatible with the dictates of a strict adherence to the Islamic religion, which was necessary to hold the Islamic community together.

For example, strict tribal and/or clan loyalty was not conducive to the unification of multiple tribes under one Islamic leader or ruler. Furthermore, the tribal system of raiding for one's own tribe or clan was not conducive to the Islamic tradition of sharing the booty with several clans or tribes. Therefore, tribal traditions facilitated the spread of Islam but also prevented the unification of tribes and the establishment of a central distributive mechanism necessary for the founding of an Islamic community. Furthermore, tribal traditions were heavily laden with animistic beliefs focusing on several potential

deities and subsequent practices, the majority of which did not fit into the belief in one God.

Next, during the time of Muslim Caliphates, the demobilization of tribal armies of conquest transformed the social basis of Islamic politics. This was, to some extent, facilitated by the growing inability of Islamic rulers to control those activists and their varying interpretations of the religious callings and traditions. New militaries and classes of political elites were formed. Populations were converted en masse, making the privilege of being the select class of Islamic subjects no longer attractive for just that.

From its inception, the Islamic community became a religio-political community, by a series of conquests (Brown, 2000). However, in the early Islamic empire, conversion was not encouraged in order to maintain the Arabo-Muslim aristocratic status and to avoid the loss of tax revenues (*jizya*) paid by non-Muslims to Muslims for protection (*Dhimma*) and freedom from military duty.

The development of Islamic government in Arabia was aided by the fact that the Muslim holy book, the Quran, was written in Arabia (Elgood, 1962). Islamic texts guarantee

the ruler of the Islamic community authority and legitimacy (Quran) (Translation of Sahih Bukhari, n.d.). The Quran ordains that all Moslems, "Obey Allah, and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority" (Quran, 4:59). This verse was recited to the Islamic Prophet Mohammed. Following his death in 632 A.D., the Caliphs, also Mohammed's closest companions, were granted authority to rule over the Islamic world, from Abu Bakr (632-634), to Umar (634-644), to Uthman (644-656), and finally to Ali (656-661) (Rightly Guided, 2005). These first Islamic rulers were also known as the rightly guided caliphs, all very pious individuals, having served as the closest companions of the Islamic prophet Mohammed. After the rule of Ali, Islam witnessed serious divisions. In 656, Uthman was assassinated, and Muhammad's cousin Ali was sworn in as the leader of the Islamic empire (Hinds, 1972). This was a breaking point in the early political leadership of Islam and two sects emerged, the Kharijites and the Shi'a. Ali died in 661, and the Islamic world failed to witness the same vitality until the emergence of Wahhabism in the Arabian Desert.

Yet, it was not just any desert; Arabia was the very birthplace of Islam. Arabian territory hosts the two most sacred Islamic shrines in the world: the *Ka'aba* (house constructed in primitive days to worship one God) at Makkah and the mosque and tomb of the 'seal of the prophets,' Mohammed ibn Abd Allah (born 570 A.D.), at Medinah (David, 1890). One reason that Arabia remains the center of the Islamic world is that one of the mandatory five pillars of Islam is the pilgrimage to one of the sacred shrines, the house built to worship one God (*the Ka'aba*) located at Makkah, Saudi Arabia.

The fact that the two holiest Islamic shrines are situated on Saudi territory grants the populations a form of holy abode and dictates the premonition that the earthly holiness transcends into the population's physical being. Therefore, Saudi Arabia serves as the leading Islamic authority; its populations represent models of Islamic conduct and practices for Moslems around the world. As birthplace of the founder of Islam as well as host to the two most sacred Islamic sites, Saudi Arabia is considered the spiritual leader of the Islamic world. (Metz, 1993). So, how is it that the Saudi nationals are labelled as

practitioners of Wahhabi Islam? What links exist between Islamic government and Wahhabism?

In the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, the time of Sheikh Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab, there existed a loose form of Islamic government, unlike the one posited originally by the five rightly chosen Caliphs. The Peninsular populations were generally Moslem; however, the tribes, once again, were not unified. Although the populations had converted to Islam from paganism, following the revelations to the Islamic Prophet Mohammed, there remained very strong animistic beliefs in spirits emanating from nature, statues, or the dead (Abd al-Wahhab, Kitab at-Tawheed). These beliefs had to be curtailed in order to prevent the tribal people from ascribing to alternative religions or cults.

The deviation from worship of one central, unifying religion into the worship of several competing religions may have posed a serious threat to the populations as they existed in the harsh peninsular climate. At a minimum, Islam provided for the establishment of a sedentary life form with an effective distributive mechanism. The sedentary way of life in the Arabian Desert was non-existent prior to Islam, and was found effectual for the

collection of tax revenues, as well as a for providing for a uniform legal code and books of uniform order and conduct which took precedence over the often harsh nomadic existence.

In addition to the importance of tribal unification, the influx of foreign nationals created another class amongst the Arabian tribes, the foreign immigrants who, as traders or pilgrims, had entered the Peninsula and made it their home. These foreign people brought with them foreign beliefs and practices that were not compatible with the tribal culture.

However, Bedouin tribes used the foreign pilgrims and traders to earn a living; some of the largest tribes like the al-Harbi often survived the extreme Desert hardship by robbing passing caravans or by selling hard-boiled eggs to them on the roadside (. Once these foreign peoples began to settle along the trade routes or close to the religious sites, the element of class was introduced into the traditional tribal unit. The merchant class became an important factor dividing the people. It was important that the foreign elements were not rejected altogether by the tribal Bedouins who had gone back to Bedouin customs

(Mortimer, 1982). The combination of Wahhabism and Islam, as a rational and civilized religion for the growing sedentary populations, was an answer to the fragmented, warring tribal Bedouin.

The development of Wahhabi ideology is key to the development of the Saudi Arabian Islamic religio-political system, otherwise known as Wahhabism. How did Wahhabi ideology develop and transform into a rudimentary political system consisting of its own legislation and social institutions?

An analysis of *Wahhabism* must take into consideration the belief systems and practices integral to the ideology and political system. It is through the Wahhabi belief system that the ideology is formed. The subsequent practice of those beliefs and the enforcement of the social practices are a key component (as was discussed in chapter two) of the Wahhabi political system. Islamic texts that are integral to Wahhabi ideology are the Quran and hadith.

In the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, Islamic studies elevated the lower classes, often placing them in political and higher social positions. This elevation of alienated and disadvantaged members of society based on religious studies

remains a strong component of Wahhabism today, one which allows for the differentiation of a member of a Wahhabi political system from a non-Wahhabi member of society.

[insert table 4 here]

Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab memorized the entire *Quran* by the age of ten (. His father taught him to read the *Quran*, its interpretation or *tafsir*, and the Prophetic traditions, concentrating on the books and writings, in particular, of Sheikh Ibn Taimiyah and Ibn al Qayyim. Abd al-Wahhab was a scholar of the Hanbali School of Islamic thought as well as the works of Islamic scholar Ibn Taimiyah.

Ibn Taimiyah al Harrani, a Hanbali scholar, was also known as Abu al Abbas Ahmad ibn Abd al Halim (Refutations, 2005). He died in 728 A.H. in a Damascus prison. His teachings and views of Islam were often opposed by other scholars. He represented an Islamic revival movement; his teachings emphasized forbidding evil and promoting good. Some of his main attacks were against the worship of statues and pictures and oppression as well as earthly

pleasures and commodities (Dallal, 1993). He fought for the utilization of God's names in everyday life, the unification of the Moslem people, Moslem brotherhood, belief in the hereafter, and social equality. Many assert that Wahhab's beliefs were mainly founded from the teachings of Ibn Taimiyah (Ibn Taimiyah, n.d.).

[insert table 5 here]

During the time of Sheikh Wahhab, all of the Islamic schools of jurisprudence and thought and their respective teachings existed throughout the Arab world. The religious schools did not form the basis of political legitimisation in the Arabian Gulf, but rather, they were the basis of the existence of different socio-economic systems within the various tribes and regions.

Wahhabism as a political system has its own set of social institutions including an educational system, which promulgates its particular version of religiously oriented ideology. In order to understand the complex Wahhabi version, one must examine some key aspects of Islam. Several sources of Islamic doctrine outline the Islamic way of life, which reflect parallel sets of matching social

institutions. Islamic scholars utilize these texts to formulate the foundations of the Islamic community's political organization. The foundations of the Islamic community, otherwise known as the "way of life," are put forth in two main doctrines: the Islamic holy book, the *Quran*, and the traditions or *hadith* of the Islamic Prophet Mohammed. The *Quran*, reportedly, was recited to Prophet Mohammed from an angel named Gabriel, beginning when he reached the age of forty, and continuing over a period of 23 years (Davis, 1890). The Islamic Prophet's traditions, which included everything from the correct direction to face while engaging in sexual intercourse to the method of brushing ones teeth, were narrated and passed down by his closest companions (Translation of Sahih Bukhari, n.d.)

