

Understanding  
ISLAMIC  
Fundamentalism

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## Islamic Fundamentalism

**F**undamentalism is a word, like many words in both Arabic and European languages, that has a range of meanings across cultures. This is relevant to the task at hand. In the science of politics, for example, the concept of 'the Left' in western literature traditionally refers to workers, laborers, the lower classes, and needy and unfortunate people.<sup>1</sup> However, in Arab-Islamic literature, 'the Left' refers to the aristocrats, to wealthy people who lead a comfortable life. Likewise, the concept of 'the Right' in western literature refers to aristocrats, the owners and controllers of capital, the upper classes, and those who do not desire change but seek to influence government through their connections as an elite, and so the term also tends to refer to rigid and reactionary people. In Arab-Islamic literature, however, 'the Right' refers to the righteous who do good deeds.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, Muslims might seek membership of 'the Left' in this world, but may wish to be among 'the Right' in the next.<sup>3</sup>

Modernization is another example of a word that gives rise to potentially misleading interpretations, because it can be mistakenly equated with westernization. However, the latter means no more than the adoption of certain alien (western) social and cultural habits that may not be inherently superior or more advanced, although this is often implied. For example, the Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II (who ruled from 1808 to 1839) considered modernity to be the imitation of the west in terms of lifestyle and even fashions. He replaced the turban with the Roman fez<sup>4</sup> and issued a decree that declared European dress as the official dress of the State's workforce, whether military or civil. The Ottomans underwent many forms of borrowing from western cultures, but none of this saved the caliphate, and Turkey was not, in any notable way, more advanced

than a country like Egypt, whose revolution took place more than a century later, whose development was arrested by not inconsiderable colonial rule and numerous wars, and who did not have to deny her own culture as Turkey did.

Secularism is another western notion, and secularization has very much been a part of modernization in the western context. Its history is rooted in the domination of the Church over the State through the Church's control of 'learning' and 'capital,' and the clergy's interference in scientific, sociopolitical, and economic matters. Secularism, however, has no parallel in the history of Islam, because Islam has no Church and no clergy in the sense of an elaborate ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Likewise, the term fundamentalism in western society has been widely used since the 1960s to characterize those Muslim individuals and groups who have been involved in Islamic revivalism in Egypt and other Muslim countries. This period has also been filled with many events that have been attributed to Islamic revivalism. These include: the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973, and the subsequent tragic conflicts between Sadat and the Islamists in Egypt; the civil war in Lebanon, which broke out in 1975; the Sudanese Islamic Republican Brotherhood's relationship with President Numeiry reaching an intolerable impasse; Ayatullah Khomeini's Islamic Revolution in 1979, which brought Islamic clerics to power in Iran; the hostage crisis at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979-80; the coming to power of Saddam Hussein in Iraq in 1979, and the start of his attacks on Iraqi Kurds; the Iraq-Iran war; Saddam's opposition to President Sadat's peace process between Egypt and Israel in 1979 under the banner of the 'Rejectionist Front'; the assassination of Sadat in 1981, which brought Islamists to the verge of revolution in Egypt; and, more generally, the threat of Islamic terrorism to western interests. All these events have become a source of increasing and ever-present concern.

It is within this complex historico-political context that the term fundamentalism has been applied to Muslims. Thus, the term 'Islamic fundamentalism' is seen by many people in the west through the prism of the above-cited and similar crises that took place in the Middle East. The application of the term fundamentalism to Muslims, as James Barr has emphasized, is, however, far from precise.<sup>5</sup> The term assumed, through this use, a wider spectrum of meaning, as almost all Islamic revivalist movements were tagged with fundamentalist labels connoting extremism, radicalism, and other, similar terms that carry the force and intent of

violence and terrorism. Such application, however, should not be taken at face value or as a rigid and mutually exclusive classification of cultures and thought. Fundamentalism does not necessarily equate to or engender extremism, radicalism, or terrorism. From an Islamic perspective, terrorism is terrorism, and fundamentalism is fundamentalism. The impact of the term is obvious, as its application can carry a certain weight.

Before the term fundamentalism was used to brand Muslims, it was and still is being used by certain Christian denominations. Some of them, in the view of many scholars, are radicals and take pride in being called fundamentalists. A great number of individuals and groups around the world, ranging from Protestant and Catholic churches to governments, have also been tagged with the fundamentalist label.<sup>6</sup>

Historically, the term was used to denote the literal, yet creative, interpretation of the Bible. Indeed, a history of Christian fundamentalism was written in 1931 by Stewart Grant Cole, and another account published in 1954 by Norman Furniss. Many authorities date fundamentalism from the time of the Holy Book Conference, which convened in the U.S. in 1910.<sup>7</sup> This conference led to the publication of a series of radical Protestant booklets, entitled "The Fundamentals," in the U.S. between 1910 and 1915. It was on the basis of this title and the contents of these booklets that the term fundamentalism was derived to characterize those "doing battle royal for the Fundamentals."<sup>8</sup>

Consequently, fundamentalism has been defined as a U.S. Protestant movement, guided by the doctrine of complete faith in the fundamentals of the inerrancy of the Bible; the virgin birth and divinity of Jesus Christ; the vicarious and atoning character of his death; his bodily resurrection; and his second coming. These fundamentals, in the Protestant view, constitute the irreducible minimum of authentic Christianity. This minimum is rooted in what is known as the fourteen-point creed of the Niagara Bible Conference of 1878 and later in the five-point statement of the Presbyterian General Assembly of 1910.<sup>9</sup>

During the period spanning the 1970s through to the 1990s, fundamentalism resurfaced to again become an influential force in the U.S. Promoted by popular television evangelists and represented by such groups as the Moral Majority, the new politically oriented 'religious right' opposed the influence of liberalism and secularism on U.S. life. This movement has adopted the term 'fundamentalism' as originally used to refer to a specific Christian experience in the U.S. in the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup>

Further, the assumption underpinning the use of the term fundamentalism in the western context is that modernism and fundamentalism are inherently opposed. Some others consider fundamentalism a negative tendency that counters the processes of modernization and rationalism.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the application of the term fundamentalism carries the implication of a dramatic conflict between fundamentalists and modernization, the former seeking to divorce themselves from modern life, rejecting new scientific discoveries, and refraining from interacting with the reality of the modern epoch. In this sense, the term fundamentalism has no Arabic source or Islamic reference.<sup>12</sup>

In other words, the term fundamentalism, born of unique historical circumstances, does not exist in Arabic and Islamic literature. For this reason, Joachim Wach emphasized that many observers, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, have stipulated that the term fundamentalism should not be applied to Islamic movements.<sup>13</sup> Muslims, especially those of the Islamic resurgence for example, reject the use of the term fundamentalism to characterize Islamism, which takes the teaching of the Qur'an and faith seriously; and if that were the criteria, then all Muslims would indeed be 'fundamentalists,' but the term would cease to be of any use.<sup>14</sup>

Etymologically, the term fundamentalism in Arabic translates to *usuliya*. This is an abstract noun of quality derived from the Arabic root (*a-s-l*), the substantive *asl* (root, origin, foundation, or basis of a thing) being the basic word from which the trilateral verb *asula* is derived. The present participle or the *nomen agentis* is *usuli* (fundamentalist, singular) and the plural is *usuliyun* and *usuliyin* (fundamentalists). Thus, the singular substantive *asl* or the plural *usul* means root(s), origin(s), foundation(s), fundamental(s) or principle(s) of a human being or of anything else, in general, including ideology(s), idea(s), or concept(s).<sup>15</sup>

The Qur'an uses the term 'fundamental(s)' as in the following: *Whatsoever palm-trees ye cut down or left standing on their roots [usul], it was by God's leave* (Qur'an 59:5); *Lo! it is a tree that springs out of the base [asl] of hell* (Qur'an 37:64); and *Have you not considered how God sets forth a parable of a good word (being) like a good tree, whose root [asl] is firm and whose branches are in heaven?* (Qur'an 14:24). Thus, the word 'fundamentalism' as known in western literature is not found in Arabic.

Further, all of the contemporary major political or social systems have their own fundamentals (*usul*: origins, foundations, or bases) upon which

they have been established and which distinguishes them from each other. In other words, capitalism, socialism, communism, democracy, and Islam are each based on their own distinct fundamentals. Thus, neither the capitalist nor democratic systems can be called communist systems.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, the Islamic system cannot be called a communist system or even democratic in western terms. This does not, however, mean that the Islamic system is theocratic or autocratic, or anything but Islamic. Islam is a broader sociopolitical system than democracy, and accommodates the substance and values of democracy within it. The phrase 'democracy in Islam'<sup>17</sup> means that Islam is bigger than democracy, and when Islam incorporates contemporary democracy within it, there still remains more space within which to encompass more permutations of democracy with no change to the inherent Islamic identity of the system.

Although the existence of democracy *in* Islam is clearly evident, those who are called fundamentalists do not appreciate any view that erases the name of Islam in favor of a label of democracy. They argue that Islam is adequately equipped and that its system has the characteristics and qualities necessary to give that system all the rights to retain its name 'Islam.' In their view, Islam will gain nothing by being called democracy. In other words, democracy is democracy, socialism is socialism, and Islam is Islam.<sup>18</sup> Each of these systems, in the fundamentalist view, has its own historically based origins, principles, and fundamentals, which define the nature of the system and distinguish one system from the other. Thus, 'Islamic fundamentalism' or 'fundamentalism in Islam' signifies searching for the fundamentals and Islamic authority, rather than referring to a specific political or religious movement.<sup>19</sup>

Searching for the fundamentals of Islam and its authority is the meaning preserved in Arabic literature, as in the sciences of the fundamentals (*ulum al-usul*). For example, among the academic institutions of al-Azhar University in Cairo, there is the Faculty of the Fundamentals of Religion. The title indicates the subject core and the objectives of the teachings in this faculty. Further, among the Arabic and Islamic disciplines are the science of the fundamentals of religion (*ilm usul al-din*), the science of the fundamentals of Islamic jurisprudence (*ilm usul al-fiqh*), the science of the fundamentals of Arabic language (*ilm usul al-lugha*), and the science of the fundamentals of Hadith (*ilm usul al-Hadith*). Nothing within these disciplines has any parallel to the western concept of fundamentalism.<sup>20</sup>

Historically, Muslim scholars who specialized in any of the sciences of the fundamentals were honored with the title 'fundamentalists' (*usuliyyun*). Among the celebrated fundamentalist scholars in the medieval epoch were, for example, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (780–855), Imam Ibn Taymiya (1263–1327), Imam 'Abd al-Jabbar Ibn Ahmad (946–1036), and Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Bisri (d. 436/1057), the author of *Sbarh al-'umad* (The Natural Hearing), a commentary on Aristotle's book of physics.<sup>21</sup> Hence, the title 'fundamentalist' in Islamic terms denotes the force and intent of the concepts of honor, fame, and celebrity.

Fundamentalism is also explained alongside the concept of Salafism (traditional or ancestral). In an oft-quoted statement, Hasan al-Banna (d. 1949) defined his Muslim Brotherhood organization, founded in 1928, as an 'Islamic society' on a 'Salafi' mission that follows the Qur'an, the Sunna (tradition of the Prophet), and the conduct of the Muslim ancestors (*salaf*).<sup>22</sup>

The term *salaf*, as a noun, refers to the venerable Muslim ancestors, while the term *khalaf* refers to the succeeding generations.<sup>23</sup> Muslims are overwhelmingly agreed that the *salaf* are better in their application of Islam than are the *khalaf*. This also applies to all Abrahamic religions, as mentioned in the Qur'an. The Qur'an refers to God's messengers (that is, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Isma'il, Idris, Jesus, Zakariya, and John), their immediate followers (*salaf*), and the succeeding generations (*khalaf*) with an emphasis on their application of faith as follows:

*These are they unto whom God showed favor from among the Prophets, of the seed of Adam and of those whom We carried (in the ship) with Noah, and of the seed of Abraham and Israel [Jacob], and among those whom We guided and chose. When the revelations of the Beneficent were recited unto them, they [salaf] fell down, adoring and weeping. Now there hath succeeded them a later generation [khalaf] who have ruined worship and have followed lust. But they will meet deception. Save him who shall repent and believe and do right. Such will enter the Garden, and they will not be wronged in aught. (Qur'an 19:57–59).<sup>24</sup>*

The words and language indicate that the immediate followers (*salaf*) of the messengers were more successful in their application of their faith than were the succeeding generations (*khalaf*). This passage also suggests that after the immediate generation of the messengers, selfishness

and godlessness at times gained the upper hand among some of the succeeding generations (*khalaf*). Hence, there are always those who see the failures in the applications of the faith and try to correct them and adhere to the fundamental principles of the religion. In this sense, the Qur'anic text cited above highlights that the Muslims of the succeeding generations (*khalaf*) are always seeking to be like their ancestors (*salaf*). Their intentions are noble but not always their actions.<sup>25</sup>

Consequently, the ultimate goal of Muslim fundamentalist movements is to establish more Islamically oriented states and societies, based on Islamic principles and values. In this context, scholars consider Islamic fundamentalism to be a combination of Islamic devotion and political activism, and conscious attempts to confirm or restate the theoretical relevance of Islam to the modern epoch.<sup>26</sup>

Islam is based mainly on shari'a (law), which regulates an individual's relationship to God (*ibadat*), as well as to other individuals, the community (Muslim and non-Muslim), and the state (Muslim and non-Muslim). Many Muslims believe in Islam as a way of life and not simply a religion or state. This fusion of matters of belief with matters of conduct in Islam makes it difficult to separate religion from politics. In this regard, there is a big question mark in many Muslim circles as to whether separation of church and state would be either desirable or appropriate. Islam is believed to be comprehensive and all-pervasive.

In addition, Islamic law is based on complete submission (*'ubudiya*) to the will of God. This is also a fundamental tenet of the Islamic religion. Since Islamic law is based on the Islamic religion, it proceeds on the same fundamental assumptions. As a way of life, Islamic law applies to all aspects of a person's existence and behavior. No realm of human experience is given precedence over another in this regard, and there is a great coordination and coherence, a blending and balance between the material, the rational, and the spiritual elements of humanity's journey. The will of God embraces all aspects of the universe, life, and humanity, and the law covers all of them. The law is a path, or a way, that guides Muslims, and the revealed law governing all of these aspects is known as shari'a. It is a comprehensive concept expounded by fundamentalists including Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966), who stated:

The shari'a is everything prescribed by God to order human life. This takes the form of the fundamentals of belief, the fundamentals

of government (*bukm*), the fundamentals of behavior, and the fundamentals of knowledge. It takes the form of the creed and the conception and all the components of this conception. It takes the form of legislative decisions and it takes the form of principles of ethics and behavior. It takes the form of the values and standards that rule society and evaluate people, things and events. Then it takes the form of knowledge in all its aspects and of all the fundamental principles of intellectual and artistic activity.<sup>27</sup>

According to Weeramantry, Chief Judge at the International Court in Swaziland, “the shari‘a is not, strictly speaking, a legal system, for it reaches much deeper into thought, life, and conduct than a purely legal system can aspire to do.”<sup>28</sup> The shari‘a places the individual in his or her relationship to society, to the universe, and to the Creator. In addition to its legal system, the shari‘a defines an individual’s religious duty. The textual sources for Islamic law are the Qur’an and the Sunna of the Prophet of Islam. These textual sources are also the main stimulus to learning. In this regard, the first revealed verse of the Qur’an was *Read: In the name of thy Lord Who createth man from a leech-like clot. Read: And thy Lord is the most Bounteous, Who teacheth by the pen, Teacheth man that which he knew not* (Qur’an 96:1–5). The Prophet Muhammad reportedly said, “The ink of the scholar is holier than the blood of the martyr.”<sup>29</sup> According to Ma‘adh ibn Jabal,

Acquiring the knowledge is worship, knowing the knowledge is reverence, searching for the knowledge is jihad, teaching the knowledge is charity, examining the knowledge is glorification of God. With knowledge, you know God and how to worship Him; and with knowledge you glorify God and unify Him (*tawhid*). With knowledge God raises people, making them leaders and guiding imams.<sup>30</sup>

The Prophet enjoined his followers to seek learning wherever they could find it: “Go ye in search of learning even if you have to go to China for it.”<sup>31</sup> His followers did just that—traveled to China, and learned the art of papermaking. The new type of paper they obtained enabled scholars to multiply the number of books printed in a manner that had been impossible with papyrus sheepskin. Thus, Islam made acquiring knowledge a jihad, and jihad requires patience (*sabr*). In this regard, Ibn

Taymiya pointed out that “God mentioned the word patience more than ninety times and linked it with Prayer in His saying, *Seek [God’s] help with patient perseverance [sabr] and Prayer. It is indeed hard, except to those who are humble* (Qur’an 2:45). God established that leadership (*imama*: imamate) in religion was hereditary out of patient perseverance and steadfastness, in his saying: *And We appointed, from among them, leaders, giving guidance under Our command, so long as they persevered with patience and continued to have faith in Our Signs* (Qur’an 32:24).

Thus, the textual sources of Islam did not solely encourage learning but also discussion and analysis. In this regard, the Prophet is reputed to have said, “If there is difference of opinion within my community that is a sign of the bounty of God.”<sup>32</sup> In other words, if there is a difference of opinion that requires scholars to pit their intellects against each other, this is a stimulus to intellectual advancement, for it is out of the clash of intellects that fresh knowledge is born. In this way, Islamic intellect came to grapple with every known intellectual problem over the centuries. Hence, fundamentalists are of the view that Islam is not rigid or suited only to the intellect of a specific epoch or generation, but rather is flexible and has something to offer all periods and generations.

