Abstract

This thesis examines the roots of Arabness or Arabism within the modern Salafi-Jihadi movement. This movement came to rise in the 1980s during an Islamic revival period in Muslim communities worldwide. With time, we eventually witness the rise of global Jihadist groups such as al-Qaeda and IS (Islamic State), who claim to represent Islam in its purest form. Throughout this thesis, the definition of Salaf that I will use will be the first three centuries of Muslims, including the years of the companions of Muḥammad (PBUH). First, I will discuss a brief history of Islamic Empires throughout this thesis, emphasizing Arabs. Then I will discuss the relationship between Salafism and the Ḥanbalī school of thought and their appeal to Arabs. After that, I will analyze the last two hundred years of the Arab world, beginning with the French conquest of Egypt in 1798, with an emphasis on the fall of Pan-Arabism and the rise of Islamism leading to the rise of Salafi-Jihadism. Subsequently, I will discuss the modern ideology of Salafi-Jihadi, how the failure of nationalism and a unified identity contributed to the rise of Salafi-Jihadism, and how it remains connected to Arabness. Finally, I will analyze IS or the Islamic State, how we can witness the inherited Arabness within Salafi-Jihadism, and how that manifests in the organization. This thesis will draw from many sources, including medieval primary sources such as the work of medieval Islamic scholars, modern secondary sources, and modern primary sources such as official IS documents.
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Part 1:

The Early History of Islam with an Emphasis on the Rise and Fall of the Arabs

Arabism in the Quran and Ḥadīth

To understand the relationship between Sunni fundamentalism or Salafism and Pan-Arabism, we must first understand the importance of Arabs within the religion itself. Then we must understand the history of Islam, focusing on the Arabs’ roles and how those roles declined in some spheres and grew in others. In this paper, I will mainly focus on Sunni Muslims, and all sources will be from Sunni books, as those are the most reliable sources for modern Salafis. It should also be noted that I am referring to Sunni Muslims whenever I use the term “Muslim” or “Islamic” without specifying their association with a particular form of Islam.

The expansion of Islam introduced the world to a new religion that quickly expanded and led to the rise of the Arabs outside the Arabian Peninsula. Although Islam initially preached and still preaches that all Muslims are equal, the Arabs still hold a special place within Islam. For starters, Muhammad (PBUH) and most of his companions (RA) were Arabs. This idea would give the Arabs an indirect "prestigious" title, in which the Arabs were seen as the divine chosen ones whom God appointed to guide people to the perfect religion. This meant that non-Arabs should, by default, be grateful to the Arabs, and in terms of Salafism, should strive to be like them. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism or Salafism can also be associated with the decline of Arabs politically and militarily in the early centuries of the Caliphate. That resulted in the Arabs only playing a theological role, through the rise of prominent Arab Sunni thinkers during and after that decline.

In the beginning, some could see Islam as the religion of the Arabs, and many references support that idea. One example is the Quranic verse (12:2): "Indeed, We have sent down as an
Arabic Quran, so that you may understand." This verse clearly shows that the initial message of Islam was purposely constructed in the Arabic language and, initially, primarily for the Arabs. Further evidence for why the Arabs saw themselves as the people worthy of the final revelation is through heritage. Many Arabs consider themselves part of the lineage of Ismāʿīl son of Abraham, who is nicknamed "Father of the Arabs." Making the Arabs ethnically unique, similar to the Israelites and how they’re depicted in Christianity and Judaism, as we see in the Hebrew Bible.

Arabs were the only group that was also forcefully converted to Islam, or at least reconverted. During the time of Muḥammad (PBUH), most Arabs in the Arabian Peninsula had converted to Islam and accepted Muḥammad's (PBUH) role as a prophet and his message as a divine message. The only main exceptions were some Christian and Zoroastrian Arabs who agreed to pay a poll tax. Nevertheless, for the most part, Islam was seen as their new unified divine message and eliminated any form of paganism. Modern Salafis and some conservative Muslims even go as far as to say that the Arabs in Arabia who did not convert were given special protection by Muḥammad (PBUH). However, that special status is not guaranteed today; thus, everyone in the Arabian Peninsula should be Muslim. As they use the ḥadith: "No two religions can meet in the Arabian Peninsula,"¹ and another ḥadith: "I will kick out the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula so that only Muslims will remain."² Therefore, giving a religious justification for the expulsion of Jews in Yemen, which was done in the name of Pan-Arabism.

