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The Sunni Divide: Understanding Politics And Terrorism In The Arab Middle East

By Samuel Helfont

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Introduction

Following the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, a bloody conflict broke out between Iraq's Sunnis and Shias. This conflict has led some observers to see the entire region through the prism of the age-old Sunni-Shia struggle. However, dividing the Middle East along sectarian lines is not an accurate way to assess the loyalties or predict the actions of various regional actors. For example, in 2006 Israel went to war with Hezbollah in Lebanon and in 2008-2009 with Hamas in Gaza. In both of these conflicts, Shias from Hezbollah and Iran sided with Sunni Islamists from Hamas and other Muslim Brotherhood associated organizations. On the other side of the regional divide were Sunni Arab Nationalists, traditional Sunni monarchies, and Sunni Islamists with Wahhabist tendencies. These groupings are generally indicative of the political order in the Middle East. So a divide exists in regional politics, but it is not between Sunnis and Shias. While it is clear that the Shias fall on one side of the political divide and that they are generally opposed by the Sunni Arab nationalists and Sunni Arab monarchists, the sectarian divisions become blurred when considering Sunni Islamists. Divisions within Sunni Islamism run deep and are extremely important, both to the regional balance of power and to the United States' efforts to combat terrorism, for example. In fact, the division that will shape the future of Arab politics is not between Sunnis and Shias but among various understandings of Sunni Islamism.

Two distinct forms of Sunni Islamism exist in the Arab Middle East, each with a separate history and world view. In reality these forms of Islamism are not even the same type of movement. One is a theological movement with its origins in pre-modern Arabia. The other is a modern political ideology with roots in the cosmopolitan cities of 20th century Egypt. Although some overlap exists between these movements (just as there are in any two ideologies), they remain distinct. The first movement is Wahhabism and follows the theological teachings of the 18th century reformer, Muhammad ibn abd al-Wahhab. The second movement is the Muslim Brotherhood, a political organization that emerged in 20th century Egypt. Each of these movements originated in largely unrelated ways. Their historic missions have been completely different, as are their goals and means for achieving them. One of the primary aims of this monograph is to disentangle the positions of these two groups so that policymakers can better understand the strategic balance and potential threats in the Middle East. Such differentiation is important because scholars and policymakers have often confused Wahhabism and the Muslim Brotherhood. For some, "Islamism" is viewed as a monolithic movement with the only variation being the level of extremism or moderation that an individual or organization professes. In fact, terms such as "extremist" and "moderate" are completely inadequate in distinguishing between Islamists.

Sunni Islamism has eluded correct understanding for a number of reasons. Often Wahhabists are not formally organized and thus very difficult to study. Some scholars have completely overlooked them. In Jordan for instance, many researchers consider Islamism synonymous with the Muslim Brotherhood, despite the fact that Wahhabists make up an increasing number of Islamists in Jordan and consider their ideology to be diametrically

opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood.[1] In other instances, westerners simply fail to distinguish between differing groups of Muslims.

A Note on Terms and Definitions

Poorly defined terms plague the study of Islamism. A closer look at a few terms will highlight the problem and provide necessary clarity for the study that follows. Among the most problematic terms is Salafist Islam. A *salaf* in Arabic is an early ancestor and often refers to someone from the founding generation of Islam. Salafist Islam, therefore, attempts to return to the Islam practiced by Muhammad, his companions, and the first generation of Muslims. It disregards the centuries of innovation and development that took place in the middle ages and early modern period. The problem, of course, is determining how Islam was practiced in the first generations and understanding why. For example, since the first generation of Islam, Islamic law permitted a Muslim man to marry as many as four wives. At the time, this was considered a significant advancement for women since no restrictions existed previously on the number of wives a man could take. In its historical context this law advanced women's rights. The problem for Salafism is whether to abide by the exact terms of the law, or appeal to its essence which was beneficial for women. Literalist and essentialist interpretations are both compatible with Salafist Islam. In contemporary Arabic, Salafism normally refers to strict literalists, but the first Muslims to popularize the term were late 19th century reformers who wanted to get away from strict literalism. Today modernist reformers who attempt to live according to the spirit of early Islamic law, and literalists who reject any innovation not spelled out in the canonical texts, both claim to be Salafists. Therefore, Salafists range from liberal-progressives to conservative-reactionaries.

Tensions within Salafism not only divide Islamists but also confuse researchers. For example, some scholars lump a modernist such as the 19th century reformer, Jamal al-din al-Afghani, together with strict literalists like the late 20th century Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Abd al-Aziz ibn Abd Allah ibn Baaz. In reality, these men have almost nothing in common and yet each considers himself to be a Salafist. And although al-Afghani's and ibn Baaz's definitions of Salafism are mutually exclusive, some researchers have actually linked them when no such connection exists.

Further complicating the situation, other terms used to describe the literalist Salafism of ibn Baaz are equally problematic. In the West, his brand of Salafism is often referred to as Wahhabism, but Muslims to whom westerners refer as Wahhabists would never use the term to describe themselves. In fact, enemies of Wahhabists first used the term to discredit Wahhabists and link them to the teachings of one man, Muhammad ibn abd al-Wahhab. The Wahhabists prefer to call themselves Salafists because it implies that they are following not a single man but the example of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions.

Because of this history, some scholars have shied away from the term Wahhabism and have preferred to use Salafism in its place. The problem, of course, is that viewing Salafism and Wahhabism as equivalent terms creates confusion when groups like the

[1] See: Quintan Wiktorowicz, "The Salafi Movement in Jordan," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2 (May 2000).

Muslim Brotherhood, which rejects Wahhabism, calls itself Salafist. The lack of adequate terminology has led some to believe, incorrectly, that the Brotherhood is Wahhabist. To avoid confusion, I will therefore refer to the followers of Muhammad ibn abd al-Wahhab as Wahhabists and refrain, as much as possible, from using the term Salafist.

Other problematic terms have led researchers and policymakers astray. "Islamic state" or "Islamic law" mean very little by themselves. Different groups use these ideas in different ways. As I hope to show, while Wahhabists and the Muslim Brotherhood both use these, and other similar terms, their definitions vary and sometimes are even mutually exclusive.

To understand properly the language of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Wahhabists, each group's history and ideology needs to be examined. Part One of this monograph, therefore, is an in-depth discussion of each groups' ideology, considered within its proper historical context. From this perspective, important differences between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Wahhabists become clear. Part Two considers the influence of these groups on the balance of power in the Middle East. Finally, Part Three builds on the differences between the Brotherhood and the Wahhabists so as to better understand the threat of terrorism from each group.

Part 1: History and Context

Emergence of Wahhabism

In the 18th century, the central Arabian region known as Najd was sparsely populated. Severe climate and terrain along with a lack of resources kept the territory geographically isolated.[2] As such those living in Najd did not have to come to terms with the global trends, which by this time were having an increasing effect on other more cosmopolitan Muslims regions, especially those within the Ottoman Empire.

Muhammad ibn abd al-Wahhab was born in this isolated region at the start of the 18th century. His father, abd al-Wahhab ibn Sulayman al-Musharraf, was the chief jurist in the settlement of al-Uyayna. Because of his father's position, Muhammad ibn abd al-Wahhab received a traditional religious education and was later able to further his studies by traveling to several centers of religious learning outside Najd, including an extended period in Medina[3] where he received his formative religious schooling.[4] His teacher, Muhammad Hayya al-Sindi, belonged to a broader school of Islamic thinkers who studied and taught in Medina at that time. Through al-Sindi, abd al-Wahhab can be linked to other "revivalist" movements within 18th century Islam. Though these other movements used different methods and came to different conclusions than abd al-Wahhab, they all attempted to purify and revitalize Islam. What is important for our purposes is that these reform movements, Wahhabism included, were pre-modern. They carried the banner of reform but they wanted to reform not on modern but traditionally Islamic terms.[5] In other words, these reformers did not attempt to adapt Islam to another system of thought, politics, or culture to meet the demands of a changing world. They were trying to reform Islam in accordance with Islamic theology, seeking to make Islam more Islamic, not more modern.

However, abd al-Wahhab's education was not limited to Medina. During the 1730s he also traveled and studied in Basra (now in southern Iraq). Indeed, some scholars have even proposed that his now famous mantra—that improper innovations had entered and corrupted Islam—was in part due to his interactions with the Shii population of Basra.[6] It was there that abd al-Wahhab wrote his first and most important book, *Kitab al-Tawhid*

[2] Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstruction Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 25.
[3] David Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* (London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006), p. 11.
[4] Natana Delong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 94,
[5] John Voll, "Muhammad Hayya al-Sindi and Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab: An Analysis of and Intellectual Group in Eighteenth-Century Madina," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 38, no. 1 (1975): pp. 32-38.
[6] Commins, pp. 11-12.

(The Book of God's Unity).[7] As the title implies, the unity of God, or *tawhid*, was the most important element of abd al-Wahhab's beliefs.[8]

Based on *tawhid*, abd al-Wahhab formed a radical new theology. He argued that Muslims had fallen into a state of religious ignorance.[9] He focused on one of the Prophet Muhammad's predictions which had foretold a time when Islam would become a "stranger." The prophet had foretold that his followers would eventually fall away and practice idolatry, just as their forbearers had done in pre-Islamic Arabia. Abd al-Wahhab believed that the Prophet's prediction had come to fruition.[10]

His assessment of contemporary Islam stemmed directly from his understanding of *tawhid*. At the time, most Muslims believed that simply stating the Islamic profession of faith — "there is no God but God, and Muhammad is his Prophet" — was enough to fulfill the requirement of *tawhid* and thus distinguish a Muslim from an unbeliever. Abd al-Wahhab rejected this understanding emphatically. Instead he insisted that verbal affirmation of belief be accompanied by action. Any action that contradicted the essence of "no God but God" could put one outside the bounds of Islam.

Abd al-Wahhab believed that when taken literally, "no God but God" implied that reverence for anything other than God was a form of idolatry. He considered any veneration of tombs, holy men, saints, or other objects thought to bring good luck to be a violation of *tawhid*. Because these practices were widespread in the Islamic world he labeled the overwhelming majority of Muslims as infidels.[11]

Abd al-Wahhab began preaching his ideas in Basra, but the Shii population there rejected his judgment that they were infidels. Eventually he returned to the central Arabian settlements of his youth. He made a number of alliances with local emirs but his preaching and activities remained controversial. He destroyed the tomb of one of the Prophet Muhammad's companions, and he had a woman stoned for adultery. Following these actions, he was again exiled.[12]

In 1744-45 he allied himself to a central Arabian emir, Muhammad ibn Saud. Abd al-Wahhab convinced Saud that he could profit greatly through religiously sanctioned conquest if he abided by abd al-Wahhab's teachings. Saud agreed and the two men formed an alliance that would transform the Arabian Peninsula. Secure under Saud's protection, abd al-Wahhab soon built a devoted following and people from around the region began to seek out the teaching of the famous Sheikh al-Wahhab.[13]

Saud took advantage of his new religious legitimacy and embarked on expanding his domain. He followed abd al-Wahhab's teaching on *tawhid* and ruled that many of his subjects and those whom he conquered were not true Muslims. Saud gave them the opportunity to embrace Islam, but if they refused, he could legitimately wage jihad against them. Prisoners had the option of submitting to Islam by conversion, agreeing to pay a poll

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[7] English translations of this book are abundant online. See for example: www.islamicweb.com/beliefs/creed/abdulwahab

[8] Commins, pp. 11-12.

[9] Esther Peskes and W. Ende, "Wahhabiyya," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, eds. P.Bearman, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W. P. Heinrichs, Th. Bianquis (Leiden: Brill Online, 2006), XI: 39b.

[10] Commins, p. 16.

[11] *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2006 ed., s.v. "Wahhabiyya."

[12] Commins, pp. 17-18.

[13] James Wynbrandt, *A Brief History of Saudi Arabia* (New York: Checkmark Books, 2004), pp. 116-117.

tax, or death. As one historian of the period has pointed out, this practice added insult to injury for Muslims, who after having been captured and humiliated, were then treated as unbelievers.[14]

Saud's raids began in 1746 with the attack of neighboring settlements such as Riyadh. He moved from settlement to settlement, enforcing his rule and the Wahhabist doctrine along the way.[15] As the Saudi state expanded, abd al-Wahhab's reputation grew. He began to use the title al-Sheikh and was considered the foremost religious authority in Najd.[16] By his death in 1792, abd al-Wahhab's ideology had taken root in the lands of the Saudi state. His son, abd Allah inherited his position as supreme religious leader and his entire family would come to be known as the House of the Sheikh.[17]

The Wahhabist doctrine can perhaps best be understood through its encounter with the Ottoman Empire in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The Ottomans at the time ruled a vast empire which stretched throughout heterogeneous societies in southeastern Europe, southwestern Asia, and northern Africa. To govern effectively, the empire relied on flexibility and tolerance toward different Islamic sects and even other religions.[18] The expanding Wahhabist-Saudi state on the other hand abhorred such tolerance for what it considered to be heretical Sufi practices such as the veneration of holy men and tombs. These differing interpretations of Islam led to a number of skirmishes on the Ottoman-Saudi frontier in the Hijaz and in southern Iraq. Notably the Wahhabists raided the Shii holy city of Karbala in Iraq. The Wahhabist interpretation of Islam regarded Shiism as an abomination. The Shii veneration of Ali and his decedents was exactly the type of post-Quranic innovations that abd al-Wahhab had denounced. Tellingly, when the Wahhabi raiders entered the holy city, they slaughtered its citizens and destroyed the Shii holy sites.[19]

Even more revealing of Wahhabism were conflicts in the first decade of the 19th century with the Ottomans in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. [20] The Wahhabists made drastic changes, many of which were intended to expose the faults of Ottoman Islam. Wahhabists criticized orthodox Ottoman theology and Sufi practices and faulted the Ottomans for failing to implement even the more lenient interpretations of Islamic law. As one historian explains, "The status of the holy city [Mecca] made its inhabitants feel superior to all other Muslims and led them to excuse a certain lewdness of behavior. Whole blocks of Mecca had belonged to prostitutes, who even paid a tax on their occupation. Homosexuality was widespread. Alcohol was sold almost at the gate of the Kaaba and drunkenness was not uncommon."[21]

Upon their conquest of Mecca, the Wahhabist clerics sent a message to Istanbul and outlined the changes they planned to implement in the holy cities and during the annual

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[14] Commins, p. 25.
[15] This process is perhaps best illustrated by: Michael Cook, "The Expansion of the First Saudi State: The Case of Washm," in *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis*, ed. C.E. Bosworth (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1989).
[16] *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2006 ed., s.v. "Wahhabiyya."
[17] Commins, p. 29.
[18] See: Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 93-95, 174.
[19] Wynbrandt, pp. 134-135.
[20] *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2006 ed., s.v. "Wahhabiyya."
[21] Wynbrandt, p. 136.

pilgrimage. They vowed to abolish unlawful taxes, prohibit the smoking of tobacco, and destroy domes and shrines. They would mandate the distribution of abd al-Wahhab's writings among the Islamic scholars and dictate that prayers be performed according to their specifications. This included interfering, if need be, in the practices and rituals of other orthodox schools of Islamic law. They also intended to ban a number of traditions such as honoring the descendents of the Prophet Muhammad and the reading of certain hadiths before the Friday prayer. Sufism would be tolerated only as long as it adhered to Wahhabist interpretations of the Sharia, and a number of books, which the Wahhabist felt were harmful, would be banned.[22]

Wahhabist reforms proceeded in two directions. First, they began to crack down on clearly un-Islamic practices that the Ottomans overlooked. Second, they enforced their own version of Islam. For the Wahhabists, both of these policies were seen as simply enforcing Islamic law and were, therefore, one in the same.

In most of the Muslim world Wahhabist reforms involved two distinct issues, however. For example, concerning the first type of reform—enforcing Islamic law—the Wahhabists ended non-Islamic taxes, prostitution, consumption of alcohol, and price gouging, with which the merchants of Mecca and Medina exploited pilgrims during the annual pilgrimage. Had the Wahhabists been satisfied with these reforms, no matter how unpopular they were in the Hejaz and with the Ottoman leadership, they probably would not have spurred outrage within the Islamic world.[23] But the Wahhabists went a step further. They also enforced their own literalist interpretation of Islamic rituals and prayers. Unlike the four widely accepted schools of Sunni Islamic law, which despite disagreement granted legitimacy to each other, Wahhabists refused to practice such tolerance. In fact, Wahhabist interference in the rituals and methodology of other schools was unprecedented in Islamic history. Wahhabists added to the tension by plundering tombs, razing shrines, and destroying domes dedicated to the Prophet Muhammad and his companions.[24] These religious sites held great significance for many Muslims, and their destruction came as a shock to the Islamic world. In addition, the Wahhabists required that all pilgrims to the holy cities follow their doctrine. This practice, in effect, halted the annual pilgrimage and eventually the Wahhabists even banned pilgrimage caravans coming from Syria and Egypt.[25]

While these reforms left most of the Islamic world indignant, Wahhabists remained defiant. As David Commins, the author of *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia,* puts it, the Wahhabists viewed their struggle with the Ottomans in terms of distinguishing between "belief and unbelief, between monotheism and idolatry, between those who love God and his messenger and those who hate God and his messenger."[26] The Wahhabists felt they were in the same position that the Prophet had been in over a thousand years earlier. They were fighting according to orders that God had given them in the Quran. The enemies they fought were the enemies of God.

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[22] *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2006 ed., s.v. "Wahhabiyya."
[23] Commins, p. 31.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid., 36.

For present purposes, it is also important to understand that this was not a conflict over Islam as a political identity. The Ottomans and their subjects in the Hejaz believed they were Muslims ruling in the name of Islam and in accordance with Islamic law. The Wahhabists' critique was theological. This would be in stark contrast to the political critiques the Muslims Brotherhood would later make against 20th century Arab regimes.

The Ottomans, of course, were not willing to accept Wahhabist rule over the holy cities. As early as 1807, they sent a dispatch to the governor of Egypt, Muhammad Ali, ordering him to destroy the Wahhabist threat.[27] In 1818 after several years of on-and-off fighting, the Ottoman forces destroyed the last of the Saudi-Wahhabist forces, thus putting an end to the First Saudi State.[28]

This, however, did not end the Saudi-Wahhabist alliance. In 1824 Turki ibn Abdullah reestablished Saudi rule over Riyadh. The Second Saudi State was again the result of Wahhabist Islam combined with Saudi political rule and once more it confronted the Ottomans and Egyptians. Despite some initial successes, the Second State fell in 1891. The surviving Saudis received sanctuary in Kuwait, and by 1902 they had regrouped and retaken Riyadh, forming the Third Saudi State.[29] During the 1920s Wahhabist raiders again came into conflict with their southern Iraqi neighbors, now ruled by the British Empire. This time however, the Saudi ruler, abd al-Aziz chose peace and stability over jihad. He confronted the raiders and forcefully transformed Wahhabism from an expansionist movement that required continual jihad against what it considered to be its infidel neighbors into a "a conservative social, political, theological, and religious da'wa (call)" that is used for "justifying the institution that upholds loyalty to the royal Saudi family and the King's absolute power."[30] Wahhabists remained puritanical and literalist in their understanding of Islam, but they left issues of war and politics to the Saudi royal family, who they considered to be legitimate Islamic rulers.

For the remainder of the 20th century, Wahhabists functioned as the religious establishment within the Saudi state. Although different elements within Wahhabism would reignite political and jihadist impulses, mainstream Wahhabists continued to view the Saudi king as a legitimate even if flawed Islamic ruler who had sole responsibility for implementing political and military policies.[31]

The Muslim Brotherhood

The second stream of Sunni Islamism under consideration is the Muslim Brotherhood. Unlike abd al-Wahhab, who developed his call to Islam in pre-modern conditions, the Muslim Brotherhood emerged in early 20th century Egypt, a vibrant cosmopolitan society under British occupation. Modern political ideologies, such as

[27] Elizabeth Sirriyeh, "Wahhabis, Unbelievers and the Problems of Exlusivism," *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2 (1989): p. 123.
[28] Ibid., 37.
[29] Wynbrandt, pp. 301-302.
[30] Ahmad Moussalli, *Wahhabism, Salafism and Islamism: Who Is The Enemy?* (Beirut, London, Washington: Conflict Forum, 2009), pp. 7-8.
[31] See: Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of a Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, vol. 29, no. 3 (May 2006), pp. 216-222.

nationalism, liberalism, and socialism where competing for the hearts and minds of the Egyptian population, and Egyptians argued passionately over whether they should identify primarily as Arabs, Egyptians, or something else all together. Under these circumstances, Islam emerged as a rival to other political ideologies.

