

WHO IS THE REAL THREAT? DAESH (ISIL) OR WAHHABISM AS ITS IDEOLOGY?

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Abstract

The rapid Daesh advance in Iraq and Syria and its indiscriminate and brutal killings in those countries and its terror attacks in Paris last November have brought Islam to the attention of the world as never before, creating an unattractive image of the faith that is widely perceived in the West as a militant, and highly charged, fundamentalist movement with endless suicidal fanatics and a grudge against the West. Islam's message of peace continues to be overtaken and eroded by the terrorist organizations such as Daesh, whose acts and practices based on Wahhabism. Thus, this paper aims to analyze the ideology of global terrorism -Wahhabism- and its effects on terrorist organizations, particularly on Daesh. At the end, it has been concluded that the most effective way to take on Daesh and prevent new terrorist organizations from emerging is to take on Wahhabism.

Key words: Global terrorism, Daesh, Wahhabism.

GERÇEK TEHDİT KİM? DAEŞ Mİ VAHHABİLİK Mİ?

Öz

Irak ve Suriye'de Daeş'in kaydettiği ilerleme ve bu ülkelerde herhangi bir ayırım gözetmeden acımasızca gerçekleştirdiği katliamlar ile geçen Kasım ayında Paris'te düzenlediği saldırılar sonrası İslam'ın tekrar hiç olmadığı kadar dünya gündemine gelmeye başlamasına ve İslam'ın, sayısız fanatikleri ile Batı'ya düşmanlık besleyen militant ve radikal bir hareket ve inanç olduğu imajının oluşmasına neden olmuştur. Gerçekten de İslam'ın barışçıl mesajları Vahhabiliği kendisine rehber edinen Daeş gibi terör örgütlerince bastırılmakta ve kemirilmektedir. Bu bağlamda, bu makale küresel terörizmin ideolojisi olan Vahhabilik ve onun Daeş başta olmak üzere dini motifli terör örgütlerine etkisi incelenip analiz edilmektedir. Daeş gibi terör örgütleriyle mücadelenin en etkili yolunun Vahhabilikle mücadele olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. Bu mücadele aynı zamanda yeni terör örgütlerin ortaya çıkmasını da engelleyecektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Küresel terörizm, Daeş, Vahhabilik

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1. Introduction

After the dramatic victories and atrocities of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) – an offshoot of Al-Qaeda in Iraq- both in Syria and Iraq and the declaration of a caliphate –‘the Islamic State’- has alarmed the international community and put terrorism at forefront again. Much has been written about the rise and expansion of the ISIL - – hereinafter referred to as Daesh– since its emergence, and analyses are being published regularly. There has been a scramble by policy makers, militaries, intelligence officials and journalists from around the globe to understand the Daesh phenomenon, resulting in an excess of unconfirmed and conflicting information

The rapid Daesh advance in Iraq and Syria was blunted to some extent by air strikes were ramped up by the United States, Russia and an ad hoc coalition of Middle Eastern and European states . Daesh has been weakened by the air strikes , but still holds significant territory both in Iraq and Syria and is recruiting as swiftly as its members are being killed or desert. Destroying Daesh is still a far off possibility.

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Indiscriminate and brutal killings of Daesh and its terror attacks in Paris last November have brought Islam to the attention of the world as never before, creating an unattractive image of the faith that is widely perceived in the West as a militant, and highly charged, fundamentalist movement with endless suicidal fanatics and a grudge against the West.

According to the hypothesis of this article, Wahhabism as an ideology has played an important role in the creation of the Daesh and its predecessor Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and Al- Qaeda Cenral (AQC), which was responsible for the attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in the US on September 11, 2001. In other words, Wahhabi doctrine was/is a source of inspiration and moral force for many radical groups and terrorist organizations around the globe.

Some other terrorist organizations or groups such as, Taliban, Tehrik - I-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Jamat-Ud-Dawa (JUD), Ansar Dine, Al Shabab, Boko Haram

are also influenced by Wahhabism . Wahhabism is a fundamentalist ideology and driving force behind terrorist acts committed by militant Islamists. Thus, it presents a global threat. Therefore, the war on terror must focus mostly on its ideology – Wahhabism-.to defeat Daesh and prevent new terrorist groups from emerging, the ideology must be combated and defeated.

2. Wahhabism

Wahhabism was founded in the first half of the 18. century in the province of Najd, a wide desert area of Central Arabia.¹ The founder of this group, Muhammad ibn Abd-al- Wahhab (1702–1792), after whom the Wahhabis and Wahhabism got its name, was teaching that every true believer had to make efforts in order to purify Islam from the theological innovations, superstitions, heresy, and similar issues. According to his belief, these phenomena are characteristic for the Jahiliyya (the age of “ignorance”) or the circumstance that existed in the pre-Islamic era. He was preoccupied with efforts to bring back the vitality of the Islam due to which he established the concept of monotheism as the paramount principle. In the 18th century, ‘Muhammad bin Saud’, the founder of modern – day Saudi dynasty, partnered with Abdel-Wahhab to start the process of unifying different tribes in Arabian Peninsula. Since the foundation of Saudi Arabia in 1932, there has been a close relationship between Saudi ruling family and the Wahhabi religious establishments.

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With the establishment of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Wahhabism gained new ground and was used as official basis for making laws and conducts in Saudi society. Wahhabism is the basis for such practices as segregation of sexes, the prohibition of the sale and consumption of alcohol, ban on women driving and a host of other restrictions. Wahhabism has also shaped the Saudi educational structure, and the Saudi school books generally denounce teachings that do not conform to Wahhabism.”