Islam, like most other religions, hosts clergy or religious specialists with authority over the community. In Islam, the religious authorities are called the *Ulema*, memorizing a large, mainly unchanging corpus of religious text and knowledge, guardians and transmitters of the Islamic theological and legal traditions. From the *Ulema* emerge the *fuqaha*, those learned in the study of Islamic

law (*fiqh*), who provide information for the judges (*qadhis*) and jurisconsults of Islam (Brown, 2000).

Muslim political theorist Ibn Taimiyah devised a political theory based on the Caliphate that symbolized the existence of an ideal unified Islamic community or *ummah*. Religious scholars interpret Islamic sources of knowledge. Their analysis and interpretation are then decreed the foundation of legal jurisprudence upon which the Islamic community can abide.

Wahhabi ideology is based on a blend of the jurisprudence of the Hanbali Islamic school, ideas presented by Islamic scholar Ibn Taimiyah (including the abandonment of all earthly pleasures and their representations and the utilization of God terms in everyday life), and Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab's own personal teachings. Early Islamic leadership led to the proliferation of Islamic schools of law with approximately 500 of them disappearing from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> century (Mez, 1937). However, the remaining four main schools of Islamic thought resulted in the institutionalization of the Islamic community's legal norms. The four main schools of Islamic thought are Hanbali, Shafii, Hanafi, and Maliki.

The Hanafi school of law was founded by the Iraqi Islamic scholar Abu Hanifa (699-767); the Maliki by Malik ibn Anas (715-795) from Medinah; the Shafii school by successors of Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafii (767-820); and the Hanbali by a student of Shafii-Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780-855) (Esposito, 1999). These main schools of thought differ greatly on their emphasis on the Islamic sources of knowledge and their interpretation. It is the interpretation and analysis of Islamic doctrine that forms the basis for differing Islamic legal systems and likewise political governance.

Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi was the first legal theorist in Islam. He attempted to balance reason and tradition through a form of prioritization of the differing Islamic knowledge sources or doctrine. All Islamic schools of thought accept the systematic prioritization of Islamic sources of knowledge to different degrees. The sources of knowledge include the *Quran*, the *hadith* or traditions of the Prophet, analogical reasoning or *ra'y*, and lastly, a binding consensus *qiyas*. Abd al-Wahhab's Hanbali school depends considerably on this particular methodology, utilizing analogical reasoning as a "last resort."

The four schools of thought differ in interpretation and analysis of Islamic jurisprudence. The Hanafi gives more weight to jurists' analogical reasoning rather than the *hadith* as a source of law. Therefore, some might say that it appears more flexible in decision making. Maliki is also critical of tradition/*hadith*; it bases its decisions upon a form of North African/Spanish (Western) consensual tradition. A fifth Shiite school of thought is named *Jafari* after the sixth Shiite Imam or priest Jafar al-Sadiq (699-765), and it adheres greatly to the Hanbali school of law, with the inclusion of the twelve Shiite imam traditions along with the Islamic Prophet Mohammad's traditions (Esposito, 1999). The Shafii, Hanbali, and Jafari schools are criticized for utilizing traditions or *hadith* to the extent that rational analysis or content criticism is largely absent. The schools that utilize the Islamic traditions more than rational analysis are called *ahl al-hadith* or family of those who adhere to the hadith or traditionalists, and rationalists are referred to as *ahl ar ra'y*. The Hanbali School, more so than any of the other existing schools, uses analogical reasoning as the final source of Islamic knowledge.

[insert table 6 here]

Islamic scholars, including the founder of Wahhabism, Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab, focused on and adhered to one of these schools rather than several at the same time. The schools were the basis of the political system's institutionalization of ideology with each explicating specific government, educational, distributive, and legal systems.

In early Islam, the masjids developed as schools or colleges for the jurisconsults like Hanbali (Makdisi, 1979). The Mosque served as an educational social institution whereby Wahhabi ideology was propagated (Leiser, 1981). During the early stages of Wahhabism, these institutions also served as social reproduction institutions as they remain today.

Early Islamic scholars gained respect, an audience, and their followers according to their ability to recite the *Quran* and/or traditions of the Prophet Mohammed as well as their application of them in everyday life. The religious scholar of the holy city of Medinah, Sheikh Abdullah bin Ibrahim al Saif, asked the young Sheikh Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab to recite traditions-the second holiest source in

Islam (Hidaayah, n.d.). The traditions that they studied were most often those associated with their particular school of thought. The Islamic scholar was awarded high positions of honor and respect. Abd al-Wahhab rapidly rose to be one of the few respected Islamic scholars in the Arabian Peninsula. Yet, unique to Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab, was the fact that he not only served the al-Sa'ud as an Islamic scholar, but as a political consultant and advisor.

Contemporary Saudi Arabia is not exclusively based on the Hanbali jurisprudence system. In 1970, Saudi Arabia set up a ministry of justice and the *Shariah* judicial system was reorganized along a more Western model in 1974 (Arab Political Systems: Baseline Information and Reforms: Saudi Arabia, 2005). Ibn Sa'ud's attempts to codify Islamic law were unsuccessful, so six books written by Hanbali jurists were chosen for reliance in *Shariah* courts. They are in order of priority-Sharaf al-Din Musa al-Hujawi, K. Al-Iqna; Abu Mansur al-Bahuti, Kashshaf al-Qina an al-Iqna; Taqi al-Din al-Futuhi, Ibn al-Najjar, Muntaha al-Iradar; Al-Bahuti, Sharh Muntaha al-Iradar; Muwaffaq al-Din; and Qudama al-Maqdisi, K. al-Mughni, Shams al-Din Abu

Muhammad b. Qudama al-Mugni li-Muwaffaq al-Din (Layish, 1987).

When those six Hanbali sources do not provide provision, several *qadhi*(s) or judges are allowed to utilize collective discretion, sometimes resorting to other schools. In agrarian regime matters, local custom has become binding legislation in Shariah courts (Layish, 1987). In the Hijaz in 1926, the laws, mainly Ottoman, were adopted, and in 1932 following the Kingdom's unification, all legislation in force in the Hijaz was extended throughout Saudi Arabia. This adoption of Ottoman legislation was based on the need to ensure legal continuity and, in the absence of religious legal literature, adequate provisions. Today, the commercial court (*Mahkama al-Tijariya*) and the Chamber of Complaints (*Diwan al-Mazalim*) operate with extensive powers concurrently with Shariah, even superseding it in some cases. Yet, Shariah criminal law still applies with the severe punishments that it prescribes. Today, there is a tendency to replace prescribed Islamic punishments with discretionary ones (*ta'zir*)-what Layish attributes to the Wahhabi, not Ibn Taimiyah doctrine. This increases the

ruler's power based on force and fear out of utilitarian considerations.

From its inception in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, al-Sa'ud rule has remained dependent on a notion of a "divine contract based on *shariah* or Islamic law" beginning with the alliance between Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab and the al-Sa'ud (Kechichian, 1986). Under the guidance of Abd al-Wahhab, Muhammad ibn Sa'ud turned the capital of Arabia, Ad Diriyah, into a center for Islamic study (Saudi Arabia: Wahhabi Theology, n.d.). This reinforced the notion that Islamic study could elevate one's social status. Next, they sent missionaries to preach Islam throughout the Peninsula, the gulf, Mesopotamia, and Syria (Saudi Arabia, n.d.). By 1803, the al-Sa'ud managed to expand their dominion from Makkah to the small gulf country of Bahrain, conveniently positioning educational and authoritative institutions such as schools with teachers and state power apparatus. By 1818, when the Ottoman destroyed the al-Sa'ud stronghold and Wahhabi political authority, Islam remained so ensconced in southern Nejd and Jabal Shammar that it would rise again to serve as the unifying ideology when the al-

Sa'ud returned to their seat of power in the next century (The Sa'ud Family and Wahhabi Islam, 1500-1818, 1992).

Islam, in the Wahhabi tradition, was, and remains, the unifying factor which allowed Abd al-Aziz to consolidate regions under his reign. He used Wahhabi ideology to link tribes from vast and far-reaching regions of Arabia into one unified force. Abd al Aziz's rule over Arabia expanded from the inception of the unique alliance in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century under his son Sa'ud, when the Ottoman Sultan asked his Viceroy of Egypt, Muhammad Ali, to liberate Makkah and reinstate Ottoman rule (Rentz, 1972). Ibrahim Pasha liberated Makkah from Sa'ud's successor, his son Abd Allah, ending a federation of regions. However, Wahhabism had really gained a foothold in the region where previous tribal loyalties had been to a degree replaced by a larger loyalty, one which guaranteed the ultimate: equality for all, regardless of economic status.

Wahhabi ideology remained strong in Arabia and Saudi rule was reinstated in 1843 by Turki bin Abd Allah, a cousin of the great Sa'ud. However, this transition remained one of the most important features of Wahhabism as

a political system. At this point in the history of Wahhabism, the prior institutionalization of one ruling authority became one of multiple authorities, based on Wahhabi ideology. Al-Sa'ud ruling territories had grown so large that many of the regions had appointed governors and judges to the towns and villages to represent *al-Dariyya* and to implement Wahhabi Islamic principles. Turki ibn Abd Allah used the loyalty of the governors to reunite Arabia. He informed the governors that the ability to reunite was based on Islam (in reality Wahhabi Islam) rather than the use of pure force. Therefore, Wahhabi Islam became an institutional mechanism, just as Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and the al-Sa'ud predicated it previously, to enforce social control, replacing the single Islamic ruler with a type of rule by proxy.