The father of political Islam in Egypt was the 19th century reformer Jamal al-din al-Afghani.[32] Al-Afghani was born in Iran in the 1830s and died in Turkey in 1897. He traveled widely throughout the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, and Europe and was exposed to a range of Western ideas on politics, science, and philosophy. While living in France he even debated prominent European intellectuals such as Ernest Renan.[33] These interactions greatly influenced al-Afghani, and while he was always a fierce critic of European imperialism, in different stages of his life he espoused various political identities.[34] While in Egypt near the end of the 19th century, he became famous for his contributions to the idea of a Pan-Islamic identity.

Al-Afghani's Pan-Islamism was heavily influenced by Western thinkers like François Guizot, whose ideas about civilization and 19th century Europe were translated in 1877 into Arabic. According to Guizot, civilizations advanced by progressing on two fronts, namely, social development and individual empowerment through new ideas and related innovations. Al-Afghani absorbed these ideas and applied them to a new understanding of Islam.[35] Therefore, as Albert Hourani, a prominent Arab historian, has argued, for al-Afghani, "the center of attention is no longer Islam as a religion it is rather Islam as a civilization."[36] This separates al-Afghani from previous Islamic thinkers. He did not simply want to serve God. He intended to develop a modern Islamic political identity that could compete with Western civilization.

Clearly, this understanding of Islam comes from a historical context vastly different from the isolated Arabian desert of abd al-Wahhab a century earlier. The result was also vastly different. While abd al-Wahhab built his call to Islam exclusively on Islam's canonical texts, al-Afghani and others like him fused Islam with contemporary Western thought. And while both abd al-Wahhab and al-Afghani based their theories on Islam, they dealt with two completely separate subjects. Abd al-Wahhab's call to Islam was devoted to theological issues such as the oneness of God. Al-Afghani on the other hand was concerned with political identity and had little interest in theology. In fact, al-Afghani was born a Shia, and some even question whether he was religious at all.[37] In many ways al-Afghani's Pan-

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[32] For three very different views of al-Afghanis biography, see: Albert Hourani, *Arab Thought in a Liberal Age* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Elie Kedourie, *Afghani and Abduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam* (London: Frank Cass and Co. LTD, 1966); and Nikki Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal Ad-Din 'Al-Afghani': A Political Biography* (Berkeley, Los Angles, London: University of California Press, 1972).

[33] A translation of this exchange can be found in: Nikki Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal al-Din 'al-Afghani'* (Berkeley, Los Angles, London: University of California Press, 1968).

[34] For example in addition to Pan-Islamism, while he was in India he called for nationalism based on shared language. See: Nikki Keddie, "Pan-Islam as Proto-Nationalism," *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 41, no.1 (Mar. 1969): pp. 17-28.

[35] Hourani, pp. 114-115.

[36] Ibid., p. 114.

[37] See Kedourie.

Islamism was very similar to nationalism. He was concerned with cultivating a shared history and a shared culture.

While al-Afghani's ideas are often at odds with the more conservative views of the Muslim Brotherhood, his idea of Islam as a political identity lies at the heart of the Brotherhood's ideology. Indeed, through two of al-Afghani's disciples, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida, a clear tie exists between his thought and that of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al-Banna. What makes this connection particularly important is that the reform al-Banna promised, like al-Afghani and unlike abd al-Wahhab, was not theological but rather political.

Hasan al-Banna was born in 1906 in a small Egyptian town ninety miles outside Cairo. His father was an imam and a teacher at the local mosque. The elder al-Banna had studied at al-Azhar and authored several works on the hadith. Hassan received a traditional upbringing and was heavily influenced by his father and his religious teachers.[38] While in primary school, al-Banna continued on a religious path, joining and eventually leading several extracurricular Islamic societies.[39]

Like abd al-Wahhab, al-Banna was a Hanbali, but he was also a devout Sufi and would remain a believer in the Sufi way throughout his life.[40] This is an important distinction between al-Banna and abd al-Wahhab. While al-Banna was a devoted Muslim, he was not a puritan. He was open to the popular practices of Sufism, which are not found in the traditional Islamic sources. Abd al-Wahhab on the other hand abhorred Sufism as a dangerous innovation that polluted true Islam.

In addition to his religious convictions, nationalist sentiments emerging in Egypt heavily affected al-Banna during his youth. He willingly joined nationalist strikes and demonstrations that engulfed Egypt in 1919, and in a telling quote declared, "Despite my preoccupation with Sufism and worship, I believed that duty to country is an inescapable obligation – a holy war (jihad)."[41] As this declaration shows, al-Banna was concerned with both Islam (describing the conflict as a jihad), and nationalism (his duty to country) and for him the two were inextricably intertwined. To defend Egypt was to defend Islam and vice versa. Other Egyptians at the time may have been devout Muslims and/or Egyptian nationalists, but these two sentiments were not necessarily related.

Although al-Banna came from a traditional family and had received a religious upbringing, he was from a new generation. Unlike his father who studied at al-Azhar, the time-honored establishment of Sunni learning, al-Banna pursued higher education at a secular teacher's college, Dar al-Ulum, in Cairo.

Cairo in the 1920s was defined by political turmoil and a search for identity. The idea of a modern, secular Egypt had considerable appeal on university campuses. For a traditional Muslim like al-Banna, these trends were shocking.[42] Al-Banna felt Egypt had gone astray and he decided that positive action was required to put the nation back on

[38] Brinyar Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1998), p. 25.
[39] Richard Mitchell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) pp. 2-4.
[40] Mitchell, p. 2.
[41] Christina Phelps Harris, *Nationalism and Revolution in Egypt: The Role of the Muslim Brotherhood* (The Hague, London, Paris: Mouton and Co., 1964), p. 144.
[42] Mitchell, p. 5.

track.[43] He made a covenant with God to reverse these trends through acts of kindness and "fight[ing] the *jihad* for truth and general reform"[44]

Soon after graduation, al-Banna received his first teaching assignment in the Suez Canal Zone town of Ismailiyya. There he founded the Muslim Brotherhood for the "service of the fatherland, the religion, and the nation."[45] As this quote demonstrates, although al-Banna had pledged to rid Egypt of foreign influences, he had already internalized such as nationalism. Islam, in its ideal state, makes no separation between nations, only between believers and unbelievers.

In this sense, the emergence of the Brotherhood was part of larger political trends in Egypt. Like al-Banna, many Egyptians felt that the westernizing policies of the 1920s had failed and that Egypt should orient itself more towards the East. For the Muslim Brothers this meant returning to Islam and protecting Muslims from the West's attempt to destroy their religion and subjugate its followers.[46]

The Brotherhood's primary goal was the establishment of an Islamic state and the reinstitution of the caliphate. However, these were not theological positions. The Muslim Brothers were not calling for the implementation of a certain theological understanding of Islam. Like other ideological movements of the time, the Brotherhood offered a solution to Egypt's political, economic, and social problems, but in place of nationalism, liberalism, or socialism they offered Islam as a political system and identity.

Moreover, as opposed to the theological arguments of Wahhabism, the Muslim Brothers during this period concentrated on anti-Imperialist rhetoric and activities. The British presence in Egypt was extremely unpopular and al-Banna used anti-British sentiments in the Brotherhood's propaganda. By doing so, the Brothers were able to form alliances with other ideological movements such as territorial nationalists, pan-Arabists, and pan-Islamists, all of whom were vehemently anti-British.[47] Additionally the Brotherhood embraced other modern and not necessarily Islamic ideas. For instance, al-Banna accepted the idea of constitutional rule and political parties.[48]

In fact, Wahhabist critics of the Brotherhood often point to al-Banna's modern origins, and his mixing of Islam with Western political philosophies to demonstrate that the Muslim Brotherhood is not a purely Islamic movement. They argue that similar to the Muslims who abd al-Wahhab had denounced, the Muslim Brothers had allowed various non-Islamic elements to contaminate Islam. For example, a recent Wahhabist tract argues that the Muslim Brotherhood is largely a reaction to the West. It asserts that the formation of Brotherhood, like other modern Islamic movements, "was in direct response to the great changes and upheavals taking [place] in Europe and elsewhere, as well as the colonial activities of the French, British, and others [...] It produced individuals who devised ideologies and methodologies with such conceptions, thoughts and imaginations of the mind that arose in direct response to the social political and economic occurrences of the

[43] Harris, p. 147.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Mitchell, p. 8.
[46] Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 38-48.
[47] Harris, pp. 161-165.
[48] Moussalli, p. 24.

time."[49] The tract's authors then compared the Brotherhood's origins to that of abd al-Wahhab who taught "prior to the main thrust of the western Industrial revolution and Colonial activities [..] and thus his da'wah [call to Islam] was non-reactionary, and was an internal da'wah that was reformative in the proper sense of the word. Thus, his methodology in da'wah was identical to Alah's Messenger [..] in starting point, priority, objective, method and focus."[50]

While Western academics may not accept the Wahhabist narrative whole-heartedly, they often espouse a similar understanding of the Brotherhood's ideology. For example, Anna Seleny, from the Fletcher School at Tufts University argues, "Islam is a religion; Islamism [by which she means the ideology of groups such as the Brotherhood] is not."[51] This does not mean, however, that al-Banna and the Muslim Brothers were not devout Muslims. In fact, their deeply held beliefs led them to Islamism as a political ideology. The difference between the Brotherhood and the Wahhabists is not the extent of their belief in Islam, but rather the focus of their reforms. The Brotherhood espoused political reform based on a strongly held, though theologically tolerant belief in Islam. They made their arguments on Islamic grounds and in the guise of traditional Islamic tracts, but their goals were political.

By 1937, the Brotherhood began to spread outside Egypt,[52] but its message remained the same. It fostered an Islamic political identity based on the implementation of Islamic law and the formation of an Islamic state. In contrast to the Wahhabists, however, as the Brotherhood expanded, it embraced a wide range of divergent Islamic practices. These "genuine" forms of Islam, as the Brotherhood considered them, varied considerably and included Sufi orders whose practices the Wahhabists deplored.[53] From this point forward the Muslim Brotherhood would transform into an international organization with branches throughout the Middle East. Each branch had, and continues to have, at least an informal relationship with the Egyptians, who remained the center of the organization. However, branches in differing countries have varying levels of allegiance to the Egyptian leadership. Some groups claim to be completely independent and others profess complete loyalty.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Hassan al-Banna kept the Egyptian branch of the Brotherhood tightly under his control. His flexibility toward various nationalist and Islamist identities was key. He also held very pragmatic views in other areas. At times the Brotherhood supported King Faruq and other government officials.[54] They also cooperated with the liberal-nationalist Wafd party. In one national election, al-Banna even ran for office but withdrew from the race in exchange for the implementation of several Islamic laws.[55]

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[49] "Historical Development of Methodologies al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin and Their Effect and Influence upon Contemporary Salafi Dawah: Part 1," *Salafi Publications* (March 2003): p. 6-7, www.salafipulications.com
[50] Ibid., 10.
[51] Anna Seleny, "Tradition, Modernity, and Democracy: The Many Promises of Islam," *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 4, no. 3 (September 2006): p. 483.
[52] Harris, pp. 158-60.
[53] Itzchak Weismann, "The Politics of Popular Religion: Sufis, Salafis, and the Muslim Brothers in 20th-Century Hamah," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol.37, no.1 (February 2005): p. 51.
[54] Mitchell, p. 16.
[55] Ibid., p. 27.

The period from 1936 to 1949 was one of expansion and growing influence for the Muslim Brotherhood. It was also a time of political upheaval and suppression. With the beginning of World War II, the British maintained an even larger presence in Egypt and were unwilling to tolerate nationalist, anti-imperialist activity. At the same time the Muslim Brothers were becoming increasingly nationalistic. Unlike the King, they were unwilling to submit to British pressure. Consequently, the government suppressed them.[56]

The Brotherhood responded by forming a "Secret Apparatus." As the name suggests, this was a secret organ of the Muslim Brotherhood. They were inspired by the concept of jihad and fighting for Islam. They clandestinely trained and undertook operations defending the Brothers against the police and government forces. The Secret Apparatus was organized into cells that were highly efficient and responsive to the Brotherhood's leadership. And again, while the Secret Apparatus owed its motivation to the Islamic concept of jihad, it also took cues from other non-Islamic movements. The Secret Apparatus can therefore be understood as a parallel to the brown shirts, black shirts and green shirts movements which characterized Western political ideologies of the time.

In the post-war years, the Brotherhood cooperated with the government at times, and opposed it at others. They remained vehemently anti-British and supported socio-economic reform. But as the decade wore on, they increasingly turned their attention towards the popular nationalist cause of Palestine. They advocated war there and took part when fighting broke out. The defeat of the Arabs in the war left the Brothers bitterly disappointed. When Egypt proposed armistice talks with Israel, the Brotherhood took part in mass protests in Cairo. In the battle that ensued with Cairo police, the police commander was killed. This scene was the last in a series of clashes between the government and the Brotherhood which had taken place since the previous year. A few days later the Muslim Brotherhood was declared illegal and its entire leadership, apart from al-Banna, was arrested.[57]

Subsequent events are still murky, but it appears that owing to the hierarchical structure of the Muslim Brotherhood, the mass arrest functioned to sever ties between al-Banna and the lower echelons of the Brotherhood, especially the Secret Apparatus. Al-Banna had always appeared to be against political violence inside Egypt, but many within the Brotherhood did not share his views. Now some of the more dangerous elements of the Brotherhood were acting without al-Banna's guidance in a climate of deep animosity towards a government, which had dissolved their organization and arrested its leaders. On December 28, 1948, a member of the Brotherhood killed Egypt's Prime Minister Mahmud al-Nuqrashi while he walked into the Ministry of Interior. This event led to additional arrests and also prompted more violence from alienated Brothers. In February 1949, al-Banna was shot and killed. Though it remains unproven, his killer was probably acting on behalf of the government.[58] Thus, the first chapter of the Muslim Brotherhood's history came to an end. The future would bring new challenges as well as fragmentation and a reconsideration of the movement's origins.

[56] Ibid., p. 22-23.
[57] Ibid., p. 65.
[58] Ibid., p. 67-70.

At this point, it should be clear that the Muslim Brotherhood did not emerge out of Wahhabism or as a reaction to it. The Brotherhood was, from its beginning, a separate phenomenon with distinct historical roots and goals for the future.

Sayid Qutb

While Hassan al-Banna's influence and charisma were critically important to the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood, his death did not end the organization or further developments in the Brotherhood's ideology. While the mainstream Brotherhood remained committed to al-Banna's ideas, others would challenge them, creating a rift within the organization. This is an important development that is often overlooked. Although some members of the Brotherhood eventually went on to form more radical organizations, this does not imply that the bulk of the Brotherhood's members rejected al-Banna's ideology. Today, this rift between al-Banna's ideological successors and radical Islamists remains intact. Therefore, the way these groups interacted with the Wahhabists is vital for a better understanding of modern Islamic politics.

Al-Banna's successor was Hassan al-Hudaybi who had worked as a judge for twenty-five years.[59] Like al-Banna, al-Hudaybi was a modernist and he continued al-Banna's policies, arguing for Islam as a political identity that could compete for the hearts and minds of Egyptians. But the Muslim Brotherhood was not the only group with appeal in Egypt. By the late 1940s the economic situation in Egypt was dire. Most political factions, including the Brotherhood supported increasingly nationalistic policies and became more and more skeptical of Egypt's monarchy and parliamentary system. In 1952, a group of military officers, led by Gamal abd al-Nasser, led a successful coup d'état. This group became known as the Free Officers.

The Brotherhood and the Free Officers agreed on several important policies and the Brothers would play an important role in the coup.[60] Soon after the coup, however, it became obvious that Nasser had no intention of implementing Islamic law, as the Brothers insisted, or allowing any dissent from the Free Officers' official policies. The new regime enacted reforms that severely undercut the Brotherhood's position which further increased tensions.[61] As the Brotherhood's opposition grew, conflict seemed inevitable. In response, the regime arrested several high-ranking Muslim Brothers and outlawed the Brotherhood.

Eventually, some Brothers decided that the only way forward was to remove abd al-Nasser from power. On October 26, 1954 a member of the Secret Apparatus, Mahmud abd al-Latif, attempted to assassinate abd al-Nasser. Abd al-Nasser survived and decided to put an end to the Brotherhood once and for all. He ordered the arrest of 19,000 Brothers. Almost nine-hundred of them were sentenced to life and hard labor. Six were hanged. For the next decade and a half the Brotherhood would operate mostly from within Egyptian prisons.

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[59] Ibid., p. 84-86.
[60] Beattie, p. 57-58.
[61] See Harris, p. 203-214; and Fouad Ajami, "On Nasser and His Legacy," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 11, no. 1 (1974): p. 41.

Abd al-Nasser's crackdown prompted the Muslim Brotherhood to re-evaluate its ideology. Prior to the Free Officers' coup in 1952, the Brothers saw foreign imperialists as the primary enemies of Islam. Now they had suffered a brutal suppression, not by the British, but by an anti-imperialist Egyptian regime. Sayid Qutb emerged to reformulate the Brotherhood's ideology and offer a different understanding of Islam and politics.[62]

Qutb was born in 1906 in the Asyut Province of Egypt. He came from a modern family and his father was even a member of the nationalist party. In 1920, Qutb left the Asyut Province for Cairo to attend secondary school.[63] After graduation, Qutb, like al-Banna, studied at the teachers college, Dar al-Ulum. He finished in 1933 and began teaching. Eventually he, again like al-Banna, went to work for the Ministry of Education.[64]

Qutb was a prolific writer. Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s he was concerned with literature almost exclusively. Like other Egyptian modernists, he dealt mostly with secular subjects.[65] He had been a member of the liberal-nationalist Wafd party and had sympathies with the West.[66] During the 1940s his views began to change. He was deeply affected by British policy toward Egypt during World War II and even more so by the creation of Israel. He felt that when it came to relations with the Arabs, the West did not live up to the liberal values it professed.[67] As a result, Qutb's writings became more ardently nationalistic and he began to write critically about social issues affecting the country.

This adversarial shift in Qutb's writings was not a welcome development for King Faruq. The King sought his arrest but with the help of Wafd members, Qutb was able to avoid arrest through a type of self-imposed exile. He arranged to take a trip on behalf of the Ministry of Education to the United States in order to study the American education system. This experience would have a profound effect on Qutb.

On the ship to America, Qutb rediscovered Islam. He started performing the five daily prayers and began an Islamic study group. Through several personal experiences, he also became concerned about sexual promiscuity in the United States.[68] During his U.S. stay, Qutb also encountered racism because of his dark complexion. He felt the country he had admired so much in his youth had utterly rejected him. When he returned to Egypt in 1951, Qutb joined the Muslim Brotherhood.[69]

He continued to write about society but now from a Muslim's perspective rather than as a nationalist or a liberal. Nevertheless, at this point, Qutb still considered Islam a modern political identity competing with other political identities. His major work from this period was "Social Justice in Islam," published in 1949. Qutb wrote it as an answer to the leftist ideas that were then popular in Egypt.[70] It is a prime example of the work for which the Brotherhood was known. When Qutb argued for social justice, he was making

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[62] Gilles Kepel, *The Roots of Radical Islam*, trans., Jon Rothschild (London: SAQI, 2005), p. 35.
[63] Yvonne Y. Haddad, "Ideologue of Islamic Revival," in *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, ed. John Esposito (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 68.
[64] J. J. G. Jansen, "Sayyid Kutb," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, eds. P.Bearman, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W. P. Heinrichs, Th. Bianquis (Leiden: Brill Online, 2006).
[65] Haddad, p. 69.
[66] Kepel, p. 38.
[67] Haddad, p. 69.
[68] Kepel, p. 38-39.
[69] Haddad, p. 69.
[70] *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2006 ed., s.v. "Sayyid Kutb."

the case for Islam in modern terms that appealed to a modern audience. But Qutb's views would soon change.

As an active and influential member of the Brotherhood, he had close contacts with important members of the Free Officers, including abd al-Nasser, before and after the 1952 coup. However, the two men had a falling out over the role that Islam should play in the new regime.[71] Following the assassination attempt on abd al-Nasser, Qutb was sentenced to twenty-five years of hard labor, and along with his fellow inmates, endured brutal torture.