Today Wahhabism is a predominant religious creed in Saudi Arabia (and a successful export) and calls for return to the fundamentals of Islam from the time of the Prophet Muhammad. Ayoob (2004) argued that in 1980s, several important developments had an effect on the Islamists; the rivalry that developed between Iran and Saudi Arabia, went beyond a simple Shiite-Sunni competition. The US, to contain

Khomeini's aspirations to export the Iranian Revolution, extended support to the House of Saud, who, having accumulated riches after the oil crisis in 1973, began to spread the Wahhabi Islam, Saudi official creed, beyond its borders by opening Islamic centers and schools.

Wahhabism calls for return to the fundamentals of Islam from the time of the Prophet Muhammad. This is a very reduced interpretation of Islam, as it acknowledges only the time of the Prophet and his companions as the true Islamic era that must be reconstructed by those who considered themselves true Muslims. Wahhabism, therefore, disregards centuries of Islamic thought and achievements that followed the early Islamic period: from 9th to the 14th century, Islamic world was at its peak, and Baghdad and Cairo were capitals of the world (Medeb, 2003, p. 17). Science and culture were flourishing: the 9th century Baghdad was home to the first astronomical school and algebra was invented there, while poetry was undergoing a renaissance (Medeb, 2003, p. 24-26). As Wahhabism does not encourage learning and is an enemy of art and music, it is understandable why its proponents consider achievements in art and science as harmful and un-Islamic. Wahhabism opposes most popular religious practices such as veneration of saints, celebration of the birthday of Prophet Muhammad and practices associated with Sufism. Other religious groups are not allowed of freedom of worship whether public or private.”

Wahhabism, similarly to Salafism, demanded return to the roots of Islam from the Prophet Mohammed's time. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab preached that Arabs succumbed to practices foreign to Islam and called for strict adherence to tawhid (oneness of God, strict monotheism) and sharia. He set off on a mission to cleanse Islam from bid'a and waged jihad with extensive violence in order to impose his beliefs.

Wahhabis and Salafis also share common ground in their dislike for Sufism, which they accuse of causing social decay, and in their explanations they draw upon the writings of a medieval Islamic scholar Ibn Taymiyya (Milson, 2004). However, what sets them apart is their relation to modernity: while Abduh realized the benefits of modernity, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab tried to root it out of the Arabian Peninsula at any cost.

In his classification of movements within political Islam, Roy (2001) argued that Wahhabism is non-political (p. 2); however, we would argue that since its inception in mid-18th century, Wahhabism, although not yet a political ideology, had a political dimension, as its founder Mohammed Ibn Abd al-Wahhab sought alliance with political leaders in tribal Arabian Peninsula in order to institutionalize its teachings. Furthermore, he applied force and extensive violence while imposing his ideas, at the same time enjoying protection from local rulers and the then superpower, which turned a blind eye to the Wahhabi raids. Although Wahhabism failed to produce prominent thinkers and works of its founder are hardly known outside the borders of Saudi Arabia, Wahhabism is still alive and well - as part of Saudi political agenda, it has been used to spread their influence ever since Al Sauds entrenched themselves as absolutist rulers at the Peninsula

Nowadays, a few centuries later, Wahhabi ideas still resonate among a small number of Muslims worldwide. Fueled by oil boom in 1970s and victory of Mujahedin fighters in Afghanistan over the USSR in late 1980s, Wahhabism began its expansion to areas around the world populated by Muslims, regardless of which school of Islamic thought they followed, particularly to areas struck by crisis or war, vulnerable to exogenous religious penetration. Where ever they came, Wahhabis created tension and even conflict among the indigenous Muslims. Some engaged in holy war against the non-believers.

3. Rise of Wahhabism and teaching of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab

Wahhabism was born in mid-18th century in Nejd, a remote province in Saudi Arabia, with no particular geo-political or religious significance, a desert barren land that neither Ottomans nor British, the then super power, were particularly interested in. The Ottomans had ruled over that territory for about 200 years, although very loosely, so that no one in the Caliphate took much interest in what was going on there (Sendub, 1998, p. 28). The birth of this brand of Islam coincided with reformist movements in Europe, when the old continent was entering a new era of prosperity. The Ottoman Empire was declining, which made it susceptible to attacks from outside forces. Internal conflicts and disunity among Muslims, in this case Arabs, could certainly accelerate its final fall.

There are different theories as to how and for what purpose Wahhabism emerged from this part of the Arabian Desert. Schwartz (2002) found causes of emergence of Wahhabism in the crisis of the Ottoman Empire, which allowed for a “new explosion of purism and fundamentalism among Muslims” (p. 67). According to an unconfirmed theory crafted in a document *Memoirs of Hempher, the British Spy to the Middle East*¹, believed to be true by some scholars, Wahhabism was a doctrine thoughtfully crafted by the British to spread disunity and deepen the rift among the Arab tribes, which would ultimately weaken the Ottoman Empire, allow Britain to colonize parts of the Arabian Peninsula and destroy Islam (Sindi, 2004). Algar (2002) argues that Wahhabis were just fortunate enough to have emerged in the Arabian Peninsula where the two holiest Muslim sites are located, and to have struck a pact in early days with the local rulers from the Al-Saud family, thereby institutionalizing Wahhabism as its official creed (p. 2). Two centuries later, thanks to the oil riches, Saudi Arabia became an exporter of Wahhabism to all comers of the world.

There is nothing revolutionary about the Wahhabi doctrine. There was no groundbreaking ideas or mystique surrounding the teaching of its founder Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. He wanted Muslims to return to fundamentals of their faith and live in accordance with the sharia. All of his teaching could come down to the following: strict adherence to tawhid (oneness of God, strict monotheism), fighting against shirk (adoring someone or something other than God), bid'a (innovations), and the state of jahiliyya (ignorance) Muslims of the Arabian Peninsula were, according to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, living in. As we have already seen, a few centuries later these ideas were also accepted by some Salafists.