Consequently, conceptions such as fundamentalism and terrorism must be distinguished from each other. Richard Nixon considered fundamentalists to be people who have a strong hatred for the west, and are determined to bring the Islamic civilization to dominance, through a revival of the past. He also believed that fundamentalists refer to Islam as a religion and state in one, and look to the past to guide the future. Thus, on this view fundamentalists are not conservatives but revolutionaries.<sup>33</sup>

Fundamentalism involves a search for authority or the following of the ordinance of the faith. In this context, following the ordinance of the faith has never equated with extremism or similar notions that suggest violence and terrorism. Fundamentalism is one thing, and extremism is another. The fundamentals of human rights are well known worldwide, but views about these rights differ from one state to another, from one community to another, and from one individual to another—and these differences can be extreme. The lawmaker gives each individual his or her rights within a framework with clearly defined limits. Each person then must observe his or her rights within this framework. Imposing the rights of one person over the rights of another person is a violation of the law, whether that law is a natural, civil, or religious law. It is because of this potential for

conflicting rights that problems and wars of all forms, including cold and hot wars, take place. Such conflict led to the two world wars, and more recently to the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, Chechnya, Darfur, and Georgia, among others. Examples of other types of racial conflict or discrimination resulting from a clash of rights are innumerable. The offensive cartoons against Islam and its Prophet Muhammad published in 2006 in Denmark and other European states; the cartoons published in Sweden in 2007; the Dutch politician Geert Wilders's film *Fitna* in 2007; and the comments made by Pope Benedict XVI about Islam and the Prophet in Germany on 12 September 2006 all illustrate this point.

Although the cartoons and the Pope's comments offended Muslims deeply, Denmark and other European states defended both on the grounds of 'freedom of speech.' Yet freedom of speech was never intended to allow people to insult others. Indeed, the freedom to insult others is an act of terrorism. Terrorism is any act that terrorizes people's lives, rights, and property. This includes any act that terrorizes the freedom of their conscience, terrorizes the freedom of their souls, terrorizes their freedom to believe, terrorizes their freedom to admire their culture, and terrorizes their freedom to maintain their own civilization.

Lawmakers give each person the rights to freedom; however, the freedom given to any citizen is never absolute, as societies must weigh up competing freedoms for the overall greater good. We as citizens give up some freedoms in return for certain forms of protection. In all of its shapes and forms, 'freedom' is not absolute, because absolutism is not in the nature of things. Absolutism does not fit with the nature of human society, which must by its very nature balance or compromise between differences and conflict. The freedom of person A must have a limit to allow for the freedom of person B. Overlapping the freedoms of these two persons will certainly adulterate the concept of individuality, the cornerstone of democracy, as emphasized by John Locke, the so-called Prince of Individualism!<sup>34</sup>

Accordingly, each person has the right to adhere to the fundamentals of his or her culture and faith; however, this freedom is limited. Understanding the text and how to practice the ordinances of one's faith within the limits of freedom afforded by society is also critical and, at times, people may move beyond such limits. Such transgression can lead to violence and terrorism. In other words, fundamentalism in the Islamic conceptualization remains fundamentalism so long as it is working

within its borders. Violating those borders by attacking others physically, intellectually, or morally constitutes an act of violence and terrorism, regardless of the religion, race, or nationality of the perpetrators.

Islamic fundamentalism is not necessarily radical or reactionary, and in no way does it inherently lead to violence and terrorism. While some of those who have been called fundamentalist groups have turned violent, the majority of fundamentalists are not violent, but rather work within the system and live by the accepted norms of mainstream society. When Egypt's militant groups turned violent, the Egyptian press misappropriated the term fundamentalism to carry such labels as extremism, activism, fanaticism, and terrorism.<sup>35</sup> In the worldwide media the term fundamentalism continued to be used as the principal term to denote violence and terrorism. Thus, Frederick Denny made the point that "probably the worldwide media use of the term fundamentalism and fundamentalists with reference to Islam makes it impossible to avoid applying the term to Islam."<sup>36</sup>

### **The Nature of the Challenge**

There is no doubt that Islamic fundamentalism has increasingly become a global phenomenon and has occupied the international press as well as the corridors of world politics. There are also various interpretations of fundamentalism, each with its own characteristics, which can be understood as relevant to the environment in which it exists and operates. In the Middle East, Islamic fundamentalist movements have increasingly come to pose a threat to the sociopolitical order in the region. In Asia in general, and in the Indian subcontinent in particular, Islamic fundamentalism has surfaced in the chronic national and ethnic conflicts that have marred this region. In Central Asia, the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism has created anxiety and stress for the regimes in Moscow and Beijing. While China is struggling to deal with the version of fundamentalism there, certain issues<sup>37</sup> and trends have recently emerged among Muslims who have actively integrated Islam into the nationalist discourse of the various ethnic groups of the Russian Federation. In addition to Iran and Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan and Pakistan are at the center of this emergence of different forms of fundamentalism. In Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, and other Islamic states of the Far East, Islamic fundamentalism has asserted itself over the political arena in the context of a decaying social order.

According to some, Islamic fundamentalism is a direct response not only to the break-up of the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of the First World War, but also to the powers that rose to dominance in the post-Second World War era. The world was divided between such dominant powers, with Britain, France, and the U.S. on one side of the divide, and the former Soviet Union (USSR) on the other. These powers, in the view of fundamentalists, constitute totalitarian colonialist regimes that occupied most of the Muslim world and considered themselves to represent the only political and social model that the Muslim world should emulate. However, the ideology of Islamic fundamentalism rejects all systems other than the Islamic system.

In the context of this theme, medieval fundamentalism from the time of Ibn Hanbal (781–855) until the time of Ibn Taymiya (1263–1328) and his disciple Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350)<sup>38</sup> became, in the eighteenth century, part of a public movement preceded or rather, accompanied, by the call for ‘Pan Islamism,’ which appeared in the movement of Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab (1704–87) in Arabia,<sup>39</sup> and Muhammad ibn Ali al-Shawkani (1760–1834) in Yemen.<sup>40</sup>

In the nineteenth century, the fundamentalist movement re-emerged as a public movement at the hands of al-Sunusi (d. 1859) in Libya, ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jaza’iri (d. 1883) in Algeria, and al-Mahdi (d. 1885) in Sudan.<sup>41</sup>

In the twentieth century, the fundamentalist movement reappeared once more to favor and support Pan Islamism as a response to western military and commercial expansionism. This theme occupied the thought of the pioneers of modern reform, some of who were steeped in the colonial movement.<sup>42</sup> These pioneers can be represented by figures such as al-Tahtawi (d. 1873), al-Afghani (d. 1897), Ahmad Khan (d. 1898), Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi (d. 1899), ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (d. 1903), Muhammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905), Rashid Rida (d. 1935), Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938), Hasan al-Banna (d. 1949), Ahmad Amin (d. 1954), Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid (d. 1963), and Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966).

In terms of their ideas, they are the pioneers of Islamic reform and revivalism. They were rational thinkers who renewed interest in Islam as an endogenous ideology. They called for liberty, social justice, equality, cooperation, and solidarity, and for humankind to master modernity, economy, and technology.<sup>43</sup> They were, as asserted by Robert Lee, both modernists and fundamentalists,<sup>44</sup> who believed in the Qur’an and the Sunna as primary sources of Islam, and did not reject human reason or

rationality but called for *ijtihad* (legal reasoning). Hence, the present Islamic fundamentalist movement can be seen as a link in a long chain of events and movements, rooted in Islamic history. Contrary to the western experience of fundamentalism, the term fundamentalism in Islamic culture does not equate with opposing modernity or rejecting the role of the intellect, but rather encourages development in all aspects of human life, including the political, social, and economic realms.<sup>45</sup>

Islamic preachers in general, and fundamentalists in particular, claim that all types of regimes, including capitalist and socialist ones, have been tried in Muslim countries but have not cured their problem of weakness and backwardness. Conversely, the Muslim modernizing elites usually claim credit for managing the transition to these systems with reasonable efficiency, while fundamentalists blame them for the failure and backwardness of the Muslim community. Many Muslims criticize western political and economic models for creating these problems. As a result, fundamentalism has been a reaction against not only local corruption but also against European countries’ political and commercial expansion into Muslim countries.

Since the 1940s, Islamic fundamentalists have been in conflict with their opponents. In the Arab world, the most important underlying causes that have moved fundamentalists toward violence have been foreign occupation and humiliation, and repression at the hands of foreign regimes. This treatment of Muslims has proved to be a failure and demonstrated misunderstanding of the nature of their aspirations and grievances. The conflict between Islamic fundamentalists and their opponents is essentially ideological, and relates to the power of sovereignty (*hakimiya*),<sup>46</sup> which is the highest governmental and legal authority over humanity. This notion of the power of sovereignty is popular among fundamentalists and young people. It determines that Muslims should govern themselves according to Islamic law, and validates condemnation of leaders who do not facilitate the application of Islamic law.<sup>47</sup> The conflict between Muslims and the west is therefore ideological and concerned with the nature of sovereignty and its implications for the relationship between the state and its citizens.

Fundamentalists argue that in the medieval period there appeared to be no significant ideological challenge to Islam. Liberal democracy as an ideology or even as an idea had not yet emerged in either pre-Napoleonic France or colonial America. Communism did not yet exist—Karl Marx



was not born until the nineteenth century, and Lenin did not set foot on the world stage until the early decades of the twentieth century. Thus, there was no ideology to challenge Islam until the rise of the western military-industrial complex. Western military expansionism has dramatically transformed the world order. With its weaponry and military technicalism, the west was able to create a state of affairs in which the major global actor was no longer Islam but the colonial west. The greater challenge then became not the conflict between Islamic and western ideologies, but that western ideology was to be served by armaments. The shift, from the Muslim perspective, was cataclysmic: "Islam had lost leadership on the world plan."<sup>48</sup> Europe emerged as an empire between 1550 and 1850, to be succeeded by capitalism from 1850 to the present. As Muslim countries fell into the hands of European colonialism, the leadership of Islam fell in its territories, and Muslims went weak and backward. The processes of European colonialism aggressively victimized Muslims, including their rulers, territories, laws, and economies.<sup>49</sup>

Subsequently, the dispute between fundamentalists and their opponents was the natural result of political developments in the twentieth century. One of the most significant characteristics of the twentieth century was the emergence of what was called a bipolar world order, which can be seen clearly in the divide between communism and capitalism. It has also led to conflict between east and west, which began as an ideological struggle but ended with a military confrontation between the Eastern and Western blocs.<sup>50</sup>

Consequently, the ideological conflict between east and west increasingly became a worldwide class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletarian class.<sup>51</sup> Such a struggle was reshaped to include, in addition to class struggle, military conflict. Here, the destiny of this ideological conflict between communism in the east and capitalism in the west had come to be decided not by ideology alone, but also by armaments.

Consequently, the bipolar world order of the 1960s and 1970s came to an end when former U.S. President Ronald Reagan shifted conceptualization of the armaments race from Earth to heaven, when he gave it the name 'Star Wars.' It was at this point that the Eastern bloc lost its last breath in the race. When President Reagan unveiled his Star Wars plan in the 1987 summit in Washington, Mikhail Gorbachev,

then leader of the Soviet Union, addressed him with words more of sorrow than of anger:

Mr President, you do what you think you have to do . . . . And if in the end you think that you have a system that you want to deploy, go ahead and deploy it. Who am I to tell you what to do? I think you are wasting money. I do not think it will work. But if it is what you want to do, go ahead.<sup>52</sup>

Gorbachev was at that time striving to maintain some sort of balance between east and west by maintaining the bipolar world order without further acceleration of the armaments race. However, Gorbachev's failed attempts in this regard took down with them the Soviet communist camp and a politically balanced world. The failure of communism confirmed that western capitalism could not establish itself on the world stage without armaments. Thus, the fate of the conflict between east and west was decided, not by the ideology itself, but also by the heavenly missiles of Star Wars. Islamic organizations in Egypt, Pakistan, and elsewhere are therefore now of the view that no ideology can take hold in the global political arena without equipping itself with sufficient armaments proportionate to those of their rivals. This view is self-evident to Islamic militant groups, as history reveals how ideas and ideologies have come to predominance on the world stage—through military might.

The fall of the communist system created a single world order, in which the opposition had all but vanished. President Richard Nixon claimed there was no candidate other than Islam to fill this void.<sup>53</sup> The west had to some extent employed Islamic radicals for this role. As Islamic ideology, especially that which was often labeled as 'fundamentalism,' came to prominence, Islam increasingly became the focal point of world politics. In this way, the nature of global conflict has completely altered: the new challenge is no longer about east versus west, but rather North versus South. The challenge is no longer between *classes*, but between past and present, between people who trust in their present to create a better future and people who trust in their past to gain a prosperous future. It is between people who see their future through the prism of their present, and others who see their future through the prism of their past. While the former group of people in the global North (the wealthy developed countries, such as those of the west) have placed their trust in their present

and see a promising future, the latter in the global South (the poorer developing countries which make up much of the Muslim world), see little that is good in their present and their future is not secure, promising nothing more than misery, unemployment, humiliation, and identity crises. The latter do not place their trust in their present because they have no present; hence they can only see a route to the future through the past. In the fundamentalist view, the future of Muslims is only to be realized in a return to their faith, to their Islamic identity, to adherence to the fundamentals of Islamic law, and to presenting themselves to the world as Muslims. Hence, the present challenge is no longer between east and west, but between the North and South, and between past and future.

The nature of this challenge is critical, as the psychological character of some fundamentalist movements has shifted over time. Since the 1970s, the Islam that was integrated into the various nationalist ideologies has increasingly been replaced by a trans-nationalistic Jihadism. In the process, the theme and framework of their ideology, as well as the geographical contours of their activity, have also changed. This shift from debate to violence has, without a doubt, grave implications. This violence has ranged from fighting, suicide bombing, kidnapping, killing, and hijacking to other forms of terrorism well known to the world media and security agencies. All of this has been committed in the name of Islam. Further, in the name of Islam, al-Qa'ida has come to be known as the chief of terrorism. Al-Qa'ida hijacked Islam in order to make the challenge somehow ideological and linked to some specifics of religion that apparently resist eradication by a purely security- and military-based agenda. In other words, terrorism is a transnational phenomenon of ideological dimensions and therefore must be challenged using the same—that is, ideological—weapons and at the same scales, that is both local and global.

Accordingly, much of the debate over al-Qa'ida and the War on Terror, and much of the work on al-Qa'ida published in both Arabic and European languages, has been dominated by a focus on three major areas: personality traits; certain conceptual binary oppositions, such as resurgence as opposed to decline, tradition as opposed to modernity, decadence as opposed to renewal; and themes of collective division, such as here and there, us and them, or our civilization and their civilization. This theoretical approach becomes even more complex as terms such as secularization, westernization, and globalization have come into play and

been used to taint the debate as one about superiority and inferiority. Thus, identifying the theological and ideological bases of al-Qa'ida's political tactics, therefore, might go far beyond developing an effective strategy to combat terrorism. Subsequently, the ongoing discussion about the War on Terror has shifted, as less attention has been paid to the religio-political forces and the root causes that have motivated Islamic fundamentalists to adopt methods of violence and terror on both the national and later the international levels. As Burke argues:

The debate over the prosecution of the ongoing 'war on terror' has been skewed. Instead of there being a reasoned and honest look at the root causes of resurgent Islamic radicalism, the discussion of strategies in the war against terror had been almost entirely dominated by the 'counter-terrorist experts' with their language of high-tech weaponry, militarism, and eradication. The latter may be useful to treat the symptom but does not, and will never, treat the disease . . . Bin Laden and al-Qaeda are the radical, extremist fringe of the broad movement that is modern Islamic militancy. Their grievances are political but articulated in religious terms . . . The movement is rooted in social, economic, and political contingencies. The smoke and the vapour trails over Tora Bora may have signalled the end of Afghanistan as a favoured destination for aspirant terrorists but it did nothing to eradicate the reasons for the volunteers wanting to go there.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, the challenge is ideological and involves some specific contingencies and qualifications that are difficult to deal with purely militarily or using high-tech weaponry, as we have seen in Afghanistan and Iraq. Seven years have passed since the War on Terror began, yet both al-Qa'ida and the Taliban are still at work. Accordingly, the time and energy that have been used in depicting the aforementioned binary oppositions should be applied instead to analyzing and defining a global counter-terrorism strategy. Those binary opposites should not be taken at face value, or understood as a rigid and mutually exclusive classification of cultures and thoughts. It is wrong to consider that Islamic radicalism was established and developed in isolation from the political, economic, and cultural circumstances in the Muslim world from which it emerged. In the words of Bouma, "Resorting to terror is a symptom of unacceptable and unchanging social dislocation."<sup>55</sup>

Islamic fundamentalism is not a recently established movement. It has existed since early Islam and continued to develop in step with political and cultural developments within the Muslim community, and thus includes a range of movements and thinkers up to and including al-Qa'ida. The Islamic fundamentalist movements' thinking and activity was previously limited to the national arena and an interest in reforming their own nations. In the words of Burke:

There was room in their programme for gradualism and compromise. There was room in their movement for a huge multiplicity of different strands of political thought. There was room for the parochial, radical, and conservative movements of rural areas and for the clever, educated, and aware ideologues of the cities. There was even room for those extremists who were committed to violence and who saw the world as a battlefield between the forces of good and evil, of belief and unbelief.<sup>56</sup>

Al-Qa'ida and its terrorist conspirators have drawn from previous manifestations of Islamic fundamentalism, yet transformed much of their theological and ideological discourses into something different, with different geographic contours. The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, in the name of Islam or jihad, illustrate this point. Hence, in its theological and ideological framework, al-Qa'ida might borrow some Islamic conceptions from the earlier fundamentalists, but appropriates and distorts these conceptions in an environment that is very different in time and place from that of the past, with the aim of serving al-Qa'ida's goals and objectives. Therefore, al-Qa'ida's repeated attempts to present itself as an Islamic 'reformist movement' should not surprise us. In its books, al-Qa'ida uses such titles and intentionally refers to prominent scholars in order to deceive its audience and to hide its terrorism behind the respect and authority implied by such titles and names. This is despite the fact that al-Qa'ida calls its opponents in the Muslim world Kharijis, Murji'is, or Haroris, or similar groups that appeared in the early history of Islam. Al-Qa'ida also charges Muslims who condemn al-Qa'ida's terrorism with apostasy, or of 'not [being] true Wahhabis.' This indicates the importance of undertaking a careful reading of the literature of the early Islamic movements, including Kharijism and its splinter groups, such as Murji'ism and 'Ibadism, and later Wahhabism, from which al-Qa'ida claims authority. This is the task of the following chapter.