Like many Muslim Brothers, Qutb began to reassess the Brotherhood's approach to Islam. Something had gone horribly wrong and Qutb wanted to understand why. While in prison, he produced two very important works, a Quranic commentary titled *In the Shadow of the Quran*, and what is probably his most important work, *Signposts*. In these works, Qutb began to appreciate the extent that modernity had shaped al-Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood. He started making theological arguments about the state of politics and he called for an Islam free from non-Islamic practices. He rejected the idea that Islam had to be reinterpreted to fit modernity. Instead he argued that the traditional Islamic sources were compatible with every age.[72]

Qutb wanted to understand Islam on Islamic terms, not in the context of other modern ideologies.[73] Unlike the Brothers that had preceded him, he purged his outlook of nationalism. He believed that Muslims should be loyal only to Islam and God. Qutb considered the Islamic system to be the "believer's homeland (*watan*), nation (*qawm*), and people (*ahl*)." Any regime that claimed legitimacy through nationalism was inherently working against the ideals of Islam. Qutb further explained that he had arrived at the "absolute and final certainty: that there can be no good for this earth, no repose or satisfaction for humanity, no edification, no blessing, no purity, and no harmony with the laws of the cosmos and the quintessence of life, except through a return to God."[74]

Qutb also addressed the modern state and political sovereignty in the light of this new conception of Islam. He argued that "any society where someone other than God alone is worshiped" should be considered non-Islamic. Similar to the Pakistani thinker Abul-Ala Mawdudi, Qutb believed that sovereignty in an Islamic state belonged to God. Therefore the act of recognizing sovereignty was an act of worship. Granting sovereignty to secular leaders, such as abd al-Nasser, was a form of idolatry.[75] Qutb used this understanding to separate the world's societies into two distinct and mutually exclusive categories: Islam, and its opposite, *jahiliyya*.

The term *jahiliyya* had been traditionally used to describe Arab society prior to the advent of Islam, and is often translated as "the Age of Ignorance."[76] Therefore, it typically

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[71] Ibid.

[72] Ronald Nettler, "A Modern Islamic Confession of Faith and Conception of Religion: Sayyid Qutb's Introduction to the Tafsir, Fi Zilal al-Quran," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* vol. 21, no. 1 (1994): pp. 109-110.

[73] It should be noted that he was not entirely successful in this endeavor. He had already internalized several modern ideas, such as the need for a revolutionary vanguard, and he (possibly inadvertently) incorporated them into his arguments.

[74] Nettler, pp. 106-107.

[75] Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam Medieval Theology, and Modern Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 25.

[76] William E. Shepard, "Sayyid Qutb's Doctrine of Jahaliyya," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4 (November 2003), p. 522.

describes a particular historic society that existed in a specific time and place. Qutb had a new interpretation. He believed that *jahiliyya* described a spiritual condition, and thus could exist at any time and in any place.

To determine whether or not a society belonged to Islam or to *jahiliyya*, Qutb looked to see if God was sovereign. Neither the communist states of the East nor the liberal states of the West passed Qutb's test. Qutb's real innovation, however, was his analysis of societies claiming to be Muslim. He put them in the category of *jahiliyya* because, while they believed in God, they too worshiped their leaders by granting them sovereignty. [77]

In declaring the Muslim world non-Islamic, Qutb crossed a line that few in Islamic history had dared to traverse.[78] With few exceptions, Islamic scholars had accepted the legitimacy of a ruler as long as he declared there were no God but God and that Muhammad was the last of the Prophets. Qutb's position on this matter resembles that of abd al-Wahhab but differs from al-Banna's position in two very important ways. First, and most obviously, abd al-Wahhab and Qutb are two of only a handful of Islamic scholars to excommunicate other Muslims. In this, they were similar to, and were influenced by the important medieval theologian ibn Taymiyyah. Al-Banna, in contrast, never even approached Qutb's position on this matter. As Gilles Kepel, a prominent historian of Islamic movements, notes, al-Banna "never dreamed of accusing the Egyptian society of his day of being non-Islamic."[79] Second and equally important was that Qutb began to make his arguments on the basis of his interpretation of Islamic sources. In prison, his isolation allowed him to put modern considerations aside. He argued for the restoration of Islam on Islamic terms. Gone were the nationalist and socialist justifications for an Islamic society. Qutb argued that the Quran and *hadith* had all the information a Muslim needed to organize society. Similar to abd al-Wahhab's theory that Islam had become a stranger, Qutb argued that Muslims had allowed non-Islamic ideas and practices to contaminate Islam and that living a truly Islamic life required Muslims not only to believe but to act in accordance with Islamic law.

Not everyone in the Muslim Brotherhood accepted Qutb's new theories. Al-Hudaybi, for example, refuted parts of *Signposts*, and opposed employing the term *jahiliyya* to describe Egypt.[80] However, others supported Qutb's ideas and became more radical. They splintered into several different movements and removed themselves from modern society. In extreme cases they further developed Qutb's ideology, declaring that Muslims who refused to leave *jahiliyya* were infidels and apostates. This stance would eventually allow Muslims to declare jihad on other Muslims perceived as living in *jahiliyya.*

Qutb's ideas caused a major rift within the Muslim Brotherhood. The mainstream majority accepted al-Banna's argument that Islam should be implemented through education and outreach. They continued to preach Islam as a modern political identity and argued for Islam in terms of democracy and human rights. Qutbs followers followed a different path all together.

In 1965 abd al-Nasser declared that he had uncovered a Muslim Brotherhood plot to overthrow his regime. The authorities claimed to have found copies of *Signposts* at the

[77] Kepel, p. 46.
[78] Ibid., p. 56.
[79] Ibid., p. 45.
[80] Ibid., pp. 61-64.

scene of every arrest, blamed Sayid Qutb and sentenced him to death. In 1966, he was executed.[81] Despite his death, Qutb's legacy would have an enormous effect on the future of Islam and the Islamic world.

After Qutb

During abd al-Nasser's crackdowns in the 1950s and 1960s, many important members of the Brotherhood fled Egypt. At the same time, Saudi Arabia began to reap the benefits of its emerging oil industry. The kingdom wanted to build universities and modernize its economy without compromising its Islamic identity. The Egyptian members of the Brotherhood were generally better educated than the Saudis and their strong commitment to Islam was an asset to Saudi leadership. Thus, when the Brothers fled Egypt many of them ended up in Saudi Arabia.[82] The move to Saudi Arabia, however, did not end the debates within the Brotherhood over Sayid Qutb and his theories of *jahiliyya*. In fact this debate, with Qutb on one side, and al-Hudaybi on the other, spread throughout the entire Middle East and the Islamic world.[83]

In Saudi Arabia, the traditional non-Qutbist Muslim Brotherhood ideology had trouble gaining traction. The Wahhabists were against the rationalist and modernist theories that thinkers like al-Afghani had espoused and they considered the political Islam of Hassan al-Banna to be an offshoot of this ideology. They rejected the combination of Islam with Western ideas such as nationalism, democracy, or constitutionalism. Also, in Saudi Arabia the general population still had tremendous respect for traditional Islamic learning and the Islamic scholars.[84] But because the Muslim Brotherhood was primarily a political organization, its leaders were generally laymen and lacked the appeal of clergy. Al-Hudaybi was a lawyer, and al-Banna and Qutb were both teachers and civil servants.

Qutb's followers, led by Sayid's brother, Muhammad Qutb, were much more successful. As mentioned above, Qutb's teachings were much closer to those of abd al-Wahhab. In addition to his appeal to the teachings of ibn Taymiyyah, Qutb completely rejected modern ideologies.[85] Also, although some issues such as *takfir* (the excommunication of Muslims), were not part of mid-20th century Wahhabism, they were present in abd al-Wahhab's original ideology.[86] For these reasons, Qutb's books found fertile ground in Saudi Arabia. .

In addition, the Wahhabists and the Qutbist faction of the Brotherhood had a mutually transformative relationship. The Saudi regime was in the midst of what became known as an Arab Cold War[87] between the traditional monarchies and the secular

[81] Ibid., pp. 40-45.
[82] Ibid., p. 51.
[83] Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Knopf, 2006) pp. 79-80.
[84] Wiktotowicz, "Anatomy of a Salafi Movement," pp. 121-123.
[85] A good discussion of the difference between al-Banna and Qutb on this issue, see: Paul Brykczynski, "Radical Islam and the Nation: The Relationship between Religion and Nationalism in the Political Thought of Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb," *History of Intellectual History*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2005).
[86] Moussalli, p. 6.
[87] This term was made famous by Malcolm Kerr, see Malcolm Kerr, *The Arab Cold War: Gamal 'Abd Al-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

nationalists. In this context the Saudis saw the spread of Islamism as strategically beneficial because it undermined the secularists. They therefore supported and tried to push Islamic movements throughout the Middle East in the direction of Wahhabism. This strategy was particularly effective with the Qutbist faction of the Brotherhood in Saudi Arabia.[88]

Conversely the Brotherhood's long history of political involvement had a significant effect on the Wahhabists. Although abd al-Wahhab's teaching had implications for politics, the overwhelming majority of Wahhabists had been non-political since the 1920s. The arrival of the Muslim Brothers fleeing Egypt created disunity within Wahhabism. Several brothers took influential teaching positions and their books circulated widely. For example, several important Wahhabists such as Safar al-Hawali and Osama bin-Laden attended Muhammad Qutb's lectures. A highly politicized Wahhabism, often referred to the *sahwah* (awakening), emerged from this mix. Non-political Wahhabists, who rejected this transformation, responded by portraying Qutb as a typical Muslim Brotherhood thinker and highlighted his secular and modernist background. They then asserted that the *sahwah* was not true to Wahhabism.[89]

This account of Wahhabism's politicization has limits, however. Qutb may have influenced the politicized Wahhabists, but their understanding of Islam still followed the main teachings of abd al-Wahhab. They were still primarily interested in theological issues such as the oneness of God and the purification of Islam. They differed with the mainstream non-political Wahhabists by claiming that the proper implementation of Wahhabist theology required an understanding of modern political contexts.

Two thinkers, Salman al-Awda and Safar al-Hawali, were especially important for challenging the non-political Wahhabist establishment. Al-Hawali in particular was well known for his knowledge of international relations. For example, in the run up to the 1991 Gulf War, the non-political Wahhabist scholars backed the Saudi government's decision to allow the American military to defend the kingdom. Al-Hawali, who claimed to be an expert on the United States, argued that these scholars did not fully understand America's imperial intensions.[90] Al-Hawali and the political Wahhabists did not reject the methodology or the creed of the non-political Wahhabists. Instead they claimed that the non-political Wahhabists did not know enough about non-Islamic issues to make informed decisions.

A small minority of political-Wahhabists went even further and began to call for jihad against Saudi Arabia and other Muslim regimes. Many of these militant-Wahhabists had fought in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union during the 1970s and 1980s. They developed a more militant attitude and refused to accept both the non-political and the political Wahhabists' arguments. Most Wahhabists called for an evolution of society toward the Wahhabist ideal, but the militant Wahhabists rejected this argument as a justification for inaction. Instead these militant Wahhabists insisted that the only way to accomplish reform was through jihad.

The history and theory of the militant Wahhabists will be discussed in greater detail in the section on terrorism below but a few points need to be made at this stage of the argument. First, all the Wahhabists, from the most a-political to the most militant, shared

[88] Kepel, p. 52.
[89] See "Historical Development of the Methodologies of al-Ikhwaan al-Muslimin," *Salafi Publication*.
[90] Wiktorowicz, *Anatomy of a Salafi Movement*, pp. 224-225.

the same understanding of Islam and the same goals for the future. They accept the theological arguments of abd al-Wahhab concerning the unity of God and its implication of matching belief with action. Put simply, militant Wahhabists believe in the same ideal for Islamic society. Their only difference is on the strategy to implement it. This ideal is significantly different from Hassan al-Banna's and the Muslim Brotherhood's ideal Islamic state. In fact, virtually all Wahhabists, no matter which stream they fall into, would claim that al-Banna's Islam, which was fused with nationalism, constitutionalism, and other modern elements, was not Islam at all.

Second, the fate of Qutbists in Egypt and elsewhere who did not migrate to Saudi Arabia needs to be mentioned. Many of Sayid Qutb's followers in Egypt went on to form various terrorist groups such as *Takfir wa al-Hijra*, and the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. These groups originated in the 1960s and 1970s with essentially a pure Qutbist ideology. Their aim was to overthrow the domestic regimes of the states in which they lived. In 1981, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad famously assassinated Anwar Sadat. However, as mentioned earlier, from the 1960s onward the Wahhabists and the Qutbists integrated their ideologies. This fusion took place both inside Saudi Arabia and throughout the rest of the Middle East. So, for example, in the 1970s the Egyptian Ayman al-Zawahiri was a follower of Sayid Qutb, but after coming into contact with likeminded Saudi Wahhabists he became an al-Qaeda leader and is now the second in command.[91] Al-Qaeda, of course, is headed by a Wahhabist Saudi, Osama bin-Laden. Other Egyptian Qutbists went through a similar transformation. For example, al-Zawahiri's associate, abd al-Qadir bin abd al-Aziz, was the founder of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, but then came under the influence of Wahhabist thought. Later he even cites abd al-Wahhab in his work. In addition, some influential scholars like Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi rely heavily of abd al-Wahhab in their work but also praise Qutbists such as al-Zawahiri.[92]

Not all Wahhabists view the Qutbists as adherents of abd al-Wahhab's teachings, and many non-political Wahhabists blame Qutb for groups such as al-Qaeda.[93] Nevertheless, Wahhabists and Qutbists would eventually unite on many important issues. Theologically they focus on the unity of God, the teachings of ibn Taymiyyah, and the importance of integrating belief and action. They are skeptical of modern ideas such as democracy and nationalism, and they consider divergent groups like the Shias to be outside the bounds of Islam.[94] For this reason, differentiating Qutbism from Wahhabism is increasingly difficult, so much so that Qutbists and Wahhabists for all intents and purposes constitute a single movement.

Therefore, for the remainder of this work, I will consider the Qutbists to have left the Muslim Brotherhood and merged with the Wahhabists. In referring to both elements as Wahhabists, some philosophical and theological nuance will be lost. Still, for this study, and

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[91] The relevant biographical information on al-Zawahiri can be found in Wright's *Looming Tower* cited above.

[92] For a demonstration of how the Qutbists and Wahhabists have integrated their ideology and the extent that they now cite one another see: William McCants, *Militant Ideology Atlas* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center U.S. Military Academy, 2006). Specific reference to abd al-Qatir bin abd al-Aziz can be found on pp. 57-58. Specific references to al-Maqdisi can be found on pp. 161-218.

[93] Haneef James Oliver, "Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimun (The Muslim Brotherhood)," *The Wahhabi Myth Website*, www.thewahhabimyth.com/ikhwan.htm

[94] For example, al-Zawahiri argues that Shias are not Muslims in his tract, *Our Stance Towards Iran: Response to the Accusation of Cooperation*. See McCants, p. 269.

from a policy perspective, the remaining differences between Qutbists and the Muslim Brotherhood are largely insignificant. What is especially important to keep in mind are these Islamists' view of modernity, and of other sects within Islam. On both of these fronts, a clear difference exists between Qutbists and Wahhabists on one side, and the Muslim Brotherhood on the other.

It is also important to understand that despite the evolution of Qutb and his followers, the mainstream ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood has largely remained intact. The debate that began between Qutb and al-Hudaybi in the 1960s continues. As mentioned earlier, al-Hudaybi rejected Qutb's arguments about *jahiliyya* and the excommunication of Muslims. Al-Hudaybi's writings were not very influential, and today he is considered insignificant. However, the ideas he expressed were representative of the rank and file Muslim Brother and those ideas continue to define the organization. For example, Umar al-Tilmisani, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood for much of the 1970s and 1980s, was also very critical of Sayid Qutb and his legacy. He, like al-Hudaybi before him, took the traditional Islamic position that overthrowing a Muslim leader was forbidden.[95] Indeed, despite the influence of Sayid Qutb and his followers, the mainstream Muslim Brotherhood maintained a position similar to that of Hassan al-Banna in the first half of the 20th century. The Brotherhood remains an organization committed to political, not theological reform. As opposed to the Wahhabists and the Qutbists, the Brotherhood continued to infuse their call to Islam with aspects of nationalism, socialism, constitutionalism, and democracy.

The best evidence of this today is the popularity of the Centrist (*wasatiya*) movement among the Muslim Brothers. In fact, the Brotherhood's current ideology is probably best articulated through a proper understanding of Centrism. The Centrist movement originated in 1991 when Ahmad abu al-Majd wrote its ideological platform. Abu al-Majd called for an understanding of Islam that was critical both of the secular Arab regimes as well as the Wahhabists and Qutbists. He claimed that the Wahhabists and the Qutbists disregarded human rights and discredited Islam in the West.[96] This critique is telling for two reasons. First, in framing the argument in terms of human rights, al-Majd incorporates modern political ideas. Second, it reflects a concern for what non-Muslims think of Islam. Wahhabists refuse to consider modern political ideals or the perceptions of non-Muslims.

The Centrist movement has been very influential among the Muslim Brotherhood's most important intellectuals. Scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Muhammad Imara, Tariq al-Bishari, and Muhammad al-Ghazali have continued to develop the Centrist school over the past two decades. With Hassan al-Banna's ideas as their ideological foundation, they argue that staying true to the early Islamic forefathers is completely compatible with modernity.[97] They hope to reinterpret modern social science on grounds that they consider Islamically acceptable. For example in the 1990s, when the study of civil society was very popular among democratic theorists, Tariq al-Bishari debated Egyptian liberals about the subject. Unlike the liberals whose arguments drew upon secular understandings, al-Bishari

[95] See: Umar al-Tilmisani, *Dhikriyat la Mudhakkirat* (Memories not Memoirs) (Cairo: Dar al-Itisam, 1985).
[96] Sagi Polka, "The Centrist Stream in Egypt and its Role in the Public Discourse Surrounding the Shaping of the Country's Cultural Identity," *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 39, no. 3 (July 2003): p. 41.
[97] Ibid., pp. 42-48.

argued that civil society needed to be derived from Islam.[98] This sort of flexibility has allowed the Brotherhood to uphold many traditional Islamic principles and customs (especially concerning women, the family, and Islam's place in society) while continuing to present its message to a modern audience.

Centrists have created a discourse that is grounded in Islam, but does not rely on one particular theological understanding of Islam. They attempt to incorporate as many Muslims into a broad coalition that shares a single Islamic political identity. Although Centrists are more tolerant of diverse opinions than Wahhabists, unlike liberal Islam, Centrism does not rule out traditional interpretations or Wahhabism. Often Centrist scholars such as al-Qaradawi will present the hard-line Wahhabist or Qutbist interpretations as one among many valid alternatives.[99] Furthermore, although Centrists present their arguments in the language of theology, Centrism is not purely theological. It is a collection of religious-based arguments made to justify political ends.

The result is a political identity that in many ways is similar to other modern political identities. For example, similar to nationalism, which relies on a shared ethnic heritage, the Centrist Muslim Brothers emphasize a common Islamic history and identity. Similar to nationalist movements, the Brotherhood also reinterprets history and politics through the lens of its ideology. For example, Hamas, the Palestinian branch of the Brotherhood, has adopted national symbols such as the Palestinian flag and map and then Islamicized them by overlaying text from the Quran or other Islamic symbols. And, just as Arab nationalist movements claimed that Palestine had always been Arab, Hamas asserted that the region had been Islamic since the time of Abraham. In fact Hamas claims that Abraham was Muslim.[100] Clearly, this falls into the category of "invented history" so often associated with nationalist movements. At the same time, the Brotherhood's reinterpretation of history also sets its adherents apart from the Wahhabists. While the Wahhabists viewed the Ottomans as corruptors, the Brotherhood tends to portray the Ottomans as legitimate Islamic rulers who were undermined by the imperialist Western powers. Again, the Brotherhood wants to foster an Islamic identity, and the Ottomans, who identified first and foremost as Muslims, meet that criterion.

The Muslim Brotherhood should, therefore, be understood as a modern political movement. Its call to Islam is what social scientists term "framing." The Brotherhood frames political arguments with the language, history and norms of Islam.[101] This does not mean that the Muslim Brothers do not believe in Islam. In fact, the opposite is probably

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[98] Sami Zubaida, "Islam, the State, and Democracy: Contrasting Conceptions of Society in Egypt," *Middle East Report* vol. 22, no. 179 (November-December 1992): p. 28.