**Early Islam** → Small local population → (Makkah) One ruler → Direct rule

**Greater Islam** → Large areas conquer/convert → Multiple ruling authorities → Rule by proxy

The idea of the potential to establish and maintain a political system based on rule by proxy is one which made Wahhabism one of the strongest and viable Islamic political systems in the world. Aided by the location and religious representation of Makkah and the necessity of every Moslem to pray and worship toward Makkah, although he or she may live thousands of miles away, the rule by proxy was even more successful. Wahhabism had taken root in a complex matrix of tribal and religious practices to form a comprehensive political system, ready to be put into action.

[insert table 7 here]

In 1912, there was a revival of Wahhabism which led to the formation of a religious settlement at Artawiyah, a village about 300 miles north of the capital city of Riyadh, but this time it was under the auspices of the Islamic brotherhood, also known as the Ikhwan (Habib, 1997). This small town expanded quickly to a population of over 10,000 former Bedouins, who suddenly began devoting their lives to farming and learning the Quran. The Ikhwan enforced Islamic forms of worship through physical

beatings. They also enforced closing shops at prayer times and governed personal appearance, including forbidding long moustaches.

Four years later, another significant development occurred in the evolution of Wahhabism as a political movement. In 1916, Ibn Sa'ud designated himself 'King' along with his former title of Imam (Kechichian, 1986). This was the first time that the al-Sa'ud actually combined, in terminology, the head of state's political and religious titles. This transformation could have occurred because Ibn Sa'ud signed a treaty with Britain that recognized him as the sole ruler or King of the Nejd and al Hasa regions the same year (Al-Farsy, 1999). Ibn Sa'ud was secure enough in his Wahhabi orientation that he was able to acquire a secular title without opposition. The solidification of the Islamic community's acknowledgement of the Wahhabi combination of a secular oriented head of state with the religious institutional apparatus was recognized publicly.

Another turn of events took place in 1924. Approximately 3000 Ikhwan stormed, looted, and set Taif on fire, also killing 300 townsfolk. They smashed all of the

mirrors that they could find. After this, Ibn Sa'ud prohibited such killing and looting; by 1926, most of Arabia fell to the al-Sa'ud, including Makkah, Jeddah, and Medinah. In 1926, an Ikhwan attack against an Egyptian Hajji and his loud brass band forced Ibn Sa'ud to rid the cities of the Ikhwan and keep them in the desert. Ibn Sa'ud then fought the Ikhwan with cars and demolished most of their stronghold in the Kingdom by 1929 (Nkrumah, 2004).

Key to Abd al-Wahhab's teachings was his philosophy, some assert, to convert political loyalty into a religious obligation. In Islamic doctrine, the separation of church and state as is recognized in the West does not exist. Political loyalty is a religious obligation as was pointed out at the beginning of this chapter.

Abd al-Wahhab called for the unquestionable allegiance to the ruler as long as the authority directs his community in accordance with Islamic law (Doumato, 1992). This bolstered the ability of Wahhabism to reproduce itself as a political system because it prevented issues of succession to interfere or weaken legitimization of the Wahhabi authority. In Islamic sources of knowledge, it is not fixed that a ruler is beyond question. Yet, with the opposition

that existed during Abd al-Wahhab's time to any political attempts to unify and settle the tribes under one ruler, perhaps it was the only way to attain that goal. After Abd al-Wahhab died, the al-Sa'ud used force to conquer and re-conquer the Peninsula; however, once that was accomplished, they tended to practice a more accommodating policy. This, perhaps stemming from Bedouin tribal traditions, has been a key aspect of the legitimisation and maintenance of al-Sa'ud rule, since the founding of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Whatever its origins, there continues to be the belief in the necessity of an unquestionable loyalty to the Islamic leader as long as he retains the traditional-Wahhabi ideology and continues the proliferation of Wahhabi institutions locally and abroad.

Today, whatever legitimization remains, may not be directed toward the sanctified rulers but rather in response to the false enemies or *bete noir* that the al-Sa'ud have created in order to maintain their fragile legitimacy. The al-Sa'ud are now cautiously secularizing the same Wahhabi institutions they formed during their ascent to power in an effort to maintain legitimacy or power over the populations. Chapter five will address

Wahhabism in its contemporary form as it exists in the Kingdom's extremely fragile and problematic society today. But first, this study will examine the relationship between the al-Sa'ud and Wahhabism, mainly how those strong foundations and political institutions were established, and finally, how the Wahhabi political institutions are being dismantled by the same family that erected them in the first place.

**Table 4.**

*Foundations of Wahhabi Based Class System*

<b>Wahhabism</b>	<b>Non-Wahhabi</b>
Study of Wahhabi interpretation of Islam according to Quran and Hanbali hadith and teachings of al-Wahhab.	Lack of religious study or study of multiple religious texts other than Quran and hadith according to multiple schools of jurisprudence
Elevated social class-the holy ones	Lower class-the infidels
Invited into upper class society power circles	No affiliation with trading or upper class

**Table 5**

*Differentiation between Wahhabi and non-Wahhabi*

*according to Wahhabi Ideological Belief System*

<b>WAHHABISM</b>	<b>NON-WAHHABI OR INFIDEL</b>
Study of Wahhabi interpretation of Islam according to the Quran, Hanbali hadith, and the teachings of al-Wahhab.	Lack of religious study or study of multiple religious texts and opinions other than Quran and hadith emanating from multiple schools of jurisprudence
Elevated social class	Lower class
Total rejection of earthly pleasures as represented in pictures and statues (Ibn Taimiyah)	Allow for representations of earth, i.e. pictures, statues
Utilization of the 99 names of God in everyday life including assigning first names (Ibn Taimiyah)	Naming utilizing other than 99 names of God

**Table 6**

*Different Schools of Islam and Key Components of the Belief Systems*

Hanbali	Shafa'i	Hanafi	Maliki
Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780-855)	Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafii (767-820)	Iraqi Abu Hanifa (699-767)	Malik ibn Anas (715-795) from Medinah
1- <i>Quran</i> 2- <i>hadith</i> or traditions of the Prophet 3- analogical reasoning or <i>ra'y</i> 4- binding consensus <i>qiyas</i>	balance reason and tradition through prioritization	more weight to jurists' analogical reasoning as source of law	consensual tradition
Rational analysis absent- <i>ahl al hadith</i>	Minimal rational analysis present <i>ahl ar-ra'y</i>	Rational analysis present <i>ahl ar-ra'y</i>	Rational analysis tradition <i>ahl ar-ra'y</i>
Final School	Second to last school	First school	Intermediate school

**Table 7**

*Wahhabism as an Ideology and a Political System*

<b>WAHHABISM</b>	
<b>Ideology</b>	<b>Political System</b>
Belief in Muslim vs. Infidel. This belief separates all forms of Islam from the Wahhabi version of Islam	Mosque operates as socio-political educational and legal institution. Wahhabi rules, regulations, and legislation are enforced by the community with the leading Islamic figures serving as the political authorities
Belief in Heaven vs. Earth and struggle to separate oneself from earthly representations of all kinds. (This belief is often tested with sacrifice of material and human needs demonstrating member's adherence to the community)	Central Distribution System whereby Islamic Taxation and Charity provide for the Wahhabi community. The taxation and charity comes from a network of corporate, individual, governmental and non-governmental organizations to promulgate Wahhabism at a global level. Funds are transferred electronically and via messengers and distributed among the community of believers
Belief in the utilization of Godly Names/Holiness in everyday life	A set of institutions or mosques that recognize Makkah as the territorial symbol of removal of earthly pleasures and the heavenly realm. Makkah represents a virtual territory as the house of supreme Islamic religious authority-Allah
Belief that authority only rests in God and a Muslim's belief in God.	Multiple Leaders by Proxy. One legitimate leader represented in Allah or God. Proxies rule by the word of God or Allah as written in the Quran and traditions ( <i>hadith</i> ).

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE AL-SA'UD AND THE ISLAMIC CONTRACT

As noted in previous chapters, Wahhabi ideology, the basis of Wahhabism as a political system, along with its unique set of political institutions including rule by proxy, the mosque as a social reproduction institution, and an Islamic distributive system, comprise one of the world's most unique, potent and viable political systems. This chapter examines the politicization of Islam through Wahhabi ideology in Saudi Arabia with an emphasis on state, economy, and society or the transition from Wahhabism as an ideology to a political system. The Al-Sa'ud's Wahhabi Islamic contract was one based on the emergence of a need for social institutions which would assist in uniting the tribes of Arabia into a unified population capable of supporting itself from within and fighting off the external enemies of the time.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is known as the spiritual leader of the Islamic world. Its territory is documented as

the birthplace of a man known throughout Islamic texts as the 'seal of the prophets,' Mohammed ibn Abd Allah, born in 570 A.D. (Metz, 1993). Saudi Arabia is also home to, as well as the guardian of, the sacred mosques at Makkah and Madinah, two of the holiest sites in Islam. Islamic law requires all able Moslems to make one pilgrimage during their lifetime to Makkah to fulfil their Islamic religious requirements.