However, none of this would have made much difference had it not been for his ambition to gain power, and the violence that ensued once he got the power through the alliance with the Al-Saud Family. Abd al-Wahhab was not very popular during his time, and to date, opinions about him vary: from the sheer condemnation and labeling as “the archetype for all Islamic extremists”, “unsophisticated, narrow-minded

¹ This document can also be found under the name “Confessions of a British spy and British enmity against Islam”. The document alleges that the British, on their quest to destroy Islam and the Ottoman Empire, sent spies to the Middle Ibn Abd al-Wahhab that he was the chosen one to reform Islam and lead the *umma* back to the roots of their faith, knowing that this would divide Arabs and initiate conflict among them. Disunity and conflict would ultimately suit Britain’s interests in the area and weaken the Ottomans.

wanderer” (Schwartz, 2002, p. 67), to statements such as “master of logic”, “prolific writer”, “sought to teach and guide individuals from every walk of life” (Delong-Bas, 2004, p. 17).

Abd al-Wahhab was no extraordinary figure whose mediocre works did not contribute much to the Islamic thought, but a militant who, while enjoying protection of the ruling classes, set out on violent raids to bring the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula back to the early Islam. His own brother, having realized the degree of deviance of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s ideas, denounced him in his written work against Wahhabism. His father, who was an Islamic judge, was forced to leave al-Uyaynah because of his son’s activities (Algar, 2002, pp. 6,7). In other words, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab stood and preached against the practices and beliefs that had been accepted by generations of Sunni Muslims, denouncing both the Sunni traditions and those who rejected his ideas. Therefore, Algar (2002) argued that Wahhabism is an occurrence outside of the Sunni Muslim community, and needed to be studied as a separate sect.

Nevertheless, some Muslims throughout the world still find his words appealing. Delong-Bas (2004) wrote Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s most detailed biography based on four types of sources: his supporters, such as Ibn Bishr, polemical works written by Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s opponents; accounts written by Western travelers, and Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s own works (p. 14). Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was born in 1702-3 in al-Uyaynah, a town in Najd province of the Arabian Peninsula, into a family of Islamic scholars who belonged to Hanbali School of Islamic thought, prevalent on the Peninsula. His grandfather, father and uncle were prominent Islamic jurists, and Ibn Abd al-Wahhab decided to follow in their footsteps. He studied Qur’an and Hadith (account of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet), and was particularly interested in the concept of tawhid. Abd al-Wahhab was actually obsessed with tawhid, which became hallmark of all of his works and the Wahhabi movement in general. He blamed every anomaly and deviation in the community on its failure to adhere to tawhid, claiming that all ills could be healed by upholding to this principle. He observed that people of Najd were worshiping trees and other objects which constituted shirk, and began traveling and preaching that people should abandon such practices and return to strict monotheism. In his preaching, he relied on hadith and

interpreted it in another way by focusing on content rather than the chain of transmission. First he preached in his hometown, explaining to people how they violated the principle of tawhid, and that they should abandon all innovative ideas in their faith. Delong-Bas argued that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's teachings resonated among ordinary people, but not among the local leaders and the ulama, who saw him as an extremist and forced him out of the village. From there he proceeded to Mecca and then on to Medina to study hadith with some of the most prominent scholars of that time. Like Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, those scholars stressed the importance of the content of hadith, refused to imitate and accept the past scholarship (taqlid), and strongly supported ijihad. (The last two, as we have already established in Chapter II, were cornerstones of the Salafism, and Muhhamad Abduh's ideas in particular). From Medina, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab went on to Basra (now in Iraq), where he continued to study hadith and Islamic jurisprudence. There he learned about Shiism, and it was probably there that his profound dislike of the Shiies emerged. He continued preaching tawhid, insisting on cleansing Islam of impurities that had infected it. Again, he was forced out of Basra by local authorities (Delong-Bas, 2004, pp. 17-22).

Algar (2002) argued that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab engaged in studying and relied on the works of the 14th century Islamic scholar Ibn Taymiyya, with whom he shared similar dislike of the Shi'ism and Sufism (p. 8), although Delong-Bas (2004) asserts that, according to his own works, that is not entirely true (p. 21). She also argued that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was not entirely anti-Shi'ite, but that he targeted only one extremist Shiite sect (p. 22).

From Basra Ibn Abd al-Wahhab traveled to al-Zubayr from where he intended to go to Syria, but was left without money and went back to Huraymila, where his father lived. He observed that population of Huraymila lived in violation of tawhid, and began preaching his ideas. There he wrote Kitab al-Tawhid (The Book of Monotheism), alienated himself from his father, and stopped preaching until his father died in 1740. After his father's death, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab declared jihad (the holy war) against those who did not adhere to tawhid, that is, to his ideas of how Muslims should practice Islam. He caused anger among the community and was almost killed in an assassination attempt. He then returned to his hometown of al-Uyaynah, which

was at the time ruled by Ibn Muammar, seeking support for his teaching. By marrying his daughter, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab established the first political pact, which allowed him to freely spread his doctrine, while supporting Ibn Muammar's political ambitions. While in al-Uyaynah, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab began using violence as a means of enforcing his doctrine. The first incident took place shortly after the alliance with Ibn Muammar was established and following the announcement to inhabitants to strictly adhere to tawhid. As worshiping of trees that was popular among the people was in Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's opinion un-Islamic, he ordered that all sacred trees be cut, and he personally destroyed the most glorified one. Understandably, this incident provoked very negative reaction among the Muslims. Second incident involved destruction of the monument over the tomb of one of the Prophet's companions, honored by the local population. Again, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab saw that as a violation of tawhid so that destruction of it was in line with what the Prophet preached. However, he was not alone while destroying the monument with his own hands; he was accompanied with 600 armed men provided by Ibn Muammer. The message was clear; Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, now enjoying political protection, was powerful enough to forcibly impose his doctrine, negate traditions that had been present in the area for centuries, and set the stage for future Wahhabi raids against non-believers. The third incident was the most brutal one, as it involved a killing of a woman who apparently came to him and confessed to have sinned outside of marriage. She was stoned to death, after allegedly Ibn Abd al-Wahhab succumbed to ulama's pressure to execute her (DeLong-Bas, 2004, pp. 23-29). Following this woman's death, Algar (2002) quoted Ibn Bishr: "his cause flourished, his power increased, and true tawhid was everywhere disseminated, together with the enjoining of virtue and the prohibition of vice" (p. 18).