[99] For example al-Qaradawi rules that while the veil preferred by the Wahhabists which covers the entire face is legitimate, it is not required. Also in a controversial ruling, he argued that execution is one of many valid punishments for homosexuality. See Samuel Helfont, *Yusuf al-Qaradawi Islam and Modernity* (Tel Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center, 2009). Further, while al-Qaradawi does not accept the excommunication of Muslim leaders, he refers to Sayid Qutb's teachings on *jahaliyya* as a legitimate. See: Gudran Kramer, "Drawing Boundaries: Yusuf al-Qaradawi on Apostasy," in *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies*, eds. Gudrun Kramer and Sabine Schmidtke (Lieden, Boston: Brill, 2006), pp. 204-206.

[100] Meir Litvak, "The Islamization of Palestinian Identity: The Case of Hamas," *Data and Analysis* (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle East and African Studies, 1996).

[101] For more on framing, see: Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman, "Framing Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 10 (June 2007): pp. 103-126; Robert D. Benford, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 26 (August 2000): pp. 611-639.

true. Their intense belief in Islam leads adherents to understand the world through an Islamic lens. The difference between the Brotherhood and the Wahhabists is that the Brotherhood's belief in Islam is not centered on a particular theological understanding of Islam. The Brotherhood understands Islam as a political-social system that defines a society, similar to the way liberal democracy defines Western society or communism defined the politics, society, and culture of the former Soviet Union.

This difference can cause confusion for policymakers who are unfamiliar with the history of Islam. For example, while both the Brotherhood and the Wahhabists call for the implementation of Islamic law and the formation of an Islamic state, they mean different things. Their definitions of Islam are also significantly different. In fact many Wahhabists would not consider the Brotherhood's Islam to be legitimate. For example, the Muslim Brotherhood's idea of an Islamic state would include many features of modernity such as elections and constitutions. Revolutionary Iran might be an example. The Brotherhood justifies the formation of this type of state on Islamic terms *and* through the modern discourse of anti-imperialism, nationalism, human rights, and democracy. The Wahhabists on the other hand desire a state based completely on "authentic" Islamic principles found in the canonical texts. A representative state might be Afghanistan under the Taliban: no elections, not justified by modern norms, no nationalism.

Relationship Between the Brotherhood and Wahhabism

As argued above, the division between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Wahhabists needs to be understood as a split between a political and a theological movement. This does not mean that Wahhabism does not have political implications or that the Brotherhood has not created theological justifications, such as Centrism, to justify their politics. Yet, the essence of Wahhabism is theological and that of the Brotherhood's is political. This difference is the reason for considerable antagonism between each movement. The Wahhabists argue that the Brotherhood is perverting Islam. The Brotherhood contends that Wahabism is not politically viable in the modern age.

Each side blames the other for dividing the Islamic community. The Wahhabists blame the Muslim Brotherhood for what it calls *hizbiyyah* (partisanship). They claim that because the Brotherhood supports the formation of political parties, it has helped divide the Muslim world into competing factions.[102] In addition, Wahhabists criticize the Brotherhood's theological leniency and its modern political influences. As one Wahhabist recently put it, the Muslim Brothers "have consistently overlooked the principal aspect of calling their followers to *tawhid* and forbidding them from polytheism, because these are matters which require time and effort to change, matters which people do not find easy to accept. [The Muslim Brothers] were more concerned with amassing groups of people together rather than calling the people to the way of the Prophet."[103] The Brotherhood believes that the Wahhabists have been so strict in their interpretations of Islam that they

[102] For more on *hizbiyyah*, see: Muhammad Naasirud-Deen al-Albaanee, "The Destructiveness of Hizbiyyah (Partisanship) Upon the Ummah," *Torid*, June 14, 2007, www.troid.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=366&Itemid=333

[103] Oliver, "Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimun."

have caused a *fitnah* (schism). *Fitnah* pits one group of Muslims, thus creating divisions that Islam strictly forbids.

Over the past few years, Wahhabism has grown in the Middle East, sometimes at the expense of the Muslim Brotherhood. In some cases, secular regimes have supported non-political Wahhabists in an attempt to keep the Muslim Brotherhood in check.[104] Specific examples of this will be discussed below, but in general, this phenomenon has increased tensions between the two Islamic movements. For example one Wahhabist website dedicated a series of articles to criticizing Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who is extremely influential and well respected among the Muslim Brothers. The author often refers to al-Qaradawi as a "dog," or "the wicked mufti."[105]

The differences between the Muslim Brotherhood's political Islam and the theological positions of the Wahhabists are clearly evident in the debates between al-Qaeda and the Brotherhood.[106] For example, al-Zawahiri has criticized the Brothers for using modern legal establishments and secular judges to push their agenda. The Brotherhood countered that judges are an important part of modern society and reform efforts.[107] Brotherhood leaders also condemn al-Qaeda's understanding of Islam for being "utterly unrealistic."[108] Even in places such as the Palestinian territories, where the Brotherhood and al-Qaeda share an interest in conducting jihad against Israel, considerable tension exists between the two organizations. For example al-Zawahiri condemned Hamas for taking part in elections "which are based on secular constitutions." Hamas responded by emphasizing the importance of modern politics.[109]

These debates are indicative of wider tensions throughout the Middle East. The Muslim Brotherhood and the Wahhabists are not one unified group aligned against secularists and liberals. Rather the Brotherhood and the Wahhabists are in direct competition. The next section explores how this conflict is playing out in various states and what the broader implications are for the region and U. S. foreign policy.

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[104] For example, see: Khalil El-Anani, "Salafists Accent," *Al-Ahram*, no. 901, June 12- 18, 2008, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/901/op2.htm

[105] "Readings in Qaradawism," *Salafi Publications*, (November - December 2000), www.spubs.com/sps/sp.cfm?secID=NDV&subsecID=NDV16&loadpage=displaysubsection.cfm

[106] It should be noted that the non-violent Wahhabists would not agree that al-Qaeda is representative of their ideology. In fact they blame the Muslim Brotherhood for the emergence of jihadists groups such as al-Qaeda. Nevertheless, as discussed above, the differences between the violent and non-violent Wahhabism is a matter of strategy and not a matter of belief or creed.

[107] "Habib Denounces Al Zawahri's Criticism of The Judges," *Ikhwan Web*, June 9, 2006, www.ikhwanweb.org/Article.asp?ID=4130&SectionID=81

[108] "Muslim Brotherhood Rejects Al Zawahri Statements and Stresses on Peaceful Reform," *Ikhwan Web*, January 11 2006, www.ikhwanweb.com/Article.asp?ID=4993&SectionID=147

[109] "Abu Marzouk: Hamas Rejects Al Zawahri Statements," *Ikhwan Web*, December 21 2006, www.ikhwanweb.com/Article.asp?ID=671&SectionID=98

Part 2: Regional Implications

The division between Wahhabists and the Muslim Brotherhood has had considerable repercussions throughout the Middle East. However, to understand this fallout we first need to put it into the proper context. An important factor in the Middle East is Iran's push for regional hegemony. To deal with Iran, diplomatic maneuvers, strong statements, and strategic realignments have dominated various Arab states' foreign policy.[110] Iran's stature is not simply a concern for its neighbors but has effects as far away as Morocco.[111]

This relationship between Iran and the Sunni Arab regimes affects both the divisions within Sunni Islamism and the consequences of those divisions. It is therefore necessary to discuss Iran, the Shias and the regional context before moving on.

The Shia Crescent

In the aftermath of September 11th 2001, the Bush administration set out to remake the Middle East by breaking the grip of authoritarian regimes. The administration planned to democratize the region by overthrowing Saddam Hussein's totalitarian regime in Iraq and by pushing for elections elsewhere throughout the region. The unintended consequences of these policies have indeed reshaped politics in the region, but not along the lines that the Bush administration had hoped.

The Arab world had long been dominated by a Sunni establishment, even though Shias far outnumbered Sunnis in Iraq, Lebanon, and in Arab regions bordering the Persian Gulf. The Bush administration's push for democratization empowered Arab Shias to a level that they had not seen in centuries. Furthermore, Iran, which had been restrained by bellicose Sunni neighbors, Iraq under Saddam Hussein and Afghanistan under the Taliban, saw the United States overthrow both regimes.

In December 2004, King Abdullah of Jordan described the effects of these developments. He used the term "Crescent" to depict a broad strip running directly through the heart of the Middle East.[112] In effect, he argued that Iran was pushing for regional hegemony by allying with a newly Shia-controlled Iraq, a Syria ruled by Iran's Allawi[113] ally Basher al-Assad, and a Hezbollah-controlled Southern Lebanon. The resulting

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[110] For example, see: Zuheir Kseibati, "A Test of Reconciliation," *Al-Hayat*, March 12, 2009, http://english.daralhayat.com/opinion/OPED/03-2009/Article-20090312-fb3d6e45-c0a8-10ed-0042-76fd9880d7ae/story.html ; Walid Choucair, "The Arab Reconciliation: Objective Reasons for Caution," *Al-Hayat*, March 13, 2009, http://english.daralhayat.com/opinion/OPED/03-2009/Article-20090313-005a38a0-c0a8-10ed-0042-76fdf3bfc78c/story.html

[111] Mohammad Al-Ashab, "Rabat and Tehran: A Chasm that Could Widen," *Al-Hayat*, March 13, 2009, http://english.daralhayat.com/opinion/OPED/03-2009/Article-20090313-0058e1ab-c0a8-10ed-0042-76fd2117eb99/story.html

[112] Robin Wright and Peter Baker, "Iraq, Jordan See Threat to Election from Iran," *The Washington Post*, December 8, 2004.

[113] The Allawis consider themselves to be a breakaway sect of Shiism.

"Shia Crescent" is said to be a direct challenge to the ruling Sunni establishment in the Arab world.

The idea of a "Shia Crescent" has attracted a good deal of attention from foreign policy scholars. For example, Vali Nasr, a professor of international politics at Tufts University recently hired by the Obama administration,[114] wrote an influential article, subsequently turned into a book, on how the Sunni-Shia divide will shape the future of the Middle East.[115] Additionally, think tanks such as the Council on Foreign Relations and the Middle East Policy Council, among others, have devoted conferences to the implications of a "Shia Crescent" for U.S. foreign policy.[116] Recent events in the Middle East have only confirmed for some analysts the importance of the "Shia Crescent" in creating a regional rift. Significant sectarian conflict between Shii and Sunni militants has afflicted Iraq. Meanwhile, the Saudis and other Sunni governments are worried about Iranian ascendance and the development of Iranian nuclear weapons. For many the tension between Sunnis and Shias was a driving factor in the 2006 Israeli war with Lebanon.

Despite the fact that Hezbollah fought fiercely against Israel throughout the war, much of the Sunni Arab establishment condemned Hezbollah. The regimes in Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia criticized Hezbollah in ways that they would never have criticized a Sunni group fighting the Israelis. Prominent Sunni scholars were also very critical of Hezbollah. For example, the influential Wahhabi Sheik Abdullah bin Jabreen in Saudi Arabia declared it to be "illegal for Muslims to join, support, or pray" for Hezbollah.[117] In this fatwa, Jabreen referred to the Shias as *al-rafidun*, a derogatory term that placed Shias outside the bounds of Islam. In fact, Wahhabi scholars had generally been very critical, if not openly hostile toward the Shias.

But on closer inspection, the Sunni-Shia divide was not as clear as often portrayed. Contrary to the Sunni establishment and Wahhabists, the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood supported Hezbollah throughout the conflict. For example, as opposed to the Egyptian regime which was critical of Hezbollah, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood held street rallies in support of the Shii organization. The Supreme Guide of the Brotherhood, Muhammad Mahdi Akif, offered unequivocal support for Hezbollah and throughout other Sunni Arab states, various branches of the Brotherhood largely followed the lead of their Egyptian counterparts by stressing unity with Iran and the Shias against the secular Sunni regimes.[118] Also important was Hezbollah's official justification for entering the war, namely, to support Hamas, the branch of the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine.

The most recent conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza during the winter 2008-2009 raises further questions about the extent of the Sunni-Shia divide in the Middle East.

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[114] Jay Solomon and Yochi J. Dreazen, "U.S. to Enlist Iran in Combating Afghan Drug Trade," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 9, 2009.

[115] Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam will Shape the Future* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006); Vali Nasr, "When the Shiites Rise," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 85, no. 4 (July/August 2006): pp. 58-74.

[116] See: For the Council on Foreign Relations conference transcripts see: "The Emerging Shia Crescent Symposium: Understanding the Shia," *The Council on Foreign Relations*, Washington D.C., June 5, 2006, www.cfr.org/project/1264/emerging_shia_crescent.html ; For a synapses of the Middle East Policy Council, see: Juan Cole, Kenneth Katzman, Karim Sadjadpour, Ray Takeyh, "A Shia Crescent: What Fallout for the United States?" *Middle East Policy*, vol. 12, no. 4 (Winter 2005).

[117] Quote is a paraphrase taken from: "Saudi Sheik Issues Fatwa against Hezbollah," *UPI*, July 21, 2006.

[118] Israel Elad-Altman, "The Sunni-Shia Conversion Controversy," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, vol. 5 (April 6, 2007): p. 5.

In that conflict the most vocal supporters of Hamas were other Muslim Brothers, Iran and Hezbollah. The Sunni Arab establishment was either critical of Hamas or noticeably silent. Indeed this conciliatory relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and its followers on one side and Iran and the Shias on the other is typical throughout the region. On other issues that supposedly separate Sunnis and Shias, such as Iran's pursuit of nuclear technology, the Brotherhood has generally sided with Iran and the Shias. For example, the Brotherhood linked scholar al-Qaradawi openly stated that a "nuclear Iran is not a threat" to the region, and that "It is obligatory on all Muslims to resist any possible attack the U.S. might launch against Iran."[119] Even in states such as Iraq, where sectarian conflict has been extremely intense, Muslim Brotherhood-related militants, such as Hamas in Iraq, have rejected sectarianism. Instead, they have called for "a culture of harmony and tolerance" between Sunnis and Shias.[120] This is in sharp contrast to Wahhabist influenced militants such as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi who declared all out war on all Shias.

The Muslim Brotherhood's position toward Iran and the Shias is only possible because Iran has also pushed for political reconciliation and the blurring of theological differences between sects. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeni's Islamic Revolution in Iran was not targeted solely at Iranian Shias. After taking power in Iran, he began a policy of *taqrib* (the bringing together of sects). He wanted to be seen not only as the leader of the Shias and Iran but also the entire Islamic world. He implemented policies and issued rulings that helped to narrow the gap between Sunnis and Shias. For example, he eliminated the prohibition on Shias praying behind a Sunni prayer leader and vice versa. And he had flyers promoting reconciliation distributed at the annual pilgrimage in Mecca.[121]

To some extent, Iranian outreach to the Sunni Arab world continues today. As Ray Takeyh of the Council on Foreign Relations has argued, "Iran has always tried to overcome the sectarian divide in the Middle East and become a larger Middle Eastern power [...] because otherwise, if it is cast exclusively as a Shii power, then by implication, its regional influence is limited."[122] Today Iranian leaders attempt to project influence in the Sunni Arab world by supporting popular causes at the expense of the Sunni Arab establishment. For example, Iranian leaders aggressively attack Israel or deny the Holocaust in speeches because this rhetoric gains favor with the Sunni Arab "street." Iran has no national interest in Palestine, but if it wants to project power it needs to court local Arab populations. Recently Tariq Alhomayed, the editor of the influential pan-Arab daily al-Sharq al-Awsat , stated: "When Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad gave the speech in which he attacked Israel and described it as a racist state during the Durban II UN anti-racism conference, he was not addressing the international community so much as he was addressing us [the Arabs]."[123]

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[119] "Qardawi: Nuclear Iran Not a Threat to Regional Nations," *Islamic Republic News Agency*, December 22, 2007, http://www2.irna.ir/en/news/view/menu-236/0712224020172538.htm ; "Qaradawi Call to Defend Iran if US Attacks it," *Gulf Times* (Qatar), October 13, 2007, www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=178201&version=1&template_id=36&parent_id=16

[120] See Hamas in Iraq's platform (in Arabic). A copy is available at: "*Hamas Al-Iraq Talan An Al-Khutut Al-Aridah Libarnamajha Al-Siyasi* (Hamas of Iran Announces its Political Platform)," *Mutimar Ahl al-Iraq* (Committee of the People of Iraq), March 23, 2007, www.ahliraq.com/news.php?action=view&id=277

[121] Sivan, pp. 181-205. Quote taken from p. 186.

[122] CFR, "Conference Transcripts."

[123] Tariq Alhomayed, "Ahmadinejad was Addressing the Arabs," *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, April 21, 2009, http://aawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=2&id=16477

This outreach has been particularly influential with the Muslim Brotherhood, because despite sectarian differences, the Brotherhood and the Khomeini-inspired Shias share a similar political ideology. Like the Muslim Brotherhood, Khomeini's brand of radical Shiism conceives of Islam as a modern political identity. In Khomeini's most important work, *Velayat-e Faqih* (Islamic Government)[124] he declared that the world was essentially political as was the Prophet Muhammad, and therefore "Islam was political or nothing else."[125]

Although many analysts accept that Khomenei has had a significant influence on radical Shii political thought, less well known is the extent to which these changes have lessened the gap between Sunnis and Shias. Prior to Khomeni, Shii political thought primarily revolved around the idea of a hidden Imam (who disappeared over 1,000 years ago) and his eventual return.[126] Because the Shias believed that Imams were infallible and that the return of the last Imam was imminent, they never developed a comprehensive theory of a state. They had no need for one. Once the "hidden" Imam returned he would have all the answers.[127] This belief stood in stark contrast to traditional Sunni beliefs which do not recognize the charismatic leadership of the Shii Imams. Sunnis therefore developed a system of government based on juristic interpretations of canonical texts. Khomeini as opposed to traditional Shii scholars argued that the Imams had passed the authority to rule onto the scholars. It was therefore possible for Shias to establish a legitimate Islamic government on the basis of adherence to Islamic law as determined by the scholars. Therefore Shii political theory, as in Sunni Islam, was transformed into a juristic interpretation of sacred law.

Khomeini, similar to the Muslim Brotherhood thinkers, incorporated several modern and not necessarily Islamic, features into his theory of an Islamic state. As one historian put it, Iran's constitution has a "central structure [..] taken straight from the French Fifth Republic, with Montesquieu's separation of powers."[128] Iran also holds elections, and despite its pan-Islamic rhetoric, has never shied away from nationalist causes. Thus, the current Iranian political structure is not a uniquely Shii model. It could theoretically be adopted in Sunni states, as well. In fact, it seems that some Sunnis are doing just that. Traditionally, Sunni scholars were wary of political power. Even when the Muslim Brotherhood turned against their secular rulers in the 1950s and 1960s, they didn't argue for scholars to assume political power. Since the Iranian Revolution, however, increasing clerical power has become more attractive. In 2007, for example, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood issued a political platform that called for the formation of a *majlis ulama*, (a Council of Scholars) that would prevent the legislative and executive branches from implementing laws contrary to their understanding of the *sharia*.[129] While the details

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[124] A better translation of this work would be "Government of the Jurists," but most authors use the title "Islamic Government" when discussing it in English. To avoid confusion I will also refer to it as "Islamic Government."
[125] David Menashri, *Iran: A Decade of War and Revolution* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1990), p. 4.
[126] See: Shahrough Akhavi, "The Ideology and Praxis of Shi'ism in the Iranian Revolution," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* vol. 25, no. 2, (April 1983): p. 203.
[127] Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 17-19.
[128] Ibid., p. 38.
[129] "*Barnamaj Hizb al-Ihwan al-Muslimin* (Platform of the Party of Muslim Brothers)," *Islam Online*, August 25. 2007, www.islamonline.net/arabic/daawa/2007/08/ikhwan.pdf

have not been completely fleshed out, this *majles ulema* closely resembles the Council of Guardians in Iran.[130]

Issues such as the return of the Shii Imam and the clergy's place in government have yet to be completely resolved. Nevertheless, in the wake of transforming their religious beliefs into modern political ideologies, Shias inspired by Khomeni, along with Sunni Muslim Brothers have developed a model for an Islamic state that downplays theological differences and transcends sectarian divides. This stands in contrast to the Wahhabism, which unlike the Brotherhood's political Islam or Khomeini-style Shiism, is a theological movement. Wahhabists will not put aside theological issues for the sake of politics.