Is Saudi Arabia an Islamic community behind the guise of a "state (*dawla*)" or is it a state whose authority is based on the Islamic religion? This chapter presents a condensed history and development of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in order to achieve a better understanding of the ruling al-Sa'ud family's politicization of a Wahhabi version of Islam to promulgate and sustain its absolute authority, power, and rule over, not only the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, but, the Islamic world.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been based on Wahhabism as its political system, or the notion of a "divine contract based on *shariah* (Islamic law)," from its inception. This contract was implemented upon the alliance formed between tribal adviser Abd al-Wahhab and the

contract's founder, Abd al-Aziz- who further consolidated the alliance by marriage to Wahhab's daughter (Kechichian, 1986). Islam was the unifying factor or catalyst that allowed Abd al-Aziz to consolidate regions under his reign.

Utilizing Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab's ideology, Abd al-Aziz linked the Arabian tribes into a unified force. Abd al-Aziz's kingdom grew from the beginning of the unique alliance with Wahhab in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, through the early 19<sup>th</sup> century where it continued expansion under his son, Sa'ud and his successor Abd Allah (Rentz, 1972). The Ottoman Sultan temporarily halted the Saudi rule of a federation of regions in 1818 AD by securing the assistance of his Viceroy of Egypt, Mohammed Ali. Ali sent Ibrahim Pasha to free Makkah from the al-Sa'ud and reinstate Ottoman rule, liberating Makkah from Abd Allah (Rentz). As noted earlier, this was the critical stage of transition between direct authoritarian rule and rule by proxy so evident in Wahhabism today.

However, Wahhabi initiated rule by proxy endured and Saudi rule was restored in 1824 by Turki bin Abd Allah, the nephew of Abd al-Aziz, cousin of Sa'ud. Previously al-Sa'ud ruled territories had grown so large that many of the

regions had appointed governors and judges to the towns and villages to represent the incumbent ruling tribe, al-Diriyah, and to implement Wahhabi principles and practices. Turki ibn Abd Allah used the governors' loyalty to al-Sa'ud to reunite Arabia. He advised the governors that the ability to reunite was based on Islam rather than the use of pure force. Serious oppression of subjects was punishable with exile (Rentz, 1972).

Turki's actions are a key element to understanding the successful maintenance of the al-Sa'ud Wahhabi style legitimacy and rule. Turki advanced that legitimacy by emphasizing tribal values along with Wahhabi ideology, creating a powerful and effective authoritative combination. An advanced system of loyalty, honor, respect, and obedience is embedded in tribal members from birth and that very system is utilized to ensure the tribe's survival - as among the Bedouin where their personal loyalty lies with their own kin (Rosenfeld, 1965). A tribal man cannot regain his lost honor in the community, so it was mandatory that the tribal people be treated with honor and respect to sustain tribal loyalty and obedience to the al-Sa'ud.

Al-Wahhab used the concept of alienation to promote Wahhabism in the Peninsula years prior because he understood that the alienation of a single tribe member for any reason could result in alienation of the entire tribe. The loss of one member of a tribe could affect the loyalty of the entire tribe (possibly an entire territory) and, consequently, exponentially reduce the al-Sa'ud's revenue.

The shift from a tribal system to a Wahhabi Islamic system was facilitated by the fact that both systems guaranteed the leader's honor and legitimacy based on his position or class. Abd al-Wahhab is noted to say that there should be unquestionable allegiance to the ruler as long as he directs his community in accordance with Islamic law (Doumato, 1992). According to Islamic sources of knowledge, rulers are not absolutely beyond question. Yet, with the opposition that existed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to attempts to unify and settle the tribes under one ruler, perhaps it was the only way to attain unification.

From the beginning of their rule, the al-Sa'ud and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab initiated an economic system whereby governors and judges served as collectors of the tax (Dallal, 1993). The alms paid their salaries, even

though their duties went far beyond the tax collector. Turki, like his predecessors, utilized the Wahhabi system of combining rule with religion, to justify levying taxes, as an instrument of state power to consolidate the people under their rule and to maintain control over the region's large socio-economic distributive mechanism by using the Wahhabi-al-Sa'ud system of equating al-Sa'ud's rule with submission to Islam.

According to Islam, *Zakat* is annual, obligatory alms to be used for very specific purposes (Quran: 2:261). The Quran states that *Zakat* is to be used for "the poor, the needy, those who collect them, those whose hearts are to be reconciled, to free the captives and the debtors, for the cause of God, and for travelers; a duty imposed by God. God is All-Knowing, All-Wise" (Quran, 9:60). In addition to the *hajj* or pilgrimage, *Zakat* is the third of the five pillars of the Islamic faith.

The Arabian tribes accepted the relationship between the leader, now coined King and the *Ulema* or religious authority, similar to the relationship, which existed between Abd al-Wahhab and Abd al Aziz in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Abd al Aziz had once held the esteemed title of

*Imam*; therefore, there were few, if any, who questioned his faith, and subsequently, his right to right to rule an Islamic community. To question an *Imam* is almost equivalent to questioning the religion itself or blasphemy. Next, in 1925, Ibn Sa'ud expropriated the rights of the tribes to their own territory or *diras* (Al-Rasheed, 1996). Land redistribution did not begin again until 1964. Everyone can apply for a piece of land; however, distribution is limited and carefully controlled. Access to land meant being a part of the al Sa'ud patronage network.

Abd al-Wahhab required adherence to the principle that the ruler should be unquestionable as long as he ruled according to Islam, in his case the Wahhabi understanding of Islam. Therefore, as long as the Wahhabi based *ulema* were with Abd al Aziz, there could be no question regarding his right to rule. The *ulema* assisted Abd al Aziz by siding with him against the 'extremist Ikhwan' who were often an embarrassment with their random raids, which created problems among their neighbors. A unique relationship between the founder of the modern day Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the accepted religious authorities or

*ulema* commenced. This relationship made demands on the public, including tax collection, easier to achieve.

*Zakat* or payment of the tax need not be forced; only a strict belief in Islam needs to be maintained in order for the people to feel the need to pay taxes and likewise to feel guilty if they do not. It became mandatory that the populations equate the Saudi ruling regime with the cause of God to sustain al-Sa'ud's legitimacy, not only to rule but to collect the taxes that financed their purpose. The al-Sa'ud used the Islamic tax-*zakat* to support a wide-ranging campaign of conquest.

This was the beginning of the al-Sa'ud socio-economic distribution center and the commencement of the largest religious propaganda system in the world. As long as there remain non-Islamic peoples and places to conquer, the *Zakat* funds will continue to fall into the hands of those who maintain control over Islam's holy sites. With *Zakat* being a foundation of Islam and the propagation of Islam resting partly on the collection and distribution of *Zakat* for "those whose hearts are to be reconciled," then the Wahhabi based distribution center will continue to function (Dhimmi Watch, 2005).

Turki was assassinated in 1834 AD to be succeeded by his son Faisal bin Turki who ruled until he was captured by Mohammed Ali and jailed in Cairo (Philby, 1955). Faisal escaped in 1843 and returned to the Nejd, restoring the symbols of the al-Sa'ud rule at the holy sites of Makkah and Madinah. Triumph was short-lived and the reign of the al-Sa'ud descended into turmoil culminating in the family being driven into exile in Kuwait, by the rival al-Rashid family who were then in alliance with the Ottomans.

Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Faisal's grandson Abd al-Aziz ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Faisal al-Sa'ud re-established al-Sa'ud's position as ruler by recapturing Riyadh from the Rashidis. The victory was made significant by Ibn Sa'ud's deployment of, reportedly, only twenty men and achieved by the assassination of the Rashidi governor of the city (Mortimer, 1982).

Initially, Ibn Sa'ud held the title of Imam or religious leader; however, in 1921 he changed his ruling title to the secular title, Sultan (Mortimer, 1982). Next, he recaptured the Islamic holy shrine cities of Makkah and Madinah and in 1932, consolidated the Hijaz and Nejd regions, after which he called himself King. King Abd Aziz

then named the regions under his reign the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It remains the only country in the world named after a ruling family.

During this period, jurists began to acknowledge that the Islamic Caliphate or religious leader of the community had emerged into a dynastic monarchy (Lewis, 1974). This could be because it was apparent that the Islamic community was actually a combination of secular and religious aspects of governance. Also, British influence was strong in the region and their power mechanism was the royal ruling family. Wahhabism was a component of Arabian society and the al Sa'ud was the uncontested ruling authority.