Having gained so much power in the religious realm, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was seriously jeopardizing the ulama, who were determined to drive him out of al-Uyaynah. They accused him of heresy and of attempting to establish a new school (madhhab) of Islam. Ultimately, their attempts were successful, and Ibn Abd al-Wahhab left for al-Dir'iyah, where he soon struck another political deal, but this time with long-lasting consequences. This time, he sought protection from Muhammad Ibn Saud, by promising him that his family would rule the area for years to come. Sendub (1998) mentioned an alleged conversation between Muhammad Ibn Saud and

Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab during which Ibn Abd al-Wahhab sought to forge an agreement with Ibn Saud, who in return requested that he offer his support solely to the Al-Saud family. Al-Saud also conditioned this agreement on a tax he was to collect from people in al-Dir'iyah, to which Ibn Abd al-Wahhab objected by saying that there would be plenty of opportunities to gain booty by looting in their future conquests (p. 24). According to this alliance, established in 1744, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was to become Imam, a religious leader, while Muhammad Ibn Saud was to be amir, a political leader. Neither of them would interfere in each other's business; Ibn Abd al- Wahhab had finally free hands to spread Wahhabism any way he seemed appropriate, while at the same time justifying Ibn Saud's conquests in the name of jihad. According to a recent study of the curricula conducted by a former Saudi judge Al- Qassem and journalist Al-Sakran, and the results presented at the Second Forum for National Dialogue in late December 2003, in Saudi Arabia Jihad against polytheists, including "ignorant" Muslims, which allows for their killing and taking of their property, is still part of the religious curricula in boys' schools in Saudi Arabia. (Dankowitz, 2004, Sweeping Accusations of Unbelief Takfir in the Curriculum section, para. 2).

This alliance between, as Schwartz (2002) calls them, "outsiders, fanatics and bandits" (p. 74), set out to rampage villages and towns, firmly establishing Wahhabism as a prevalent doctrine. Their hatred of Shiism resulted in leveling of Karbala, a holy Shiite city, and slaughtering of thousands of its citizens. Furthermore, Wahhabis in their quest for purity destroyed the tombs of the Prophet's companions, conquered the holy places Mecca and Medina, looted its treasures, books and objects of art. By 1788, Wahhabi-Al-Saud alliance controlled most of the Arabian Peninsula (Schwartz, pp. 74-78).

Fighting in the name of Islam, Wahhabis violated it first by imposing their views by force, which is clearly forbidden in Islam, and furthermore by not following the rules Islam sets out for Muslims fighting the non-believers. According to Islam, battles against non-believers must be announced in advance, while Wahhabi raids were sudden, without an announcement. Sendub (1998) mentioned a story recorded by Ibn Bishr which illustrated this assertion. The story talked of a ruler of Hurma region who came to Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab to tell him that his people, having first

accepted the Wahhabi doctrine, decided to abandon it. Shortly afterwards, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab sent an army, surrounded the village at night, and attacked at dawn, at the time of the prayer. The village was destroyed and most of the villagers killed. Those who survived fled to other areas (p. 24).

As said before, the Wahhabism was born at the time when the Ottoman Empire was in crisis. Whether or not this movement was a reaction to the Empire's decline and the rise of Europe, or just an isolated case of fundamentalism is not quite clear. Certain elements of Wahhabi teaching indicate that modernization in some form had reached Najd, where Wahhabism was born, as Ibn Abd al-Wahhab spoke against innovations that had taken root there. It was probably due to several factors that this doctrine emerged at that particular time as a reaction to the weakening of the Ottoman Empire, aspirations of the British and elements of modernization that had reached this remote area with no significant importance to the Turks or to the British, who were just getting started to colonize this part of the world. Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab recognized the right moment and used the opportunity to proclaim himself as a religious authority in the Arabian Peninsula.

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However, the Ottomans did not look favorably at Wahhabi raids and advances, as they coincided with attacks coming from the outside weakening the Ottoman Empire. They did not want any internal conflicts that would weaken the Empire even more. While the Muslims were defending themselves from the French Army in Egypt, Wahhabis managed to take control over many cities, including Mecca and Medina, killing and looting everything on their way (Sendub, 1998, p. 24).

Still, that did not stop Napoleon and the British to offer their cooperation to the Al-Saud family. Had the British (and the French) known that this obscure doctrine would become a powerful ideology and turn from a friend into a foe, they would have stopped Wahhabi advances at any cost. However, having established good relations with the Al-Saud family, the British left the central Arabia to their control, as they were interested in other areas of the Peninsula. The Al-Sauds promised they would not attack the British, and the British promised not to interfere with Al-Sauds activities (Sendub, 1998, p. 24).

Yet, when the Ottomans sent Muhammad Ali Pasha to subdue the Wahhabis in 1811, the British turned a blind eye and failed to extend their assistance to Wahhabis. While they were fighting a powerful army lead by Ali Pasha, the British used the opportunity and took control over Bahrain, which marked the beginning of the colonialization process on the Peninsula (Sendub, 1998, p. 24).