## The Origins of Fundamentalism

The aims of Islamic movements of the modern epoch are to establish an Islamic order and to confirm the theoretical relevance of Islam to the modern world. The theological and ideological discourse of contemporary Islamic movements also has its roots in Islamic history and has developed in step with social and political contexts through the centuries. Numerous movements have emerged throughout the history of Islam. Among them are the Kharijis, 'Ibadis, Hanbalis, and Wahhabis, which are presented here as examples that substantiate the link between medieval and modern movements including al-Qa'ida. All of these movements call for rule by shari'a, but they have different approaches to achieving their goals. Islamic movements differ from each other, not only in time and space, or in their infrastructure, character, and function, but also in terms of the themes and framework of their theological and intellectual discourses. These differences are based on the political, social, intellectual, and moral contexts in which they exist and function.

### Kharijism

Kharijism, as both a term and an ideology, has been used by al-Qa'ida and its opponents as a diacritical mark with which to label the other. While al-Qa'ida calls its Muslim opponents Kharijis, it considers itself a "jihadist reformist movement" and what it does as jihad on behalf of all Muslims: "We consider our jihad in this stage to be the jihad of an *umma* (nation). Therefore, any individuals or groups that enter the jihad and exchange loyalty with us on the basis of 'blood for blood and destruction for destruction'; they are part of the jihadist movement."<sup>1</sup> Here the link between al-Qa'ida and the Kharijis begins. Al-Qa'ida borrowed the

idea of loyalty from the Kharijis and made loyalty to al-Qa'ida a 'special loyalty,' embodied in a covenant, the most important of which is 'blood for blood and destruction for destruction.'

The word Kharijism refers to the ideological views of the Kharijis, the first radical group in Islam, who rebelled against 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, the third caliph (ruled 644–56). He was one of those early Muslims whom the Prophet Muhammad admired. 'Uthman perfected his interpretation of Islam under the guidance of Muhammad, married Muhammad's daughter, worked as his secretary and ambassador, and was later elected to the office of the caliphate as the third of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs. Under his leadership, the caliphate expanded from Arabia to the rest of Persia, North Africa, the Caucasus, and Cyprus. In this vast state, Muslim centers of learning began to emerge in different territories that naturally varied in their cultural ethnicity and linguistic backgrounds. These centers began to develop their own dialectic traditions of reading and studying the Qur'an. This alarmed 'Uthman, who feared that religious controversy might result if Muslims sought to develop and adhere to their own dialectical styles. He appointed a committee to compile the text into one volume and to make copies for all the cities and centers in the caliphate. This is the Qur'an as it is known today. However, in 656, after twelve years in office, 'Uthman was besieged in his house for twelve days and was finally murdered by Muslim radicals. Their motives have been detailed in the literature, as part of the great upheaval, or Fitna. In short, the radicals accused the caliph of nepotism and misrule. The Egyptian literary critic Taha Hussein (1889–1973) stated that

When 'Uthman became caliph, he not only lifted the ban placed by 'Umar [second caliph] upon the companions to go to the other territories, but also gave them rich presents from the public treasury. He gave al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwam 600,000 dirhams in one day, and gave Talha 100,000 dirhams in one day, enabling them to buy lands, property, and slaves in other territories.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever the reasons might have been, Caliph 'Uthman was murdered by this Islamic radical group, which later came to be called the Kharijis. The Kharijis have influenced the history of Islam ever since, and have served as a spiritual parent to many medieval and modern radical groups, including al-Qa'ida. For example, al-Qa'ida has borrowed several ideas

from the Kharijis, among which is their notion of disloyalty to the government. The Kharijis were the first to rebel against the legitimate government and ultimately assassinated their ruler, who was a prominent friend of the Prophet of Islam. In the present day, Ayman al-Zawahiri, now the head of al-Qa'ida, has incorporated the Khariji idea of rebellion against the government and the state, which has led to acts such as the planned assassination, alongside other jihadist groups, of Egypt's President Sadat in 1981.

Etymologically, the word *kharijis* (pl. *khawarij*) is an abstract noun that refers to those who 'go out' of the legitimate authority of the state. Whoever rebels against legitimate authority is called a *khariji*.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, al-Qa'ida's leadership, namely, al-Zawahiri and his affiliates, are Kharijis, who have rebelled not only against their own states, but also against religious authority. They have killed political and religious figures, and innocent civilians, both Muslim and non-Muslim, of countries with whom Muslim countries have treaties and mutual relationships.

Following the controversial murder of 'Uthman, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib was elected to office, but Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufyan ('Uthman's nephew) rejected him. Mu'awiya had been appointed by 'Uthman as governor of Damascus, after which he sought to reach the highest office. As a result, a struggle for succession ensued between the two men. They fought each other in two big battles. 'Ali won the first, but the conflict persisted, leading to a second battle. The two men mobilized their forces and met each other at Siffin, a town that now forms part of Syria, close to the border with Iraq. Camping there, 'Ali tried to resolve the dispute by means of arbitration, but the situation continued and Mu'awiya demanded that the murderers be brought to justice while the upheaval was still at its peak, and the house of the caliphate still disorganized from within. Mu'awiya publicly displayed the bloodied clothes of 'Uthman in the mosque in Damascus to foster ill feeling against 'Ali. The failure of 'Ali's attempts to resolve the dispute peacefully led the two rivals to once again engage in armed hostilities at Siffin. After several skirmishes, the fighting became fierce. Both 'Ali and Mu'awiya were unhappy about the heavy losses on both sides, but Mu'awiya was particularly dejected, and hoped that the battle would decide their fates. However, the battle did not go in favor of Mu'awiya's wishes. In danger of defeat, Mu'awiya took the advice of his general 'Amr ibn al-'As and ordered a special army unit to stick Qur'ans onto the ends of their lances.<sup>4</sup> Neither Mu'awiya nor

his advisory general necessarily believed that 'Ali's army would accept arbitration at this point, especially after 'Ali's previous attempt to resolve the matter by peaceful means had failed, and with his army now advancing to victory. Mu'awiya and his general, however, were certain that some of 'Ali's forces would favor arbitration, and so at the very least it would cause dissension in 'Ali's army, which is precisely what happened. Some of 'Ali's soldiers, who had rebelled against 'Uthman, refused to continue fighting against Mu'awiya's men when they saw the Qur'an stuck on the end of their lances. They believed that because the Qur'an had come between the two sides, the *bukm* [rule and judgment] rests with God alone (Qur'an 12:40). This meant that the two sides should settle their differences through arbitration under Islamic law. 'Ali urged these soldiers to keep fighting, saying that Mu'awiya was trying to trick them and was on the brink of defeat, but they did not listen. While 'Ali was arguing against those soldiers that "I know better about what is in the Book of God," his general, al-Ashter, pursued Mu'awiya's retreating army and was advancing to victory. However, the rebellious soldiers within 'Ali's camp threatened to attack General al-Ashter from the rear if he did not withdraw. They even 'threatened 'Ali that they would do with him as they had done with 'Uthman if he did not order al-Ashter to stop fighting.' Having no choice, 'Ali ordered al-Ashter to "stop fighting and accept the arbitration."<sup>5</sup>

The next stage in this conflict was arbitration. Both sides agreed upon the principle that one person should represent each side as a judge. They also agreed that both arbiters should base their judgment on the Qur'an, and both sides should accept and implement that judgment. Mu'awiya selected his top general and main supporter, 'Amr ibn al-'As, to represent his side. "Amr was a shrewd general and 'an able negotiator loyal to his cause."<sup>6</sup> As for 'Ali's side, the rebel soldiers made their choice: Sheikh Abu Musa al-Ash'ari. They insisted on Abu Musa, although 'Ali protested against the choice. 'Ali's concern was over Sheikh Abu Musa's absolute neutrality, especially as he was to negotiate the matter with General 'Amr, Mu'awiya's main supporter. A treaty was drawn up and agreed to, one which ordered both parties to lay down their arms and accept the judgment of the arbiters. The nobles of the two armies added their signatures, but the radicals from 'Ali's army did not. On their way back from the battlefield toward Kufa, the radicals quarrelled with 'Ali and used theological arguments to justify their political stance against him. The radicals had wanted 'Ali to stop fighting and accept arbitration, but

when he did so the group changed its view and rejected arbitration on the pretext of *No rule but God's* (Qur'an 12:40). They now blamed him on the grounds of this theological view, namely that his acceptance of human judgment would make the future of any judgments dependent on human opinion rather than on divine judgment. This group detached itself from legal authority (that is, 'Ali's caliphate), for which they became known as Kharijis (that is, those who 'went out').<sup>7</sup>

Subsequently, the Kharijis made an attempt on 'Ali's life. As he was entering Kufa with the rest of his army, they wounded him. The traitors rejoiced and marched to camp in Harura, a small town in the Kufa province. However, 'Ali sent his envoys to settle the dispute with the rebels, some of whom then renounced their radical views and returned to 'Ali's camp. Those who refused regarded 'Ali as not a true Muslim. According to Ibn Khaldun:

They demanded from 'Ali to repent, and break the Treaty and go back with them to fight Mu'awiya . . . 'Ali said, "We have a treaty and a covenant with them" . . . Harqous [a Kharijite] said to 'Ali "this is your sin for which you should repent" . . . 'Ali replied, "It is not a sin but let's say a weak opinion" . . . Zar'ah [a Kharijite] said, "If you do not condemn this human judgment and renounce it we will fight you."<sup>8</sup>

Al-Tabari pointed out that 'Ali himself went to them in a final attempt to resolve the dispute, but that they

argued and asked him: "Do you think human judgment is just? Why have you considered human judgment?" . . . 'Ali reminded them of the role that they played in the whole course and said, "You have decided on the matter of the entire case; you have decided for the arbitration and selected Abu Musa; and that the judgment was also based on the Qur'an . . . . The Qur'an is but words printed on paper and cannot speak without humans . . . . Those human arbiters made the Qur'an speak and they spoke of the Qur'an" . . . . Some of them accepted 'Ali's view and returned to his camp.<sup>9</sup>

The remaining Kharijis withdrew to the east of the Tigris River toward al-Nahrawan (southeast of Baghdad). On their way, the Kharijis encountered people and became increasingly fanatical and condemned all

those who disagreed with them, including ‘Uthman, ‘Ali, Mu‘awiya and the arbiters, as well as those who accepted the arbitration. They branded them all as *kuffar* (infidels; sing. *kafir*)<sup>10</sup> and worthy of execution. This was their early stock of theology, which ‘went out’ (*kharaja*) with them to the east of the Tigris province, and on their way they dealt harshly with those who did not share their views. According to al-Shahrastani (1086–1153), “the people feared for their life and property at the hands of the Kharijis.”<sup>11</sup> The terror they inflicted during their travels forced ‘Ali to take action. His army engaged with them and defeated them at al-Nahrawan in 658, but some survived and ultimately assassinated ‘Ali in 661. They also organized simultaneous attempts against the lives of both Mu‘awiya and ‘Amr for being ‘infidels.’<sup>12</sup>

In terms of their theology, Julius Wellhausen has described the Kharijis as “people of deep conviction, much nobler than the Jewish Zealots and no worse than Christian heretics and saints, because they were men of action who found martyrdom not upon the scaffold but upon the battlefield.”<sup>13</sup> Their movement was initially religious, but it gradually developed into an aggressive and uncompromising force, accepting no authority except that of “a caliph whom they themselves select and whom they could, and frequently did, at any time reject.”<sup>14</sup> Their uncompromising character and their theological discussions also created the foundations upon which they would later split into “twenty groups,”<sup>15</sup> eight of which were large and subdivided into ten other smaller groups, such as those referred to by al-Shahrastani as the ‘early’ Muhakkima, al-Azariqa, al-Najadat, al-‘Adhiriya, al-Bayhasiya, and al-‘Ibadiya.<sup>16</sup> Their radicalism took various shapes and forms, from theology to weapons, debates to skirmishes, and cold to hot wars. In their debates, each party supported its position with texts from the Qur’an and Hadith (sayings of the Prophet). It was out of this great upheaval, from the divisions and subdivisions of the Kharijis, that radical Islamic groups were born, spread, and had a significant impact on the Muslim world.<sup>17</sup>

The Kharijis inspired other extremist groups that were not necessarily Kharijis. For example, the Early Muhakkimis (Muhakkima) called themselves the Jama‘at al-Muslimin (‘Community of Muslims’) on the pretext that people outside their group were infidels. It was based on this group that a number of modern radical groups selected their names. For example, one of the jihadist groups in Egypt calls itself the ‘Community of Muslims’ (Jama‘at al-Muslimin) to signify that they are the only Muslims

and that all others are infidels. This belief is also shared by the Indonesian Jama‘at Islamiya and by al-Qa‘ida. The Muhakkimis inspired the Murji‘i groups (al-Murji‘a), who held distinctive views about religion and its practices, but agreed with other Kharijis on some points, including issues of governorship.<sup>18</sup> Today, members of al-Qa‘ida think of themselves as the only true Muslims and consider their opponents, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, to be infidels. The organization attaches the label of ‘apostasy’ to Muslim governments and calls the public and Islamic groups who oppose al-Qa‘ida’s violence and terrorism ‘Murji‘is,’ after one of the Khariji groups. On this subject, the al-Qa‘ida theorist al-Maqdisi wrote a book entitled *Imta‘ al-nazar fi kashf shububat Murji‘at al-‘asr* (Pleasing the Sight by Unveiling the Suspicion of the Murji‘is of the Epoch). He argues that “the Murji‘is in our era are many, some of them are but ordinary people and some others are linked to the religion.”<sup>19</sup> This book is based on a Wahhabi book, attributed to Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab, with a similar title: *Kashf al-shububat* (Unveiling the Suspicion).

Similar to the Murji‘is, the Wa‘idis (al-Wa‘idiya) were another extremist group that was part of the Khariji network. It condemned and branded as infidels any Muslims who did not follow them. Similarly, the Azariqis (al-Azariqa) were one of the largest and most extreme of the Khariji groups. They moved from Basra, conquered al-Ahwaz (in Iran), and killed all of its governors appointed by Ibn al-Zubayr, who ruled in Medina from 682 to 692. The Azariqis did so because they did not consider his rule legitimate.<sup>20</sup> This group also influenced al-Qa‘ida’s theology and ideology. The Azariqis called their Muslim opponents “polytheists, unbelievers, or infidels [who] should be killed.” They also called those who “did not join them polytheists, even if they agreed with them,” and stated that “any one [who] came to join the Azariqis was subject to investigations and examinations, even if he claimed to be one of them”; further, “they permitted the killing of civilians, the wives and children of their opponents.”<sup>21</sup> According to the Egyptian historian Shawqi Dayf:

The Azariqis think of themselves as the only true Muslims in the world, and people other than them, as infidels that are forbidden to eat their food or to have a link with them through marriage or inheritance but their men and women must be killed with their children . . . . Any territory other than the territory of the Azariqis, is but the territory of infidels (*kufi*).<sup>22</sup>

The ideas and the language expressed in this quote comprise the theme and framework of the ideology of al-Qa'ida and similar groups. One should bear in mind that the differences between the radical groups of our modern times are the same as the differences that existed between the medieval radical groups. Thus, the theological differences among these radical groups should not obscure their affinity. Irrespective of their differences in religious dogma, the radical groups are very much alike in their approach to religious reality and the way they carry out their affairs in general. Their differences lie in their political tactics, which depend on the circumstances of their leadership and military strength, and their particular historical and geographic context. Their theology, described by Wellhausen as a form of active fundamentalism, reflects their uncompromising observance of the Qur'an. To these groups, anyone who opposes their views should be ostracized or killed.<sup>23</sup>

Hence, the Khariji groups were numerous, but were all rooted in the tradition of the Early Muhakkimis. Another common feature of the Kharijis and present-day radical groups is that they believe in change from the top down and the spread of their views by violent means. Perceiving themselves to be the only Muslims, they consider their terror as righteous jihad and *the* holy means to spread their views. Hence, all radical groups, including al-Qa'ida and the Khariji groups, have come to be known to the majority of Muslims as assassins and bandits.<sup>24</sup>

The Kharijis' radicalism continued to grow, and reached its zenith in the period between 690 and 730. Their radical activities contributed to the fall of the Umayyads at the hands of the Abbasids in 750.<sup>25</sup> Throughout these conflicts the groups' aims became confused and twisted as the ends came to justify the means. This idea underlies one of the important tactics of al-Qa'ida today. The group justifies its terrorist acts including suicide bombings and killing civilians as a means to achieve its aims.

The Abbasids saw their war against Kharijism as a war of ideas. This vision is worthy of consideration when looking at the 'War on Terror' today. It is becoming increasingly evident that the War on Terror should not be confined to a purely military agenda. Indeed, terrorism cannot survive without its radical ideas. The Abbasids increased the number and quality of their learning centers. As the processes of writing and interpretation of authoritative texts, and the schools of law and philosophy, flourished, the Kharijis' radical ideas were refuted. Some views could not stand up to questioning and thus were eliminated; others found their way

to moderation; and others took their discourse to the far extreme. It is in the latter—the radical Khariji literature—that al-Qa'ida has found its area of interest and conviction.