Acceptance of the close relationship between King Abd Aziz and the Islamic religious body, the Ulema, grew. The Ulema also supported King Abd Aziz by siding with him against the extremist nomadic elements of the Ikhwan- the Muslim Brotherhood opposing secular tendencies of Islamic nations and devoted to strict Hanbali Islamic rites, combining military, agricultural and missionary functions (Kechichian, 1986). The Ikhwan were creating problems among neighboring regions by carrying out random raids. King Abd Aziz, in an attempt to resolve the problem, established two

hundred new settlements to be inhabited by the Ikhwan to influence their assimilation of a sedentary society (Glossary: Saudi Arabia. (n.d.).

The Wahhabi predicated relationship between the founder of the modern day Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the accepted Wahhabi based religious authorities grew. The Ulema were exchanging or bartering their authority and legitimacy for the Kingdom's religious power, which the al-Sa'ud was happy to concede as long as its own legitimacy went unquestioned. Al-Sa'ud's main interest in Islam emerged as tax or *Zakat* collectors besides utilizing it for legitimacy purposes.

The al-Sa'ud had successfully enforced rule by royal succession. King Abd Aziz died in 1953 and his son Sa'ud succeeded to the throne. He was a spendthrift, playboy and ineffective ruler. In 1964, the al-Sa'ud family, with the consent of the religious leaders and the Ulema, deposed Sa'ud and made one of his six other brothers, Crown Prince Faisal ibn Abd al Aziz al Sa'ud, King (Mackey, 2005). A second brother, Khalid, served as Crown Prince. Unlike his predecessors, King Faisal was a practicing and devout Moslem, interested in modernizing the Kingdom and educating the masses, while maintaining an Islamic base.

His nephew, the son of his brother Khalid, assassinated King Faisal in 1975 (Metz et al, 1993). However, the Saudi population now had a vision and hope that a leader, such as King Faisal, could ascend to the throne again. Great numbers of Saudis named their children after King Faisal, known for ruling with piety, justice and strength. Hospitals, charity organizations, welfare associations and academic institutions were named after the late King Faisal.

King Faisal proposed the creation of a consultative council in 1964 as a means of giving more voice to the people in line with Islamic tradition. The council was not realized until August of 1993, almost thirty years later under the rule of the late King Fahd (Saudi Arabia Constitution, 1993).

Following the death of Faisal, his brother Khalid became King, and Fahd, his younger brother, was appointed his Crown Prince. During Khalid's rule, al-Sa'ud suffered its first criticism of Western cultural influence on the royal family due to its leaning toward a more secular state policy in regards to Western, in particular, U.S. interests in Saudi Arabia. Wahhabism as a political system demands

for strict adherence to Wahhabi ideology, an aspect of which calls for the complete separation of those who believe and those who do not as demonstrated in previous chapters.

Due, in large part, to the al Sa'ud alliance with non-Wahhabi Islamic elements and their Commodification of Islam, an attempt was made to take over the Grand Mosque at Makkah, within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, by Saudi nationals in 1979. The rebels were later captured and beheaded, throughout the Kingdom over a period of weeks, to serve as an example to others (Kechichian, 1986). The al-Sa'ud had begun the tightrope walk between the Wahhabi political system that they were instrumental in forming and a political system, which would allow for rationalization instead of traditionalism to play a greater role in their authoritarian rule.

The rebellion sent a signal to the rest of Saudi Arabia. It was not that the royal family had ceased to practice Islam nor that the West had too much influence in the Kingdom. The attack was perceived as directed against the legitimacy of what had now become the al-Sa'ud political machine - an institution that was seen to dispose

of any obstacle in its path. The dichotomy of al-Sa'ud's rule was thus exposed. Their power could not be used against the rebels in an attack at the two of holiest sites in Islam. Such an act of aggression would be a violation of those sites and judged as blasphemous by the Islamic world.

The al-Sa'ud and the *Ulema* consolidated their efforts on issues affecting security (Bligh, 1985). The majority of the Ulema viewed the Makkah uprising as a threat to unity and as an attack on their credibility.

King Khalid died in 1982, less than five years after the uprising, leaving Fahd to address the fortification of the house of al-Sa'ud (Layish, 1987). Fahd made enormous fiscal investment in neighboring countries and to dissenters of Western culture and other foreign supporters, to foster outside support, while granting the Saudi Arabian religious authorities, the police force, and localized religious leaders' extensive license within the Kingdom (Saudi Arabia Invests USD one billion in Algeria, 2004) (Saudi Arabia invests \$150 million in Sudan's Merwe Dam Project, 2003). The extension of the al-Sa'ud power was not

limited to the streets, shops, schools and mosques. The authorities seized the power to enter the private domain.

The *mutawaeen* (members of the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice) and their bands of followers began searching the streets for any dissenters from Islam, chasing and beating people without apparent reason. They enforced strict adherence to the closure of shops and businesses during prayer times, the complete veiling of women - a practise that is not dictated in Islam - and all other elements of the conservative Wahhabi code. Local Saudi police and the National Guard gave free reign to the *mutawaeen*. Saudi police were also given extra authority and an unofficial curfew throughout the 1980s was enforced. Police patrolled the streets in search of anyone afoot after 10:00 p.m. with the authority to stop and question the individual's purpose for being in that neighbourhood. The police would also interrogate others to confirm the validity of people's statements.

The local Imam was considered the Islamic prayer leader within the small community where his Mosque was situated and the al-Sa'ud began recruiting them to report on the community's activities and keep track of their

congregation. Imams were given specific details on members of the congregation within their local area of responsibility, which varied in size from approximately 20 to 100 families. The head of the household, together with his sons, was expected to attend the daily *Maghrib* or sunset prayers and especially the Friday prayers. If a man did not attend prayer services, he was reported.

*Imam's* walked the neighborhoods taking different routes to prayer every day, to stop and talk to the men in the street. A car missing from its normal parking space at night would prompt the local Imam to question that man or his neighbors, on his whereabouts and the justification for missing prayers at the neighbourhood mosque (Knighthawk, 2002).

Realizing the potential power of the Imams, the al-Sa'ud stationed spies at meetings that brought together groups of women or men to discuss Islam and at prayer services in the mosques, to listen to the Imam's sermons. In most cases, the spies were typically comprised of single mothers, widows or men unable to support their families. The government informants are paid for by Zakat and heavy

oil revenues to spy on Saudi nationals and report on their activities (Isikoff, 2004).

The informants report any Imam, religious leader, or scholar who announces a translation of the Quran or *hadith*, that conflicts with the al-Sa'ud interpretation of Islam. The individual is, at times, forced to issue a public apology for misunderstanding and misrepresenting Islam or he or she can be banned from speaking or attending public meetings. This telltale practise became so prevalent in the late 1980s that followers saw some of their most respected Islamic leaders apologizing for their own lack of Islamic knowledge. Not only did these actions bring public embarrassment to the reputable religious leaders but also greatly decreased al-Sa'ud's ability to contain dissent within the Kingdom (Ulemas and Sheikhs Consider the Withdrawal of Sheikh al-Fahd and Sheikh al-Khudair a New Blow to Those Who Try to Disturb the Security and Stability in the Kingdom, 2003).

In fact, the recently deceased King Fahd changed his name from the secular title of King to the sacred classification of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in November, 1986 in an effort to stave off rumors that the

royal family was no longer leading the Islamic community according to Islam (Sabertooth, 2003). The al-Sa'ud became more dependent on support from outside the Kingdom and subsequently strengthened its alliance with the West, while openly creating an external enemy of the Western-allied Israelis - using their conflict with the Islamic Palestinians - to divert the now dangerous tensions building within its society. As long as the al-Sa'ud could maintain this enemy of Islam, they could maintain the façade that they indeed continued to adhere to Wahhabi Islamic ideology.

However, the deterioration of relations between the religious authorities and the al-Sa'ud paralleled the increasingly overburdened economic situation, although the state of the economy was not a cause but a contributor to weakening relations. Inequalities present in the population grew wider as subsidies decreased between 1985 and 1992, despite ample oil revenues and the population's ability to pay taxes. In 1994, King Fahd announced a budget cut of approximately 19% and some reports estimate a Saudi government deficit of \$10.7 billion in 1994 (Prados, 1996). Decreased oil revenues, an exploding population and the

Gulf war were said to have cost the Saudi government around \$55 billion, aside from the almost \$17 billion provided to the U.S. to defer the Gulf War costs (Prados).

The al-Sa'ud economic system's inequalities brought into question the adherence of the al-Sa'ud to the long-standing Wahhabi-al-Sa'ud Islamic distributive system. Al-Sa'ud economic corruption ate away at the political system's economic institutions established to reward the Islamic community for its loyalty. Over the past decade, the al-Sa'ud have invested, overwhelmingly, in the 'Commodification of Islam' (S. Baroni, Public Presentation, Jan 2006). Billions of dollars flow through the, predominantly al-Sa'ud established, funded, and controlled 'Islamic' television, film, radio, publications, clothing, banking, educational, and food industries. Whether or not this 'Commodification of Islam' has been done for individual interests or the interests of the Islamic community as a whole is a question that the al-Sa'ud is being forced to respond to today.