Whether Muḥammad (PBUH) said that or not, modern Muslims, who accept the Sunni sciences of hadith, take that as law. This means that Arabs were treated a little differently in terms of accepting Islam. Thus, giving the impression that an Arab, by default, should be a

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¹ al-Muwatta’ Imam Mālik ḥadith number: 1625
² Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim ḥadith number: 1767.
Muslim. Today, a stereotype that we see as "racist" or wrong has historical and religious backing. Hence, making the Arabs the founders of Islam and a community that should all be Muslim, thus representing Islam.

Arabs would legally rule this new community. As a ḥadith states: "This affair will remain with the Quraysh as long as two remain." The meaning of this ḥadith, or at least as traditional Sunni Muslims interpret it, is that the issue is the issue of who can be Caliph. As the ḥadith states, only a member of the Quraysh tribe can be Caliph. Therefore, in terms of race, the identity one is born with; the Caliph must be an Arab. Some argue that there are descendants of the Quraysh who are not Arab, or the children of mixed marriages. An example being how some Muslims in Iran and South Asia claim to be descendants of Muḥammad (PBUH).

It would be correct to say they are not Arab, but ethnicity can be changed. As ethnicity is a modern construct and defined, each ethnic group is defined by that specific group. That definition could include tradition, linguistics, culture, and lineage. This could mean that some people adhering to an Arab ancestry could be incorporated into a new identity, like Arabs who initially migrated to modern-day Pakistan and identified as Arab. With time, they would abandon their historic Arab roots and adhere to a new ethnic identity, like Desi’s with an Arab ancestry, thus, the changing their ethnicity.

The construct of “Arabs” as an ethnicity is also a modern construct by modern Arabs. However, that does not mean it did not exist in some form. As we see in the former ḥadiths, the concept of Arabs did exist, or at least for the ḥadith folk, it had to exist. The scholar Peter Webb explored this idea, and his findings were that the concept of “Arabs” changes with time. His findings show that the earliest definitions of Arabs always connect the people with the language.

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3 Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhari ḥadith number: 3501.
Other scholars define “Arabs” as those who derive from the land of the Arabs. These two qualifications seem to be the most accepted qualifications for being an Arab and how they were defined then and even now. As we see with efforts to “Arabize” non-Arabs living in the Arab world, which would be the modern equivalent to the “land of the Arabs.” This process of Arabization was done mainly by enforcing the Arabic language and suppressing the language of that minority group. Therefore, it should be clear that when I discuss the concept of “Arabs” in the early Islamic world and before the construction of an Arab identity. I mean Arabs as a linguistic group, as those who speak Arabic, and who can also trace their lineage back to the Arabian Peninsula, which in some cases is done through tribal affiliation.

If we exclude Shi’ites and Khawārij from our definition of who is eligible to be the leader of the Islamic community, we get a better idea of who can be Caliph, as the vast majority of Muslims are Sunnis and are incorporated into the broader Islamic culture. The same Islamic Sunni culture, that by the time of the Caliphs, had already incorporated some elements of Arab culture and traditions into the religion. Making those social and ethnic groups who adopted Islamic culture, culturally, and by default ethnically, close to the Arabs. However, in the case of eligibility to be Caliph, culture and tradition is not enough, a Sunni Muslim must be able to prove that they’re from the Quraysh tribe. Thus, must claim an Arab lineage.

The second requirement is that the Caliph must speak Arabic, which theoretically, can be learned. This means that if a non-Arab who can prove to be a descendant of Muḥammad (PBUH) learns Arabic. Then according to Sunni Islam, that person is qualified to be a Caliph. Since that person is would technically be an Arab who has returned to their roots. Therefore, giving the Arabs a divine claim over the direct authority of the state, making the Arabs the sole rulers over the Muslim community.