### 'Ibadism

Anyone who is familiar with the literature of the Khariji and al-Qa'ida groups knows that among the links between them is the perception that the Qur'an may only be read literally. In addition, the 'Ibadis' idea of *takfir*, which charges others with unbelief, is one of the most motivational ideas in al-Qa'ida's doctrine. *Takfir*, as emphasized in al-Qa'ida's writings, leaves the gate wide open for all forms of violence and terrorism. Al-Qa'ida's ideologues, such as al-Zawahiri and Abu Bakr Naji, consider all opponents of al-Qa'ida as *kuffar*, who must be fought and killed.<sup>26</sup> This and other lethal ideas are rooted in the Khariji splinter groups, such as the 'Ibadis, who developed their own ideology, 'Ibadism (*al-Ibadiya*), out of Kharijism and later split into subgroups—in a manner similar to that seen among radical groups in the Muslim world today.

Thus, the 'Ibadis are the heirs and legatees of the Kharijis. Kharijism has survived into our age, in the form of more than one group, among which is the 'Ibadi group and its ideology. 'Ibadism was named after its founder Abu 'Abdullah ibn 'Ibad (d. 715). He was a member of the Kharijis' Early Muhakkimi group and spent a considerable amount of time in Yemen and Iraq. Ibn 'Ibad was the political mentor of the group, but its spiritual leader and imam was Jabir ibn Zayd. His followers founded communities in parts of southern Arabia, North Africa, Iran, Iraq, and Yemen as well as on the coastal territories of the Arabian Gulf. From the ninth to the eleventh centuries, the 'Ibadis conducted a series of sporadic radical actions and confirmed the presence of the Kharijis in theological, ideological, and political arenas.

Following the line of the Kharijis, the 'Ibadis legitimized regime change from the top down. It is in this literature that al-Zawahiri found the authority to kill Egypt's President Sadat in 1981, and to kill civilians, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. They charged both caliphs 'Uthman and 'Ali as being *kufir*. If those caliphs were charged as *kufir*, it was easier for al-Qa'ida to charge the current Muslims and non-Muslims (rulers and ruled) as *kufir*.<sup>27</sup>

The 'Ibadis radical stance against the government made it difficult for them to live in eighth-century Basra. Most of them moved to Arabia's

remote areas such as Oman and Hadramawt, but some also went to North Africa and even to Zanzibar in East Africa, and Khurasan in Asia.

The original 'Ibadi movement split into three groups, each of which had its own theology and ideology, which governed a group's radical activism. The Yazidis (al-Yazidiya), the Hafisis (al-Hafisiya), and the Harithis (al-Harithiya) reacted violently against what they considered to be *kafir*. The latter two groups, in particular, had a few theocentric ideas that were inherited by al-Qa'ida. Among these ideas are: "their opponents should choose either to follow them or to be fought and be killed"; "all the territories of their opponents are territories of Islam"; "the courts of the elites are places of *kufir* that should be fought"; "the ability to act is a state that comes before the action itself"; and "there is no end for jihad."<sup>28</sup>

Thus, al-Qa'ida mimics the 'Ibadis and uses religion for purely political gain. As emphasized by Ibn Khaldun, the spirit of fanaticism lives on in the souls of the 'Ibadis and communicates itself through them; they radically opposed their own government and revolted against it.<sup>29</sup> The 'Ibadi groups consider government, namely the imamate, to be a matter of the achievement of heroes. Heroism is always in great demand among Khariji groups. As Wilkinson put it: "The imamate becomes a highly competitive position; various tribal factions try to seize it, each claiming to champion the cause of the qualified imam."<sup>30</sup>

From the time of the first Kharijis until the time of Bin Laden, the need for hero imams has continued to predominate among all radical groups, which has led to the loss of innocent lives. The 'Ibadis believed that their leadership must be vested in an imam who combines religious and political authority. Thus, the imamate is the cornerstone of the 'Ibadis' life and creed. Due to their focus on establishing the imamate, the 'Ibadis were more interested in war than intellectual debate or the production of scholarly works. They also considered their imams to be more 'war heroes' than scholars or 'ulama.<sup>31</sup>

This trend can also be seen in modern Islamic groups, including al-Qa'ida. Indeed, al-Qa'ida is focused on war and its scholarly works are aimed at justifying war. Al-Qa'ida followers understand their actions and methods as legitimate jihad, and that the jihad will continue until the end of this world. 'Abdullah 'Azzam, one of al-Qa'ida's ideologues, wished not only to win the war against the Soviets and establish an Islamic imamate (state) in Afghanistan, but also to open another war front somewhere else

to continue their jihad and extend their state.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, al-Zawahiri, formerly al-Qa'ida's second-in-command, admitted that the jihad will never stop, but will continue to the end of this world.<sup>33</sup> In addition, al-Qa'ida's imams are, like those of the 'Ibadis, closer to war heroes than to 'ulama. The publications of al-Qa'ida are raw materials, selectively extracted to fit their ideological and political tactics. Like the 'Ibadis, al-Qa'ida has raised its leaders to the status of war heroes and imams; even Bin Laden became the crowned sheikh and leader of heroism and the imam of all imams. Bin Laden and his general, al-Zawahiri, thought of their group as the only 'Muslims,' and the rest as infidels. In this regard, the difference between the radical groups of old and those of the modern era can be reduced to one of political tactics.<sup>34</sup>

The 'Ibadis say that any Muslim who opposes *them* is an unbeliever (*kafir*), as in the following:

All those who pray in the direction of the *Ka'ba* in Mecca but oppose us are unbelievers. It is lawful to take as booty such things as their weapons and horses but nothing else. It is unlawful, however, to kill them or take them captives by a surprise attack unless the war has been declared and their unbelief has been established.<sup>35</sup>

These words mirror the theme and framework of al-Qa'ida's theology today. Establishing an Islamic state is, for al-Qa'ida, an obligatory duty for all true Muslims. To the 'Ibadis, the imamate is also obligatory as an ordinance of God to command and interdict: to enact justice and to fight the enemy. Therefore, the concept of sovereignty is very closely linked to the Islamic state that al-Qa'ida seeks to establish, and to the imamate in the case of the 'Ibadis. In either case, the situation of the state and the imamate is seen as similar, and described by the 'Ibadis as following these four stages: (a) rise (*zubur*); (b) defense (*difa*); (c) spread (*intisbar*); and (d) concealment (*kitman*).<sup>36</sup>

The first stage (rise) occurs when an imam is in office and is visible in both the religious and political spheres. This means that there must be a *visible* imam, not a *hidden* imam. During this stage, the imamate is established, the 'Ibadi laws rule the sovereign, and the community is in full control of its own affairs, free from foreign (non-'Ibadi) control. For them, non-'Ibadis are foreigners (whether Muslim or not) and ultimately unbelievers. The second stage of defense takes place when the 'Ibadi



community falls under foreign (non-'Ibadi) rule. Here their imam must mobilize the 'Ibadis against the foreigners. This is not only his religious duty, but also the duty of his office. The third stage (spread) occurs if the imam fails to mobilize the 'Ibadis, in which case the 'Ibadis are free to organize themselves into groups to fight the foreigners by any means, without an imam leading them. The fourth and final stage (concealment) eventuates if the previous three stages have failed to establish the imamate. During this stage, the 'Ibadis refer to their imamate as in the 'concealment' stage.<sup>37</sup> It is important to note that the concealment of the imamate in the 'Ibadis' view is completely different from the understanding of concealment held by the Shi'is.

To 'Ibadis, their imamate signifies the existence of their imam and their sovereignty. Thus, their concept of sovereignty expresses the existence of their imamate under their imam and symbolizes the Ibadis' collective religio-political consciousness. The indissoluble link between the existence of the imamate and sovereignty requires the imam to act as a 'hero' and a 'liberator,' rather than merely a scholar. This means that the imamate is 'a personal achievement, not a divine appointment' as in the Shi'i view. The 'Ibadis hold the belief that the imam is a 'builder' of 'cities and states' rather than a successful manifestation of 'divine justice,' as the Shi'is perceive him to be.<sup>38</sup>

#### *Toward Moderation*

The 'Ibadis were originally Kharijīs, but over time became moderate. They were relatively few in number and lived in largely remote areas. Today, the 'Ibadis live in the territories of the coastal Gulf, principally Oman, the Naffusa mountains and Zuwara provinces in Libya, the Island of Jerba in Tunisia, the Mzab valley in Algeria, and Zanzibar province on the east coast of Africa. In these areas, the 'Ibadis' religious, legal, and political traditions can be traced back directly to their earliest days in Basra. Today's largest 'Ibadi community is in the Sultanate of Oman in southeast Arabia, where the 'Ibadis form the majority of the population and 'Ibadism is the state religion.<sup>39</sup>

Wherever they dwell, the 'Ibadis have always been willing to sacrifice their lives in order to establish their imamate and express their religio-political consciousness. Therefore, they consider the Omani town of Nizwa 'the core of their Islam,' because Nizwa was always at the center of their rebellious activities and was the site where the 'Ibadi imamate

was finally established in 793. This imamate maintained power without any major resistance until the first half of the eighteenth century, when a struggle for the imamate erupted and dragged the region into a series of violent clashes that continued until the early decades of the twentieth century. These conflicts were not religiously motivated, but rather driven by political and economic factors. The economic resources that Oman had secured from its invasion of the East African coast and later from oil excavations were central to the conflict.<sup>40</sup>

These wars weakened the 'Ibadi factions. The Persians were watching them closely and ultimately captured Muscat in 1743. However, Ahmad bin Sa'id was able to liberate the 'Ibadi imamate and become its imam in 1749. He united the northern imamate with that of the south under his leadership. Sa'id then began to develop the imamate's economy from a localized pasture-grazing and agricultural model to one based on international trade. The discovery of the Cape Sea route shifted trade from the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf to the Indian Ocean. A new, more influential 'Ibadi merchant class began to emerge, which played a significant role in the imamate's politics and economy. The merchants were the political force that supported Imam Ahmad in his bid to expand the trade between his Omani imamate and India. A number of seaports on the East African coast and on the Indian coast began to grow with the obvious domination of the 'Ibadis.<sup>41</sup>

Imam Ahmad established the Bu-Sa'id dynasty, which has continued to rule over the imamate in Oman, Zanzibar, Pemba, and Kilwa in East Africa, in one form or another, to the present day. From the time of Imam Ahmad Bu-Sa'id (father of Sa'id) to the present reign of Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id, wars between 'Ibadi factions have taken place from time to time. The political authority in Muscat and the religious authority in Rustaq have been unified at times, and separated at other times. Zanzibar was also one of those areas that was dominated and ruled by the 'Ibadis until 1960 when it was finally annexed by Tanganyika, known today as Tanzania.<sup>42</sup>

The present Sultan Qaboos Bin Sa'id assumed power on 24 July 1970. As soon as he gained power, he was confronted by an insurgency but finally defeated the rebels in 1975. One of his first measures was to expand the armed forces and upgrade the military's equipment, to abolish many of the previous regimes' harsh restrictions, to offer amnesty to all opponents of the previous regimes, and to launch a major program to modernize religious perceptions.

Sultan Qaboos, although an 'Ibadi, is not the imam and is not considered the religious head of 'Ibadism. However, since his accession to power in Oman, he has launched a sustained program for the publication of major 'Ibadi works, so that it at last became possible to understand the 'Ibadis through their own traditional texts. He also began to modernize Oman's infrastructure, social programs, and government bureaucracy. The sultanate adopted a foreign policy that encouraged foreign investment, maintained ties with British and U.S. interests, and aligned itself with the moderate Arab powers.

Currently, the imamate has disappeared into the sultanate. The 'Ibadi Sheikh Ahmad bin Hamad al-Khalili is the top religious authority and Supreme Mufti of present-day Oman, and vice-president of the International Union of Muslim Scholars (INUMS). In 2004, the mufti represented his country in the Sixteenth Convention of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, which convened in Cairo during 28 April–1 May 2004. During this period, the widely read Egyptian daily *al-Abram* interviewed the mufti and asked him about many of the pressing issues of the day, including jihad, the War on Terror, the war in Iraq, and Islam and Muslim affairs in general.

In terms of jihad, the mufti outlined that jihad as referred to in the Qur'an should only be understood within the framework of "the defense against aggression. God says: *And fight in the way of God against those who fight against you but be not aggressive, Surely God loves not the aggressors*" (Qur'an 2:190).

Focusing on whether or not the resistance in Iraq is jihad, the mufti stated that "Muslims are Mujahidin as long as they are defending themselves, their country, their wealth, their property, their honour, and their dignity."

As to the issue of liberty in Islam, the mufti emphasized that freedom is not absolute but "limited to the frameworks of morals," and that "Islam permits no one to walk undressed in the street, or to be a thief who transgresses the rights of others." He continued: "Islam permits no one to transgress the sacredness of others. The freedom which transgresses the rights and the sacredness of others does not exist in Islam."

In terms of women's liberty, which has spread all over the Arab world, the mufti pointed out that humankind, whether men or women, must adhere and limit themselves to the framework of morals and virtues.

However, "liberty, which liberates man and woman from the framework of the morals and virtues, is not liberty but profligacy and this is not healthy for either man or woman."<sup>43</sup>

The mufti's words reflect the views of modern 'Ibadis. This interview took place on 19 June 2004. At that time, the women's movement in Oman was going from strength to strength, and by appointing female ministers, Oman became the only Arab country, apart from Egypt, in which a number of women occupied positions of high office.

### Hanbalism

Hanbalism refers to Ibn Hanbal's school and theory of law. He was a theologian, a major collector and critic of Hadith, a jurist, and the founder of the fourth Sunni school of law, which is today the official school of law in some countries, including Saudi Arabia and Qatar.<sup>44</sup>

When examining al-Qa'ida's ideas, scholars usually mention the writings of Ibn Hanbal (780–855) and Ibn Taymiya (1263–1328) as well as the writings of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703–92). Some of their works are regarded as being among the main early sources of the theological and intellectual discourse of the Islamic radicalism of the present era.

However, while Ibn Hanbal and Ibn Taymiya made original contributions toward formulating new jurisprudential ideas accepted by the vast majority of Muslims, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab offered a philosophical dogma accepted by only a small minority of Muslims and advocated that those who did not follow his dogma should be known as polytheists (*mushirkun*) and deserving of jihad against them. In either case, these scholars are the products of different generations, different sociopolitical contexts, and different approaches to the issues of concern. While Ibn Hanbal was alive during the time of the Abbasids, Ibn Taymiya dealt with the remnants of the Seventh Crusade, and witnessed the Eighth Crusade and the Mongol aggression. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, however, was around during the time of the Ottoman Empire and the early stages of western military expansionism in the Middle East.

Ibn Hanbal was a scholar with a taste for the concrete and the specifics of faith, and a dislike for the theoretical and abstract. He lived at a time when all of the elements of Abbasid rule (750–1258) had reached their zenith and borne fruit, whether sweet or sour. When the Abbasid caliphs came to power in Baghdad, Islam was entering its golden age. The sciences of the Qur'an and Hadith, in addition to Arabic language,

Islamic philosophy, history, physics, and other disciplines, were very well established.

Subsequently centers of learning became an intellectual marketplace for many new ideas, religious and otherwise.<sup>45</sup> This led to the emergence of groups with different views, ranging from Manichaeists to Shu'ubis, Jabaris, and others. Some of these groups had views similar to that of the radical groups of our time. For example, the Jabaris (al-Jabariya) share similarities with al-Qa'ida in interpreting the Qur'an literally, and in the view that humankind did not have free will in anything it did, and that humans, like a feather blowing in the wind, have no control over their motion—thus the human mind is seen as merely a receiver.<sup>46</sup>

It was in opposition to such 'heretics' that a movement, led by the jurist Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, emerged that encouraged Muslims to return to the Qur'an and Hadith. Ibn Hanbal devoted himself to studying these sources and the rulings based on them. However, his time and sociopolitical context did not allow his views to remain immune from distortion. Nevertheless, they continued to possess outstanding merits that paved the way for the fame he later acquired. In the words of Abu Thawr (764–854):

If anyone were to say that Ahmad Ibn Hanbal was one of the people of Paradise, he would not be rebuked for that. This is because if you went to Khurasan, you would hear the people there saying, "Ahmad Ibn Hanbal is a righteous man." The same is true if you went to Syria and Iraq. That is the consensus, so if he was to be rebuked for his opinion it would be like saying that the consensus was invalid.<sup>47</sup>

Similarly, 'Abd al-Raziq al-Sana'ani (who was from Yemen and died in 826, some twenty-four years before the death of Ibn Hanbal) stated that

I have never seen a more erudite and God-fearing person than Ahmad Ibn Hanbal. . . . Among the leading scholars of Hadith who came to Yemen from Iraq were four men. Al-Shahadhakuni (d. 849, six years before the death of Ibn Hanbal) was the best in the memorization of Hadith; Ibn al-Madini (d. 849) was the most versed in Hadith differences; Yahya ibn Ma'in (d. 847) was the most conversant on the *rijal* (the narrators of Hadith); and Ahmad ibn Hanbal was the best of them in all these disciplines.<sup>48</sup>

Ahmad ibn Hanbal was born in 780 (thirty years after the establishment of the Abbasid dynasty). He devoted himself to studying the Sunna and jurisprudence (*fiqh*). His faithful adherence to the primary sources of Islamic jurisprudence in his exegesis of the Qur'an and Hadith cleansed Islam of the heretical ideas that were attached to it at the time. He replaced what gave him doubt with what gave him certainty. His school of Islamic law became one of the four main canonical schools of Sunni Islam.