To counter the al-Sa'ud power apparatus of National Guard, police, *mutawaeen*, and *Imams*, the populations have developed a highly intricate subversive social system. To

be discovered participating in this underground social network is punishable by torture, life imprisonment or death. However, the underground system struggles to revitalize Wahhabi ideological foundations and to reform what remains of the al-Sa'ud/Wahhabi political institutions.

In March 1992, Saudi Arabia adopted a constitution by Royal decree of King Fahd, rather than by the Islamic notion of democratic consensus. Chapter 1 General Principles Article 1 of the constitution states that "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Arab Islamic state with Islam as its religion: God's Book and the Sunnah of His Prophet are its constitution." This clause notes that the al-Sa'ud remains committed to the principles of Wahhabi/Hanbali Islam and it also protects them against any possible threat against their rule. By affirming the Arab aspect of Islam, the al-Sa'ud request its neighbors to uphold and support its political foundations through their acceptance of the al-Sa'ud claim that the Kingdom is the center of both the Arab and Islamic world.

According to the Quran and hadith, or the Prophet's traditions on succession, nothing grants any such process,

as stated in Chapter 2 Article 5 (a) of the new constitution, that "the system of government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is that of a monarchy" and (b) providing succession to be "by the sons of the founding King Abd Al-Aziz bin Abd al-Rahman al Faysal Al Sa'ud and to their children's children" (Saudi Arabia Constitution, 1993). In Islam, as in the first Caliphate of the Islamic community, a leader is elected by consensus and pledged loyalty of the populations. The leader is authorized to rule as long as he remains in accordance with Islam and is responsible to all.

The al-Sa'ud established a quasi-separation between political mechanisms and Wahabbi ideology by removing the religious *imams* and *ulema* from Islamic accountability, as none of the early Islamic caliphs (often referred to as the Rightly Guided Caliphs) were popularly elected. The first caliph-Abu Bakr, was recognized on the basis of his age and closeness to the Prophet; the second was designated by the first; the third was chosen by a counsel; and the fourth had the caliphate handed over to him.

According to the 1992 Saudi constitution, the King appoints all deputies of the prime minister and ministers and members of the Council of Ministers by Royal decree

(Article 57) and he also has the right to dissolve and reorganize the Council of Ministers, presenting further conflict between the al-Sa'ud and Wahhabi tradition. According to Islam, the King must listen to his advisors and take their views into consideration, signifying consensus. The King and his ministers, who are all royal family members, do not allow for differences in opinion. Should an individual disagree with the ruling family, he is asked to step down, or is imprisoned, tortured or killed.

The abuse of human rights by the ruling al-Sa'ud increased throughout the 1990s as the separation between al-Sa'ud and the Wahhabi Ulema widened (Report: Saudi Arabia, 2005). Al-Sa'ud restrictions placed on the Ulema resulted in the emergence of more dissenters within their ranks and the general population (On the Line, 2004). Many of the Ulema and al-Sa'ud family relationship fractures emerged after King Fahd expelled Muslims from Saudi Arabia during and following the Gulf War. This act was one that may have led to the irreversible downfall of the royal family. According to Wahhabi Islam, the 'other' or the infidels should never enter the holy land. Expelling the Muslims from Saudi Arabia and allowing the U.S. to build a

base in the Kingdom, were against all principles of the Wahhabi ideology that the al-Sa'ud authority had depended on for more than a century for its own legitimacy.

Hastening to quiet the masses in October 1994, King Fahd announced the establishment of the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs to be led by the Minister of Defence Sultan ibn Abd Al Aziz and another Council for Islamic Call and Guidance to be led by the Minister of Islamic Affairs (Kostiner, 1997). The public soon realized the rules and regulations and appointment of members of the councils was not by consensus but rather by enforcement and that the Consultative Council was not the mechanism aimed to distribute power, as suggested by the King and his deputies from its inception. The al-Sa'ud's perception of their loss of the control brought about by the Islamic contract initiated by their forebears is demonstrated by their establishment of these other political institutions under the name of Islam.

Journalist Bob Woodward's book, *Plan of Attack*, and the ensuing media crisis indicates that the al-Sa'ud is unlikely to receive support, on which they now depend, from

the Bush administration in the event of continuing attacks against the regime (Woodward, 2004).

The April 2004 bombing of the General Security headquarters in Riyadh was the third terrorist attack in less than one year. Daily attacks and armed struggles are occurring between internal Saudi security forces and civilian groups and individuals fighting against the al-Sa'ud regime. Some claim that it is al-Qaeda and others that it is Iran. Yet, al-Qaeda is the Saudi opposition group based on Wahhabi Islam. The al-Sa'ud rejection of the Wahhabi system that its authority rested on is no longer accepted. The Wahhabi driven religious establishment can no longer act as al-Sa'ud's mediator because they too have become the Wahhabi "other"-the same "other" created by the al-Sa'ud-Wahhabi ideology in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to consolidate and unify the tribes.

Many of the neighbourhood mosques now serve as centers for popular dissent and meeting grounds for those planning the next attacks aimed at toppling the ruling family. The separation of Wahhabi education in normal schools versus mosques-run *madrusahs* has historical roots. In early Islamic periods, Hanbalis preferred to teach in mosques

away from the eyes of the ruling authority controlled schools or *madrusahs* (Leiser, 1981). Therefore, Today's government controlled *madrusahs* or schools are over-crowded and hosted in dirty, collapsing apartment buildings. The unchallengeable state curriculum is religion, which is studied four subjects at a time, and all forms of creativity are labelled blasphemous and prohibited.

Unemployment is rising rapidly in the Kingdom and has reached 25% in most areas (Saudi Arabia, 2006). Government health services are lacking and water is scarce, with supply often cut off for days at a time. Monitoring and censoring media has become increasingly difficult for the government. Citizens specialize in breaking government computer firewalls, diverting the non-dissident religious authorities and deceiving or bribing the police. Al-Sa'ud's creation of an external enemy to bolster its Wahhabi legitimacy has backfired; in the resulting rampant hatred of not only America but of anything that symbolizes America or Western culture.

Civil disorder and dissidence within Saudi Arabia demonstrates that the population has little tolerance for its government, which they believe has turned against its

own Wahhabi foundations. The al-Sa'ud have broken their Wahhabi Islamic contract and their rule of the Kingdom is now in jeopardy. The Wahhabi political system they created to consolidate the masses under their control now seek to overthrow them and return the Wahhabi political institutions including education, economic, and legal systems to the people.

## CHAPTER FIVE: WAHHABISM AND ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

After examination of the development of Wahhabi ideology into Wahhabi political systems and the contemporary al-Sa'ud attempts to separate the same founding Wahhabi ideology from its institutions, this study will examine Wahhabism as it compares to other Islamic political movements. While, fundamentalism also known as Islamism, emerged with the birth of Islam, Wahhabi ideology, dating back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, can be said to have influenced the emergence of several contemporary Islamic political movements. From 1970-1995, approximately 175 Islamic fundamentalist groups existed throughout the Arab world (Dekmejian, 223-247). All of the groups identify themselves as being based on Islam; yet, Nazih Ayubi noted "Islam means different things to different people...to some it may mean legitimizing the status quo while for others it may provide...a spearhead for revolution." (Karawan, 1992). The following pages will examine and compare three Islamic political movements to Wahhabism including the Society of

the Egyptian Brotherhood, the Jama'at-I Islami or Islamic Party, and today's contemporary al-Qaeda.

Islamic political movements, however, often did not share or found themselves on the Wahhabi version of Islam, but rather on the Islamic school of jurisprudence practiced in the particular country from where they initially emerged. While neither the Egyptian Brotherhood nor the Jama'at-I Islami provided, like Wahhabism, the ideological foundation for a religio-political fundamentalist state, they are still worth examining.

Islamic fundamentalist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood Society in Egypt established by Hasan a-Bana in 1929, were founded, and in part thrived on an increasing intolerance of foreign influence (Brown, 144). As noted in earlier chapters, Wahhabism too was influenced by an intolerance of foreign practices i.e. the Shiite worship of stones or tree worship and animistic belief systems.

Secondly, like Wahhabism, the Egyptian Muslim brotherhood called for the institutionalization of pure Islamic law. So, the insistence on Islamic legal systems and intolerance of foreign elements were predominant

factors in both Wahhabism and the Egyptian Brotherhood movements.

Thirdly, like Wahhabism, the Brotherhood called for a strict adherence to the Islamic texts—the *Quran* and the *hadith* or traditions of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad. The group, similar to Wahhabism was well organized with charismatic leadership (Gourley). Despite the organization and great appeal that the revivalist movement had, the group began attacking the Egyptian government. The assassination of President Sadat by the group only led to it being impossible for the group to entrench itself further into Egyptian political institutions. The drastic measures taken by the Egyptian Brotherhood to advance their agenda may have resulted in alienating themselves from some of the public that had supported them in the first place.