The similarities between Khomeini's Shiism and the Muslim Brotherhood have had serious political repercussions. Although animosity between the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran remains over sectarian and nationalist issues, a practical alliance has developed that places each group on the same side in Middle Eastern politics.[131] Wahhabists, conversely, are clearly on the other side of that strategic divide. Therefore, as the Wahhabists and the Muslim Brotherhood compete for influence throughout the Middle East, they will affect the region's balance of power. The more the Muslim Brotherhood is successful, the more the balance will shift in favor or Iran. The more the militantly anti-Shia Wahhabists are successful, the more Iran's influence will subside.

Regional Fallout

Most scholars recognize that Sunni Islamist movements are extremely popular throughout the Arab world. And yet, Sunni Islamism is not a monolithic movement. In fact, despite common terms, two distinct movements exist within Sunni Islamism, the Muslim Brotherhood and Wahhabism: the former functioning as a political movement that adapts to modern political realities in the Arab world, the latter exhibiting a form of theological purity that refuses adaptation to non-Islamic realities. Throughout the Middle East these two movements often compete and this rivalry has had far reaching consequences for regional politics.

In general, Wahhabism has recently experienced gains throughout the region, in many cases at the expense of the Muslim Brotherhood.[132] Even so, the conflict between Wahhabists and the Brotherhood takes different forms depending on the geo-political locations, histories, and circumstances of various Arab states. This section examines trends in a number of important Arab states and elaborates on the implications of these developments for the region as a whole.[133]

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[130] Mohamed Elmenshawy, "The Muslim Brotherhood Shows its True Colors," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 12, 2007.

[131] See: Samuel Helfont, "The Muslim Brotherhood and the Shia Crescent," *Orbis*, vol. 53, no. 2 (Spring 2009); L. Azuri, "Muslim Brotherhood Debates Its Position on the Shi'a," *Memri Inquiry and Analysis*, no. 511 (April 24, 2009) www.memri.org/bin/latestnews.cgi?ID=IA51109

[132] For an articulate overview of recent regional developments see: "Salafism Rising in Mideast," *Kuwait Times*, October 20, 2008, www.kuwaittimes.net/read_news.php?newsid=ODQ2Mjk4MzU5

[133] For reliable information on the Wahhabist-Muslim Brotherhood split and its effects on regional politics see Marc Lynch's two blogs: The now defunct "abuaardvark.com" and his newer "lynch.foreignpolicy.com." Links to several

Egypt

The Muslim Brotherhood has a long a history of both peaceful and violent opposition in Egypt. In the 1940s, a member of the Brotherhood assassinated a Prime Minister and in the 1950s, another attempted to assassinate abd al-Nasser. In the 1960s and 1970s, several Muslim Brotherhood offshoot groups, heavily influenced by Sayid Qutb and identifying more with the Wahhabists, spawned some extremely violent terrorists. In response, the regime has routinely cracked down on the Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood in its current form claims that domestic terrorism and domestic political violence are illegitimate. It does support terrorism against non-Muslims abroad such as in Israel and it is extremely critical of the Hosni Mubarak regime's relations with the Jewish state. Domestically, the Brotherhood is very critical of Egypt's corruption and violations of human rights. The regime in turn, attempts to portray the Brotherhood as illegitimate by pointing to its violent past, as well as its current positions which deny rights for women and religious minorities.

Egypt has a small, politically insignificant Shii population and so does not need to address the sectarian strife that has gripped other states such as Lebanon and Iraq. However, in regional politics, Iran and Egypt are bitter rivals,[134] and the Muslim Brotherhood has sometimes acted as a proxy for the regime's Shii competitors. This was evident in the 2006 Israeli war with Hezbollah. A more telling example occurred in April 2009, when Egyptian authorities discovered a Hezbollah cell operating in Egypt. The regime worried that the cell was preparing either to launch attacks against the state or against Israel from inside Egypt.[135] An attack on Israel could have drawn Egypt into a war with Israel similar to the 2006 conflict between Lebanon and Israel. The discovery of a Hezbollah cell operating in Egypt prompted Egyptian nationalists to accuse Hezbollah and Iran of a dangerous provocation. In contrast, the Brotherhood publicly defended Hezbollah.[136]

Historically, non-political Wahhabism was not influential in Egypt. Recently it has started to gain ground. Wahhabism has been especially attractive to lower income Egyptians and former Muslim Brothers who have lost faith in politics. Beginning in the 1990s, the regime began to look at non-political Wahhabists as allies against the Brotherhood because of the non-political Wahhabist teaching that Muslims should always obey their rulers. So with the help of Saudi Arabia, Egypt began to rehabilitate imprisoned Islamic militants in part by providing them with Wahhabist books and literature. When the Brotherhood had success in the 2005 parliamentary elections, the regime became even more repressive toward the organization, downgrading it from an illegal party to a

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of the sources used in the following analysis can be found on these two blogs, so while his name may not appear in footnotes, please know that he has contributed significantly to the following research.

[134] For a recent example see: Abdul Rahman Al-Rashed, "Iran's Threats Towards Egypt," *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, March 4, 2009, http://aawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=2&id=15941

[135] Yoav Stern, "Egypt to Hezbollah: We'll Strike Back If You Attack Us," *Haartetz*, April 13, 2009, www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1078205.html

[136] "Muslim Brotherhood Chief Defends Nasrallah," *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, April 13, 2009, http://aawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=1&id=16390

constitutionally prohibited organization. This in turn helped to foster more support for the Wahhabists, both among the general Egyptian population and to some extent within the Brotherhood itself.[137]

For policymakers and analysts, then, the presence of Sunni Islamists in Egypt is not as important as the specific Sunni Islamist organization itself. The Muslim Brotherhood remains the most powerful Islamist organization in Egypt. As long as this is the case, Egypt will have an important foil to the regime's anti-Iranian policies. If the Brotherhood were to gain more power and influence, it would put the regime in an even more difficult situation. If however, the Wahhabists build on recent gains and begin to make serious inroads into Egyptian society, or even push the Brotherhood toward Wahhabists positions, the regime's anti-Iranian stance could begin to see less resistance.

Kuwait

As far as Arab states are concerned, Kuwait and Egypt could not be more different. Kuwait is located on the other side of the Arab world, bordering the Northern Persian Gulf. While Egypt has a long and rich cultural history with deep roots in the Mediterranean basin, until the 20th century Kuwait was an under-populated city-state considered by many a cultural backwater. Kuwait experienced neither a harsh colonial occupation nor the waves of modernist political and cultural movements that had influenced many of the Arab states. Also unlike Egypt, Kuwait is demographically diverse, with Shias making up nearly one third of the population. Politically, Kuwait is a constitutional monarchy and the ruling family still holds near absolute authority. Even so, the regime is far less oppressive than most of its neighbors and its parliament has been far more influential than its Egyptian counterpart.

The Kuwaiti branch of the Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1952 and refers to itself as the "Islamic Guidance Society." It has maintained close ties with other Brotherhood branches throughout the Middle East. However, its formal relationship with the Egyptian branch was broken in 1991 when the Kuwaiti Brothers faulted their Egyptian associates for failing to criticize Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. Nevertheless, the Kuwaiti Brotherhood's domestic and foreign policy positions have remained closely aligned with those of other Muslim Brotherhood branches. One notable difference is that the Kuwaiti Brotherhood has been free to participate in Kuwaiti politics. If the various levels of Brotherhood political participation were put on a spectrum, the Egyptian Brotherhood, which is completely illegal, would be on one end, and the Kuwaiti branch, enjoying the same rights and freedoms as the other political actors, would be at the opposite end. The Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood, also unlike many of its regional counterparts, has been known to cooperate with the existing regime.[138]

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[137] See: Joshua Stacher, "The Brothers and the Wars," *Middle East Report*, no. 250 (Spring 2009); Paul Schemm, "Ultraconservative Islam on the Rise in Mideast," *The Washington Post*, October 19, 2008; Nathan Field and Ahmed Hamem, "Egyptian Salafism: A Chronicle of Violence Foretold?" *The Daily Star* (Lebanon), March 13, 2009, www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=5&article_id=100035

[138] Nathan Brown, "Pushing Toward Party Politics: Kuwait's Islamic Constitutional Movement," *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Carnegie Papers*, no. 79 (Jan. 2007).

The Wahhabists in Kuwait are also an important movement. Wahhabism has had a long history in Kuwait, mostly because of geographical proximity to the Wahhabist heartland of central Arabia. Unlike in Saudi Arabia, however, Wahhabism has never been the dominant stream of Islam. The Kuwaiti Wahhabists are unique in that they participate in democratic politics. However, this does not mean that they have accepted democracy as legitimate. The Kuwaiti Wahhabists participate on purely practical grounds. While they do not accept the foundations of the democratic system they view electoral victory as a means to gain power and achieve goals.

Wahhabist political participation makes Kuwait a particularly telling example of the interaction between differing groups of Islamists. In parliamentary politics, the Muslim Brotherhood is generally caught between reaching out to the Shii members of parliament, many of whom have ties to Hezbollah and Iran, and accommodating the Wahhabists, who consider Shiism an abomination.[139] The level of support for each party therefore is very important in determining where Kuwait will stand in regional politics.

For example in Kuwait's May 2008 election,[140] the Brotherhood, the Wahhabists, and two Shii parties all ran candidates.[141] Combined, the Wahhabists and the Muslim Brotherhood increased their number of seats significantly, while the Shii parties only gained one additional seat.[142] Much of the international press coverage depicted this as a victory for the Sunni Islamists, but on closer examination, that sort of superficial analysis tells us very little.[143] While the Wahhabists doubled their representation, winning ten seats, the Muslim Brotherhood suffered one of its worst setbacks by winning only three. The results point toward increasing divisions inside Kuwait, and more importantly the Wahhabists functioning as a check on the Shias. Had the situation been reversed, with the Wahhabists performing poorly in the elections and the Muslim Brotherhood doubling its representation, the Shias may have been able to woo the Brothers into joining their push for pro-Iran, pro-Hezbollah policies. In fact, considering that, despite its losses in 2008, the Brotherhood remains one of the most well organized political parties in Kuwait, this scenario is still very much a possibility. By Arab standards, the Kuwaiti regime is staunchly pro-American, but as the memories of Saddam Hussein fade, if the Brotherhood and the Shias form a parliamentary block, Kuwait could begin to shift its stance. It is doubtful that Kuwait would turn against the United States, but the regime could remain silent or absent itself from issues concerning Iran that are important to U.S. interests.

It should be evident then, that in Kuwait, as in Egypt, the success of Sunni Islamists is of little concern to policy makers dealing with regional issues. What matters is which Islamists are successful.

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[139] Ibid., 17.

[140] It should be noted that Kuwait held another election in May 2009, but as this took place after the first draft of this work was completed, it will not be dealt with here.

[141] Hussain Al-Qatari, "Elections 2008 Guide," *Kuwait Times*, May 17, 2008, www.kuwaittimes.net/read_news.php?newsid=OTE4MzA3MDE4

[142] "*Ma Ilan Al-Nataij Al-Nihayah, Al-Salafiyun Abraz Fi Al-Intakhabat Al-Kuwaytiyah* (With the Announcement of the Final Results, the Salafis are the Winners in the Kuwaiti Elections)," *Al-Arabiya*, May 18, 2008 www.alarabiya.net/articles/2008/05/18/50017.html

[143] Nathan Brown, "Kuwait's 2008 Parliamentary Elections: A setback for Democratic Islamism?" *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Web Commentary* (May 2008): p. 2.

Other Gulf Arab States

The Wahhabists victories in Kuwait sparked a debate in the Arab press about the status of the Muslim Brotherhood versus that of the Wahhabists throughout the Arab Gulf States. Some have argued that the Brotherhood's losses in Kuwait should not be seen as a trend toward Wahhabism. They argue that electoral success is not necessarily indicative of popularity. Often, districting or the dynamics of party politics can lead certain parties to have more success than others. In Kuwait's case, tribal politics instead of ideology may have played a role.[144] Others have suggested that the decline of the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood is indicative of its waning influence throughout the Arab Gulf States.

In Saudi Arabia, the Brotherhood has largely been absorbed into the Wahhabist movement. This is to be expected considering Wahhabism's long history in Saudi society. The remnants of the Brotherhood in Saudi Arabia today are visible in political Wahhabists such as Salman Awda, and Safar al-Hawali discussed earlier. Yet while these thinkers were certainly influenced by Muslim Brothers, they also clearly identify with the teachings of abd al-Wahhab. In Qatar, Brotherhood thinkers and intellectuals remain active in the media, especially on the satellite channel Al-Jazeera, but do not have a formal organization. In other Gulf States, the Brotherhood is faring better but not necessarily well. In the United Arab Emirates, the Brotherhood has shown signs of innovative thinking, but the Emirati security services have prevented the Brothers from developing into a political force. The Brotherhood in Oman, true to its nature, has attempted to stay clear of sectarian politics, but the dominance of Oman's unique brand of Ibadi Islam, which is distinct from both Sunnism and Shiism, has limited the Brotherhood's influence there.[145]

In each of these states, even those where Sunni Islamism plays an important role, such as in Saudi Arabia, the weakness of the Muslim Brotherhood has meant very little popular opposition to anti-Iranian policies by the ruling regimes. The single possible exception is Qatar, which has often attempted to play a mediating role between pro- and anti-Iranian factions. Qatar's policies however, have more to do with its complicated relationship with Saudi Arabia, as well as its security concerns vis-à-vis Iran, than it does with domestic politics.

Bahrain

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[144] For an example of this type of argument see: Wasam Kamal "*Al-Saud Al-Salafi Wal-Taraju Al-Ikhwani Fi Intakhanat Al-Kuwaytiyah* (The Rise of the Salafi and the Retreat of the Brotherhood in the Kuwaiti Elections)," *Islam Online*, May 21, 2008, www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1209357766616&pagename=Zone-Arabic-Daawa%2FDWALayou

[145] See: Mihanna al-Habayl, "*Al-Halha Al-Ikhwaniyyah Fi Al-Khalij… Ruya Naqdiyah* (The Status of the Brotherhood in the Gulf… A Critical Look)," *Islam Online*, June 3, 2008, www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1209358102635&pagename=Zone-Arabic-Daawa%2FDWALayout . For a summary and analysis of this article in English see: Marc Lynch, "MB in the Gulf," *Abu Aardvark*, June 10, 2008, http://abuaardvark.typepad.com/abuaardvark/2008/06/mb-in-the-gulf.html

The remaining two states on the Arabian Peninsula, Bahrain and Yemen, as well as Lebanon in the Levant, offer interesting examples in that they have mixed Sunni and Shii populations, and have been at the center of regional power struggles.

The island kingdom of Bahrain, in particular, has experienced regional political struggles amid domestic sectarian tensions. Despite the fact that Shias make up an estimated seventy percent of the population, Sunnis control the government and Shias have no presence within certain national institutions such as the security forces. After the Islamic revolution in Iran, Shias began a process of politicization. Eventually this led to what has been called the "Bahraini *Intifada*." The two Shii parties active in Bahrain developed out of this *intifada* and remain politicized along sectarian lines.[146] Iran has often added fuel to the sectarian fire by attempting to solidify support among the Bahraini Shias and thereby strengthen its regional position. For example, recently the speaker of the Iranian parliament declared that Bahrain was in fact Iran's fourteenth province. He blamed Iran's pre-revolutionary Shah for capitulating to Britain Iran's claim to Bahrain.[147] Further complicating sectarian strife are tensions between Persians and Arabs. Owing to its long history with Iran, some Bahraini Shias are Persian while certain Sunnis are descendents of Arabs from the Iranian side of the gulf.[148]

To insure its rule under these conditions, the Sunni regime has imposed a number of restrictions on Shii political participation. As a result, Shii Islamist parties have boycotted parliamentary elections, leaving the parliament largely in the hands of Sunni Islamists. Just as in other Arab states, the Sunni Islamists are divided between the Muslim Brotherhood and Wahhabists. As such, Wahhabists are critical of the regime on theological grounds, condemning, for instance, the widespread availability of alcohol. At the same time, however, they are reliably anti-Shia, which is very helpful for a Sunni minority ruling a divided society. Yet to complicate matters, Al-Minbar, the Bahraini branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, has often supported the regime even though its politics are not based on theology. In fact, the Bahraini Brotherhood tries to follow the example of the Christian Democratic parties of Europe by advocating religious values that complement democratic politics. The Brotherhood's pro-regime stance, therefore, has more to do with local politics than with Sunni theology.[149] The Brotherhood could support the Shias if it had an interest in doing so.

In the last Bahraini election (2006), the Wahhabists won eight seats and the Muslim Brotherhood won seven. Yet, some analysts claim the Brotherhood has lost considerable support in the past few years.[150] If so, the regime can expect a strong anti-Shia faction to side with it in opposition to easing anti-Shii policies. On the other hand, if the Wahhabists are too successful and the Brotherhood begins to feel threatened, the regime will have to work hard to insure that the Brothers do not find common cause with the Shii Islamists against the Wahhabists. This will be especially true if the Shii Islamists decide to participate in the next election.

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[146] Katja Niethammer, "Stubborn Salafis and Moderate Shiites: Islamic Political Parties in Bahrain," *International Studies Association 48th Annual Convention, Hilton Chicago, IL*, February 28, 2007.
[147] Ali Younes, "Iran, Bahrain, and the Arabs," *Al-Arabiya*, March 3, 2009, http://www.alarabiya.net/views/2009/03/03/67617.html
[148] Niethammer.
[149] Ibid.
[150] al-Habayl.

Here, again as in other Arab states, the important division for policy makers to watch is not between Sunnis and Shias, but the internal divisions in Sunni Islamism.

Yemen

Yemen is also unusual in that Zaydi Shias[151] make up thirty percent of the population[152] and also functions as a base for militant Wahhabists and al-Qaeda. As in Bahrain, Iran has been accused of meddling in internal Yemeni politics on behalf of the Shias. For example, a political scientist at Sanaa University recently penned a scathing article in the influential pan-Arab daily *al-Sharq al-Awsat* in which he accused Iran of using the Shias of Yemen to divide the country and undermine its security. He asserts that Iran has ambitions throughout the Arab Middle East and that Yemen's lack of centralized power, along with its Shii minority, makes it a perfect site to further Iran's aims.[153]

Sectarian tensions in Yemen have been especially high since 2004, when a group of radical Shias led by Hussein al-Houthi rebelled against the government.[154] Al-Houthi was later killed but the uprising continued and the rebels are still often referred to as Houthists. For the past five years the conflict has been simmering with occasional violent outbursts. The government has responded with military crackdowns.

This conflict has obviously affected sectarian relations in Yemen. The Wahhabists, true to form, have strongly opposed the uprising and some militant Wahhabists have even joined the army in fighting the Shias.[155] The Muslim Brotherhood in Yemen, known as Islah (Reform), has a much more tolerant view of the Shias. As the largest opposition party in Yemen, Islah has often attempted to accommodate as many segments of Yemeni society as possible. Until recently, Islah appeared to support the regime,[156] but it has also formed opposition coalitions with al-Haq, the party aligned with the Shii uprising.[157] It contains several factions, some of which have strong Wahhabists tendencies and others which have Shias in their ranks.[158] Because Islah is a political and not a theological movement, it has been able to incorporate differing and even mutually exclusive understandings of Islam. Because Yemeni Wahhabists have not yet been able to assert themselves politically as an

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[151] This is a different stream of Shiism than the twelve stream prevalent in Iran.
[152] "Country Profile: Yemen," *U.S. Library of Congress of Congress - Research Division*, (August 2008).
[153] Najib Galaab, "Who Will Save Yemen," *Al-Shaq Al-Awsat*, May 5, 2009, http://www.aawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=2&id=16626
[154][154] For an overview of how the conflict began, see: Andrew McGregor, "Shi'ite Insurgency in Yemen: Iranian Intervention or Mountain Revolt?" *Jamestown Foundation: Terrorism Monitor*, vol. 2, no. 16 (May 10, 2005).
[155] For an example of Wahhabists fighting with the military against the Shii rebels see: Mohammed bin Sallam, "Air strikes continue in Sa'ada with hundreds of victims," *Yemen Times*, vol. 14, February 22-25, 2007. http://yementimes.com/article.shtml?i=1027&p=front&a=3
[156] For example in 1999, Islah supported President Saleh's reelection. See: "Presidential Election, 1999," *Yemen Gateway*, January 1, 2001, www.al-bab.com/yemen/pol/pres99/election99.htm
[157] See for example, "Parliamentarian Elections," *SABA – Yemen News Agency*, January 10, 2004, www.sabanews.net/en/print46592.htm
[158] Jillian Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 72.

independent entity, some have remained uneasily in Islah. However, recent developments suggest they may soon form their own parties.[159]

For now the government has declared victory over the Shii rebels and ceased its operations against them. In fact, the government was unable to defeat the rebels. The result, some analysts note, is that the Shias have prevailed, and that Iran has successfully asserted itself in Yemeni politics. If Islah tends towards the traditional Muslim Brotherhood position it could prove to be a valuable ally for the Shias and Iran in Yemen. If, however, the Wahhabists assert themselves within the party, or form their own political entity, they will be an important foil to the Shias. Again, the prominence of Sunni Islamism is of little use to analysts concerned with Yemen's strategic role in the region. Yemen's future leanings depend not on the influence of Sunni Islamism in general but on which groups of Sunni Islamists will prevail.