Schwartz (2002) made an important point by saying that Wahhabi violence was never directed towards the British, although Britain was Christian, an aggressive superpower with a different agenda from the one presented to the Al-Sauds, but at their fellow Muslims, the Ottomans, against whom, they even declared jihad in late 1780s (p. 79). One thing that connected Wahhabis and the British was their common enemy - the Ottoman Turks.

It was not legal and acceptable in Islam for a Muslim to fight another Muslim. Therefore, to create a rift between Arabs and Turks there was a need for a new interpretation of Islam that would sanction such murder, but under the guise of Islam. This interpretation came to be known as Wahhabism.

4. Wahhabism Today: Going global

In this section, the reemergence of Wahhabism in the 20th century, its transformation into an ideology and its transnationalization. Several centuries later, Wahhabism remained a driving force for those fighting in the name of Islam. Return to the ideas of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab towards the end of the 20th century was partly a result of the refusal of Muslims to accept cultural and technological domination of the West and the pattern of global politics, particularly that of the US. Wahhabism became capable of mobilizing Muslims across the world, uniting them in their political goal to fight the infidels and set up an ideal Islamic state, thus transforming this religious doctrine into an ideology. The turning point for dissemination of Wahhabi doctrine beyond borders of the Arabian Peninsula was undoubtedly a victory of Mujahedin in Afghanistan over the USSR and oil boom in Saudi Arabia in 1970s.

There are two ways in which Wahhabism is spread among Muslims outside Saudi Arabia: one is through foreign jihad fighters who fought in different fronts were Muslims were attacked, and the other through da 'wa /missionary work/ of Saudi

humanitarian organizations. Foreign jihad fighters would introduce Wahhabi Islam among their fellow soldiers, by imposing strict adherence to Islamic practices, or condition joining a Mujahedin unit on a completion of a madrassa (Islamic school) beforehand. The Saudi humanitarian workers would operate among the masses of ordinary civilians, disseminating religious materials with Wahhabi contents. Today, Wahhabis can be found almost in every Muslim community worldwide, particularly in areas once affected by armed conflict. The Saudi Government Paper Billions Spent by Saudi Royal Family to Spread Islam to Every Corner of the Earth (2002) published at MEMRI web site listed locations where Wahhabi schools and Islamic centers were established (para. 1- 4). Further politicization of Wahhabism by Osama bin Laden and his subsequent actions made Wahhabi doctrine a global threat.

Wahhabism has, thanks to petrodollars and radicalization of Islamist movements, transformed into a powerful ideology, capable of mobilizing masses across the Muslim world ready to fight in jihad, something that Muhammed Ibn-Abd al-Wahhab called for and carried out several centuries earlier. The doctrine remained the same, its main ideologue is still a Saudi, Osama bin Laden, and only the protector of the House of Saud changed from Britain to the United States. But at the time of its reemergence, much more was at stake than before; the defeat of the USSR and access to cheap Saudi oil, without which the US economy would crumble. While Britain tolerated Wahhabi raids and their expansion as Arab disunity benefited its colonial plans, the US used Wahhabi Mujahedin as a tool to beat its rival, the USSR. America was determined that the USSR, a source of all evil in the world, be defeated at any cost. This time, the US did not send its army to Afghanistan; it generously financed local Mujahedin, who were seen as 'freedom fighters'. However, they saw themselves as jihad fighters fighting paving the way for the creation of one of the most retrograde and repressive regimes in the Middle East, the Taliban, who turned Wahhabi ideas into practice, and eventually became the USA's worst nightmare. against the infidel Russians. A video footage from' a BBC documentary Power of Nightmares (Curtis, 2004) showed Reagan giving a speech and dedicating the launch of a space shuttle to the fighters of Afghanistan. A former CIA agent, who appeared in the same documentary, stated that before being dispatched to Afghanistan, he was given Stinger missiles and 1 billion dollars as aid for Mujahedin, confirming that CIA provided the

Mujahedin with training and weapons. The US was not aware it was paving the way for the creation of one of the most retrograde and repressive regimes in the Middle East, the Taliban, who turned Wahhabi ideas into practice, and eventually became the USA's worst nightmare.

But for Islamists and Wahhabis alike, invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet troops in December 1979 also marked a new era. For the Mujahedin and Islamists worldwide, Afghanistan presented a perfect opportunity to fight a wholly war and establish a state based on the Wahhabi doctrine. Backed by the US and Saudi Arabia, whose royal family, according to Fisk (1998) was also generously providing funds to the Afghans, the fight of the local Mujahedin attracted Islamists from across the Middle East who started pouring into Afghanistan through a border with Pakistan. None of them were, Kepel (2003) argued, Bosnian Muslims (p. 100). The headquarters for the Arab volunteers was in Pakistan, and was run by a radical religious leader Abdullah Azzam from Palestine, for whom jihad in Afghanistan was just a start in a long process of liberating lands of Islam from infidels. He became a mentor for Osama bin Laden and other foreign fighters in Afghanistan.