Two observations of comparison must be further examined. The Egyptian Brotherhood did not become a political system with the necessary institutions that exert social control over the populations. It did not proclaim to practice the Hanbali/Wahhabi version of Islam and it never achieved an advanced economic distribution or education system. It was successful in pushing Egypt's

President Anwar Sadat to agree to the institution of Islamic law in 1980 as the main source of state legislation. However, Sadat was assassinated in 1981 when he attempted to take control of the mosques, the main religious educational institutions, because the Brotherhood had managed to swing many toward its political ideology, threatening the Egyptian government's survival. The Egyptian Brotherhood never managed to co-opt the state to legitimize its activities by allowing its agenda to be integrated into further political institutions. This could be partly attributed to the fact that the Egyptian government did not base its authority on religious premises.

South Asia's Jamaat al Islam, founded in 1941 by Sayyid Abu'l A'la Mawdudi, also began as an Islamic fundamentalist ideology aimed at eradicating foreign influences on Islamic practices in South Asia (Gourley). The Jama'at was formed as a political movement aimed to bring society back into the realm of strict Islamic ideology.

Mawdudi attempted to cut all political and social ties to all non-Muslims, while at the same time taking up arms against them. This appears similar to Wahhabism; however,

one must not forget that Wahhabism, although promulgating adherence to a strict Wahhabi form of Islam, was founded based on collaboration with the legitimate authority, not in opposition to it. Over two decades and following several attempts to overthrow the state apparatus, the Jamaat al Islam also failed.

Yet, both the Egyptian Brotherhood and Jammat al Islam did not possess the founding components of Wahhabism as a political system. Wahhabism represented a Muslim ruling authority, which utilized Wahhabi Islam to derive legitimization from and control the masses. This was accomplished by integrating Wahhabi Islamic practices into the educational, legal, and authoritative institutions. Neither the Egyptian Brotherhood nor Jama'at-I Islami demonstrated the Wahhabi ideology which so harshly separates infidel from Muslim based on practice, loyalty and adherence to the Wahhabi version of Islam. The Egyptian Brotherhood was also a nationalist movement, which could have accounted for some of the diffusion of its potency. However, it was well respected in the Arab Muslim world as being the ultimate Islamic political force.

The Al-Qaeda political movement began at around the time of the Gulf War. Actually, it was in its organizational phase prior to the Gulf War, but it was still comprised of many smaller groups or cells separated by region, city, village and sometimes mosque. Al-Qaeda then unified the various groups or cells at the time of the Gulf War and accomplished this feat with the assistance of some of the major decisions taken by the al-Sa'ud ruling family. The al-Sa'ud decision, resulting in the unification of the Islamic political movements inside Saudi Arabia, came in August 1990 when the Saudi government allowed the stationing of Americans, Europeans and other foreign non-Islamic people inside the Kingdom (Karawan, 1992). This act would not have had such a violent reaction had King Fahd not kicked Muslims out of the Kingdom at the same time including large populations of Iranians and Palestinians who had been working in Saudi Arabia for decades. In a shocking turn of events, the ruling al-Sa'ud ordered the leading Wahhabi Islamic cleric Abd al Aziz Bin Baz in a shocking television address to authorize and sanction the King's actions (Bin Baz, 1990).

Al-Qaeda members espouse the tenets of Wahhabi Islamic belief. They practice alienation of all non-Muslims and Muslims who do not follow their religious predisposition. The leader of Al-Qaeda is Saudi national Osama bin Laden (Brennan, Pillar, 2006). Osama is renowned for his speeches to members of Al-Qaeda around the world. His speeches provide information about the Al-Qaeda movement, which he heads.

Whether or not Osama is in Saudi Arabia is irrelevant, because Osama, without question, speaks Wahhabi rhetoric. Abdullah Bijan Al-Oteibi, a once time Islamic radical said that "In a sense, bin Laden is using Wahhabi ideology in this original revolutionary form against the Saudi state" (Zakaria, 3). Although he speaks in general terms, in context, he is addressing in order: 1) Saudi Arabia; 2) the West; 3) Other Muslim countries; 4) Other Muslim peoples. There is an order to his address with the first two-Saudi Arabia and the West, representing the dialectic. This resonates with Wahhabi ideology examined earlier where the dialectic comprised those who believe and follow Wahhabi ideology and those who do not.

Osama's latest speech, sent to Al Jazeera television station on November 1, 2004, is a unique example of some aspects of Wahhabi ideology. Many of the patterns prevalent in this speech resound throughout the Kingdom's diverse rhetorical avenues today among Wahhabi adherents.

Osama begins his speech by praising God, "Praise be to Allah who created the creation for his worship and commanded them to be just and permitted the wronged one to retaliate against the oppressor in kind" (Bin Laden). This statement informs the audience of several points: first, that the most important thing in this world is God; second, that man is less important than God because it was God who created man; and third, that God created man to worship him as opposed to anyone or anything else. This statement resonates with Wahhabi undertones. Wahhabi ideology shuns the worship of anything or anyone on this earth and love and worship for only God. Bin Laden is speaking pure Wahhabi rhetoric.

The statement also represents, in accordance with Wahhabi ideology, an attack against the United States and the al-Sa'ud family, because, according to Bin Laden, the royal family, by their association with America, and in

particular the Bush family, are also non-believers or infidels by virtue of that association.

Next, the statement addresses the fact that God commanded the Muslim or believer to be "just." These words symbolize the fact that Osama is most likely addressing Saudi Arabia. Osama's word of God is to the people of Saudi Arabia, not the world, because the world is comprised of foreigners and Westerners versus those who are just or Saudi Muslims. It is believed that God commanded the Saudi Muslims (those in the Arabian Peninsula at the time of the Prophet Mohammad) to lead the world by setting an example for the rest of the world of what it means to be just. According to Wahhabism, the religious and just Muslims are elevated believers.

Next, Osama's statement orders that if an individual is oppressed, by those who are unjust or the non-believers, then he or she has the authority by God to retaliate. The sentence "permitted the wronged one to retaliate against the oppressor in kind" means that Osama is addressing the Wahhabi populations in Saudi Arabia and around the world. This is a call by Osama bin Laden to war and that war is in Saudi Arabia. There is no need for justification of

retaliation against the West because that is a given, and it is understood that life is a war against the West. However, Osama is justifying the war and declaring his sanction of a war against other Muslims or the al-Sa'ud family.

As noted earlier in Wahhabism, Al-Qaeda effectively uses God terms on a regular basis, illustrating the Wahhabi-Hanbali fixation on such terminology. By associating the creator or God with "just" worshipers, it is assumed that the wronged one is the just believer and the oppressor is the unjust non-believer or infidel. In Wahhabism it is asserted that non-believers are Western and that believers or Muslim are Eastern peoples.

The examination and comparison between Al-Qaeda and Wahhabism demonstrate familiar ideological similarities. To both, the formula *al-Islam din wa-dawla* (Islam is the religion and state) takes precedence (Kramer, 4). However, one must also examine the political institutions and the similarities and/or contrasts that exist within them. Wahhabism had developed its own educational systems through mosques, and religious schools (*Madrosas*). Al-Qaeda has

also developed and maintained an extensive network of mosques to teach and to enforce Wahhabi beliefs.

Wahhabism was governed by the Islamic authority in Saudi Arabia-the al-Sa'ud king. Yet, the increase of Saudi state power at the expense of public political participation has led to alienation of the masses from authority (Cudsi & Dessouki, 191). Al-Qaeda is governed by Osama bin Laden, an Islamic authority as well, but his whereabouts are not known nor are they provided to the general populations. However, his prevailing presence on television and in the media do much the same, if not more in terms of governance or rule by proxy.

Also, more so than other movements, Al-Qaeda promotes rule by proxy in that Osama speaks about love for God alone. Worship for a ruler or legitimate political authority is not allowed in either Wahhabism or Al-Qaeda. The governing authority is the true Wahhabi Islamic leader, at present Osama Bin Laden.

Al-Qaeda, like Wahhabism, also has a complex economic distributive system (Jones, 2003). Hosting technologically advanced financial capabilities; the movement distributes and receives funds from all corners of the earth. Unlike

Wahhabism, the Al-Qaeda economic system is much faster moving and much more difficult to unravel (Lederer, 2005). Al-Qaeda funding travels the world in nano-seconds and under the guise of many covers.

Finally, the mosques and their congregations, which are responsible in part for the enforcement of Islamic or *Shariah* legal principles, manage many of the operations of Al-Qaeda, as was the case in Wahhabism. The mosques serve as a transportable quasi-state reproducing some of the main political institutions necessary including training and education, providing authoritarian leadership, economic distribution, and mechanisms for social control. The Al-Qaeda mosque is responsible for the community and its congregation ascribes to its teachings. Subsequently, congregational members fall within the responsibility of that mosque and the leader of that institution-the *imam*. Members are also subject to the rules and regulations of the way of life proscribed by that mosque. Religious identity is channelled to the Al-Qaeda congregations from the mosque and its leaders, with the focus being on individual loyalties upon religious values-critical in

mobilizing members for social, moral, and political action (Lapidus, 25).