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5 Ibid. Pg. 181.
The Rise of Arabs

In terms of what we see after the death of Muḥammad (PBUH), with the first Caliph Abū Bakr (RA) launching the Ridda Wars, in response to the newly converted Arabs in the Arabian Peninsula leaving Islam, with some even declaring themselves as prophets. Although strategically, it would be best to try and settle this division more peacefully, as the remaining Muslims were outnumbered. However, Abū Bakr (RA) took it upon himself as the new religious leader of the Muslims and the first Caliph to launch a series of wars against the tribes that left Islam or refused to pay ṣadaqa, and to bring them back to the fold of Islam forcefully. His campaign was successful and sent two clear messages, intentional or not, to the Arabs—one being that the new Islamic Caliphate would not tolerate Apostates. The second was that Arabs would now be Muslims, and any attempt to deny or change that will result in war, whether or not the Muslims are in a position to physically wage war.

The second Caliph, ʿUmar (RA), also played a role in creating an Arab-dominant narrative of Islamic history. One of the first things ʿUmar (RA) did as Caliph was the establishment of the registrar or dīwān. Initially, the purpose of the dīwān was to keep track of the warrior's pensions and pay. It would later be entirely dominated by Arabs, thus putting most of the newly established Caliphate's wealth in the hands of the Arabs. One can argue that it was the Arabs who conquered the land and were entitled to the war loot. However, the money was given out differently, as it was first given to the prophet’s (PBUH) family members such as cousins, then those who fought during the time of Muḥammad, then the Ridda Wars, then the conquests of Syria and Iraq.\(^6\) The vast majority of them being Arab, despite al-Ṭabarī stating that everyone received their fair share whether they were Arab or non-Arab. In reality, most wars

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happened before the conquest of non-Arab lands meaning the non-Arabs did not even have a chance to take part in that wealth. The registrar also reported the tribe of a warrior, thus continuing the tradition of tribal identity, and by default Arab identity, with the newly established Islamic culture.\(^7\)

The registrar would later transform into the primary administration of the Caliphate under the Umayyad dynasty. However, like 'Umar's (RA) registrar, the Umayyad’s Jund diwan, or soldier registrar, would remain dominated by Arabs. Except that, unlike 'Umar's (RA) army, this time, even non-active soldiers still received compensations, furthering the Arab dominance over the wealth of the Caliphate for the next century.\(^8\)

During the initial conquest of non-Arab and non-Muslim lands, we witness the use of the Islamic institution of Jizya or poll tax. A special tax on all non-Muslims regardless of race or religion, living in Muslim ruled territory. For the most part, this was done consistently throughout the Caliphate, with few exceptions. One of those exceptions happened during the time of 'Umar (RA), in which he allowed a non-Muslim Arab tribe called Banū Taghlib. This tribe was given a special status; they did not have to pay poll tax rather a tax called ṣadaqah or charity, which is said to be double of the zakāt that all Muslims paid.\(^9\) When comparing this tribe with the other non-Muslims who were forced to pay a poll tax, the only difference we can see is that this group was Arab, thus giving them more leverage to negotiate compared to the other non-Muslims. This signals that even non-Muslim Arabs were given special treatment during this time.

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With the rise of the Umayyads, we witnessed more pro-Arab policies that would remain for the next 90 years. For starters, they referred to non-Arab Muslims as Mawālī, which means “the owned people” or clients. Although the title was initially given to those captured by Arabs in wars, it would eventually be used as a derogatory term to distinguish Arab Muslims from non-Arab Muslims. Some Umayyad governors even resorted to enslaving non-Arab Muslims who had revolted against the Caliph Hishām. This gave the idea that Arabs were even above the law, as a Muslim cannot legally enslave another Muslim. Furthermore, it gave the impression that non-Arab Muslims were in the exact status of non-Muslims, as a Muslim can legally enslave a rebellious non-Muslim. Further evidence to support this is that during the first and second civil wars, in which we see Muslims killing Muslims but never see Muslims enslaving other Muslims.