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Kepel stressed several different categories of foreign volunteers in Afghanistan; apart from the local Mujahedin whose sole interest was to drive out foreign troops from their country, another category of fighters were wealthy Arabs from Saudi Arabia with their fancy gear and equipment, who did not contribute much to the fighting. Osama bin Laden was one of them. He arrived in Afghanistan in 1985 and tried to gather the data about volunteers get into contact with those staying in Afghanistan and form them into a network. According to Kepel, the US Intelligence service came up with a name Al-Qaeda to describe the group, as Al-Qaeda means a database, although Islamists themselves did not use it (p. 95). Arrival of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan coincided with mass arrivals of extreme radical Islamists who had been released from Egyptian and other prisons, including Osama's now right hand man al-Zawahiri. The authorities sent them off to fight in Afghanistan hoping they would not return, which was a very convenient way of getting rid of militant elements that had been causing serious problems in their home countries (p. 94). Al-Zawahiri, an admirer of Qutb, and his followers further radicalized jihad in Afghanistan, thereby

radicalizing the entire Islamist movement. Following the Soviet retreat, Afghanistan was, after Saudi Arabia, another place where this doctrine was thoroughly implemented: deeds of the Taliban regime are well known, ranging from the most extreme as denying basic human rights to women, to banning everything that they considered to be un-Islamic, including music and any other forms of entertainment.

After the war in Afghanistan, destruction of the Berlin wall, dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the end of the Cold War, the stage was set for further transnationalization of Wahhabism, particularly to former Soviet Republics in Central Asia and later to the Balkans. However, what made this transnationalization possible was the Saudi oil riches, and to certain extent the West and the US, being their best oil clients. According to Aburish (1995), in the years of 1975-1979, Saudi Arabia had its “happy hour” (p. 166). Its GDP increased by 85% and annual surpluses were between \$6 billion and \$32 billion. In 1980, the US became the biggest importer of Saudi oil and business of all sorts was flourishing between the two countries, including the weapons sales (p. 169). This “brutal friendship” (p. 148), as Aburish called it, culminated when Saudis requested the presence of the US Army on its soil, shortly after Saddam Hussein’s invasion in Kuwait in 1990. As Wahhabi religious establishment in Saudi Arabia was against this decision, King Fahd managed to negotiate a deal and persuade them into accepting the US Army, but was forced to offer some concessions. The Mutaween, or a religious police, a body that oversees implementation of Wahhabi rules, was given even more power to make sure citizens lived in a strict accordance with Islamic law. This same Mutaween would later create its counterpart in Afghanistan, The Taliban’s Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Suppression of Vice, responsible for unprecedented degradation of women and denial of their basic human rights (Fisk, 1998, para. 8-10). However, the Saudi royal family eventually became target of its own politics; dissident movements have started to emerge, targeting the House of Saud, whom they see as betrayers of Islam. In clashes that ensued, many were jailed by Saudi authorities and Osama bin Laden was stripped from Saudi citizenship in 1994 (Kepel, 2003, p. 99).

Al-Qaeda did not stay quiet: after a series of terrorist acts against Americans in New York, Saudi Arabia, Kenya and Tanzania in 1990s, it attacked America again

on September 11, 2001, leaving the world in shock and fear. 15 out of 19 hijackers that attacked the World Trade Centre in U.S.A were the citizens of Saudi Arabia. Osama bin Laden himself and many other global ‘Jihadists’, who participated and fought in Bosnia, Chechnya, Afghanistan and Iraq were also Saudi nationals. These Al Qaeda terrorists brought the terror on the doorstep of Europe with Madrid train bombings in 2003 and London terror attacks in 2005.

The global war on terrorism started by the USA and its western allies after September 11 aimed at annihilating the leadership and cadres of Al-Qaeda. These efforts culminated in the killing of Osama Bin Laden – founder and leader of Al-Qaeda- in 2011 resulted in the decline of the terrorist organization. His successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri, has been unable to control the affiliates associated with the al-Qaeda brand name. Indeed, he has been accused of allowing too many groups to come in under the umbrella of the organization. This chaotic situation has caused problems for Al –Qaeda Central (AQC).

Decline of AQC led to the mushrooming and self-reliance of Al-Qaeda affiliates in the Middle East, Africa and Asia that sought to champion local hatred against Western supported monarchs and translate an Islamic vision for their regions into violent jihad by adopting the ideology and practices of AQC. These franchise fused local aspirations with the ambition to make their movements a part of the quest for a global Islamic Caliphate on the lines espoused and propagated by Al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in the Sahara-Sahel region; Al-Shabaab in Somalia; Boko Haram in Nigeria; Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) in Iraq; Daesh, the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) in Libya; Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen, the Taliban in Afghanistan; and the Lashkar-e-Tayibba in India and Pakistan are some such affiliates.

Today the Daesh - an offshoot of the AQI- is the deadliest and most dangerous terrorist group among the all Al-Qaeda affiliated groups. Therefore, it has become the focal point in the global fight against terrorism. Western nations have turned their attention to the Daesh in response to the organization’s growth and success and began launching airstrikes in Syria and Iraq in an attempt to halt the jihadists’ advance and dismantle the group. While Daesh has shown an impressive and rapid expansion, it is

unlikely that it will continue to enjoy the growth it has seen thus far, especially with the escalation of airstrikes led by the United States, Russia and other states.

The developments related to Daesh in Syria and Iraq since 2013 were caused by the Syrian civil war that entered its fifth year as of 2016 in addition to the unstable situation in Iraq. The political arena after the fall of the Al-Baath regime led to the establishment of the Islamic State in Iraq in 2006, which evolved six years later under the pressure of the Syrian crisis to what is known nowadays as the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL) or the Daesh. On June 10th, 2014, the world woke up to the news of the fall of Mosel, the second largest city in Iraq, in the hands of the Daesh's fighters. Abu Baker Al- Baghdadi, the man who inherited the leadership of the the Daesh in 2010, declared himself as Caliphate only three weeks after his group captured Mosel.

5. Daesh and Wahhabism

Daesh represents a return to Wahhabi origins. It uses the concept of Takfir, which is an an essential component of Wahhabism. It is a tool used for mobilizing and rallying against the 'kuffar' (infidels) who oppose the da'wah. Daesh uses this same tool to rally its members. Both the Wahhabi ideology and Daesh also agree on asserting the concept of Hijra (migration), dividing the world between Dar al-Islam (House of Islam) and Dar al-Kufr (House of Infidelity), where both encourage Muslim migration to Dar al-Islam, i.e. lands under Wahhabi control.