Lebanon

Lebanon, perhaps more than any other Arab state, has a long history of sectarian conflict. Its future will undoubtedly be determined by the outcomes of such conflicts. Christian-Sunni Muslim tensions in Lebanon are well documented and in the last ten years Hezbollah has made an effective push for Shii domination of Lebanese politics. But of all the scholarship dedicated to factionalism in Lebanon, very little exists on the division between Wahhabists and the Muslim Brothers. Nevertheless, the dynamics of this division among Sunni Islamists may be the most important factor within Lebanese politics.

Demographics in Lebanon are extremely contested. The three major groups are Maronite Christians, Sunni Muslims, and Shii Muslims. Although there has not been a census since the 1930s, estimates indicate that Shias are the largest of the three sects but not a majority of the population. Christians, Sunnis, Shias, Druze and a number of others also have smaller sub-sects.

Because of these demographic realities, any group needs to align with another faction if they wish to rule. The Muslim Brotherhood, known in Lebanon as al-Jamaa, has been an important wild-card in these alliances. Until the mid 1980s, the Brotherhood acted independently, pushing its own agenda. In 1985 however, the Brothers clashed with the invading Syrians. The conflict came to a head in Tripoli where the Syrians crushed Brotherhood resistance and began to exert considerable control over the organization.[160] After succumbing to Syria's military domination, the Brotherhood often aligned with the Syrian backed Shii factions such as Hezbollah. For example, Faysal Mawlawi, the Secretary General of al-Jamaa, has consistently promoted unity between Sunnis and Shias.[161] Also, during Hezbollah's war with Israel in 2006, when sectarian tensions were extremely high and many Sunnis were blaming the Shias for the destruction of the country, the deputy

[159] Ahmed Muhammad al-Daghshi, "*Al-Salafiyun Fi Al-Yemen…Hal Yashkalun Hizban Siyasan* (The Salafis in Yemen…Will They Join a Political Party?)" *Islam Online*, June 18, 2008, www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1212925413069&pagename=Zone-Arabic-Daawa%2FDWALayout

[160] Gary C. Gambill, "Salafi-Jihadism in Lebanon," *Middle East Monitor*, vol. 3, no. 1 (Jan-Mar 2008).

[161] Elad-Altman, pp. 6-7.

secretary of al-Jamaa stated that his organization was fighting alongside Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon. He went on to underscore that the Lebanese Brotherhood supported Hezbollah and that his organization's support went "back to the 80s."[162]

Since the 2006 war, the Brotherhood's relationship with Hezbollah has been strained. Officially, the Muslim Brotherhood remains neutral in the conflict between the ruling regime and Hezbollah. Some members of al-Jamaa have sided with the regime and some have continued to support Hezbollah.[163]

Even this ambiguous stance, however, is a stark contrast to the vehemently anti-Shia Wahhabists. During the Lebanese Civil War in the 1970s and 1980s, the Wahhabis were generally non-political. They maintained a small military wing but were reluctant to use it. They refused to intervene when the Syrians clashed with the Brotherhood in Tripoli, and the Wahhabists openly criticized the Brotherhood's participation in Lebanese politics. Because of these apolitical tendencies, the Syrians generally left the Wahhabists alone.

Beginning in the early 1990s, however, the Wahhabists gained more support than the Muslim Brotherhood and became more political. A telling example of this transformation occurred in the Palestinian refugee camp, Ain al-Hilweh. Until the early 1990s, radical Iranian and Syrian backed Sunni groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, had dominated the camp. Wahhabism gained a greater following when many of the Palestinians became increasingly frustrated with the failure of the "anti-Zionist struggle" to produce results. They felt that the Allawi Syrians and the Shii Iranians were hampering the Sunnis and that the Iranians and Syrians viewed the "resistance" as a means to their national ends, not as a means of liberating Palestine. Wahhabism's anti-Shii teachings became more attractive and while Iranian patronage became less so. A similar process of Wahhabisation took place throughout several Sunni areas in Lebanon. The growth of Wahhabism, therefore, was directly related to a rejection of Iranian influence.

Since the popular anti-Syria uprising in 2005 which became known as the Cedar Revolution, Syrian and Iranian influence in Lebanon has been limited. The western leaning anti-Syrian government, known as the March 14th Coalition that emerged out of the Cedar Revolution, has worked to decrease Iranian and Syrian influence even further. An important part of its strategy has been to offset Hezbollah's growing influence by supporting the spread of Wahhabism among Sunni Islamists. This strategy backfired however, when in 2007 a Wahhabist faction from the Palestinian refugee camp, Ain al-Hilweh, began robbing banks. The government responded by sending the Lebanese Army to take control of the organization and a bloody battle ensued. Since then, the March 14th Coalition has been less inclined to support Wahhabism.[164]

In Lebanon the dynamics of the Wahhabist-Muslim Brotherhood split are very clear. Sunnis who have embraced Wahhabism have disavowed alliances with Iran and the Shias. The Wahhabists have, therefore, acted as a powerful buffer against Hezbollah-led Shii dominance in Lebanese sectarian struggles. In contrast, the Brotherhood has often been an important ally for Hezbollah and the Shias. Even when not completely supportive of

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[162] Hayan Nayuf, "*Biltizamina Maa Ilan Majmuat Suniyah 'Jabhat Aljihad' 'Ihwan Lubnan' Yakashufun An Qitalihim Ila Janib Hizb Allah Fi Janub* (In Conjunction with the Announcement of the Sunni Groups "The Jihad Front" and "The Brotherhood of Lebanon" Revealed their Fighting on the Side of Hezbollah in the South)," *al-Arabia.net*, August 1, 2006, www.alarabiya.net/articles/2006/08/01/26248.html

[163] Elad-Altman, p. 7.

[164] Gambill.

Hezbollah, the Brotherhood has refrained from outright support of Hezbollah's rivals. In Lebanon, as in other Arab states, a dramatic shift in power and influence from the Brotherhood toward the Wahhabists, or vice versa, could radically alter sectarian politics. This shift would also have considerable influence on regional politics, either pushing Lebanon closer to Iran and the Shias, or conversely moving it toward other pro-western Sunni Arab states such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Syria

As in other Arab states, sectarian tensions in Syria are important not only for domestic politics but also for the region. However, the reverse is also true. In some cases regional politics can heavily influence domestic sectarian rivalry. Syria is a good example of the latter.

Syria is unique in the Arab world because of its Allawi regime. The Allawis consider themselves to be an off-shoot of Shii Islam although some Shias dispute this and some Sunnis, who consider Shiism to be legitimate, do not recognize the Allawis as Muslims at all. Nevertheless, in the modern era, the Allawis have attempted to align themselves with the Twelver Shiism prevalent in Iran and Southern Lebanon. They have been using Twelver Shii courts since the 1920s. After the Iranian revolution, the relationship became even stronger. In 1980, then Syrian President Hafez al-Assad sent 200 Allawi scholars to Qom to study with Shii scholars.[165]

For this reason, with the rise of the Shias in the region thanks to the 2003 Iraq War and the Bush administration's push for democratization, the Syrian regime under Bashar al-Assad aligned itself with the Iranians and the Shias. For Syrian Wahhabists, this development was not a problem. They were already opposed to the secular Allawi regime. The fact that the Allawis were now more closely aligned with the Shias did not change anything. The Wahhabists are anti-secularism, anti-Allawi, and anti-Shia. For the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, though, this new regional order posed a problem.

The Muslim Brotherhood has a long history in Syria and has enjoyed various levels of support among Syria's Sunni majority. In the 1960s, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood emerged as a significant opposition movement to the repressive Baathist regime. By the late 1970s, the Brotherhood had begun to launch attacks against the regime and its security forces. These confrontations climaxed in 1982 when the Brothers ambushed a group of government forces in the city of Hama. President Hafez al-Assad responded by razing the quarter that contained the Brotherhood's stronghold. Tens of thousands lost their lives and neighborhoods were destroyed.[166] After the massacre at Hama, the Syrian Brotherhood went into exile and remains so until today. It has also proven to be one of the most anti-regime and anti-status quo branches of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The realignment of the Middle Eastern regional order posed a dilemma for the Syrian Brotherhood. The Syrian regime had aligned itself with Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas, and

[165] For more on Allawi-Shia relations see: Martin Kramer, "Syria's Alawis and Shi'ism," in *Shiism, Resistance, and Revolution*, ed. Martin Kramer (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 237-252.
[166] For a brief account of this confrontation, see: Thomas L. Friedman. *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990), pp. 76-105.

tacitly with other Muslim Brotherhood branches. In conflicts such as the 2006 war with Hezbollah, the Syrian Brothers found themselves in opposition not only to the Syrian regime and the Palestinians, but also to its fellow Muslim Brothers in Jordan, Egypt, and elsewhere throughout the Arab world. At first, the Syrian Brothers attempted to maintain their anti-regime stance, criticizing Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad for "seeking, out of wickedness and malice, to destroy the region [the Sunni Arab controlled Levant] that they have no affiliation to or association with."[167] The Syrian Brothers also chastised compatriots in other countries for not understanding the nature of the Syrian and Iranian regimes.[168]

Recently, however, the Syrian Brotherhood appears to have succumbed to regional pressures. At the beginning of 2009, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood decided "to suspend its activities against the Syrian regime," and in April of 2009 it formally withdrew from the National Salvation Front, the main opposition movement.[169] The Brotherhood remains banned in Syria but these developments show that even under extreme circumstances, the Brotherhood's ideology is inherently open to alliances with non-Sunnis and that its alliances are dependent on political rather than theological considerations.

So far Wahhabism exists in Syria only as a largely non-political network of scholars. Reports indicate that violent Wahhabists receive passage through Syria to Iraq. Also, Syria has certainly produced its own jihadist fighters,[170] but Wahhabism has yet to emerge politically as a challenge to the Brotherhood or the regime as it has in other Arab states. With the recent transformation of the Syrian Brotherhood's policies away from opposition to the regime, anti-regime Sunni Islamists could move toward Wahhabism. Similar to the trends within Sunni Islamism in Lebanon discussed above, Wahhabism's anti-Shia, anti-Iran positions may prove increasingly attractive to Sunnis frustrated with the Allawi-Syrian regime. A familiar dynamic would then materialize in Syrian Sunni Islamism with Wahhabists on one side, acting as a foil to the regimes support for Iran and Hezbollah, and the Brothers on the other, helping the regime to pursue its policies. Analysts and policymakers should be alert to this split in Syria, not the growing or waning influence of Sunni Islamism as a whole.

Jordan

[167] Faisal Shaikh Muhammad, "*Najad Wa Bashar Yutawa'dan alMuntaqa Biltafjir* (Ahmadinejad and Bashar Threaten to Ignite the Region)" *Ikhwan Syria*, June 21, 2008, www.ikhwansyria.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3147&Itemid=29 . Translated excerpts of this article are also available at: "Syrian Muslim Brotherhood Website: Syria, Iran Working to Ignite Region for Own Interests," *MEMRI Special Dispatch*, no. 1707 (September 7, 2007) http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP170707

[168] See: "Senior Leader of Muslim Brotherhood in Syria," *MEMRI Special Dispatch*, no. 1796, (December 30, 2007) http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP179607#_ednref1

[169] Mohammed Al Shafey, Fatima el Issawi, and Saad Jarous, "Syrian Muslim Brotherhood Withdraws from Opposition Group," *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, April 6, 2009, http://aawsat.com/english/print.asp?artid=id16306

[170] For example see: Murad Batal al-Shishani, "Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and the Third Generation of Salafi-Jihadists," *Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor*, vol. 3, no. 16 (August 15, 2005).

Unlike its northern neighbors, Jordan is a fairly homogeneous society. The main divisions are between Sunni Arabs native to the East Bank of the Jordan River, and Palestinian Sunni Arabs native to the West Bank. A Christian minority exists but is politically insignificant. There is no substantial Shii population.

One unique aspect of Islamic politics in Jordan is that the Jordanian royal family, the Hashemites, claims descent from the Prophet Muhammad's family. This gives it a sense of Islamic legitimacy that other secular and nationalist regimes do not have.[171] In some ways this has helped the regime to cultivate a relationship with the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood in Jordan traditionally acted as a loyal opposition to the Hashemite Regime. Until the late 1970s, and especially during Jordan's wars with Israel in 1948 and 1967, the Brotherhood was mostly supportive of the monarchy's policies. In the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, however, the Brotherhood and Jordan's King Hussein began to clash. The Jordanian regime was appalled that a sitting monarch could be overthrown by an Islamist opposition. It strongly supported the Iranian Shah during the revolution and backed Baathist Iraq in its war with Iran in the 1980s. The Brotherhood supported Khomeini and the Islamists. Therefore the Brotherhood, unlike the regime, supported Iran in the Iran-Iraq war. These tensions peaked in 1994 when King Hussein signed a peace treaty with Israel. Since then, the Jordanian Brotherhood has displayed the most important opposition to that treaty and has worked to prevent further normalization between Jordan and the Jewish State.

Despite these tensions, however, the Muslim Brotherhood has not been outlawed. In many ways it remained a loyal opposition party and has participated in electoral politics since the early 1990s with varying levels of success.[172] Recently, this relationship has been tested. Over the past five years, a wave of terror attacks in Jordan (despite the fact that these attacks were not carried out by the Jordanian Brotherhood), as well as the electoral successes of Hamas in the neighboring Palestinian territories and the ensuing chaos there, have caused the Jordanian regime to crack down on the Brotherhood. As a result, the internal struggle within the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood has left some Brothers frustrated and others have pushed the organization in a hard-line direction. Many Brothers have left the organization, preferring Wahhabism instead or forgoing Islamic politics all together.[173]

Wahhabism in Jordan has developed in exactly the opposite manner. Rather than establishing a close connection with the monarchy, it has completely avoided it. Wahhabism in Jordan dates back to the 1970s. As in Syria, Jordanian Wahhabists are largely connected through an informal network of scholars. Most Wahhabists in Jordan reject formal organizations all together. They insist that in a state where the regime exerts significant control over all formal associations, the only way to remain true to their beliefs

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[171] The only other exception is Morocco where the king also claims descent from Muhammad.

[172] Curtis R. Ryan, "Islamist Political Activism in Jordan: Moderation, Militancy, and Democracy," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 12, no. 1 (June 2008). For more on the history of the Jordanian Brotherhood, see: Shmuel Bar, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan", *Data and Analysis* (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 1998).

[173] See: Marc Lynch. "Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood in Tough Times," *Abu Aardvark*, June 6, 2008. http://abuaardvark.typepad.com/abuaardvark/2008/06/jordans-muslim.html ; Yaron Eisenberg. "Hardliners Assume Leadership of Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood," *Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Focus*, vol. 5, issue 22 (June 10, 2008).

is to stay completely independent and unorganized. This is in contrast to the Muslim Brotherhood's official position. As one prominent Jordanian Wahhabist put it: "The senators and members of Parliament of the Muslim Brotherhood, when they entered Parliament or the Ministries, they became part of the system. And they think they are going to be able to force change and affect [the system], but in reality it is they who are affected, changed, and weakened."[174] These anti-organizational tendencies have been even further exacerbated by the fact that when some Wahhabists did try to form formal groups such as the Quran and Sunna Society in 1989, the regime rebuffed their efforts and intelligence officers harassed the organizers.

Unlike the situation in some other Arab states, many Jordanian Wahhabists see membership in the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and adherence to Wahhabism as mutually exclusive. For example, Mashur Hasan Salman, who is now an influential Wahhabist scholar in Jordan, was once a member of the Brotherhood. After being indoctrinated into Wahhabism, however, he began to see his new beliefs as incompatible with membership in the Muslim Brotherhood and left the organization.[175] To some extent a trend has emerged recently within Jordanian Islamism away from the Muslim Brotherhood toward non-involvement and Wahhabism.

If this development continues, the regime will have an easier time remaining in the pro-western camp with Egypt and Saudi Arabia. If the new hardliner positions of the Brotherhood gain traction, the monarchy will find it much more difficult to maintain a pro-western stance. For example, the Jordanian Brotherhood was able to mobilize significant support for Hamas during Israel's war in Gaza in the winter of 2008-2009. As a result King Abdullah was more vocal in his condemnation of Israel than his peers in Egypt and Saudi Arabia and more critical than he had been in a similar war in 2006. The King's position in the next war will depend, to a large extent, on the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood, which is aligned with Hamas and Iran, or on that of the anti-Shia, non-political Wahhabists.

A clear pattern has developed in the Middle Eastern Arab states. As Sunni Islamists compete for power and influence, they affect and are affected by regional politics. Understanding the divisions within Sunni Islamism is crucial for analysts and policymakers concerned with the Middle East. The only Arab state in the Middle East not discussed thus far is Iraq. The conflict between Sunni Islamists in Iraq most clearly manifests itself through their understanding of jihad. Iraq, therefore, will be dealt with in the next section.

[174] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "The Salafi Movement in Jordan," p. 226.
[175] Ibid., pp. 225-233.

Part 3: Terrorism and Jihad

For policymakers, one of the most pressing issues surrounding Islamist movements is terrorism. Islamist terrorism is, of course, closely connected to jihad. However, the term jihad in and of itself is not very useful. It has a number of meanings ranging from a completely non-violent internal struggle to a violent holy war. Jihad as an internal or personal religious struggle is unimportant to the argument here. All subsequent references to jihad will imply jihad as holy war. Nevertheless, even when used to describe holy war, the definition of jihad can vary dramatically. The Muslim Brotherhood and Wahhabists both employ jihad as a means of fighting their enemies but often mean different things.

Understanding these differences goes to the heart of each movement's philosophy and has important implications for policymakers. But before turning to modern definitions, some familiarity with classical Islamic interpretations of jihad is necessary.[176]

Traditionally, jihad takes two forms, offensive and defensive. Offensive jihad is missionary warfare. It is considered a collective duty and was practiced when Muslims were in a position of strength vis-à-vis their adversaries. The mindset of medieval Muslims was similar to that of medieval Christians. Muslims believed they possessed the truth about God and salvation. They considered unbelievers to be engaged in wickedness, not just against God, but against themselves. After all, they would be made to pay for their errors in the afterlife. Therefore, although jihad as missionary warfare was a duty God imposed on Muslims, it had certain altruistic features as well. Two points must be made clear. First, this type of reasoning was typical of pre-modern times when religions expanded sometimes by force. Charlemagne, for example, was famous for combining military conquest with forced conversion to Christianity. Further, the Greeks, the Romans, and the Mongols created Middle Eastern empires through aggressive warfare before, during and after the Islamic conquests.

Second, the issue of Islam being spread by the sword deserves comment. Islam as a civilization and political order was for a large part spread by the sword in the Middle East. Only rarely, however, were the conquered peoples forced to convert. On the Arabian Peninsula and in the aftermath of certain battles, some non-Muslims were indeed forced to convert. But this was not the norm. Still, the spread of Islam as a political system did make conversion to Islam attractive since being a Muslim was the only way non-Muslims could obtain a place of privilege. Under these circumstances, Middle Eastern peoples gradually and voluntarily converted to Islam.

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[176] The controversy over Islam and jihad today has made this definition quite contentious. A good overview of the concept was recently published by Patricia Crone, who is one of the foremost authorities on classical Islam. I will largely rely on her depiction. See: Patricia Crone, "Jihad: Idea and History," *Open Democracy*, May 5, 2007, www.opendemocracy.net/faith-europe_islam/jihad_4579.jsp ; For examples of the debate surrounding the definition of jihad, see: E. Tyan, "Djihad," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 2007); and a rebuttal: Roy Parvis Mottahedeh and Ridwan al-Sayyid, "The Idea of Islam Before the Crusades," in *The Crusades from the Perspective of the Byzantine and Muslim World*, eds. Angeliki E. Laiou and Roy Parvis Mottahedeh (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2001), pp. 23-29; Also see Ella Landau-Tasseron, "Jihad," *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Washington DC: Brill, 2007); And finally see: "Jihad" *Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press Inc., 2003).