Ibn Hanbal's birth, education, and early teachings until he reached intellectual maturity all coincided with the reign of Harun al-Rashid (763–809), when the Abbasid empire reached its peak in many spheres of human endeavor, including the military, commerce, agriculture, philosophy, literature, the arts, and the sciences. The name of Harun al-Rashid was a dominant one in the global politics of the day as a symbol of higher culture and a more advanced civilization. His capital city and power base, Baghdad, had flourished into the most splendid city in the world. With its glorious centers of learning, arts, and philosophy, Baghdad surpassed Constantinople as the city without peer on earth. Schools and universities thrived, hospitals were built, and goods from every corner of the world filled its bazaars. Harun al-Rashid, who himself was a scholar, poet, and outstanding soldier, routinely rewarded artists, poets, writers, scientists, and philosophers for their talents. The people prospered along with the caliph and his court, and affluence and sophistication were in evidence everywhere.

Harun al-Rashid died in 809, taking his legacy with him. He was succeeded by his elder son al-Amin (ruled 809–813), but quarreled with his younger brother, al-Ma'mun, who wanted the top job. The tension between them worsened until there was a bloody struggle for the throne. Later, al-Amin was assassinated and replaced by al-Ma'mun.<sup>49</sup>

In 809, when al-Rashid died, Ibn Hanbal was in his thirtieth year and was widely regarded as an authority on Islamic jurisprudence. During the civil war, he collaborated closely with other scholars to protect the Islamic faith and culture from the influence of rival factions' ideas. Conversely, al-Ma'mun founded the House of Wisdom (Bayt al-Hikma), a celebrated university where Greek philosophy was translated by the empire's best minds, Muslims, Christians, and Jews. The use of philosophy to present the articles of Islamic faith gave way to the emergence of a new theology that in turn gave rise to new factions. Among the debated issues were the reality of faith; God's will and determination (*al-qada' wa-l-qadar*) in

relation to humankind's will and action; human reason and revelation; governmental authority and legitimacy; and the concept of jihad and related issues.

Other controversial issues included the 'createdness' of the Qur'an, the caliphate, the previous caliphs, and the differences between the views of scholars and those of the Prophet's Companions as well as among the Companions themselves.

Subsequently, various factors moved Ibn Hanbal to make certain statements, especially when al-Ma'mun himself attempted to compel the imams of jurisprudence and Hadith to accept his opinion, willingly or unwillingly. In 827, in the face of those hugely influential scholars, the Caliph al-Ma'mun proclaimed the doctrine that the Qur'an was created, not eternal. In 833, al-Ma'mun went a step further and issued a decree that imposed his will on the Muslim community to accept his doctrine that: (i) the Qur'an was created; (ii) after the Prophet, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib is better than the first three caliphs before him;<sup>50</sup> (iii) government employment must only be granted to those who accept this doctrine; (iv) the position of judge must only be granted to those who accept this doctrine; (v) testimony in courts is accepted only from those who believe in this doctrine; and (vi) scholars must be interrogated about their opinions concerning this doctrine, and punishment will be inflicted upon anyone who rejects it.<sup>51</sup>

When al-Ma'mun issued the order to all provinces that all scholars be questioned to ensure they subscribed to his doctrine, Ibn Hanbal refused to accede to the caliph's demand. As a man of faith, Ibn Hanbal instead issued certain statements regarding Islam, which are as true to the position of the *Salaf* (referring to the early generations of Muslims, the so-called 'Pious Predecessors') as is his jurisprudence. Al-Ma'mun persecuted Ibn Hanbal and jailed him several times.<sup>52</sup> Riots then broke out and remained until al-Ma'mun left the office to his son al-Wathiq (r. 842-47). He followed his father's directives, and left Ibn Hanbal in detention. With this in mind, the leading jurists of Baghdad visited Ibn Hanbal in detention and asked him about the legitimacy of the caliph's authority and whether they should reject his authority. Ibn Hanbal advised that they were obliged only to renounce him in their hearts but not disobey or cause civil unrest and conflict in the community.<sup>53</sup>

This position is directly opposed to al-Qa'ida's ideas and tactics, as advocated by its leaders Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri. Al-Qa'ida does

mention Ibn Hanbal in its writings in order to deceive al-Qa'ida's affiliates or followers; and not all of them are keen to search for the details of historical fact. Ibn Hanbal promotes the view that one should not overthrow the government from the top down. His legal opinion is that the jurists should keep the Muslim community united behind the government they hate most. Despite his imprisonment, Ibn Hanbal believed that neither the rulers nor anyone in their circle should be killed, and changing the regime by force was not an element of Ibn Hanbal's legacy.

When the caliph al-Wathiq learned about the jurists' meeting with Ibn Hanbal, he issued a declaration prohibiting Ibn Hanbal from seeing anyone. Yet riots did not cease and the public did not abandon Ibn Hanbal. The size of the angry crowd grew daily, as did opposition to the caliph. Judges even refused to take their seats at the bench. This situation alarmed the caliph, as all his measures failed to quell public anger. The caliph put a number of people, including jurist rioters, to their deaths, and their heads were displayed in different cities. Fearing the unrest and the possibility of popular rebellion, al-Wathiq decided to free Ibn Hanbal and send him away from Baghdad. The caliph's message was that "you should go to live wherever you like, but not in the city where the caliph lives."<sup>54</sup>

Ibn Hanbal left at once, but a few months later al-Mutawakkil came to power, in 847. The caliph al-Mutawakkil dismantled al-Ma'mun's doctrine, removed all restrictions imposed on Ibn Hanbal, and sent out for his return. Ibn Hanbal returned to Baghdad and resumed his lectures. He was also invited to the palace to teach the royal family, including the caliph's son al-Mu'tazz, the future caliph. Ibn Hanbal enjoyed the rest of his life as a celebrity in the highest echelons of government and was guaranteed independence of thought.

In the context of al-Qa'ida's theology, Ibn Hanbal's views on faith and law are critical. His political view is based in his understanding of faith, as he says:

Faith is word and deed. It increases when you do good and decreases when you do evil. A man [ruler or ruled] can leave the faith but remain within the fold of Islam. He is only removed from Islam if he associates partners with God or rejects one of His ordinances. If he abandoned them through ignorance or laziness, in either case, he is subjected to God's will that He may punish or may pardon him.<sup>55</sup>

This view is directly opposed to that of al-Qa'ida and similar groups of the modern era. It reflects Ibn Hanbal's adherence to the notion of freedom of belief. While this view is seen as traditionalist by some, it can also be seen as pragmatic by others. If one considers Ibn Hanbal's position through the prism of the Companions, Ibn Hanbal is then a traditionalist or a fundamentalist. Yet this fundamentalism is not opposed to human reason and is not outside the scope of rationality. If one considers his view from the perspective of the freedom to practice one's faith, he appears pragmatic, and there are illustrations of this on many pressing and sensitive issues including the issue of *takfir* (unbelief) in the quotation above.

Ibn Hanbal's pragmatism is also evident in his political views on the caliph and caliphate, and how the caliph should be chosen. Regarding these matters, Ibn Hanbal avoided sedition and civil disobedience. He did not approve of treason or the change of government by force. Ibn Hanbal strove for the unity of the community and preferred to obey the ruler, even if the ruler was unjust. To Ibn Hanbal, rebellion against the ruler is a rebellion against the community.<sup>56</sup> His view on all of these sensitive issues is in direct opposition to that of al-Qa'ida's ideologues, including Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri, as will be detailed in subsequent chapters.

By the middle of the ninth century (855), Ibn Hanbal had died but his legacy had spread across Arabia, Damascus, Khurasan, Egypt, and other Islamic centers and territories. It is, however, important to note that the original legacy and the heritage of Ibn Hanbal, which played a significant role in the history of Baghdad, came to "acquire notoriety as a troublemaker through the exploits of Barbahari (d. 329/941)."<sup>57</sup>

### After Ibn Hanbal

Ibn Hanbal left his legacy to the pens of scholars of varying interests and political inclinations located within a range of political environments, from Iraq to Arabia, Egypt, Damascus, and Khurasan. As Ignaz Goldziher emphasizes, the school of Ibn Hanbal went on "an evolution from an *ecclesia pressa* to an *ecclesia militans*, with a penchant for 'fanatical terrorism.'"<sup>58</sup> Examples of this are numerous, including that of al-Barbahari, which well illustrates the point. Al-Barbahari became a powerful Hanbali scholar with a number of followers in Baghdad. The followers' response to al-Barbahari, as Ibn Abi Ya'la (d. 1131) says, "drew the attention of the Caliph." Portraying al-Barbahari's influence on his followers, Ibn Abi Ya'la noted the sad contrast between this Hanbali generation of

al-Barbahari and Ibn Hanbal, "the faithful master who never liked to be followed by anyone, even on the street."<sup>59</sup>

Al-Barbahari took Ibn Hanbal's thought to the extreme. For example, al-Barbahari asserted that on the day of resurrection God would place the Prophet Muhammad beside Him on the Throne,<sup>60</sup> a dogma that had not been mentioned by Ibn Hanbal, nor had he elevated the Prophet to the status of divine Throne. The eminent historian al-Tabari (838–922) took issue with these new Hanbalis on this matter. When al-Tabari died, his burial had to take place at night to avoid the Hanbalis, led by al-Barbahari, disturbing his funeral, for they accused him of being a rejectionist (*rafidi*)<sup>61</sup>—a charge that is used by al-Qa'ida today against its Muslim opponents (both rulers and ruled). In this regard, al-Qa'ida's idea of rejectionism is not taken from Ibn Hanbal but from al-Barbahari, who himself borrowed the idea from the Khariji rejectionist group, al-Rafida.

Al-Barbahari and his followers zealously took the law into their own hands and persecuted those who rejected their views. The accounts of their radical activity are innumerable.<sup>62</sup> They harassed and assaulted their opponents, raided shops and homes in search of liquor and musical instruments, and surveilled men and women seen walking together in public. The activity of these militants alarmed the authorities, and it appears that the police also made a good number of arrests. The caliph warned al-Barbahari that they would be faced with "fire and sword" if they did not put an end to their fanaticism. They were also prohibited from holding meetings—not even two followers were allowed to meet together in one place at any one time.<sup>63</sup>

This new Hanbali generation imposed on Ibn Hanbal's legacy rules that he had not created, and of which he had never approved. While his school, for instance, was on good terms with the caliphate and its authority, some of the later Hanbalis came close to crossing the line into outright conflict with caliphal authority. Ibn Hanbal's teachings stood for unhesitating obedience to the ruler, except in disobedience to God. He was neither an active opponent of the caliphs nor a loyalist pledged to their support, and he never instigated social disobedience. The later Hanbalis' exploitation and violence occasionally "erode[d] the foundations of Ibn Hanbal's political politics."<sup>64</sup>

The Hanbalis' fanatical activism continued until the fall of the Abbasid caliphate at the hands of the invading Mongols (Tartars) in 1258, who destroyed Baghdad.<sup>65</sup> Thereafter, the Hanbali influence shifted

to Damascus. Their number was small and the state ensured that their thought remained insignificant. It was not until the Ayyubid state (1171–1250) that the Hanbalis' influence increased and gradually they began to win positions in the offices of state.

The Hanbali influence extended with the advent of the Mamluks who took over the Ayyubid state. The Mamluk state (1250–1517) adopted a tolerant policy toward the Hanbalis and appointed their judge, for the first time, in Damascus. Generally, salaried appointments in institutions of learning became a popular role for Hanbali scholars.<sup>66</sup>

Subsequently, the Hanbalis became increasingly visible. 'Abd al-Ghani al-Maqdisi (d. 1203) was a prominent Hanbali scholar who would not hesitate to take the law into his own hands. He clashed with al-Malik al-'Adil (who ruled Egypt from 1200 to 1218), and stood against practices that he regarded as evil.

Thus, the Hanbali influence was always of a piece with the level of their involvement in society. One of the Hanbali scholars who fitted well into the political arena was Ahmad Ibn 'Abd al-Halim ibn Taymiya (1263–1328).

### **Ibn Taymiya and the Concept of Jihad**

Ibn Taymiya was a celebrated scholar and a legendary figure who gained considerable prominence, much like Ibn Hanbal. If we consider his stand against outside invaders, his stand against the Mamluk kings, his enduring popularity, and his contribution to the military activity of his time, one finds that all are indicative of an eminent scholar of outstanding character whose fame also earned him jealous enemies.<sup>67</sup>

Ibn Taymiya was born in Haran, a city in northern Syria, which had a strategic location and a great history. It was located at a central point along the highways between Damascus, Edessa, and Raqqa in northern Syria, awarding it strategic value from an early date. The Bible tells us that Haran was named after Abraham's paternal uncle, Haran. The Bible also indicates that Haran was the city to which Abraham (Ibrahim) migrated with his wife Sarah, his father Terah (Tarih), and his nephew Lot. It was also the city where Abraham's father Terah died and was buried.<sup>68</sup> In Hebrews 11:8 and in Genesis 12:1, Haran was the city where Abraham received the revelation. Thus, Haran had a special significance for travelers, a significance underscored by the fact that Haran bore a unique relationship to the city of Ur, the birthplace of Abraham in

Babylon (in Iraq). Haran was also among the territories of the purely Arab tribes of Mudar, and later hosted the seat of the caliphate and its centers for education, translation, and intercultural dialogue. Haran retained its importance during the periods of the Umayyads, the Abbasids, the Ayyubids, the Crusaders, and finally the Mongols.

It was in Haran that Ibn Taymiya was born to a Hanbali scholarly family in 1263, five years after the fall of the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad at the hands of the Mongols in 1258. In 1260, three years before his birth, Sultan Qutuz defeated the Mongols at 'Ayn Jalut.<sup>69</sup> However, the invaders, whether Crusaders or Mongols, kept coming back, despite being defeated several times. Ibn Taymiya saw the glory of the Abbasid caliphate crumbling under the Crusades and the Mongol aggression. The Muslims had had no caliph since the fall of Baghdad. Aleppo, Hama, and Homs (the burial place of General Khalid ibn al-Walid, who never lost a battle) were under attack. In 1269, wars destroyed the city of Haran. Ibn Taymiya's family took their six-year-old son and left to settle in Damascus. They abandoned their property but managed to take some of their books.<sup>70</sup>

The fall of Baghdad at the hands of the Mongols in 1258 was also the time when the Mamluks came to power in Egypt and began to consolidate their rule over Damascus and Arabia. In the midst of this political and social upheaval, religious movements spread ideas and practices not condoned by Islam. It was in this context that Ibn Taymiya formulated his views on the causes of the weakness of the Muslims and on the need to return to the Qur'an and the Sunna as the only means of revival.<sup>71</sup>

He structured his ideology on the basis of scholarly combinations of legitimate schools of thought, including the Maliki, the Hanafi, the Shafi'i, and the Hanbali schools of jurisprudence.<sup>72</sup> This comparative approach enabled Ibn Taymiya to cultivate and accommodate certain tendencies within the thought of his predecessors and to develop their ideas further. He produced a large number of works that strongly confirmed his mastery over the sciences of Arabic lexicology, logic, rhetoric, criticism, philosophy, theology, Hadith, and jurisprudence.<sup>73</sup>

Ibn Taymiya found himself assuming the role of a sociopolitical reformer, working in several spheres. He analyzed and exposed the reasons behind the weakness and instability of Muslim society. He developed a political and ideological legacy by locating the roots of Islamic revivalism in contemporary political processes and associated events. He provided a

systematically focused and balanced explanation of theological, political, and social issues related to a variety of complex events associated with the Crusades and the Mongol invasions and their brutal influence on the caliphate and Muslim society.<sup>74</sup>

The violence of the Crusades and Mongols urged Ibn Taymiya to call upon his contemporary rulers to help rebuild a strong and enlightened nation, and to reform various sectors of society and the polity, including prevailing cultural and intellectual institutions. He considered the defects in the governmental, educational, cultural, and moral spheres as causes for the weakness of the Muslim community at the time.<sup>75</sup>

The Mongols referred to themselves as Muslims during this period, as a tactical maneuver to strengthen their rule—but this tactic did not convince people like Ibn Taymiya. He proved that the Mongols were invaders who used religion only as a means to divide and conquer. The Mongols did not implement the shari‘a, but implemented their Manichaeen law called *Yasa*, or in Arabic *al-Yasiq*. This law was a compound of the Mongols’ various tribal beliefs and philosophies, and based on it, they not only destroyed all Islamic books found in Baghdad, but also burned Baghdad, Damascus, Aleppo, and Haran to the ground, and did not differentiate between soldiers and civilians, women, children, and elderly people. Ibn Taymiya viewed this behavior as that of invaders, and therefore declared that jihad against them was legitimate.

Religion is often used tactically for political gain. When Napoleon came to Egypt, he adopted the Mongols’ tactics and identified himself as a Muslim; he even dressed as a Muslim, appeared in public squares, and visited al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo with a large Taliban-style turban on his head. After his visit, the ‘Grand Imam Napoleon,’ as he was referred to in Egypt’s *Rose al-Youssef* magazine, permitted his horses to enter al-Azhar Mosque, and ordered his artilleries to destroy al-Azhar in Cairo. Like his Mongol pioneers in Iraq and Syria, Napoleon came to Egypt with both public and private motives. In public, Napoleon, in the words of Rodenbeck, came “as a servant of Allah and of the Ottoman Sultan. His mission was to punish the wicked Mamluks and secure Egypt from their grasp. In private of course, there were other more practical reasons: the economic potential of Egypt and the weakness of its Ottoman masters, Napoleon’s megalomania and his romantic visions of the East, and his wish to threaten Britain’s hold in India.”<sup>76</sup> Thus, the ‘Grand Imam Napoleon’ used religion for political gain.<sup>77</sup>

Muslims from the extreme right to the extreme left viewed the Mongols’ faith as corrupt. It was through the prism of this consensus that Ibn Taymiya saw the potential of the Muslim community and believed that victory does not come from debating theological matters. Victory comes from the community’s return to the Qur’an and the Sunna, to unify its forces and to stand firm in jihad to liberate the country from invaders. It was to this idea and its underlying framework that Ibn Taymiya dedicated himself and he campaigned tirelessly to put his theories into practice in society.