The Umayyads also prevented non-Arab Muslims from fighting in the army, and when allowed to fight, they were not given a salary; instead, they would be paid in war spoils. The registrar further supports this idea since it documents a person’s name and tribe. Therefore, it would be impossible to successfully incorporate them into the registrar, thus impossible to give them a salary or pension. Furthermore, all government employees, including governors, were Arabs, showing the absolute dominance of the Arabs in both the government and political bodies of the state and in the army, which is the sword and strength of the Islamic Caliphate.

This situation remained the same, if not more severe, in the later years of the Umayyad-controlled Caliphate. With the Caliph Hishām Ibn Abd al-Malik, the Caliphate continued to emphasize the role of bloodline in which people were still being judged depending on their association with an Arab tribe. This continued Arab superiority would create a toxic

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and rebellious environment within the Muslim community, especially from the growing non-Arab Muslim converts. It would result in multiple rebellions and eventually the rise of the ‘Abbasids, which could be seen as a sign of Islamic universalism taking down Arab exclusivism or superiority.\textsuperscript{14} It was even seen as a “dawla”, which means a complete flip, and in this instance, they flipped the Caliphate from an "oppressive" Umayyad to a "righteous" ‘Abbasid.

However, despite all of negative aspects and policies of the Umayyads, there is still one major accomplishment that the Umayyads did that no one after them managed to do. That is, they managed to expand their Caliphate to the greatest height of any single Islamic empire. The Umayyads controlled territory from the Iberian Peninsula in the west to Sindh and Central Asia to the east. This was the most extensive border that even the ‘Abbasids or Ottomans could not reach. It is important because it portrays the Umayyads as these great conquers and spreaders of Islam. If they had not conquered that land, there probably would not have been any Muslims in Central Asia, the Islamic West, and the Iberian Peninsula.

This is seen as a remarkable achievement in the eyes of conservative Sunni Muslim Arabs today. Many of the average Arab Sunni Muslims associate the Umayyad army with being exclusively Arab, which is incorrect. They hold the assumption that it was only the Arabs who conquered parts of Europe, and if not for the Umayyad defeat at Tours in 732 AD, some Arab Sunni Muslims say that all of Europe would have been Muslim. Of course, there are Muslims who raise the question, "Why didn't the Umayyads try to conquer the Franks again?" The only answer that seems plausible to them is that they could not fight the Franks again because of the limits of the empire and various Shi’ite and non-Arab rebellions, with the first successful rebellion being the Berber revolt in 740 AD.\textsuperscript{15} This creates an idea of a lost Islamic Europe,

which could have prevented colonialism and made the Muslims and Arabs the world's greatest superpower today, in the eyes of some. This further supported the idea that when both the army and generals are Arabs, like in the Umayyad period, then Islam could conquer the world.

The Umayyads are also praised for their fights against Shi’ism, as majority of Arabs today are Sunni, so conservatives praise Umayyad leaders who fought the Shi’ites and put down the various Shi'ite rebellions. Thus, seen as heroes in the Sunni world, regardless of whether people knew who they were and their role in shaping the Islamic world. I can say that as a person who lived in Jordan, a majority Arab Sunni country, my high school was named after Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan, one of the greatest Umayyad Caliphs. My brother's elementary school was also named after a problematic Umayyad governor and general, named Al-Ḥajjaj Ibn Yusuf, remembered by some Shi'ites and even some Sunnis as a butcher.

The Umayyads are also credited as the first to order the gathering of ḥadith or traditions of Muḥammad (PBUH). This began with the Umayyad Caliph ʿUmar II, who ordered a formal collection of the Prophet’s (PBUH) traditions, which would later be referred to as ḥadiths. This makes the Umayyads the heroes and potential founders of modern conservative Sunni Islam, as the majority of the Sunni schools of jurisprudence use ḥadith in making Islamic rulings. ʿUmar II also holds a high place among modern Sunni Muslims for doing this, with some calling him the fifth rightfully guided Caliph.

Overall, the Umayyad dynasty represented the dominance of Arab Muslims and the height that the Caliphate could reach when dominated by Arabs in the governing and military bodies. We see a massive empire concerned with expanding its borders with Muawiyah (RA) launching wars against Byzantines and the later Marwanid Caliphs conquest of Iberia. Thus, it

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was a dynasty based on Arab superiority but remembered as the great conquerors and heroes of Muslims, especially among Arabs, as this would be the last time, before the establishment of modern states, where we would see Arabs as the head of the Islamic world militarily and politically.