This type of offensive jihad can only occur when Muslims are in a position of strength. It is a collective rather than an individual duty and is usually carried out by an Islamic ruler and his armies on behalf of the entire Muslim community. As long as this kind of jihad is waged, individual Muslims, who are not part of the offensive, are not sinning, even if they do take part in it.

The second type of jihad is defensive. It takes place when Muslims are under attack from non-Muslims. Unlike offensive jihad, a defensive jihad is an individual duty. Each individual Muslim is required to join the fight. Typically this meant that when non-Muslims attack a Muslim land, the residents of that land are required to resist. If they are unsuccessful their immediate neighbors are required to join the jihad. If that is still not enough to repel the non-Muslim force, the next closest Muslim community is obliged to fight, and so forth and so forth until the entire Muslim world, if need be, has come to their fellow Muslims' defense.

In the modern world, the concept of jihad has become complicated. As a call for supporting war, it is useful in that it offers a powerful and religiously-sanctioned call to arms. Many modern Muslims, from both secular and religious movements, have called for jihad as a means of rallying support for war. For modern Muslims engaged in the battle of ideas, however, the legacy of jihad can be problematic. There exists today, a widely accepted stigma against offensive and expansionist warfare. This is particularly true in the Muslim world which was conquered and ruled by expansionist European empires during the 19th and 20th centuries. Therefore, many Muslims who attempt to fuse Islam and modernity have trouble coming to terms with the historical practice of expansionist jihad. An example of this tension can be seen in the sermons of the prominent Muslim Brotherhood related scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi. In one sermon, al-Qaradawi insists that the "Prophet Muhammad did not carry a sword, but used the good word to preach his message."[177] Nevertheless, in a sermon less than a year earlier, he had claimed that the Prophet Muhammad's life "was one of continuous jihad. The ten years he spent in Medina were bloody jihad and fighting against non-belief, infidelity, Judaism, and others."[178]

Because of this friction between pre-modern and modern norms, the Muslim Brotherhood has infused the meaning of jihad with modern concepts and norms. Wahhabists, in contrast, give less attention to modern stigmas. This is not to say that they will not employ modern norms in their rhetoric, but they refuse to let modern ideals constrain their discourse. Consequently the Brotherhood and the Wahhabists have two different understandings of what constitutes legitimate jihad. These two understandings share several important similarities, but also have significant differences. Understanding how each group thinks about jihad is paramount for policy makers concerned with terrorism. Failing to distinguish between these two groups could result in wasting valuable resources on preparing for an attack that will never come, or worse, being unprepared in the face of imminent danger.

[177] "Near/Middle East: Round-Up of Friday Sermons 22 Sep 06," *BBC Monitoring*, September 26, 2006.
[178] Qatar TV, "Live Sermon from Umar Bin-al-Khattab Mosque in Doha," November 25, 2005, *BBC Monitoring: Near/Middle East: Round-Up of Friday Sermons 25 Nov 05*, (November 29, 2005).

The Muslim Brotherhood and Jihad

As already noted, the Muslim Brotherhood evolved out of an Islamic reform movement that attempted to fuse Islam and modernity. At the turn of the 20th century in Egypt, reformers such as Rashid Rida and Muhammad Abdu began to emphasize aspects of jihad that were more in line with modern values. They down played the importance of offensive jihad, asserting that it had no place in modern Islam. Instead they focused on jihad as a means of resisting aggression and imperialism.[179] In this interpretation non-Muslims are the aggressors and modern *mujahidin* (those who fight jihad) are freedom fighters. The imagery and values surrounding these depictions are completely modern and did not exist in classical Islam. Nevertheless, they have been useful for modern Islamists. The Muslim Brotherhood in particular has adopted this understanding of jihad. More so than his reformist predecessors, Hassan al-Banna was much more militant in his anti-imperialist rhetoric. He emphasized the disgrace that had befallen the Islamic world, constantly reminding his peers of Islam's erstwhile golden age. Injecting a sense of urgency and ferocity in his message, he described the Brotherhood as "the army of liberation" and "the battalion of salvation for this nation afflicted by calamity."[180] As one historian suggests, "A consequence of this view was that the Muslim Brothers attached far greater importance to the Islamic duty of struggle (*jihad)* than was the tradition in Islamic circles at that time…"[181] Al-Banna even wrote a treatise on jihad,[182] and made it required reading in the Brotherhood's educational programs.[183] The idea of jihad as resistance to Western imperialism and aggression remains at the center of the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology today.

Sometimes this understanding of *jihad* appears to be at odds with the Brotherhood's actions. In the first half of the 20th century the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood had a Secret Apparatus that used force against other Egyptian Muslims. Similarly, recent events in Gaza show that Hamas is willing to use force against rival Palestinian factions. These are exceptions to the Brotherhood's general understanding of jihad, however. The Brotherhood justified these events by claiming that its rivals were agents of Western imperialists. Nevertheless, the Brotherhood as a whole has strong tendencies against domestic political violence. Unlike Wahhabists, and Qutbists, the Muslim Brothers do not declare other Muslims to be outside the bounds of Islam and therefore legitimate targets of jihad. In fact, they are very critical of groups such as al-Qaeda on precisely these grounds. For example, after al-Qaeda attacks in Jordan in 2005, the Muslim Brotherhood took to the streets in anti-al-Qaeda protests.[184] Similar events have taken place throughout the Middle East anytime al-Qaeda attacks Muslim targets. The one exception to this is in Iraq, but Iraq is an all together different situation. Therefore it will be discussed below.

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[179] Moussalli, p. 18.
[180] Mitchell, p. 206.
[181] Lia, p. 82.
[182] Hassan al-Banna, *Rasalat al-Jihad*. Available in Arabic on the Brotherhood's website: www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ArtID=180&SecID=371
[183] Lia, pp. 90, 165.
[184] See: Ryan.

The Brotherhood has sometimes used its differences with al-Qaeda to portray itself as being against all forms of violence and terrorism.[185] Such claims should be considered propaganda and are demonstrably untrue. Unfortunately the Brotherhood's insistence that it is against terrorism has been so persistent that many Western experts have begun to believe them. For example, Western academics often claim that various branches of the Brotherhood support Hamas, but then later claim that they are against terrorism, as if targeting civilians is not terrorism as long as the targets are Israelis.[186]

The Brotherhood *does* support terrorism but not in the same way as al-Qaeda. The difference stems from the Brotherhood's understanding of jihad as an expression of anti-imperialism. In this sense it is similar to other "resistance" movements found throughout the third world. As such, the Brotherhood only considers jihad to be legitimate when it is defensive and can be justified as resisting occupation. Therefore, despite the claim by a member of the Brotherhood's Executive Bureau that "Muslim Brotherhood rejects all forms of violence,"[187] the head of the Muslim Brothers, Muhammad Akif, has clarified that,

> The Muslim Brotherhood movement condemns all bombings in the independent Arab and Muslim countries. But the bombings in Palestine and Iraq are a [religious] obligation. This is because these two countries are occupied countries, and the occupier must be expelled in every way possible. Thus, the [Muslim Brotherhood] movement supports martyrdom operations in Palestine and Iraq in order to expel the Zionists and the Americans.[188]

Outside the Arab world, the Muslim Brotherhood uses similar logic to justify jihad in Chechnya and Kashmir, as most Brothers perceive these to be occupied territories. It should be noted that in the above quote, Akif's claim that "the occupier must be expelled in every way possible" can be taken literally. The Brotherhood is known to resort to all means necessary while fighting jihad, including suicide bombings, the use of human shields, and employing children. As al-Qaradawi declared, "The Israelis might have nuclear bombs but we have the children bomb and these human bombs must continue until liberation."[189]

Yet, even when the Brotherhood deems jihad legitimate, the influence of modern norms is still apparent. It is essential for the Brotherhood to be perceived as resisting aggression. It is therefore hesitant to attack those it perceives as occupiers outside the occupied territories. While the Brotherhood considers attacks on Americans in Iraq to be legitimate, attacks on the United States are not. For the Brotherhood, the same principle holds true throughout the Muslim world. In an online religious edict, al-Qaradawi declared, "As long as the people of Chechnya fight in defense of their lands, honor, and religion

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[185] For example, see: "Dr. Morsi: MB Has a Peaceful Agenda," *Ikhwan Web*, July 23, 2007, www.ikhwanweb.com/Article.asp?ID=1024&LevelID=1&SectionID=147

[186] See for example: Brown, "Pushing Toward Party Politics." I should note here that I am not accusing Nathan Brown, or anyone else of an anti-Israel bias. I am only pointing out that they are repeating the Muslim Brotherhood's propaganda without fully thinking it through.

[187] For example, see: "Dr. Morsi: MB Has a Peaceful Agenda." *Ikhwan Web*.

[188] "New Muslim Brotherhood Leader: Resistance in Iraq and Palestine is Legitimate; America is Satan; Islam Will Invade America and Europe," *MEMRI Special Dispatch*, no. 655, (February 4, 2004) http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP65504#_edn1

[189] Al-Jazeera Television, "Life and Religion: Al Jazeera Program Debates Arab Stand on Intifadah, Suicide Bombers," April 28, 2002, *BBC Monitoring*, (April 30, 2002).

against a tyrannical oppressive force, which does not fear Allah or have mercy on any creature, their fighting is Jihad."[190] However, in an addendum that was most likely added after the Belsan school hostage crisis in 2004, an incident where several Chechens took over a school outside of Chechnya,[191] al-Qaradawi exclaims, "it's very disgusting to see some people – who are Muslims by name– launching aggression against innocent people and taking them as scapegoats for any disagreement they have with the state's authority!!"[192] Al-Qaradawi has no problem targeting Israeli children or using Muslim children as suicide bombers. The difference was that the school was not in occupied Muslim territory.

The Muslim Brotherhood's reinterpretation of jihad as a strictly defensive measure has implications for the traditional Islamic worldview. Islam like Christianity is a universal religion meant to encompass the entirety of humanity. Traditionally, this was to be accomplished by missionary jihad. Because the Brotherhood has disavowed offensive jihad it has also had to readjust other aspects of its ideology. One major step in this process was the development of *fiq al-aqalliyat*, or jurisprudence of minorities. The minorities in question are Muslims living in non-Muslim states, typically in Europe and North America. The purpose of this jurisprudence was to deal with issues that Muslim minorities face in non-Muslim lands, but it also includes an important reinterpretation of relations between the Muslim and non-Muslim world.

In classical Islam, scholars divided the world into two categories, the Lands of Islam, and the Lands of War, which the Muslims should conquer through missionary jihad. Taha Jabir al-Alwani, a Muslim Brotherhood linked scholar, has led the way in developing an influential theory of dividing the word into the Land of Islam, and the Land of the Call to Islam (*Dar al-Dawa*).[193] Instead of understanding the non-Muslim world as lands that will need to be conquered by jihad, this theory argues that non-Muslim lands will one day fall under the category of the Land of Islam through peaceful proselytism. Muslim minorities living in non-Muslim lands, al-Alwani argues, will play an essential role in converting the un-believers. In a sense, this changes the focus of division between Muslim and non-Muslim lands from geographic, to chronologic. Instead of strictly dividing the world into Muslim and non-Muslim lands, thereby forbidding Muslim to live in non-Muslim lands, it separates it into Muslim lands and the lands that are in the process of Islamicization. This allows modern Muslims to live and to some extent integrate into non-Muslims states.

What this shows is that the Muslim Brotherhood has worked hard to develop a comprehensive philosophy for reinterpreting Islam and its place in the modern world. Its rhetoric on jihad as strictly defensive is not simply posturing or apologetics. It is part of the Brotherhood's broader *weltanschauung* and it is not something it will discard easily.

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[190] Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "Jihad in Chechnya," *Islam Online*, April 19, 2004, www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/FatwaE/FatwaE&cid=1119503543542

[191] Yana Voitova, "Beslan Children Testify," *St. Petersburg Times Online*, August 26, 2005.

[192] al-Qaradawi, "Jihad in Chechnya."

[193] Shammai Fishman, "*Fiqh al-Aqalliyyat*: A Legal Theory for Muslim Minorities," *Research Monographs on the Muslim World*, series no. 1, paper no. 2 (Washington DC: Hudson Institute, 2006).

Wahhabism and Jihad

Wahhabists generally see the Brotherhood's reinterpretation of jihad as an abomination. Muhammad ibn abd al-Wahhab's interpretation of jihad makes no apology for aggression. In fact, offensive jihad was essential to the spread of Wahhabism in the 18th and 19th centuries. The famous union between abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad ibn Saud was based on the idea that Saud would have much to gain from religiously sanctioned expansive warfare.[194]

Modern Wahhabists attempt to stay true to the pre-modern teachings of abd al-Wahhab. They disregard modern norms and stigmas. Indeed, they view the very accommodation of these norms by Islam as a grave threat to the religion. Therefore, even completely non-political and non-violent Wahhabist recognize that the principle of offensive jihad is valid even if they do not currently practice it. They are extremely critical of Muslim Brotherhood related scholars who have argued that offensive jihad is invalid in the modern period. As one non-violent Wahhabist argues, Brotherhood scholars have "belittled" the Islamic tradition "in the name of 'understanding of priorities'" and they have "declared their loyalty for the Infidels in the name of 'creating a good picture of Islam.'"[195] He adds that recent attempts to reinterpret jihad are unsurprising since, historically, the "figureheads of the Bankrupt Brotherhood" have been known to "distort, twist and water down the objectives of Jihad."[196]

Another important aspect of Wahhabists' interpretations of jihad is a very limited definition of who is a Muslim. As discussed above, abd al-Wahhab declared the overwhelming majority of 18th century Muslims to be unbelievers and authorized jihad against them. Abd al-Wahhab and his followers were especially confrontational toward non-Sunni Muslims such as the Shias. This type of thinking was reinforced in the modern period by offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood inspired by Sayid Qutb. Unlike abd al-Wahhab, there is no evidence that Qutb himself was anti-Shia. His theory of *jahaliyya*, however, opened the door for the excommunication of Muslims who did not conform to his understanding of Islam. When Qutbism and Wahhabism merged in the 1970s and 1980s, the result was a small but extremely violent strain of Islamism.

Wahhabist fighters and violent Qutbist off-shoots of the Muslim Brotherhood further integrated their thought through the shared historical experience of fighting the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. In a well known story, Osama bin Laden offered to continue the momentum begun in Afghanistan by defending Saudi Arabia against Saddam Hussein's armies following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The Saudis' preference for American troops was the last straw for some Wahhabists who had been increasingly politicized since the late 1960s. Out of these circumstances groups like al-Qaeda emerged. Bin Laden later joined with the Qutbist al-Zawahiri in declaring war not only on "imperialist crusaders" such as the United States and Israel, but also on the Arab regimes and the Muslims who lived peaceably within them. Radical jihadists justify the killing of Muslim civilians either by declaring them collateral damage in a legitimate jihad or by blaming these civilians for

[194] Wynbrandt, pp. 116-117.
[195] "Readings in Qaradawism: Part 4 : Discontinuation of Jihaad," *Salafi Publications*, www.spubs.com/sps/sp.cfm?subsecID=NDV16&articleID=NDV160004&articlePages=1
[196] Ibid.

acquiescing to apostate regimes. Either as unbelievers or outright apostates, average citizens became legitimate targets for jihad.

Throughout the 1990s, debates within Islamic movements focused on the legitimacy of rebellion against Muslim rulers.[197] Toward the end of this period, however, the debate began to shift toward taking the fight to the United States and other Western powers. Some radical Wahhabists considered the Arab regimes to be controlled by the West. Some even considered the presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia to be the equivalent of an American occupation of the Arabian Peninsula. An Islamic edict signed by Osama bin Laden in 1998 argues that "for over seven years the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbors, and turning its bases in the Peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighboring Muslim peoples." It continues, Islamic scholars "have throughout Islamic history unanimously agreed that the jihad is an individual duty if the enemy destroys the Muslim countries." Consequently, killing "Americans and their allies — civilians and military — is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible."[198]

One point that should be clear from this document – and this is a point that is often misunderstood in the West – is that while groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Qaeda disagree over the permissibility of offensive jihad, the debates between the groups about events such as 9/11 were not over the offensive or defensive jihad; al-Qaeda considered 9/11 to be defensive jihad. The debate was therefore over what constitutes defensive jihad. As already noted, for the Muslim Brotherhood defensive jihad is tied to other third world resistance ideologies. Therefore, it was essential for the Brotherhood that jihad not be portrayed as offensive. Consequently, after 9/11 the Brotherhood's leadership from around the Middle East released a statement declaring, "The undersigned, leaders of Islam movements, are horrified by the events of Tuesday 11 September 2001 in the United States, which resulted in massive killings, destruction and attack on innocent lives. We express our deepest sympathies and sorrow. We condemn, in the strongest terms, the incidents, which are against all human and Islamic norms…"[199]

This type of rhetoric, which includes appeals to both specifically Islamic *and* universal human norms, is typical of the Brotherhood. Members of al-Qaeda made clear that they rejected this combination of Islam and modernity. In 2002 they released a statement arguing that the perpetrators of 9/11 acted in accordance with Islam and Islam alone. They made clear that al-Qaeda was not concerned with other non-Islamic ideologies. For example al-Qaeda asserted that, "the only motive these young men [those that carried out the 9/11 attacks] had was to defend the religion of Allah, their dignity, and their honor. It was not done as a service to humanity or as an attempt to side with Eastern ideologies opposed to the West." Al-Qaeda further criticized the worldview of the Muslim Brothers, arguing that they "speak in their masters' languages and in the concepts of the enemy…"[200]

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[197] Quintan Wiktorowicz and John Kaltner, "Killing in the Name of Islam: Al-Qaeda's Justification for September 11," *Middle East Policy*, vol. 10, no. 2 (Summer 2003): p. 77.

[198] See *fatwa* released by bin-Laden in 1998: "Al-Qaeda's Fatwa," *PBS Website*, February 23, 1998, www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1998.html

[199] Quintan Wiktorowicz and John Kaltner.

[200] "Translation of April 24, 2002 al-Qaeda document," *Middle East Policy Council*, www.mepc.org/journal_vol10/0306_alqaeda.asp

These differences between the Brotherhood and al-Qaeda (and other Wahhabists) are part of a conflict over integrating modern norms into contemporary interpretations of Islam and more specifically about the nature of jihad. On many of the broader issues the Brotherhood and al-Qaeda actually agree. Al-Qaeda has declared that its jihad is defensive, and the Brotherhood, through its support for Hamas, has shown that in some cases targeting civilians is legitimate. Al-Qaeda often points out these similarities and uses them in its rhetoric, attempting to point out inconsistencies in the Brotherhood's position:

> America's status among Muslims is the same as that of the Jews -- they are both people of war. What is permissible regarding the right of the occupying enemy to the land of Palestine permits the right of anything like it, which is then backed and supported. If you are surprised by this, you will truly be surprised by those who rule that the martyrdom operations in Palestine in which civilians fall victim are among the highest forms of jihad, and then rule that the martyrdom operations in America are wrong because of civilian deaths. This inconsistency is very strange! How can one permit the killing of the branch and not permit the killing of the supporting trunk? All who permit martyrdom operations against the Jews in Palestine must allow them in America. If not, the inconsistency leads to nothing but a type of game playing with the legal ruling.[201]

With America now occupying Iraq and Afghanistan, this argument is even more poignant. Still, the Brotherhood has remained steadfast in its opposition to 9/11-style attacks. Often the Brotherhood attempts to portray its opposition to al-Qaeda as an opposition to violence in general, but as this debate makes clear, the disagreement between these groups is not over the use of violence, or the implementation of certain controversial tactics such as suicide bombings that target civilians. The debate is over who is a legitimate target and that debate can only be understood as a disagreement between a group that embraces modernity and one that rejects it.

Another defining feature of violent Wahhabist groups is the centrality that jihad plays in their ideology. Because Wahhabism is essentially a theological movement, actions need to be justified not on the basis of political expediency but a proper understanding of Islam. As discussed earlier, in the 1970s and 1980s, political Wahhabists justified their break from the more established non-political Wahhabists by arguing that they had a better understanding of modern contexts in which Islamic rulings must be implemented. For example, they claimed to have a better understanding of the United States. and its role in international affairs. Violent jihadists often make a similar claim. They argue that because they actively participate in jihad, they have a much better understanding of battle and its consequences.