On the issue of defense and security, he provided sharp and focused ideas. He did not vacillate about adopting jihad and fighting against the invaders, and urged his fellow Muslims to sacrifice their lives in order to liberate and protect their country.<sup>78</sup> Consequently, Ibn Taymiya’s concept of jihad was a reflection of his time. It was not only Ibn Taymiya who focused on jihad in Damascus: when the Abbasid caliph Ahmad ibn al-Imam al-Zahir moved the seat of the caliphate to Cairo, his first speech also focused on jihad. He emphasized the aggression of the invaders, their brutal activities, and their destruction of the cities and of peoples’ livelihoods. The caliph urged the people to use jihad to defend themselves, their property, and their country. Conversely, he urged scholars to embark on *ijtihad* (legal reasoning) and to do their best to promote and revive the jihad as a Muslim duty, an obligation of every able Muslim to liberate the country. In this context, the caliph said:

O people, you should know that the jihad is necessary in human life, and that the knowledge about jihad cannot certainly stand without the consensus of the people. Gross violations were committed against every sacred and inviolable truth in our land. If you have seen the enemy when they entered our land; when they deemed lawful, human blood and properties; when they killed our elders and babies; when they captured the boys with the girls and killed the parents with their progeny; when they violated the honor of women and the honor of the caliphate in the lands and the seas; when the fearful cries raised to the high skies from the pains of suffering and blaze. O, slaves of God, tuck up to the hand of *ijtihad* and revive the duty of jihad.<sup>79</sup>

The caliph’s words reflect the theme and framework of Ibn Taymiya’s concept of jihad and even his own active involvement in the jihad against the Mongols.

As for the issue of jihad, I have explored this notion and its qualifications in some detail in previous publications,<sup>80</sup> and further discussion on jihad is presented in later chapters of this book. In this section, however, the focus is on jihad as observed by Ibn Taymiya. The difference between his view and that of al-Qa'ida will also be outlined.

Based on the Qur'an and the Sunna, Ibn Taymiya called upon his community for jihad against aggression. To him, every Muslim can carry out jihad to liberate his/her country. Hence, he authorized everyone in society with the sword of jihad, so that farming was the sword of the farmer, medicine was the sword of physicians, production was the sword of factory workers, and knowledge was the sword of school and university teachers. This indicates that Ibn Taymiya considered jihad the defensive duty of every able Muslim, and that it could take varying shapes and forms. It could take the form of warring, spying, educating, writing, advising, transmitting, security, farming, medicine, food production, transporting, embargoing, interpreting, and other non-physical conflict. It could take the form of a cold war, a war of words, or psychological warfare, and it could take the form of persuasion.<sup>81</sup>

Thus, Ibn Taymiya's concept of jihad was clearly different from that of al-Qa'ida, which considers jihad to refer only to physical hostilities, characterized mainly by suicide bombing, killing civilians, destroying property, kidnapping civilians for ransom, and stealing money and personal property to finance jihad. These are crimes and not the jihad approved by Ibn Taymiya.

Ibn Taymiya divided the penalties decreed in Islamic law into two categories: penalties to be executed on person(s) completely subjugated to the ruler; and penalties to be executed on those rebellious individuals or groups who cannot be subjugated except through fighting or force. He classified jihad as part of the latter category. To him, if the country is attacked, jihad becomes an urgent duty for Muslims to defend themselves, their honor, their property, and their country. Based on the Qur'an, which declared, *Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits* (2:190), *[a]nd fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression* (Qur'an 8:39), Ibn Taymiya considered jihad a defensive duty against aggression.<sup>82</sup>

With reference to the destruction of Baghdad and Damascus, Ibn Taymiya emphasized that any able Muslims summoned to defend their country, who refused to do so, should be regarded as rebels, to be fought against until there was no more civil discord. He stressed that if the people

do not defend their life and property, there will be no one to defend them. Since jihad was lawful warfare against aggression, then anyone who refused jihad would be considered a rebel against their country, their government, and their army, and should be fought—a view that is agreed upon by all Muslims. At any rate, those who do not defend their property and country are those who will suffer the negative consequences of their apathy and infidelity. He supported his view with reference to the following Hadith: "If the guilt was kept secret, it would be injurious only to its author; but when it is made public—and no one combats it—then it would be injurious to the community at large."<sup>83</sup>

#### *Who is the Enemy?*

As for those who should be fought, Ibn Taymiya distinguished between the People of the Book and others who do not have a revealed book or scriptures. He defined the People of the Book as the Jews and Christians, but named those who have received no scriptures "unbelievers." In either case, he emphasized that Muslims should only fight aggressors, and that jihad is not decreed in order to be used against everyone, but only against aggression. He stated:

We should fight those who fight us. *God said: And fight in the way of God against those who fight against you but be not aggressive, Surely God loves not the aggressors* (Qur'an 2:190). The Prophet also said: "Kill neither a *dhuriya* (women, children, and the handicapped) nor an *asif* (hireling)."<sup>84</sup>

As for 'the People of the Book,' Ibn Taymiya further states: "They should be fought only for the violation of the terms of the treaties concluded with them, not because they are non-Muslims, until they embrace Islam or until they pay the tribute."<sup>85</sup>

This is the core of the concept of jihad in Ibn Taymiya's thought. From where, then, does al-Qa'ida's concept of jihad against the Jews and Crusaders originate? Its lack of origins in the Qur'an confirms that al-Qa'ida is seeking to deceive its audiences and followers, especially when using Ibn Taymiya or Ibn Hanbal as a point of reference. Al-Qa'ida has paraphrased the views of Ibn Taymiya and Ibn Hanbal to suit its own political ends. Both Ibn Taymiya and Ibn Hanbal excluded non-combatants from intentional harm,<sup>86</sup> but al-Qa'ida has included



them (women, children, men of religion, the elderly, the permanently disabled, and those who are not able to hold defensive or offensive power).

There is strong juridical support for the argument that the practices of the Prophet and his policy on war were based on the basic attitude of defense, and not offense. According to a number of classical works, the precedents of the Prophet do not support wars of aggression.<sup>87</sup> The Prophet and his followers were persecuted severely for many years, while there was no order to fight back. His followers asked for his permission to fight, but he rejected their calls because there was as yet no higher order. It was not until the higher order permitted them to defend themselves that the Battle of Badr in 624 occurred. Thus, jihad of aggression is supported by neither the Qur'an nor the Prophet.

It is well known that the Prophet did not fight foreign wars, except on two occasions: once when he was compelled to do so because of the assassination of his envoy to the court of Busra; and the second when he invaded Tabuk as a defensive measure to counter an overwhelming and immediate danger of attack by the Byzantine emperor.<sup>88</sup>

History is also on Ibn Taymiya's side in confirming that jihad is solely a defensive duty. For example, he referred to the defense of Medina against the blockade made by Quraysh to take over the city, stating that "God permitted none to abandon the jihad to defend Medina, although he did permit them not to pursue the enemy after the siege was raised."<sup>89</sup>

Defending Medina was jihad, or as Ibn Taymiya put it, "jihad to defend the country, the religion, the family, and the lives of community." This "defense type" is what "duty permitted to do" and "this is obligatory. However, to hunt or pursue the enemy after their siege around Medina has been left was not permitted."<sup>90</sup> Thus, Ibn Taymiya's concept of jihad is clearly different from that of al-Qa'ida, which involves attacking civilians and destroying property beyond the oasis and seas. Hence, references to Ibn Taymiya in al-Qa'ida's literature should be evaluated carefully and within the appropriate context.

Turning to the caliphate's internal affairs during the wars against the invaders, Ibn Taymiya focused on the rebellions and pointed out the jurists' variant views on the matter. He noted that the rebels were those Muslims who did not follow or submit to the rule of law and its establishments and institutions. At that time, the rule was the rule of the shari'a law. Ibn Taymiya here refers to the fundamentals, which are both explicit and general and include prayer, *zakat* (tax), fasting, and others. Ibn Taymiya described how

the jurists agreed that he or she who neglects the fundamentals should be brought to justice and dealt with according to the law. If he or she agrees to abide by these duties and prohibitions, charges against him or her should be dropped. If a rebel initiates a fight or attack (like al-Qa'ida and similar groups), fighting him becomes an urgent duty. Ibn Taymiya considers the Kharijis and similar warring factions to be lawbreakers who should be fought unless they submit to the law and its institutions.<sup>91</sup>

Ibn Taymiya's influence on al-Qa'ida's ideologues should also be considered within the appropriate context. Ibn Taymiya has influenced scholars in various disciplines, both of his own and of later generations. According to Chamberlain, during his time Ibn Taymiya's influence illustrated his versatility and capacity to work in any environment.<sup>92</sup> He was the man of the people and the mind of the state. He developed a strong relationship with King al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qalawun (d. 1341), who came to power three times. A group of his students, including al-Amir Zayn al-Din Katabagha al-'Adili (d. 1321), Sayf al-Din Buraq (d. 1356), and Salih al-Din al-Takriti (d. 1341), were from the ruling elite and were devoted to his teachings. Other supporters, such as Fakhr al-Din al-Sa'igh (d. 1341), were judges.<sup>93</sup> The eminent scholars al-Dhahabi (d. 1348) and Ibn Kathir (d. 1372) were Shafi'i scholars who were influenced by Ibn Taymiya. In addition to their mastery of the Arabic language and literature, they were prominent imams, head of Hadith masters, perspicacious critics and expert examiners of Hadith, encyclopedic historians and biographers, and foremost authorities on the canonical readings of the Qur'an. If these were Shafi'i scholars, others like Imam Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350) and Ibn Muflih, the judge of Damascus and its ambassador to Tamerlane in 1400, were Hanbali scholars.<sup>94</sup> Al-Zar'i was an eminent Asha'irite scholar, while al-Tufi (1361) claimed to be Shi'i, but both studied under Ibn Taymiya.<sup>95</sup> Despite the differences in their interests and backgrounds, these scholars were all influenced by Ibn Taymiya's creed and the clarity of his approach and thought.

The influence of Ibn Taymiya was widely felt among members of his own generation and those that followed, including ours. The following examples of those who have shared his influence involve a number of the leading Hanbali scholars of their times. They were selected from different generations only to illustrate the unbroken chain of transmission: al-Mizzi (d. 1341), al-Dhahabi (1347), Ibn al-Qaiyyim (d. 1350), Ibn Kathir (d. 1373), Ibn Abi al-'Izz (d. 1390), al-Jura'i (d. 1478), Ibn Muflih (d. 1479),

al-Mardawi (d. 1480), al-Hajjawi (d. 1561), al-Futuhi (d. 1564), al-Karmi (d. 1624), al-Buhuti (d. 1641), and Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792).

Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab revised his Wahhabist tract, which influenced later scholars, including the Saudi scholars al-Sa'di (d. 1956) and Ibn 'Uthaymin (1928–2000). Later, al-Qa'ida scholars and ideologues such as 'Abdullah 'Azzam, Dr. Fadl, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah al-Mas'ari, al-Maqdisi, and Abu Bakr Naji consulted those earlier scholars, reappropriated views and rulings, and applied them to different environments and different contexts, as will be detailed in the subsequent chapters.

It is imperative to note that the extent of Ibn Taymiya's influence differs from one scholar to another. Indeed, citation of Ibn Taymiya's opinions by scholars does not necessarily mean they were influenced by or agree with them. For example, some Hanbali scholars like Ibn al-Qayyim, who was inseparable from Ibn Taymiya, and later, al-Sa'di, do not cite a great deal from the writings of their master Ibn Taymiya, but they were clearly influenced by him. Other scholars such as Ibn Muffih and al-Mardawi cite a great deal of Ibn Taymiya's opinions without evidence of much impact on their own jurisprudential opinions. Some scholars, therefore, were more profoundly influenced than others by his overall methodology. In this regard, the influence of Ibn Taymiya on Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab is significant, but this does not necessarily indicate that Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab followed Ibn Taymiya or Ibn Hanbal. We know that Ibn Taymiya rejected many rulings attributed to Ibn Hanbal as false. Conversely, there are many accounts indicating that Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab subscribed to certain opinions with which Ibn Taymiya disagreed.

### Wahhabism

Wahhabism has achieved great momentum in contemporary Islam, particularly in terms of its connotations of violence and terrorism. However, the Saudis claim that the core of Wahhabism is purification, while some critics of Wahhabism have argued that religious purification is used as a prescription for the present Islamic radicalism. The former Saudi ambassador in London emphasized that "from our view in the Saudi kingdom, there is nothing called Wahhabism."<sup>96</sup>

In the aftermath of September 11, the U.S. authorities outlawed a number of Saudi charity associations and criticized some segments of the curricula taught in Saudi schools. In this regard, the Saudi authorities

said that they have revised the list of books taught in their schools. This, however, did not convince their education official, Hasan al-Maliki, who rejected their claim and said "they teach to the students that whoever differs from the Wahhabi interpretation is either a *kafir* or a deviated person who must repent or be killed."<sup>97</sup>

The Saudi kingdom cooperated with the U.S. in financing the war or jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan and trained the jihadists there. Afghanistan then became the pot into which jihadist groups of varying colors melted together to produce a new movement called al-Qa'ida. Al-Qa'ida is a transnational network whose ideological framework is formulated by ideologues from varying cultural backgrounds, with Wahhabism as the indisputably leading ideology. Hence, "the genie had emerged from the bottle and those who are concerned could not put it back in."<sup>98</sup>

Wahhabism refers to the ideology and the movement founded by the Saudi scholar Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703–92). His scholarship is widely considered as an important root of fundamentalism in the modern age. During his time, most of the Arab territories formed parts of the Ottoman Empire (1300–1924). The Ottomans were Muslims and stood for Islam, not as the *salaf* (ancestors) were supposed to have conceived it, but as it had developed over those centuries of disputed ideas.<sup>99</sup> Accordingly, the Wahhabi movement, launched in central Arabia, aimed to bring purity to religion. The legacy of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab has since been encapsulated in the term 'Wahhabism.' The followers of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab consider Wahhabism to be a term coined by their enemies to connote their deviation from mainstream Islam.

The teachings of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab came under the spotlight after the terrorist events of September 11, 2001. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's teaching is new to some, but for others it is not. In addition, there are some who can see a similarity between the pattern of action of the Wahhabis and that of modern radical groups such as al-Qa'ida. As the majority of the perpetrators of September 11 were Saudi nationals, who were born and educated in Saudi Arabia, Wahhabism became one of the pressing issues of concern. Bin Laden, the former leader of al-Qa'ida, was himself a wealthy Saudi national who was born and educated in Saudi Arabia. These facts led some to consider the influence of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's teachings on Bin Laden, while others considered Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab to be the godfather of Bin Laden.

Hence, Wahhabism has been criticized by its opponents as the intolerant and puritanical ideology that influenced Bin Laden and his conspirators and provided some Muslims with the ideological and intellectual tools to express their anger and hatred. Conversely, Wahhabism is considered by its adherents (Wahhabis) to be one of the main Islamic schools of thought, and they view Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab as one of the most prominent Muslim reformers of his time. Wahhabis have always referred to their master, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, with titles such as 'imam' (political and religious leader), 'Sheikh al-Islam' (religious authority), and '*mujaddid*' (renewer or restorer). In the words of a Wahhabi, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab is "Sheikh al-Islam [and] a renowned religious scholar and a great reformer of his time."<sup>100</sup> It is in the context of these connotations that Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's grandson sees Wahhabism as the only "true Islam," and the non-Wahhabi others as not true Muslims.<sup>101</sup>

Wahhabism, like 'Ibadism, is among those unique Islamic movements that incorporated some specific elements of the Khariji and Hanbali ideas, embodied in the thought of Ibn Taymiya, into modern Islamic movements, including al-Qa'ida networks. It is difficult to believe that modern Islamic movements were born out of a vacuum. In other words, modern Islamic movements constitute a rebirth and thus an extension of historical Islamic ideologies, which were embodied in such Islamic movements as those of the Kharijis, the 'Ibadis, the Hanbalis, and the Wahhabis. The Wahhabi movement is an inseparable link in the chain of Islamic movements that connect medieval to modern Islamic thought.

Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab was born in al-'Uyayna, a town located at al-Yamama in the province of Najd, seventy kilometers northwest of Riyadh, the capital city of today's Saudi Arabia. His brother was a Hanbali scholar and his father was a Hanbali judge, who exercised his rulings based on the Hanbali school of jurisprudence. The School of Ibn Hanbal (780–855), previously discussed, was prominent in the Najd area during the time of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab. He studied first with his father and then moved to the centers of learning in the surrounding territories. He visited Mecca, Zubayr, Ahsa, and Medina, spending four years in each. He then traveled to the centers of Basra, Kufa, and Baghdad (all in modern-day Iraq). Whether or not 'Abd al-Wahhab visited Damascus is still in dispute, but Wahhabi opinion dictates that he

proceeded from Damascus to study philosophy in Hamadan, Qum, and Isfahan (in Iran).<sup>102</sup>

While in Basra, the young Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab fell under the influence of an undercover British spy nicknamed 'Humphrey' who was one of many spies (such as George Belcoud and Henry Fansie) sent by London to the Arab countries to destabilize the Ottoman Empire. Humphrey is referred to by numerous authors as the man who inspired Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab and shaped his extreme tenets of Wahhabism.<sup>103</sup> In its colonies, Britain usually followed the strategy of divide and conquer—that is, the fostering of diverse groups or sects and encouraging them to stand against each other, so that colonial Britain might exploit such divisions to dominate colonized peoples. Humphrey learned to speak Turkish and some Arabic while in London. Before receiving the order for the Basra assignment, he was sent to Istanbul and, as he said, "pretended to be [a] Muslim" named "Muhammad," and came "to work in Turkey and to live in the shadow of the caliphate, the representative of the Prophet Muhammad. Indeed, this was the pretext I used to stay in Istanbul."<sup>104</sup>

During his two-year stay in Istanbul, Humphrey worked as a carpenter and learned Arabic, and studied the Qur'an and Hadith under the tutelage of a scholar called Ahmad Effendi. Humphrey related:

One day I said to Ahmad Effendi, my parents are dead. I do not have any brothers or sisters, and I have not inherited any property. I came to the centre of Islam to work for a living and to learn the Holy Qur'an and the Sunna, that is, to earn both my worldly needs and my life in the Hereafter. He was delighted with the words of mine, and said: "You deserve to be respected for these three reasons."<sup>105</sup>

Humphrey stated that he used to send his "reports" of "observation monthly to the Ministry of Colonies" in London. After returning to London, Humphrey was once again assigned to serve his country, this time from Basra. Among the aims of Humphrey's mission in Basra, as he later revealed, was "to discover the Muslims' weak points and the points through which we can enter their bodies and disjoin their limbs. Indeed this is the way to beat the enemy."<sup>106</sup> With these colonial tactics, the British hoped to pit the Arabs against the Turks. The British knew, as explained by Humphrey, that religion is useful and that Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab was an easy target. In his memoir, Humphrey stated:

One day, in the Ministry of Colonies, I made a conference to the difference between the Sunnis and the Shiites, saying, if Muslims knew something about life, they would resolve this Shiite-Sunni difference among themselves and come together. Someone interrupted me and remonstrated, "Your duty is to provoke this difference, not to think of how to bring Muslims together."<sup>107</sup>

In Basra, Humphrey used all the information he had already collected about Istanbul, the names of his teachers, the name of the mosque where he used to pray, and the name of the mosque's imam. Deploying his skills as a spy, his ability to speak both Turkish and Arabic, his knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith, and of some Islamic and Arabic traditions, Humphrey, as he said, "managed to survive" when he was "subjected" to a "shower of questions." In Basra, he had to show the Basrans that he was a Muslim from Istanbul who prayed in that mosque behind that imam, and show them that he had knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith. He then began to go to the mosque and pray with them. The Basrans believed him, although he had no passport or any other form of identification. He then worked as an "assistant to a carpenter" and lived in a room rented from a Mr. Murshid Effendi, before moving to live at his workplace, which was owned by a "Mr Abd-ur-Rida, a Shiite from Khorassan, Iran." Humphrey took advantage of his "company" with Abd-ur-Rida, and began to "learn Persian." The workplace, owned by Abd-ur-Rida, was the place where "the Shiites would meet and talk on various subjects from politics to economy."<sup>108</sup> It was at Abd-ur-Rida's place that Humphrey met the young Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab and a relationship between them began. In this regard, Humphrey says:

From time to time a young man would call at our carpenter's shop. His attirement was that of a student doing scientific research, and he understood Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. His name was Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Najdi [from the Najd area]. This youngster was an extremely rude and very nervous person. While abusing the Ottoman government very much, he would never speak ill of the Iranian government. The common ground that made him and the shop-owner Abd-ur-Rida so friendly was that both were inimical toward the caliphate in Istanbul. But how was it possible that this

young man, who was a Sunni, understood Persian and was friends with Abd-ur-Rida, who was a Shiite? In this city Sunnis pretended to be friendly and even brotherly with Shiites. Most of the city's inhabitants understood both Arabic and Persian. And most people understood Turkish as well.<sup>109</sup>

Humphrey found in Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab the qualities of the person that he was looking for. In the words of Humphrey: "Muhammad of Najd was the sort I had been looking for. For his scorn for the time's scholars, his slighting even the (earliest) four Caliphs, his having an independent view in understanding the Qur'an and the Sunna were his most vulnerable points to hunt and obtain him."<sup>110</sup>

Humphrey then "established a very intimate friendship with Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab" and they became "brothers." In connection to this, Humphrey once said to Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab:

I have heard that the Prophet made his companions (*ashab*) brothers to one another. Upon his positive reply, I wanted to know if this Islamic rule is temporary or permanent. He explained, "It is permanent." Then I offered him to be my brother. So, we were brothers. From that day on, I never left him alone. We were together even in his travels—I was sending monthly reports to the Ministry of Colonies in London. The answers I received were very encouraging and reassuring. Muhammad of Najd was following the path I had drawn for him.<sup>111</sup>

During their travels, Humphrey showered Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab with money and other pleasant and luxurious gifts. He found Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab to be "a Sunni outwardly" who was also of the view that "there was no reason for Sunnis to adapt themselves to one of the four *madbhabs* (schools of thought). Allah's Book does not contain any evidence pertaining to these *madbhabs*."<sup>112</sup> Acting as a good, practicing Muslim, Humphrey claimed that he was able to convince Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab that he was the only one who understood Islam correctly, as the Prophet Muhammad had understood it. He also convinced Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab that the Prophet loved him. Humphrey said that he told Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab about his dream. In Humphrey's own words (translated from the Turkish):

One day I fabricated the following dream: Last night I dreamed of our Prophet. I addressed him with the attributes I had learned. He was seated on a dais and around him were scholars that I did not know. You [pointing at Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab] entered. Your face was as bright as halos; you walked toward the Prophet, and when you were close enough, the Prophet stood up and kissed you between your both eyes. He [the Prophet] said, "You [Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab] are my namesake, the heir to my knowledge, my deputy in worldly and religious matters." You said, "O Messenger of Allah! I am afraid to explain my knowledge to people." "You are the greatest. Don't be afraid," replied the Prophet. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab was wild with joy when he heard the dream—He was sure I had told him the truth. I think, from then on, he was resolved to publicize the ideas I had imbued him with and to establish a new sect.<sup>113</sup>

Subsequently, Humphrey attempted to explain his dream by viewing it in the context of the idea that Muslims are ignorantly on the "wrong side" of the teaching of the Prophet. Therefore, on this account, Muslims are weak and currently on the "decline" while Christians are "gaining ascendancy." Muslims have gone "astray" and must come "back" or be "fought" and "killed" because they are no longer Muslims.<sup>114</sup>

The question of Britain's interaction with the Ottoman Empire in general, and with Wahhabism in particular, can be gleaned from today's Internet technology. One need only type in a few key words or phrases, such as 'British and Wahhabism,' on any search engine to find an answer. Many websites point to the British influence on the rise of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab and Wahhabism, similar to the question of who created Bin Laden and introduced him and his jihadism onto the world stage, and to the question of who 'made' Khomeini and Saddam Hussein. One might also ask who encouraged certain religious factions to oppose each other, as is the case in many scenarios involving conflict currently taking place in Iraqi towns and cities, from Basra to Anbar and from Samurra to Baghdad. If Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab took the bait once, Saddam took it twice: first to go after Iran and second to go after Kuwait, until finally he himself was caught like a wild rat. In either case, neither the responsibilities of Saddam nor those of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab can be laid at the doorstep of others. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's ideology cannot be placed on the shoulders of either the British or Humphrey. In other words,

Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab must be seen as wholly responsible for creating the ideological movement that is Wahhabism.

The British role in creating and supporting Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab is outlined in a number of documents, among which is "Memoirs of Mr. Humphrey."<sup>115</sup> These were serialized in *Der Spiegel*, and later in a prominent French newspaper, and translated into Arabic by a Lebanese intellectual, as well as into many other languages. Humphrey was one of the British colonial office intelligence operatives and was mentioned in the book *Mir'at al-Haramayn* (The Mirror of the Two Holy Mosques), written by Ayyub Sabri Basha in 1888.

Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's travel sketches are also interesting. He traveled to Medina to find it still an important center of Islamic knowledge and intellectual exchange, one which attracted scholars and students from every corner in the Muslim world. In Medina, he studied under the tutelage of 'Abdullah ibn Ibrahim ibn Sayf from al-Majmaa oasis in Sadair. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab was later to say about his teacher: "The sheikh once asked me, "Do you want to see the weapon I have prepared for al-Majmaa?" "Yes," I replied. He brought me to a house where many books were stored and said, "This is the weapon I have prepared."<sup>116</sup>

These books, as implied by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, were the ideological weapons that his teacher had prepared to combat what he saw as innovations and which had come to be seen as the essential beliefs and religious habits of his compatriots. It is useful here to note that among the scholars who also studied with Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab under 'Abdullah ibn Ibrahim ibn Sayf was Muhammad Hayat al-Sindi (a well-known scholar from Sind in India), and Shah Waliyyuallah al-Delhawi (from Delhi in India, who, like Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, was born in 1703).<sup>117</sup> This may indicate how certain ideas that are similar to what has come to be called Wahhabism traveled to India. After Medina, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab traveled to Baghdad, where he married a wealthy woman and settled down for five years, before he moved to Iran to undertake further studies and met Humphrey before returning to his home town al-'Uyayna in the Najd region.<sup>118</sup>

In the beginning, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's teachings were not new, but had been preached by others. Through his scholarly family and through his travels and studies in Arabia, as well as in Ottoman Iraq and Syria, he had felt the influence of the school of Ibn Hanbal, which was embodied in the thought of Ibn Taymiya. When Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab started to teach, as Humphrey explained, he denounced Ottoman rule, Ottoman Islam, and

the Ottoman Empire all at the same time. According to Albert Hourani (d. 1993), Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab drew his inspiration from the Hanbali school as handed down to him and proclaimed that Islam does not take the form of mere words or imitation of what others have said, stating that on Judgment Day, it will not be enough to plead "I heard people saying something, and I said it too."<sup>119</sup> In his opinion, Muslims must discover the true nature of Islam. Islam overall is a rejection of all gods except God, a refusal to allow others, be they "king or Prophet, or saint, or tree or tomb," to share in the worship. To worship pious men is as bad as worshiping idols, and it is not simply words and thoughts that constitute *shirk* (associating partners with God), but also the will and the actions that imply it—"a man's will to do the acts of this [material] world is a form of *shirk*."<sup>120</sup>

Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab saw that his exegesis and the call for a return to the authoritative texts (the Qur'an and Hadith) had become highly influential. Hence, true Islam is the Islam of the first generation, the pious forerunners (*al-salaf al-salib*) and the companions of the Prophet. In their name, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab protested against all those who encouraged innovations that were not prevalent in seventh-century Arabia. Those innovations, in Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's view, brought other gods into Islam. Against such innovations, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab interpreted Islam with a firm exclusiveness that was alien to his masters, both Ibn Hanbal and Ibn Taymiya. He was strictly literalist and uncompromising, and applied his ideas with an aggressive and intolerant approach that went far beyond the canon for which his pioneers and his contemporaries, including his brother and his father, as well as later scholars, stood.<sup>121</sup>

Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's focus on Ibn Taymiya did not mean that he absorbed the latter's views or that their beliefs were identical.<sup>122</sup> Teachers cannot be in any way held responsible for whatever notions their students may subsequently develop, and neither can the essential constituents of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's teachings be retrospectively imposed onto his pioneers or on Ibn Taymiya's teachings. There is no doubt that Ibn Taymiya was a far more rigorous and careful thinker and an infinitely more prolific scholar than was Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab. Among the key differences between the two men is that the medieval thought of Ibn Taymiya is important to the modern reformist movement led by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1897) and Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1905).<sup>123</sup> In addition, the form of Ibn Taymiya's opposition to Sufism is different, for it was not a total rejection, but rather an objection to certain aspects

of Sufism that he regarded as immoral or incompatible with Islam. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's rejection of Sufism was broader, however, and not merely a rejection of certain aspects of Sufi behavior. It should not surprise us that Ibn Taymiya was himself an initiator of the Qadiriya order,<sup>124</sup> and was buried in the graveyard of the Sufis with his brother Sharaf al-Din 'Abdullah.<sup>125</sup>

Further, anyone familiar with their works knows that Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab abridged some of Ibn Taymiya's writings, among which was *Minhaj al-sunna* (The Way of the Sunna). He also abridged some of the works of Ibn Taymiya's students, especially those of Ibn al-Qayyim. For example, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's book *Mabath al-ijtihad wa-l-ikhtilaf* (Research in Legal Reasoning and Difference) is an abridged version of Ibn al-Qayyim's book *I'lam al-muwaqqi'in* (Informing the Signatories). He also abridged the book *al-Insaf fi ma'rifat al-rajih min al-khilaf* (The Equity in the Knowledge of the Preferred from the Controversial), written by Ibn Taymiya's student 'Ala al-Din al-Mardawi, with the aim of accurately identifying Ibn Hanbal's opinions. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab was selective in his choice of what works to abridge, and attempted to draw on the thought of his predecessors to develop his own political position.

Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's books comprise a general collection of raw materials without any commentary, mostly drawn from the Qur'an and Hadith. His most important book, *Kitab al-tawhid* (The Book of Monotheism), for example, is described by its translator Isma'il al-Faruqi (d. 1986) as having "the appearance of a student's notes."<sup>126</sup> As this and others of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's books are available to me, I can confirm that al-Faruqi's description can be applied to other writings of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab. Overall, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab did not, out of the raw materials, create as many works as one might think. He was occupied more by the affairs of the newly established Wahhabi state (the Wahhabi state was not officially adopted in Saudi Arabia until 1932).<sup>127</sup> Therefore, his authorship of jurisprudence is composed merely of various raw materials, the majority of which are from the Qur'an and Hadith, compiled into two small volumes with large Arabic font, and published in Saudi Arabia by the University of the Imam. Seeking to reform his society, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab revealed that his methodological approach was not focused on writing or on educating people, but rather was grounded in the social and physical worlds, in a way that has widely been described as radical. Indeed, he implemented his opinions by force.<sup>128</sup>

Accordingly, when Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab returned to Najd he joined his father in the town of al-‘Uyayna and began to voice his criticism of innovation (*bid‘a*) and what he considered to be *shirk*. In this regard, his father, ‘Abd al-Wahhab, apparently did not share his son’s views and rejected his method of imposing them on people. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s brother Sulayman also did not accept all of his brother’s teachings, and led the opposition movement against him for a long time. Thus, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s teachings were, in some respects, contrary to the teachings of his father and brother, both leading Islamic scholars of their time. According to ‘Uthman ibn ‘Abdullah ibn Bishr, a Saudi historian who wrote a standard Saudi chronicle, the father discussed these matters with his son and “words were exchanged between them” (*waqa‘a baynahu wa bayna ibnibi kalam*).<sup>129</sup> Here, the son’s methodological approach to reform created a rift between him and both his brother and father, as well as some of the inhabitants of al-‘Uyayna. Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s most credited and learned grandson, Sheikh ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab, similarly claimed that “exchange (*niza‘*, or ‘dispute’) of words and arguments (*jidat*) between him [Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab] and the people, including his learned father [‘Abd al-Wahhab] took place.”<sup>130</sup>

Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s radicalism, according to the Saudi chronicler Ibn Bishr, resulted in the removal of his father from the judgeship (*al-qada’*) in al-‘Uyayna. In another version of the story, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s father had been removed from his judgeship in al-‘Uyayna by the ruler of the time, Muhammad ibn Mu‘ammar, for reasons that remain unclear. Whatever happened, the father “changed residence” from al-‘Uyayna to the nearby town of Huraymila in 1726.<sup>131</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab followed his father to Huraymila, but restrained his political activity by remaining “low key” until his father died in 1740.<sup>132</sup>

The death of his father released Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab from all constraints on standing for what he believed was right. Now the son saw himself as *the* sheikh who could take his father’s position of the judgeship and annihilate all that he considered to be “*shirk* and innovation.” This status in religious and political circles has persisted, and in contemporary Saudi Arabia, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s view of himself has spread into society’s consciousness. He *is* seen as *the* sheikh, and his progeny bear the title ‘Al al-Sheikh’ (family of the Sheikh). With his great ambition to destroy *shirk*, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab decided to achieve

his objective by any means, even if this required the use of force. In this regard, the anonymous author who introduced Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s most important book *Kitab al-tawhid*, which was published in Riyadh by Dar al-Salam (1996), wrote:

The Sheikh was resolved to make every effort to *fight* against the circumstances to the extent of jihad. He urged the ‘ulama (scholars) to strictly follow the Qur’an and the Sunna and derive the issues directly from them. He forcibly contradicted the blind following of any scholar of the *umma* in preference to the Qur’an and Hadith.<sup>133</sup>

The language used here confirms that Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s pattern of reform consisted of using force and jihad against all people including the ‘ulama. It is important to note that the above quotation is taken from the introduction, written by an author who preferred to conceal his or her identity. This unknown author believed that it was sufficient to mention the name of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab rather than his/her own name. The introduction was entitled “Sheikh al-Islam Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab—a Renowned Reviver and Great Reformer.” Under this title, this mystery author devoted eight pages (9–16) to Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s introduction and his *Kitab al-tawhid* (Book of Monotheism) to readers of English. There is no indication that the publisher wrote this section. Indeed, the publisher only provided two pages (7–8) of his own notes, signing off with his name, ‘Abd al-Malik Mujahid, and identifying his position as “General Manager, Dar-us-Salam Publications.”

Thus, the anonymous author wrote the introduction as though Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab himself were introducing the book to its readers. However, one must ask why the author of the introduction felt it necessary to conceal his/her name. Such concealment of an author’s identity, even for a short piece of writing, is unacceptable, and raises questions about the authenticity of the book and its author. However, identifying complete data (that is, author, publisher, and year and place of publication) is problematic for some Arabic sources, including Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s literature (that is, books written by Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab or attributed to him).<sup>134</sup>

Whether or not the introducer of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s *Kitab al-tawhid* is him/herself a Wahhabi is not known, but their use of certain key words and phrases in the introduction, such as ‘fight,’ ‘jihad,’ ‘forcibly,’

and ‘urged the ‘ulama,’ is revealing. The force and intent of these words in the context of the preferred title, “Sheikh al-Islam Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab—a Renowned Reviver and Great Reformer,” clearly emphasizes the radical methodology of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s pattern of reform. It also points to the causes of the rift that he created between himself and his father, the ‘ulama, and the inhabitants of al-‘Uyayna and Huraymila.