The Decline of the Arabs

With the rise of the ‘Abbasids, this new dynasty marked the beginning of the decline for Arabs in every aspect. The first significant change the ‘Abbasids did was abolishing specific laws that favored Arab Muslims over non-Arab Muslims. They also began the incorporation of non-Arabs into the military on a large scale, with many Khurasani troops joining the military.\(^\text{18}\) However, this could be seen as a positive step forward to create an inclusive environment that would flourish. In the eyes of some, especially western Islamic Studies scholars but also including Sunni Muslims, that is true. As a result, the ‘Abbasids flourished, preserving and creating knowledge that western thinkers would later use during the Renaissance. However, in the eyes of the conservative Arab Sunni Muslims, this period was seen as a constant decline, and it is the modern Salafis Islamic “duty” to right the wrong that was created during this period.

Of course, in terms of the new laws, the laws were not initially accepted by all Arabs, especially the Syrians. They went from being the great imperial army of the Caliphate, to potential traitors who fought for the preservation of a “superior race” idea. These Syrians would revolt four years after the ‘Abbasid revolution, showing a potential crisis between the former Arab elites and the new non-Arab sympathetic administration.\(^\text{19}\) This crisis was solved by allowing the Syrian soldiers and leadership to guard the Byzantium frontier of the Caliphate.\(^\text{20}\)


\(^{20}\) Ibid.
Once a tremendous imperial army that threatened all of Europe, became a mere border guard for the Caliphate. Nevertheless, the Syrians at the time could do nothing, as their revolts were unsuccessful. This left room for modern Sunni Arab Muslims to create a narrative not only denouncing frontier Jihad as only defensive and non-extent during the Umayyads, who was always on the offensive—but also denouncing and putting Arabs in such a humiliating position that contributed to the further decline of the Arabs, and later the decline of the Islamic community.

However, during the early ‘Abbasid period, the Arabs remained relevant in the military. The early ‘Abbasids still relied on Arabs for warfare, and most importantly, an Arab would be at the head of the army. As is known, the ‘Abbasids were Arabs and the Caliphs; thus, they were still the head of the military and political body. The Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd even took great pride in leading the army into Jihad and saw it as one of the duties of a Caliph.\(^{21}\) This meant that despite the initial partial decline of Arabs in the army, an Arab was still the head of that army. It remained the case even when the Caliphate began a transition away from a volunteer army to a slave army.

During the Caliph al-Mu‘tasim in the 9th century, the Caliphate officially switched from a paid volunteer army dominated by Arabs and Khurasanis to a Turkish slave army.\(^{22}\) This was seen as a significant development in the Islamic world, as it furthered the decline of Arabs and introduced Turks into strong positions in the Caliphate. The rise of the Turkish slave army marked the official end of Arab dominance over the military soldier ranks.

This Arab rule over the political and military bodies of the Caliphate would soon come to an end during the 10th century with the arrival of the Buyids. During the 10th century, almost

\(^{21}\) Ibid. Pg. 129.
300 years after the Prophet's death (PBUH), a Persian Shi'ite dynasty, the Buyids, would become the protectors of the Caliphate. This meant that the Buyids were in complete control over the Caliphate politically and militarily, with the Caliph only holding a symbolic position but no real power.\textsuperscript{23} This would mark the official end of Arab dominance over the Caliphate, as Arabs would only be able to retain the symbolic title of Caliph under the Buyids, Seljuks, and the later Mamluks of Egypt, until the arrival of the Ottomans in 1517 AD. However, during the 12th and early 13th centuries, there was a brief era when the ‘Abbasid Caliph regained control from the Seljuk Turks and had some independence. Except, by that time, the ‘Abbasids only directly controlled a small emirate of their former empire, comprising modern-day central and southern Iraq. The independence would also end with the sack of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258 AD.

