

Wahhabism and Governance

Islamic Political Thought (BSS474)



Josef Kraus

History and Evolution of Wahhabism

- Different evolution than other branches of salafism
 - Weak orthodoxy (Hanbali)
 - Barbarism and ignorance (*jahiliyya*) of Bedouins
 - Worshiping of people and graves (*ziyara*) + cults of caves, trees, magic etc.
 - Reaction by fundamentalists



History and Evolution of Wahhabism

- Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703 – 1792)
 - Cult of only one God (*tawhid*) and refusing of polytheism and idolatry (*shirk*)
 - God created people to worship him, people's duty to do so
 - Small *shirk* – showing of religiousness (*riya*)
 - Big *shirk* – people and graves worshipping, sacrificing to other God, any mediation between people and God, belief in magic



History and Evolution of Wahhabism

- Current society in *jahiliyya*, people are unbelievers
- Migration (*hijra*) from *jahiliyya* to the world of Islam is a duty of each Muslim
- ibn Abd al-Wahhab tried to convert Bedouins to true Islam
- It is necessary to fight polytheist like the Prophet
- Unbeliever is the one, who doesn't believe in Quran and Sunnah, or who doesn't practice, or refuses to pay *zakat*, or go to Mecca

[Saud – Abd al-Wahhab Agreement]

- Importance of connection to Saudi state
- First Saudi state 1744
 - Ibn Abd al-Wahhab gave a promise of loyalty to the king Muhammad ibn Saud
 - Ibn Saud promised to support Wahhabism, jihad and to spread sharia among people
 - Ibn Saud married ibn Abd al-Wahhab's daughter
- Ordering the good, forbidding the bad
 - Zakat collection, praying time, hajj...

Tensions within Ottoman Empire

■ Conflict with Ottoman rule

- Disrespect to Ottoman authority by Wahhabis
- Endangering pilgrimages to Mecca
- Worsening of a security situation in Arabian Peninsula
- Destroying of graves of Muhammad's party members
- 1801 plundering and looting of Karbala

■ Propaganda campaign against Wahhabism

■ Armed campaign 1811 – 1818 – destroying of the first Saudi state

Wahhabi and Saudi Exile

- Ibn Saud captured, moved to Istanbul and executed
- Rest of Saudi and Ibn Abd al-Wahhabi family to Egypt
- Contact with other Islamic thoughts
- Sulaiman ibn Abd al-Wahhab
 - A Muslim who doesn't demonstrate his hate to polytheist is an apostate and not being a part of Muslim community
- Abdul Rahman ibn Hasan (grandson) studied in al-Azhar university – discovered Ibn Taymiyya thoughts
 - Returned to the second Saudi state (1824 – 1891) to become highest judge in Riyadh
 - Second Saudi state destroyed, interruption of Wahhabi tradition

Wahhabism and Saudi State

- The third Saudi state (since 1902) – Abdul Aziz ibn Saud conquered Riyadh
- Campaign to a country islamization
- Pressure upon Bedouin tribes
 - Forced to live in colonies
 - Harb, Mutayr, Utayba... tribes
- Their members left *jahiliyya*, accepted Wahhabism and called themselves an *ikhwan* (brothers)
- *Ikhwan* the most fanatic and the most combative power



Wahhabism and Saudi State

- At the first Abdul Azis used *ikhwan*, but soon they criticized the Kingdom – too secular, connections with foreigners, bringing innovations (*bid'a*)
- Solution by military force (with British help)
- With the support of *ulama* of Riyadh
 - No disobedience or rebellion to the ruler is legal
- *Ulama* accepted Abd al-Aziz's position of the king
 - The king is a secular leader, not a head of Wahhabism
 - *Ulama* helped to implement innovations (*maslaha*)

Wahhabism and Saudi State

- Abdul Aziz ibn Baz – 40s, 20th century – fatwa forbidding the employment of non-Muslim foreigners
- Ibn Saud disagreed, ibn Baz in jail, accepted the threat of schism towards the state – finally took it back



Wahhabism and Saudi State

- Since 50s – *mufti* Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Al ash-Sheikh
 - Believed in excommunication (*takfir*) of individuals and countries
 - Who doesn't rule according to divine rule is despot (*taghut*) and infidel (*kufar*)
 - Duty to migrate (*hijra*) from unislamic world
 - Prohibition of any social contact with polytheists
 - Censorship – no photos etc.
 - Solidarity with oppressed Muslims – opening to them
 - 1961 – Islamic University of Madinah established (contrary to al-Azhar)



Wahhabism and Saudi State

- 1962 – modernization by prince Faisal - abolition of slavery
- 1964 – Faisal became a king – internationalization of Wahhabism
 - The idea of panislamism - counterbalance to panarabism
 - Establishment of religious foundations and charities abroad
- Continued during king Khalid's rule (1975)
- Two threats for the kingdom in 1979
 - Juhayman al-Utaybi rebellion
 - Islamic revolution in Iran and Shia emancipation
- 80's – the rise of social conservatism and regime tightening
 - Supervision over morality and religious duties,
 - Active support of armed jihad in Afghanistan and other places

Wahhabism and Saudi State

- Accepting of religious refugees – mainly Muslim Brotherhood
 - Ideology closeness
 - Inspired by Sayyid Qutb
 - Affection and competition of MB to Wahhabism
- Rabee al-Madkhali
 - The method of *al wala wa al bara* – loyalty and disavowal
 - Disqualification of any different religious thought
 - Using takfirism (verses 5:44)
 - *Do not fear people, but fear Me. And do not sell My revelations for a cheap price. Those who do not rule according to what God revealed are the unbelievers. (kafirun)*

Takfiri and Takfirism

- A *takfiri* is a Muslim who accuses another Muslim (or an adherent of another Abrahamic faith) of apostasy
- Accusation itself is called *takfir*
- Derived from the word *kafir* (unbeliever - infidel)
- Used not only for infidels, but also for apostates
- *Kafir* is sometimes used interchangeably with *mushrik*, those who commit polytheism
- Legally only *ulama* can declare a *kafir*
- Often misused by extremists

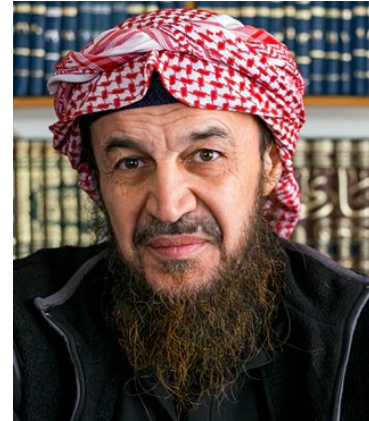


Wahhabism and Saudi State

■ Main *takfiri* ideologist Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi

- Affected by qutbism
- *Takfir* towards people and regimes (not against Saudi)
- Two basic principles – to worship only one God, to excommunicate the one who doesn't
- Be rude and unfriendly to polytheist
- Use *al wala wa al bara* towards unbelievers and non-islamic regimes
- Democracy is a sort of religion, object of worship = *shirk*

■ 90s – empowerment of Wahhabi clergy, the rise of extremism and intolerance towards foreign enemy – Christians, Jews, the West + fight against own Shia minority



[Mohammad bin Salman a Reformist?]

- Crown Prince's (since 2017) effort for modernization
- Several successful reforms
 - regulations restricting the powers of the religious police
 - removal of the ban on female drivers
 - Saudi 2030 vision includes economic, social and religious change
- Bright future?
 - Assassination of Jamal Khashoggi
 - Game of Thrones?



[Thank you for your attention!]