The influential Jordanian scholar Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, for example, argues that those who carry out jihad are not only a valuable source of information about battlefield tactics, but also possess insight on matters of jurisprudence that separates them from other Muslims who shirk their obligation to carry out jihad. Al-Maqdisi justifies this point by citing the Quran 29:69: "Those who fight for Our cause, We will surely guide them

[201] Ibid.

to Our path." He explains that God gives special guidance to those who fight jihad.[202] With arguments such as this, radical Wahhabists are able to justify their positions even though they are much less qualified than other Wahhabists in terms of traditional Islamic education. Some jihadists have even gone as far as to claim that jihadist fighters are infallible and that God always guides them to act properly. [203]

A Case Study in Iraq

The difference between Wahhabists' and the Muslim Brotherhood's ideas about jihad, then, is not simply theoretical. It is evident in their actions and reactions to events throughout the Middle East. Understanding this difference is crucial for interpreting current events and establishing informed policies. There are a few places where these dynamics play out, but they are most vivid in contemporary Iraq. In the wake of the U. S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, several "resistance" groups emerged. Most analysts separate these groups into Sunnis and Shias. Some divide the Sunnis into Baathists and Islamists, but few go a step further to divide the Islamists into Muslim Brotherhood-inspired groups and Wahhabists. Nevertheless, this final differentiation is critical.

To take one telling example, in 2007 a group of Islamist insurgents calling themselves the "1920 Revolution Brigade" produced a splinter group named "Hamas of Iraq." While these groups are not directly affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, they share a similar ideologically and outlook. The name Hamas is an obvious nod to the Muslim Brotherhood branch in the Palestinian territories. In 2007, both the 1920 Revolution Brigade and Hamas of Iraq produced political platforms similar to other Muslim Brotherhood branches throughout the Middle East. An analysis of a few positions of these platforms highlights the ideology of these groups. The 1920 Revolution Brigade's platform states:

> -Our goal at this stage is to fight the invader who occupied our land. Our jihad in this phase is defensive and not offensive jihad. The liberation of the country by freeing it from the domination of the foreign, non-Muslim Sultan, militarily or politically, is our purpose. What applies to us from Islamic jurisprudence on defensive jihad is the basis of our efforts, but we do not claim infallibility.
>
> -The basis of our jihad is not to cause harm to the civilians. We do not accept the statement made by the people of this world that says, "The end justifies the means." If the mujahidin target the occupier, and are sure that by targeting him they will surely kill him, but there is a possibility that an innocent civilian might be hurt, we will not do it, and we will not consider such action a kind of jihad.

[202] E. Alshech, "The Emergence of the 'Infallible Jihad Fighter' – The Salafi Jihadists' Quest for Religious Legitimacy," *MEMRI Inquiry and Analysis*, no. 446 (June 2008), www.memri.org/bin/latestnews.cgi?ID=IA44608
[203] Ibid.

> -Diversity is one of God's ways, and we do not deny others the right to their own Ijtihad [the use of reason in interpreting Islamic Law], and we have our own [Ijtihad].[204]

These principles clearly indicate that the 1920 Revolution Brigade is following the Muslim Brotherhood and is opposed to al-Qaeda. The platform is written in the language of resistance to occupation and its authors attempt to differentiate themselves from fighters who kill civilians or consider themselves infallible. In contrast to Wahhabism as well, this platform embraces diversity of thought and rational interpretation of Islamic law.

Hamas of Iraq's platform, released later in 2007, is similar. It also calls for "armed jihad as a means of expelling the occupiers" but its use of modern norms in its rhetoric is even more prevalent. The platform "calls upon public opinion, international bodies, and institutions to respect this right [of resistance] as legitimate for all people who are subjected to occupation, and to distinguish between them and the armed criminals targeting innocent civilians." This virtually eliminates the Islamic justifications for jihad altogether. Jihad, according to this document is a universal principle that is not unique to Islam. Hamas of Iraq's platform also resembles the 1920 Revolution Brigade in its defense of religious diversity, but Hamas of Iraq goes even further than its parent group. The platform explicitly rejects violence "in the resolution of political disputes between the components of the Iraqi people which are working to solve their religious, sectarian, or ethnic differences. Rather, [these groups should] rely on dialogue and consensus, and take into account the public interest in promoting a culture of harmony and tolerance among all Iraqis."[205]

Also notable is that this call for tolerance stems from an Iraqi rather than an Islamic identity. Appeals to nationalist sentiments are common among the Muslim Brothers. Even the names Hamas of Iraq and the 1920 Revolution Brigade have nationalistic significance. The 1920 revolution was an Iraqi revolt against British occupation, and the name Hamas of Iraq makes clear that it is a particularly Iraqi organization. This stands in marked contrast to al-Qadea's affiliates in Iraq. The group that westerners commonly refer to as al-Qaeda in Iraq calls itself al-Qaeda in "*Bilad al-Rafidayn*," which literally translates as al-Qaeda in "the land of the two rivers." This is an overt rejection of the modern nation-state and nationalism.

Despite these differences, one should not confuse the 1920 Revolution Brigade or Hamas in Iraq with other Baathists or nationalists. Both groups make clear that their goal is an Islamic state under Islamic law. As with other Muslim Brothers, however, their idea of an Islamic state and Islamic law is intertwined with several other modern political ideologies.

It should now be clear that two distinct forms of Sunni Islamic resistance exist in Iraq. The Wahhabist affiliated groups such as al-Qaeda support an armed jihad to expel American forces and are unconcerned about civilian casualties. They are also extremely anti-Shia. In fact, many Wahhabist fighters consider the Shias to be legitimate targets of

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[204] "The 1920 Revolution Brigades: The Koran and the Sunnah are the Two Main Sources of our Jihad," a*l-Aseef*, January 18, 2007, www.alaseeef.com/vb/showthread.php?t=4900

[205] See the political platform of Hamas of Iraq, "*Hamas Al-Iraq Talan An Al-Khutut Al-Aridah Libarnamajha Al-Siyasi* (Hamas of Iran Announces its Political Platform)."

jihad and some, such as the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, have openly called for their extermination. Conversely, while Muslim Brotherhood related groups remain violently anti-American and support armed jihad against the U.S. presence in Iraq, they are equally adamant in their opposition to violence against other Iraqis, irrespective of their sect.

A failure to appreciate this division within Sunni Islamists could lead policymakers and analysts to dangerous misunderstandings about the situation on the ground in Iraq. Around the time that the US military began to implement the surge, there was also a gain in popularity among Muslim Brotherhood related groups, sometimes at the expense of Wahhabist groups. Of course, the surge provided a much needed increase in security. But, just as important was that more and more Iraqi Sunnis saw participation in Iraqi politics as beneficial. This may have further contributed to the Brotherhood's gains. This shift also contributed significantly to a reduction of attacks in Iraq and a decline in the number of casualties among Iraqis. One should not be fooled, however, into thinking that the Muslim Brotherhood is any less anti-American, or that the reduction in Iraqi-on-Iraqi violence has anything to do with support for resisting the American occupation. While Brotherhood related groups oppose fighting other Iraqis, their position toward American occupation is similar to that of al-Qaeda. To put it simply, opposition to al-Qaeda should not be misconstrued to mean support for the United States.[206]

This is not to say that there has not been an overall decline in attacks against Americans or that there is not increased willingness to cooperate with U.S. forces among Iraqis as a whole. The surge and General David Petraeus's counterinsurgency strategy have made real and important gains in convincing Sunnis to cooperate with the US military and Iraqi security forces. However, it would be a dangerous not to take into account the shift toward Brotherhood related groups and therefore overestimate American gains.

[206] Marc Lynch made a similar argument though he downplayed the significance of the surge more than I think is prudent. See: Marc Lynch, "Our Enemy's Enemy," *The American Prospect*, April 18, 2007, www.prospect.org/cs/articles?articleId=12656

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Understanding the divisions within Sunni Islamism will help analysts to avoid serious mistakes and to put events into their proper contexts. For example, one should not expect the Muslim Brotherhood to be anti-Hezbollah or anti-Iran. Conversely, one should also not expect Wahhabists and the Muslim Brotherhood to work together simply because they are both Sunni Islamist. When trying to understand terrorist threats, analysts need to see that the Muslim Brotherhood and the Wahhabists have different ideas about jihad. Furthermore, recognizing each group's history and ideology can assist in evaluating the Brotherhood and Wahhabist propaganda. For example, Muslim Brotherhood critiques of terrorist groups that target other Muslims or the United States homeland should not be taken to indicate that the Muslim Brotherhood has renounced violent jihad. To misunderstand this would be extremely dangerous because in several cases, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Muslim Brotherhood's understanding of jihad represents a direct military threat to the U.S. and its allies.

Policy Implications

The division within Sunni Islamism presents a unique policy challenge. Since the Brotherhood and the Wahhabists often compete with one another and because this competition has important regional and strategic consequences, one would expect policy debates in the United States to be centered on which group to support. Indeed, to the extent such a debate has taken place, it does normally revolve around this question. Some have argued that support of the Brotherhood can help draw Muslims away from violent Wahhabists such as al-Qaeda.[207] Others counter that the Brotherhood often acts a gateway to more violent ideologies. Several prominent members of al-Qaeda, for example, were once members of the Muslim Brotherhood.[208] And as we have seen, some Arab regimes have promoted non-political Wahhabists as an alternative to the heavily politicized Muslim Brotherhood. This approach has some backing within the current U.S. administration. For example, the United States Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates has praised a Saudi program that rehabilitates violent Islamists through non-political Wahhabist teachings. When discussing this program earlier this year, Gates stated, that the Saudi have done "as good, if not a better, job of [rehabilitation] than almost anybody."[209]

Focusing policy on which movement to support is wrong on two counts, however. First, increased power in the hands of either the Muslim Brotherhood or the Wahhabists

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[207] See: Robert S. Leiken and Steven Brooke, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 86, no. 2 (March/April 2007); Marc Lynch, "Assessing the Muslim Brotherhood 'Firewall,'" *Abu Ardvark*, May 13, 2008, http://abuaardvark.typepad.com/abuaardvark/2008/05/assessing-the-m.html

[208] For an example of this argument, see: Demetri Sevastopulo, "The Face of 9-11," *The Financial Times*, August 15, 2008.

[209] Kamran Bokhari, "Limits to Exporting the Saudis' Counter-jihadist Successes," *Strafor Global Security and Intelligence Report*, May 14, 2009.

would be detrimental to U.S. interests. And second, policymakers do not have to make such a choice.

U.S. interests in the Middle East would be best served by the existence of stable open societies throughout the region. Liberal democratic regimes that are at peace with their neighbors are obviously the ideal. Nevertheless, a push for democratization that empowers one of these two groups would be a disaster not only for the United States, but for the people who would have to live under the new regimes. The resulting polities would be neither stable nor democratic.

Supporting the Muslim Brotherhood and other likeminded organizations may seem convenient when faced with the prospect of violent Wahhabism. But this would be an ill-advised and short-sighted policy. While the Muslim Brotherhood may be open to modernity and seem more moderate when compared to Wahhabism, empowering the Brotherhood would be harmful both to U.S. interests in the region and to the populations which would fall under its control. In contradiction to America's interest in regional peace and stability, the Brotherhood has consistently aligned itself with Iran's bellicose posture toward Israel, the secular Sunni Arab Nationalists, and the Sunni Arab monarchies. Empowering the Brotherhood, would therefore draw the region further away from an Arab-Israeli accord and closer to a regional war. Furthermore, the Brotherhood's policies would be detrimental to women and religious minorities living under its rule. In instances where the Brotherhood has gained power, such as Hamas in Gaza, the results have been extremely harmful to the population under its control. Even if the Brotherhood were not to gain control of a state, an increase of its influence and power could still be detrimental. In states such as Kuwait, where the parliament has considerable influence on the regime's policies, a more powerful Brotherhood could push Kuwait's policies in a dangerous direction. In other states where the parliament is less influential, such as Jordan, popular politics can still have considerable influence on the regime. As discussed above, the King of Jordan's rhetoric during Israel's 2006 war with Hezbollah was much more subdued than it was two years later during Israel's war with Hamas in Gaza. To a large extent, this change was due to domestic pressures from groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood.

Considering the problems that the Muslim Brotherhood presents, some have suggested that supporting non-political Wahhabists may neutralize the Brotherhood.[210] Since non-political Wahhabists urge their followers to shun political involvement, leaving policy decisions solely in the hands of the ruling regimes, some have argued that Wahhabism can act as a stabilizing force. As one Egyptian liberal puts it, the quietism of non-political Wahhabists is "a kind of Christmas present to the dictators because now they can rule with both the army and the religion."[211] This, too, is an extremely risky and short-sighted policy. Wahhabists, from the most violent to the most non-political, all share the same core beliefs. Therefore, non-violent Wahhabists can become violent, and violent Wahhabists can become non-violent without changing their creed. The propagation of non-violent Wahhabism, then, does not guarantee that those on the receiving end will not eventually support al-Qaeda. In fact, non-violent types may function as a gateway to more violent forms of Wahhabism. For example, the prominent non-violent Wahhabist Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani mentored a number of students throughout the 1980s.

[210] See: Paul Schemm, "Ultraconservative Islam on the Rise in Mideast."
[211] Ibid.

As Quintan Wiktorowicz, a noted expert on Islamism, shows "Among [al-Albani's] elite students were Ali Hasan al-Halabi, Salim al-Hilali, Hasan Abu Haniya, and Umar Abu Qatadah. The first two went on to become prominent nonviolent scholars in their own right with substantial international influence. Hasan Abu Haniya emerged as a local jihadi sheikh. And Abu Qatadah became the mufti for the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria, a member of al-Qaeda's fatwa committee, and one of the most influential members of the Salafi jihadi network. All four learned about Islam directly from Albani, yet they eventually moved in radically different directions."[212] At the heart of the problem is that Wahhabism, no matter how non-violent or non-political, is inherently destabilizing. As Richard Gauvain, a lecturer in comparative religion at the American University of Cairo, argues, even the non-violent Wahhabist position "is not that jihad is not a good thing, it is just that it is not a good thing right now."[213] As the example of Ain al-Hilweh camp in Lebanon demonstrates, discussed in Part Two, support for non-political Wahhabists at the expense of the Muslim Brotherhood is playing with fire. Nonviolent Wahhabists can quickly transform into extremely violent terrorists.

Yet, policy options are not limited to choosing between the Muslim Brotherhood and Wahhabists. This monograph has attempted to show that these two movements are in fact dissimilar. The most prudent policy would, therefore, treat them separately, developing a distinctive approach for each.

Wahhabism presents a unique challenge for U.S. policymakers in that Wahhabists consider any epistemology not beginning and ending with traditional Islamic sources to be invalid. Engaging Wahhabists in direct public diplomacy or a battle of ideas would be next to impossible. After all, they do not accept the modern secular premises – whether they be liberal, realist, Marxist, etc. – that our arguments rest upon. However, the US does have a direct interest in limiting, as much as possible, the influence of the more violent Wahhabists, and empowering the most non-political scholars. As mentioned above, Secretary Gates has already acknowledged the utility of such a policy. However, there has been very little discussion thus far on how policy makers should go about doing this. The first step is for U.S. diplomats and policymakers[214] concerned with the Middle East to familiarize themselves with the internal arguments and language of Wahhabist debates. What separates al-Qaeda from Wahhabists who oppose attacks on the United States, such as the Saudi religious establishment, is that some Wahhabists consider America to have entered into a treaty or an alliance with an Islamic ruler. America is, therefore, protected under Islamic law and an illegitimate target for jihad. These are technicalities of Islamic law but they are very important to Wahhabists and can make the difference in convincing a Muslim to support or refrain from supporting terrorism against the United States. Groups such as al-Qaeda understand this and use it in their propaganda. For example when addressing its critics in the wake of 9/11, al-Qaeda made sure to assert that "Truly, America is not, nor has it ever been, a land of treaty or alliance."[215] U.S. policymakers should understand these debates and, in this case, make sure the United States is portrayed as

[212] Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of a Salafi Movement," p. 213.
[213] Gauvain is quoted in the Schemm Washington Post article cited above.
[214] This would include senior diplomats stationed in the Middle East as well as policy makers in Washington D.C. such as the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs.
[215] "Translation of April 24, 2002 al-Qaeda document," *Middle East Policy Council*.

having entered into a treaty with a legitimate Islamic ruler. The United States needs to pressure Middle Eastern governments to depict their relationship with America in this manner, and through public diplomacy which does the same. Of course, this type of public diplomacy will not, on its own, end the threat of al-Qaeda and other violent Wahhabists. But when combined with efforts such as the Saudi initiative Secretary Gates praised, it can help non-violent Wahhabists to discourage others from attacking American targets.

Another step is to see that the Muslim Brotherhood, while not an organization U.S. policymakers should support in its current form, is at its core open to modernity and modernist arguments. In other words the Muslim Brothers, as opposed to Wahhabists, speak our language. The Brotherhood has made clear that, at least in theory, it accepts the validity of modern norms such as nonviolence, non-aggression, human rights, democracy, and constitutionalism. Policy makers concerned with public diplomacy should therefore make clear where they feel the Brotherhood is not living up to these norms. For example, when the Brotherhood claims to be nonviolent, it should be challenged over its support for violence in Israel, Iraq, Chechnya, and Kashmir. When the Brotherhood claims to accept human rights, it should be made clear where it falls short concerning religious minorities and women's rights. When the Brotherhood claims to be democratic, it should be made clear where its proposed policies fail to meet democratic standards. Thus far the US has failed to articulate these types of arguments clearly. It has therefore let the Brotherhood's propaganda stand unchallenged, causing many in the Islamic world to conclude that the United States opposes the Brotherhood not because it is an undemocratic and often militant organization, but because it is Islamic.

As a secular state, the United States should not recognize any religion as superior or inferior. Policymakers should underscore that they intend to treat the Muslim Brotherhood as they would any other political party, regardless of religion. The more the debate focuses on the Muslim Brotherhood's politics rather than religion, the more successful U.S. policy will be. Care should be taken not to lend legitimacy to the Brotherhood in its current form. But by engaging the Brotherhood indirectly in the battle of ideas, the United States can challenge the Brotherhood to embody the principles it already claims to accept.

This type of engagement could be extremely timely. The current U.S. administration enjoys unprecedented levels of popularity in the Arab and Islamic world and over the past decade, the Brotherhood, unlike the Wahhabists, has shown itself to be open to reform in accordance with modern and even liberal norms.[216] The United States cannot on its own force the Brotherhood to reform, but it can engage in debates that challenge the Brotherhood's inconsistencies. There is no reason to believe that in the future the Brotherhood cannot transform into a liberal-Islamic political party. In fact, it has already internalized several modern and liberal norms needed for such a transformation. Whether it will one day act in accordance with those norms is yet to be seen, but the United States should do everything in its power to push the Brotherhood in that direction.

Because the Brotherhood often resorts to propaganda which sounds disingenuous, some conclude the group should not be trusted.[217] However, this line of reasoning fails to

[216] See for example: Mona El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood," *The International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3 (August 2005): pp. 373-395.

[217] For example, Hassab al-Turabi, who headed the Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan, claimed to put forth a liberal Islamic platform, but when he gained power, the result was anything but liberal.

take into account the fact that the Brotherhood's propaganda is not only directed at western audiences. It often uses non-violent and anti-authoritarian arguments to gain support domestically and many Brotherhood supporters were attracted to the organization precisely because of these arguments. Challenging the Brotherhood to live up to its propaganda will force it either to reform or risk alienating a substantial segment of its supporters. Both outcomes would be beneficial for U.S. interests and Middle Eastern politics.

By understanding the Muslim Brotherhood and Wahhabism not as two similar manifestations of a single movement but as two separate movements, US policy makers can address each group separately, forming distinct policies for each. This will help to neutralize the most nefarious elements of each movement while not empowering an equally problematic element of the other or dangerously destabilizing the regional balance of power. Thus, the United States could form policies that pull the Muslim Brotherhood away from militancy without pushing it toward Wahhabism while also limiting the most nefarious elements of Wahhabism without pushing them toward the Iranian led anti-western camp. This would promote long term liberalization/democratization while continuing to support short term stability.

The United States' interest in creating an environment which would allow for liberalization and democratization is not shared by the often authoritarian Arab regimes. Indeed, the United States has had difficulty pressuring Arab regimes to implement more liberal and democratic policies. Nevertheless, the interests of the Arab regimes and the interests of the US do intersect in some fundamental ways, especially in limiting extremism. Therefore if the US frames its policies in terms of limiting extremism, it should receive more support from the Arab regimes, even if in the long term, these same policies may also lead to liberalization.

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