Therefore, it can be said that Al-Qaeda serves as a transportable form of Wahhabism. Al-Qaeda, like Wahhabism proscribes to strict adherence to the Quran and Hadith and the Hadith as interpreted by the Hanbali School of jurisprudence. Wahhabi and Al-Qaeda ideology are identical. Wahhabism as a political system with all of the institutions for social control is also identical to Al-Qaeda; however, because the Al-Sa'ud struggle today to dismantle the Wahhabi political system that had sustained their rule for decades, it has had to transform itself for survival into Al-Qaeda, a cell like structure that resembles a transportable political system. Saudi Arabia's inability to adapt the puritan theocratic institutional system with the modern conditions of a state, economy and society may have forced Wahhabism to temporarily transform its own institutions.

Today, Wahhabi territory is virtual territory. All Muslims from around the world pray to Makkah. During prayer five times a day, they are within that territory, no matter where their physical beings lay. Al-Qaeda members around

the world look to Makkah, the ultimate religious representative within those cells for guidance and authority and they in return grant that cell legitimization and the funds for it to survive (Al-Qaeda / Al-Qaeda (the Base)).

The examination of multiple Islamic political movements is necessary in order to grasp the similarities and as well the complexities that exist. Although the Egyptian, South Asian and Al-Qaeda movements differ greatly from one another, there are a few similarities that remain including the separation and alienation of non-Muslims, the call for an Islamic revival, and the incorporation of marginalized groups into their congregations. However, Al-Qaeda demonstrates that what was once considered the Al-Sa'ud Wahhabi political system is now the very potent and viable al-Qaeda, transportable, and at times an actual virtual political system. Just how one can comprehend the complexities in understanding a transportable political system and/or communicating with it, is yet to be seen. The ability to grasp the realities of the current form of Wahhabism is an opportunity that leads toward a better understanding of its complexities.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

The study of the evolution of Wahhabism from an ideology to a political system is one in which there exist a multitude of theoretical and conceptual definitions that fall within gray areas. When does an ideology evolve into a political system and what defines that political system? Do diverse ideologies evolve into political systems differently? It is essential to examine a political system from the inception of the ideology in which it espouses, drawing patterns and examining relationships. In order to comprehend the evolution of Wahhabism from an ideology to a political system, it is imperative that one examine first the components that comprise Wahhabism as an ideology and subsequently as a political system.

One of the first questions that requires examination is why followers of Wahhabism do not recognize the meaning of the term. Perhaps it is because Wahhabism as an ideology denies member scrutiny. Yet, only through a close examination of Wahhabism as an ideology, can one ascertain

the foundations of this denial. Lack of understanding amongst its followers can be attributed at least in part by its non-existence among members. According to Mullins definition that ideology "links the cognitive and evaluative perception of one's social condition," perhaps members' cognitive and evaluative perceptions of their social condition is such that the ideology in itself cannot be comprehended by members within the system (Mullins, 1972). Such a condition then demands outside study and examination, in particular within the transformations that Wahhabism presents in contemporary society.

Wahhabism is fluid within contemporary dynamic political systems and rapidly changing international relations, but, as a political system, it continues to expand at a global level, giving rise to a new form of contemporary terrorism as demonstrated in the comparison of Al-Qaeda and Wahhabism. However, can we call this form of terrorism a political system?

Al-Qaeda possesses authoritative leadership through Osama Bin Laden, along with innumerable religious authorities or *Imams* at community mosques around the world; its territory is virtual or the house of God symbolized by

Makkah; it controls a global economic distributive system; encompasses a complete legal system governing a member's way of life; and has the ability to enforce that legislation. It's authority is unquestionable and members form an elite community that almost resembles a tight knit family unit, with members numbering in the thousands.

Careful examination of Wahhabism as an ideology has to take into consideration the context within which it emerged. In an economically stricken, tribal, segmented society where class is cause for survival, religious studies dominated the disenfranchised and the marginalized poor populations (Al-Ghafur, 1964).

Along with Mohammed Abd al-Wahhab's new Wahhabi ideology came the solidification of a class system based on religious practices. Those who ascribed to Abd al-Wahhab's religious orientation belonged to his elite community of pure Muslims versus all others who did not-the infidel versus the Muslim. It did not matter if the infidel was a Muslim or not. What mattered was whether they demonstrated through practice, their belief in the tenets of Wahhabism (Mortimer, 62).

Wahhabi ideology was not extraordinary in that it included the basic teachings of Islam and the traditions of the Islamic Prophet Mohammed, but it was very different from other Islamic ideologies. Wahhabism emphasized particular Islamic practices above others and that emphasis was greatly responsible for the new form of Wahhabism we see today in Al-Qaeda.

Wahhabi ideology was resilient, triumphant, and not surprisingly, outlasted numerous regime changes in the Arabian Desert (Esposito, 2002). The Al-Sa'ud Abd Al-Wahhab alliance solidified the governing institution necessary to create a political system. Immediately uniting the tribes, collecting tax revenues, and proliferating the new ideology in the local training centers, the mosques, so too were the social institutions and economic system established whose foundation rested on Wahhabism as an ideology.

As Wahhabism grew and foreign lands were conquered, a form of rule by proxy developed whereby local authoritarian leaders governed their communities according to Wahhabism; however, the ultimate guidance came from the house of God or Makkah, Saudi Arabia (Mortel, 1987). And that house of God at Makkah was governed by the Custodian or Guardian of

Islam-the Saudi King. Makkah belonged to the Muslim masses, no matter how remote they may be and it was Makkah that dictated the legal system that all Wahhabi adherents recognized and obeyed.

The Al-Sa'ud was successful in positioning its governance as the unquestionable ruler of the Islamic community. Today, to question the Al-Sa'ud is tantamount to questioning Islam and traitors, otherwise known as apostates are executed (Three Saudis executed by beheading, 2005). Recent bombings inside Saudi Arabia and attacks against the Al-Sa'ud and its interests came from the Wahhabi followers that it created. The al-Sa'ud's increasingly visible Commodification of Islam as well as other anti-Wahhabi tendencies has incited the Kingdom's religious populations against it.

After the 1979 takeover of the grand mosque at Makkah, the al-Sa'ud marketed its religious position to the masses focusing on the Wahhabi ideology of infidel versus Muslim, East versus West, and in creating external enemies that Wahhabism could attack (Kechichian, 1986) (Kostiner, 1992). However, this diversion did not prevent the public from acknowledging that large class differences existed,

especially when religious men or *Imams* and *ulema* were imprisoned and Muslims were kicked out of the holy land in 1990 and foreign peoples brought in to guard the holiest sites in Islam following the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq (Saudi Arabia Country Profile, 2002).

These actions constituted a public demonstration by the al-Sa'ud against the Wahhabi ideology. That, along with the continuing al-Saud Commodification of Islam, have led to a Wahhabi revolt inside the Kingdom. The Al-Sa'ud, in an attempt to arrest the growing number of Wahhabis who dared question their governance, began modifying the Wahhabi institutions that it had established decades ago (Stalinsky, 2003) (Al-Shamery, 2006). This unraveling of some of the key components of Wahhabism forced those who adhere to the ideology's beliefs and practices to move underground. Many Wahhabi adherents fled Saudi Arabia and established new Wahhabi communities outside the country. Others deep inside the Kingdom run theirs in the virtual world, fleeing from the watchful eyes of the authorities (Teitelbaum). A communiqué, issued by al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia called for revenge against the al-Saud for arresting 40 citizens for "abetting terrorist activity in the state

and their impact on the Jihadist Internet community" (A Message from al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia Concerning the Arrest of Forty Suspects and the al-Hesbah Network, 2006).

The examination of other political movements reveals that many of the movements did not have the chance to establish and form political institutions. Lacking these, both movements nearly collapsed and were not successful in establishing their hold. Al-Qaeda, however, demonstrated striking similarities to Wahhabism. Its economic distributive system was one owned and run by the people; the authority remained within the virtual territory of the house of God; its social reproduction and training centers remained the mosques. Yet, the mosques in Al-Qaeda were forced to take on greater responsibilities as the Islamic community began functioning as a separate political system inside another's territory. How these two systems will interact with one another is a question that has yet to be answered. Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah, in his first appearance before his consultative counsel stated that he will continue on to reform the Kingdom's economic and political system irrespective of any objectives of *takfir* from its religious populations.

This study has examined Wahhabi political ideology as social values which exist beneath and underlie the relationship between those who hold power and those who are controlled by that power (Loewenstein, 1953). However, if the Wahhabi ideology was invoked by the al-Sa'ud, forming the basis for a relationship between the al-Sa'ud and Saudi Arabia's diverse populations, can the ideology be dismantled beneath the political system without a collapse of that system and its corresponding institutions? Crown Prince Sultan, deputy premier and minister of defense and aviation made a public statement April 4, 2006, "I can assure you and everyone else that the ruling family is united in one hand and one heart" (Qusti, 2006). Yet, the question is not if they have one heart or two or if they are united, but if the ground they stand on is strong enough to bear their weight.

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