Takfir is strongly emphasized in Muhammad Ibn Abd -al- Wahhab's fatwas and messages. For example, he asserts that he did not know the meaning of la ilah illa Allah (There is no God but Allah) during his time as a taleb elm (student of religion), and that he had previously been guided towards his ideas on Tawhid and Shirk (polytheism), which is an assertion he applies to all the ulema of his time:

“During that time, I did not know the meaning of la ilah illa Allah; neither did I know the meaning of Islam. This was before God bestowed His Grace. This was also true of my teachers; no man among them knew what this meant. If any of Al-'Aridh's ulema [Riyadh and its surroundings, also known as Al-Yamamah region] claims that he knew what la ilah illa Allah meant, or knew the meaning of Islam before this time, or claimed that one of his teachers knew what it meant, he, then, had lied, fabricated and given credit where credit wasn't due”. (Bin Qasim 1996, X, p. 51)

As can be seen in its literature, Wahhabi da'wah presents itself as a correction to widespread jahilyyah (ignorance) and a revival of an extinct Islam; thus anyone who does not join its ranks is an infidel. This is why Ibn Abd-al-Wahhab charged the Hanbali ulema, who opposed him or simply did not respond to his da'wah, with kufr. He even charged those who did agree with his charges with kufr.

Ibn Abd-al-Wahhab used takfir as a weapon against political opponents of Wahhabism. He charged the people of Ha'il with kufr. He charged them not because they practiced what Wahhabism considers acts of shirk (idolatry), but because they did not agree with Wahhabism's takfir of the Turkish state and the people of Mecca. 'Those who do not charge the mushrikon (polytheists) of the Turkish state and the grave worshipers,' he said, 'such as Meccans, with kufr [...] is a kafir like them.' He charged those who submitted to the Saudi state and then turned against it with red'dah (heresy). Husain bin Ghannam wrote that

“... many people from Wadi Al-Dawasir entered Islam, but some of them renounced it after six months. Thus Abdul-Aziz prepared an army, confronted them, tortured and killed many of them until they were humiliated and weakened, and asked to return to Islam”. (Bin Ghannam 1994, p.169)

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Daesh also practices accusations of red'dah, especially with those who oppose it, or reject absolute obedience to its leadership. A case in point is what Daesh did to the Shu'aitat clan in Deir Al-Zour - a province in Syria- where, after Daesh struck a treaty with the clan, a conflict occurred that led to the issuing of a sentence against them for being 'an abstaining clan', resulting in its men being killed, women displaced and homes demolished. Takfir here serves as an incitement to combat, and there is a deep connection between takfir and fighting in Wahhabi discourse; the takfir of people necessitates fighting them until they submit to the Tawhid-representing state, which is an approach Daes practices unequivocally. Killing, in the original Wahhabi movement, was not limited to times of war against opponents of Wahhabism, but rather extended to assassinations of certain figures in times of peace. One example of this was the assassination of Uthman bin Mo'ammer, Emir of Al-'Uyayna (40 kilometres from Riyadh), while in his mosque after he finished Friday prayer for suspicion of conspiring against the Wahhabi da'wah, despite the fact that he had shown support for it. This is similar to the assassinations perpetrated by Daesh of those it considers

Sahawat (referring to Al-Anbar tribes who fought with the US army against Jihadis in Iraq in 2007) who were suspected of conspiring against it, even if they were, in fact, its allies.

Tawhid to Wahhabism is embodied in the state; anyone who does not join the state, disown its enemies and consider them kuffar is branded a kafir too. As can be seen in the example of Ha'il mentioned above, believing in Wahhabi da'wah is translated into subordination to the state and disowning its enemies. Having any doubts implies kufr, and one who doubts the kufr of a kafir is also a kafir, according to Wahhabism. This is what Daesh leadership believes in, as they see the Islamic state they lead as having a monopoly over religious truth, and thus those who disobey the state have renounced their faith. This way any opposition to Daesh becomes kufr or red'dah and should be fought and killed.

The punishments meted out to kuffar are not limited to slaughter; takfir legitimizes the stealing of their money. Sheikh Abdul-Latif bin Abdurrahman Al-Sheikh, one of the second Saudi state's ulama and a descendant of Ibn Abd-al-Wahhab issued a fatwa legitimizing the taking of money from the Turkish military caravan and that of visiting Shi'ite caravans. This is mentioned by Bin Qasim, who confirms that:

“Ibn Al-Hadhrami's brigade was famous and well-known at the time of Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him). The brigade targeted the camels of Quraysh, who, even with their kufr and perversion at the time, were not as misguided as many of the military and the Rafidah visitors. One who argues over the legitimacy of taking the possessions of the soldiers and visitors and knows not what happened to people's faith, needs to correct his own faith, review Islam from its origins, and comprehend the conflict between God's messengers and their peoples”. (Bin Qasim 1996, VIII, p. 353)

This makes bank robberies and other actions on the part of Daesh completely legitimate from their perspective. Nonetheless, this growing amount of takfir does not imply that Wahhabism wholesale acknowledges the practice of takfir. Whenever Ibn Abd-al-Wahhab was asked about this, he would deny it and consider it a fabrication. Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi (Abu Baker Al-Baghdadi's predecessor) endlessly repeated the same. But Wahhabism's constant examining of what it means to be a Muslim leads to the conclusion that many Muslims are outsiders to the circle of Islam, and that Wahhabism, in tying Islam to Wahhabism's interpretation of it, has embodied the

religion in the Tawhid state. Despite the fact that it does not charge all Muslims with kufr, Daesh considers many Muslims as kuffar. That being so is why the fighting and killing this entails against Muslims, more than any other group of people, is what is being witnessed today.