Due to his radical understanding of reform (that is, through the way of “jihad, fighting, and force”), Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab was politically ordered to leave Huraymila. He gathered some followers and was able to secure a return to al-‘Uyayna under conditions that he found far more favorable than the conditions he faced when he had been compelled to leave the same town fifteen years earlier. At that time, al-‘Uyayna’s ruler was ‘Uthman ibn Mu‘ammar, who found it of value to extend his protection to Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab. The alliance was strengthened also by Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s marriage to Jawhara, “the aunt of the ruler ‘Uthman ibn Mu‘ammar.”<sup>135</sup>

Protected by the ruler, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab gradually embarked on preaching his understanding of *tawhid*. In this regard, the Saudi mufti and government scholar Shaykh ‘Abdul ‘Aziz ibn ‘Abdullah ibn Baz (d. 1999) has emphasized that when Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab aligned with this ruler, the state protected him and provided him with the power he needed to achieve his objectives. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s pattern of reform is described by Ibn Baz in the following words:

He [Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab] knew that nothing could be achieved without jihad. When he noticed that his call to Islam had no effect on some, one day, the Sheikh said to the governor, “Let us demolish the dome at the grave of Zaid ibn al-Khattab (Zaid was the brother of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab [the second caliph] and a martyr who died in the fighting against Musaylima al-Khadhdhab [Musaylima the Fallen Prophet] in AH 12).” The Prince agreed and mobilized an army of six hundred soldiers headed by the Sheikh [Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab] and marched toward the grave. As soon as they approached the dome, the people came forward to defend it but when they saw the Prince with his army, they changed their decision. Then, the Sheikh took the action of demolishing and removing the dome. God removed it by his hands, thanks to God; none of its traces remains now. Similarly, there

were other domes, caves, trees, and so on that were also destroyed and removed. The Sheikh, thus, continued his mission by words and action for which he became very famous. In addition, one day a woman came to him and confessed that she had committed adultery. After realizing that she was sane, married, and had confessed her sin without external compulsion, he gave the order, according to the Sunna, that she should be stoned to death as a punishment.<sup>136</sup>

Thus, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s pattern of reform involved the use of force and jihad. Whatever he said must be implemented or would be forcibly implemented. Hence, the rationality that was highlighted by the Qur’an was rejected, and human reasoning became irrelevant. To him, human reason had no right to say anything about any situation that a person might encounter. He left his writing on jihad wide open to interpretation, unlimited by the rules and conditions of Islamic shari‘a. His *fatwa* (legal opinion) emphasized that the Muslims should engage in jihad against the *kuffar* (unbelievers) and *munaḥiqun* (hypocrites); again, this is rather a broad declaration without limitation or qualification. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s notion of pragmatism was revealed in his saying that if his teachings were not followed in practice, the declaration of jihad would be necessary.<sup>137</sup>

Consequently, scholars and the established religious and political authorities in Najd, Mecca, and Medina came to disagree with him. They reproached his mission and rejected both his arguments and his approach. The ruler could not protect him or his marriage any longer, and expelled Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab from the region of al-‘Uyayna once again.<sup>138</sup>

This lack of protection in al-‘Uyayna was the first step on Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s path to success. He left al-‘Uyayna for Dir‘iyya, which was under the governorship of Muhammad ibn Saud (d. 1765). After his arrival, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab stopped preaching until he had cemented a new alliance with Muhammad ibn Saud in 1745, and sealed it with another marriage and a formal oath-taking ceremony between the two parties. Muhammad ibn Saud’s son, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, then married the daughter of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab.<sup>139</sup>

By marrying his daughter into the tribe of Ibn Saud, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab secured the alliance and initiated a process that led to the unification of a number of disparate tribes under one leadership. This pact proved permanent and established a political entity that gave rise to the



first Saudi state. The alliance with Ibn Saud also ensured that Wahhabism became the religious ideology of the unification between the prevailing political entities in Arabia at the time. Everyone who joined the alliance was required to take an oath, to follow the teachings of the imam Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, and pay *zakat* (tax) at the rate prescribed by him.

Subsequently, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab created his own law enforcement body to guard public moral behavior in almost every aspect of human life, including the requirements to dress modestly and close shops to attend prayers. This law enforcement body was described as "constables for the punctuality—with an enormous staff in their hands, [who] were ordered to shout, to scold and to drag people by the shoulders to force them to take part in public prayers, five times a day."<sup>140</sup> This system of religious policing has continued to the present, and is currently in effect in Saudi Arabia under the title of 'Hay'at al-Amr bi-l-Ma'ruf wa-l-Nahi 'an al-Munkar' (The Organization of Commanding of Good and the Forbidding of Evil).<sup>141</sup>

Ibn Saud's alliance was to legitimize his military activities undertaken for the sake of state expansionism. State expansion requires additional resources such as taxation. But the people might resist the increased taxation and, therefore, might affiliate themselves with other political rivals in the region. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab sought to prevent Ibn Saud from levying his customary tax on the people. After some deliberation, Ibn Saud concurred with Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's assurance that the forthcoming jihad would yield income far in excess of any money gained through taxes. On this matter, the Saudi chronicler Ibn Bishr reported that Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab said to Ibn Saud, "Perhaps God has in store for us, conquests and booty better than the share of the harvest."<sup>142</sup>

Therefore, Ibn Saud pledged that he would conduct jihad against all who did not follow Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's teachings. In this way, the ideological plan was sealed and the arena for jihad prepared. Therefore, when Ibn Saud began to expand his territory and conquer the people and their passions, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab and his followers supported him. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab promoted this conquest on the grounds that after Ibn Saud had completed his conquests he would focus on religious matters.<sup>143</sup> The Saudi forces embarked on their battle in the name of jihad and returned laden with such abundant plunder that it drew the attention of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab and urged him to inform his allied partner that "this is more than you get from the people of your town."<sup>144</sup>

Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab considered all Muslims of his time who did not wish to share his teachings to be far worse polytheists than the people of the pre-Islamic era of *jabiliya* (ignorance). This tenet of his doctrine shocked his brother Sulayman, who highlighted 'intolerance' as a main feature of his brother's teachings. According to the Arabian historian and Mufti of Mecca, Ahmad ibn al-Zayni Dahlan (1816–86):

Sulayman once asked his brother Muhammad, "How many are the Pillars of Islam?" "Five," he answered. Sulayman replied, "No, you have added a sixth one: He who does not follow you is not a Muslim. This, to you, is the sixth pillar of Islam."<sup>145</sup>

The historian and author 'Uthman ibn Sanad, who lived in Basra in the 1780s, also noted this tone of extremism:

When Tuais, a black slave, killed Thuwayni [a sheikh from the Muntafiq tribes in the lower region of Euphrates], Saudi's adherents did not condemn the murder but praised it not only because they were convinced of Thuwayni's infidelity, but they were also convinced of the infidelity of all people on earth who did not share their views.<sup>146</sup>

The coalition of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's theo-ideology and Ibn Saud's political ideology gave rise to a theo-political Wahhabi state that later adopted the name Saudi Arabia in 1932. The use of religion as a basis for legitimacy differentiated the House of Saud from neighboring tribes and built a base of support that helped to establish the House of Saud in the Arabian Peninsula. It is remarkable, then, to find that the twentieth-century Saudi state came to acquire a second *raison d'être* as a privileged instrument of foreign—first British and then U.S.—interests in the Middle East.<sup>147</sup>

The Saudi state's abhorrence of non-Wahhabi Muslims has manifested itself on many occasions. Emphasizing his allegiance to western powers during the twentieth century, 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Saud, who ruled from 1902 to 1953, once told St. John ('Abdullah') Philby, his go-between with the British Foreign Office, that he preferred Christians to non-Wahhabi Muslims. Christians, Ibn Saud stated, "were of a kindred faith because they were 'people of the Book'; being believers according to their lights, they were less abhorrent to him than lax Muslims—*Mushrikim*." Ibn Saud

further explained that Christians act according to their religion, whereas Muslims who do not follow the Wahhabi understanding of *tawhid* are guilty of *shirk* (polytheism).<sup>148</sup>

Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's experience of his previous expulsions and resistance to his ideas led him to appreciate that the regime of godliness could only be established with the backing of temporal forces. Hence, if uncompromising monotheism was to be enforced, polytheism would have to be eliminated, jihad waged, 'good' ordered, evil forbidden, and the support of men of the sword would be necessary.

With the establishment of the alliance in 1745, jihad was declared, and by 1765 most of the Najd and 'Asir regions and even parts of Yemen had been conquered and subjugated under Wahhabi rule. The response of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab to opposition to his teachings was usually swift and uncompromising; the consequences were painful for those who stood against him. Those who opposed the Wahhabis were considered "apostate," deserving of "chastisement." For example, when Wahhabi forces set out for Jalajil in Sudayr, they ambushed the inhabitants, demolished their houses, and cut down some of their palm trees.<sup>149</sup>

In 1766, Muhammad ibn Saud was assassinated and succeeded by his son, 'Abd al-'Aziz. In this new era, the alliance between Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab and the state strengthened. 'Abd al-'Aziz was married to the daughter of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab. 'Abd al-'Aziz renewed the alliance with his father-in-law and both men reaffirmed their declaration of jihad in the name of Wahhabism and its expansion.<sup>150</sup>

Embarking on jihad, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab and his son-in-law 'Abd al-'Aziz expanded their power and wealth. The Wahhabis considered their wealth and power to be God's reward for their faithful adherence to Islam. People other than Wahhabis were seen as disbelievers who should be overcome and whose possessions should be confiscated. With this in mind, the jihad that the Wahhabis embarked on made their state a famous center, not only for Wahhabism but also for dominant political rule over most of Arabia. Wealth, luxury, and power were among the features of the lifestyles of the powerful elite. This was evidenced, as Ibn Bishr points out, by the "possession of money, property, luxuries, herds of varying types, including rare horses and dromedaries, even arms and weapons [which] were decorated with gold and silver."<sup>151</sup>

This wealth and power were further augmented when Riyadh and its surroundings fell into Wahhabi possession: in 1773, the Wahhabis

conquered Riyadh and made it their capital. Yet Riyadh did not mark the limits of their ambition, as their sights were set on the rest of Arabia, as well as Iraq and Syria; yet this would require more preparation and commitment.<sup>152</sup>

By 1773, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab had reached his seventies and deemed it appropriate for him to start planning for the future of religious and political authorities. Allen and Delong-Bas claim that Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab resigned from the office of imam in 1773.<sup>153</sup> However, resignation had not previously existed in the lexicon of behavior in Arabic authorities and institutions. Religious and political authorities usually remain in their positions until their death, whether natural or by other means. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab did not therefore resign, but remained imam until his death in 1792.

Before his death, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab witnessed his son-in-law 'Abd al-'Aziz, the young Wahhabi, ruling over the greater part of Arabia from the center of Riyadh. The Saudi chronicler Ibn Bishr argues that Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, further strengthening his legacy, awarded the title of imam to his son-in-law, and entrusted him with the command over the religious, military, and economic affairs of the state.<sup>154</sup>

Awarding the title of imam to 'Abd al-'Aziz did not mean that Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab had resigned. He remained the Grand Imam and the supreme authority to the extent that not a stone could be turned without his approval. In the words of Ibn Bishr, "No camels were mounted and no opinions were voiced without the approval of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab."<sup>155</sup>

'Abd al-'Aziz then became both the amir and imam of the Wahhabi state. His title of imam enhanced his leadership as Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's general, and distinguished him from others in Arabia. He was the top general of a wealthy and powerful state, and men of the sword were ready to execute his orders. Fearing the power of the Wahhabis and seeking their security, smaller entities joined the Wahhabis. Any individuals or groups who joined the Wahhabis were required to take an oath of loyalty and allegiance, and to observe their religion according to the Wahhabi tenets. Tribes were fully aware that the Wahhabis would conquer them, eventually:

At the moment when they were least expected, the Wahhabis would arrive to confront the tribe they wished to subject, and a messenger would appear bearing a Qur'an in one hand and a sword in the other.

His [Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's] message was stark and simple: "to the Arabs of the tribe of—hail! Your duty is to believe in the book I send you. Do not be like the idolatrous Turks, who give God a human intermediary. If you are true believers, you shall be saved; otherwise, I shall wage war upon you until death."<sup>156</sup>

Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab died in 1792, but his death did not temper the Wahhabi offensive in Arabia and did not diminish the Wahhabi creed or desire for conquest and wealth. In 1802, 'Abd al-'Aziz appointed his son Saud to lead a raiding cavalry and ordered them to attack Karbala, in southern Iraq, one of the holiest places for Shi'i Muslims. It contains the burial site of Imam al-Husayn ibn 'Ali, the paternal cousin of the Prophet. The attack was planned to take place on 12 May 1802 (the anniversary of 10 Muharram 1217) the day on which Shi'is gather to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn. This timing was aimed at inflicting maximum insult and pain upon the Shi'is. Recounting the event the Saudi chronicler Ibn Bishr said:

Saud [son of 'Abd al-'Aziz and grandson of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab] set out with the divinely supported army. He made for Karbala and began hostilities against the people of the city of al-Husayn. The *Muslims* [the Wahhabis] scaled the walls, entered the city by force, and killed the majority of its people in the markets and in their homes. Then they destroyed the dome placed over the grave of al-Husayn. They took whatever they found inside the dome and its surroundings. They took the grille, which was encrusted with emeralds, rubies, and other jewels. They took everything they found in the town: different types of property, weapons, clothing, carpets, gold, silver, precious copies of the Qur'an as well as much else—more than can be enumerated. They stayed in Karbala during the morning, leaving around midday with all the property they had gathered and having killed about two thousand people. Then, Saud departed by way of al-Ma'al-Abyad. He had the booty assembled in front of him. He deducted one-fifth for himself and then distributed the rest among the *Muslims* [the Wahhabis], giving a single share to each foot soldier and a double share to each equestrian.<sup>157</sup>

Ibn Bishr emphasized the word 'Muslim' in the above quote to signify the Wahhabis, because Wahhabis call themselves Muslims to the exclusion

of others. In addition, the language used in this account indicates the Wahhabis' pattern of what they called jihad and illustrates their approach to reform and their belief in *tawhid*. Since that time, Saud has come to be known as the 'butcher of Karbala.'<sup>158</sup>

Repeating this pattern of oppression, the Wahhabis dominated peoples throughout Arabia. They conquered Ta'if in February 1803, and Mecca and Medina in 1805, and annihilated those who did not wish to accept the Wahhabi creed. They committed massacres and burnt any books found other than the Qur'an and books of the Hadith. Describing their attacks against Ta'if, Ibn Bishr relates: "Their forces entered the city and took it by force but without fighting [*sic*], and killed some two hundred of its people, in the market places and in their homes. They took much property, valuable items such as coins, weapons, cloth, and jewelry, beyond all measure and computation."<sup>159</sup>

The Wahhabis' radicalism, and the fall of Mecca and Medina to them, was felt by the 'ulama and the public in all corners of the Ottoman Empire. The Wahhabis consolidated their power in the regions of Mecca and Medina, and shut down the pilgrimage route to Mecca. The pilgrimage caravans from Ottoman Syria and Egypt were deemed to be bearers of *shirk* and were therefore denied access to the Holy Sites. The Wahhabis were sending the message that "the Islam that the Sultan protected was not the true Islam, and that the Sultan was not the true leader of the *ummah*."<sup>160</sup>

Wahhabism alarmed both the Ottomans and the British. Both forces were working against each other tactically and strategically in the region. The British and the Ottomans viewed Wahhabism from different perspectives and out of different motives. The British believed that their plan to destabilize the Ottoman Empire was working well, and saw Wahhabism as another energetic factor they could exploit to ensure the success of their plan. They kept watch and left things to develop of their own accord. The Ottomans observed the Wahhabis' domination of most of Arabia as they increasingly became a threat to the political order of the Ottoman Empire in regions including Iraq and Syria along the main route to Istanbul, the center of the Empire.

In addition to their threats against the Ottoman Empire, the Wahhabis demolished the Ottoman sultan's claim that he was the Guardian of the Holy Sites of Islam. The closure of the pilgrimage routes by the Wahhabis had also removed an important source of revenue in the form of taxes for

the Ottomans. At that time, the Ottoman Empire was in turmoil, as it was confronted in the east by the Wahhabi conquest, and by the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt. In the west, the Ottomans were also forced to deal with recurrent hostilities, including those from Russia and Austria.

Focusing on the Wahhabis, the Ottomans assigned Egypt's Muhammad 'Ali to the task of liberating the holy cities and reopening the pilgrimage routes to all Muslims. In 1812, Muhammad 'Ali landed at the port of Yanbu' on the Red Sea coast, and recaptured Medina. Three months later he recaptured Mecca and Riyadh, and expelled the Wahhabis from Hijaz, sending them back to the Najd region. He then followed them to Najd and captured their new capital city, al-Dir'iya, in 1818. 'Ali called the Wahhabi scholars to the Mosque of Dir'iya, where he presided over a theological debate in order to convince them of their errors. The debate lasted for four long days after which a number of the scholars were finally convinced. However, others led by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's sons were not. After deliberation and the issuance of a *fatwa*, 'Ali executed two of the grandsons of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab. 'Abdullah ibn Saud was arrested and sent to Cairo and from there to Istanbul where he, too, was executed, based on a *fatwa* issued by Mustafa Asim Efendi, Sheikh al-Islam of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>161</sup>