6. Multinational Terrorist Organization Seeking to Create a Caliphate

When comparing the Wahhabi movement with Daesh, it is necessary to note the difference between their target audience in terms of mobilization and rallying for battle. In the case of the original movement, the population of the Najd region was the target audience. It depended on fighters from Najd to expand the area of the state. Daesh, however, is similar to the Ikhwan (brethren) in its composition, in that it depends on a Bedouin popular base and on social sectors located in the Syrian desert. Daesh differs from the Ikhwan in that it recruits fighters from all over the world, making it an international organization, whereas the Wahhabi movement operated at a local level.

Historical conditions must, of course, be taken into account when considering this difference. It may have been the case that if the Wahhabi movement had had the ability to recruit individuals from all over the world, using modern telecommunication methods, it would not have hesitated to do so. The Wahhabi movement wanted to expand and spread its message globally, and did not confine itself to the regions of Najd and Al-Ahasa. Rather, it aimed at extending to Yemen, Iraq and Hejaz since it targeted all Muslims as its audience.

This leads us to the concept of the caliphate, since it is clear that the concept ISIS invokes has been influenced by the literature of the post-caliphate-Islamist movement, which focuses on uniting divided Muslims under a caliphate. Wahhabism, on the other hand, did not call for a caliphate which competed with the Ottoman caliphate, nor did it designate Imam Mohammad bin Saud a caliph. Still, this is not a major divergence, since both movements believe in an expansion unlimited by geographical borders, which are what the Ikhwan adhered to, and thus were in conflict with King Abdulaziz's approach. This conforms to the texts of the Wahhabi movement, which believed in an imperially modelled expansion, evoking Islamic

conquests of the first caliphate era. Original Wahhabism believed in the expansion of the Tawhid state, according to its fighting abilities, with its ruler being imam to Muslims, while scholars of altered Wahhabism rejected the idea of resurrecting the caliphate. King Abdulaziz did not remain an imam after he settled his state's border and established it; he became a king, which is a title that goes against all original Wahhabi literature that declares that only God is king.

On the question of expansion, Daesh is similar to original Wahhabism since it does not recognize borders and seeks to expand and rule all Muslims. The question of the caliphate, however, was not on the table at the time of original Wahhabism in the same way as it is now, a difference that is related to historical conditions.

7. Concluding Remarks

Daesh has been weakened by the recent air strikes and ground assaults and lost considerable amount of territory both in Iraq and Syria. It is quite unlikely that they will gain more territory. On the other hand, it is quite likely that it will continue losing more territory and strength. Eventually it will fade away or become marginalized but new terrorist organizations will emerge if the ideology of global terrorism – Wahhabism- keeps growing and spreading radicalism among Muslims. The most effective way to take on Daesh and prevent new terrorist organizations from emerging is to take on Wahhabism.

Like all fundamentalist religions (and that includes many in the West), Wahhabism has developed as a belief that seduces individuals with ultraorthodoxy, oversimplifying answers to complex questions arising from a highly changing and unstable global climate. It provides ready but inadequate answers, suffused in dogma, while promising a return to the 'true' path of Islam. Wahhabism asks a high price in the form of violent personal and societal sacrifices, which represent a departure from the true essence of the path of peace, "The Way," originally promulgated and interpreted by the Prophet Mohammed as the meaning of being a Muslim

Islam's message of peace continues to be overtaken and eroded by an ideology of hatred embodied in the teachings of Mohammed Ibn Abd -al-Wahhab. Saudi Arabia

is the poignant example of the expansion of Wahhabism as a socio-religious trend assimilating the poor and ignorant, turning them into weapons more potent than bullets or bombs. Persistent zealotry of belief, along with scores of ruthless and committed militant recruits indoctrinated in the pursuit of ‘jihad’ as a sacred duty, is a promise of violence to which the world awakes daily, without any clear-cut answer to preempt it.

The tried-and-failed methods of military force to eradicate threats and respond to enemies while searching for peace remain a chimera and a paradox within the context of Islam. The only true path possible seems to be that of pluralism and the search for new venues of development for Islam, rather than retaining a fixed view of its precepts, ideas, and Muslim practices as prescribed and enforced by the Wahhabism. Islam is not about hatred; it is about submission only to God. The violence and terror brought on by a few will remain a constant potentiality, as long as fear is fed with lack of understanding about this maxim that religion is being used to terrorize and control. The Wahhabi cult could become a historic relic of a brutish past to its believers, only if there were viable religious alternatives available to living a modern life without sacrificing adherents’ beliefs.

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In fact, this is something that cannot be done successfully from the West. Just as Muslims cannot tell Westerners how to conduct their religious and spiritual lives, so it would seem ridiculous for the West to show Muslims what is right and what is wrong with the Islamic religion. It is up to Muslims themselves to work these things out— and to solve the problem.

At the same time, however, the West does need to accept some responsibility for the fact that Wahhabism has become so powerful and has managed to hijack the Islamic faith. It is not to be forgotten that Wahhabism was crafted by the British and the West allowed the Saudis to set oil prices in 1973, thereby creating a vast pool of wealth that is controlled by one royal family and its immediate clan. This family protects Wahhabism and is in turn protected by it. In this venture, the West is tacitly cooperating. Once people learn exactly what Wahhabism is all about, perhaps that support will dry up.

The Wahhabi fundamentalists have a right to their beliefs, so long as they do not infringe on the human rights of others or promote violence. It may take a long time to recover from the wounds inflicted by Wahhabism. In the interim, education, religious temperance, and tolerance may yet prove to be the best means of healing.

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