Of course, some might argue that this is not true and that the Fatimids, who claimed to be Arabs from the lineage of the fourth Caliph and first Shi’ite Imam ʿAlī, still held a mighty empire in Egypt. They even declared themselves a Caliphate and controlled the Levant and the Hijaz regions before the arrival of the Crusaders. However, one major issue with the Fatimids was that they were Ismaili Shi’ite Muslims, thus religiously seen as unconnected to the modern majority Arab world, which is mostly Sunni. However, even if we disregard the religious aspect of the Fatimids, we still witness a similar problem that the ‘Abbasids had.

Unlike the ‘Abbasids, the Fatimids managed to keep control over the political sphere. However, they still heavily relied on non-Arabs, especially for the army. The Fatimids initially relied on Berber soldiers and generals to protect Egypt and expand the empire into the Levant.\textsuperscript{24} Then, they would eventually use Turkish slave soldiers to decrease the influence that the Berbers


had in the army.\textsuperscript{25} Nevertheless, it would be a Sunni Muslim Kurd, by the name of Salāḥ al-Dīn, who was initially a minister during the Fatimid era, and later the military ruler of Egypt on behalf of Zangid dynasty in Syria, who would later abolish the Fatimid Caliphate in 1171 AD.\textsuperscript{26} This abolishment marked the official end of the Arabs being the dominant force in Islam, as there will technically be smaller Arab emirates throughout the Islamic world such as in Morocco. However, the core heartland of Islam would remain in the hands of non-Arab Muslims. Nevertheless, one has to ask, why did the Arabs accept their new non-Arab rulers?

The answer can be seen through the rise of a new identity that began developing during the Rashidun Caliphate as a political identity until it became the dominant identity during the ‘Abbasids and Fatimids era. This era can be considered the rise of the Sunni religious identity where their enemies were still non-Muslims, but now also other sects in Islam such as the different branches of Shi‘ism. With both the Buyids and the Fatimids, who belonged to two different sects of Shi‘ism, seen as the enemies, only through Sunni unity could the Sunnis, whether Arab or non-Arab, regain control. This was seen through the Sunni revival in Baghdad led by the ‘Abbasids, Seljuks, and traditional Ḥanbalī scholars. Furthermore, it was seen in Syria with the Sunni revival of Nūr al-Dīn Zangī, a Sunni Turk who ruled in Aleppo during the 12th century, who built Sunni schools and institutions.\textsuperscript{27}

It can also be said that during these political and military shifts occurring in the early centuries of Islam, a new group was emerging. It began with the early times of the ‘Abbasid Caliphs, who are sometimes remembered as those who fought Sunni Islamic scholarship, especially al-Ma‘mūn. This can be seen during the miḥna, which saw the Caliph al-Ma‘mūn

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid. Pg. 305.
\textsuperscript{26} Christie, Niall. Muslims and Crusaders: Christianity’s Wars in the Middle East, 1095-1382, from the Islamic Sources. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2020. Pg. 39.
seeking to expand the role of the Caliph; from a political and military role and adding an additional religious role.\textsuperscript{28} Al-Mamun eventually died, and his next two successors held on to his policies, but with the arrival of the Caliph, al-Mutawakkil, he reversed all of the al-Ma'mun policies.\textsuperscript{29} This event marked a victory for the Arab traditional scholar, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, against the Eastern influenced ‘Abbasid Caliphs.

This reversal was primarily due to the severe pressure and opposition that Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and his followers led. This is significant because this opposition would later establish themselves as Ahl al-Hadith or Hadith folk. Within this group were Arab scholars such as Abū Bakr al-Khalāl, Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī, and later Ibn Taymiyyah. This is important because these scholars would keep the tradition of Islamic literalism and hadith alive, which would be dominated by Arab scholars today. These scholars would later be the groundwork for the modern Salafist movement, emphasizing Ibn Taymiyyah, who is seen by some as the true founder of the Salafist movement and highly influential among Salafis today.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid. Pg. 129.
Part 2: 

The Formation of Salafism and its Roots in Arabism

The Emergence of the Ḥanbalī School of Jurisprudence

With the rise of Islam, we begin to witness the emergence of different methodologies of making Islamic rulings. These different methodologies would lead to different schools of thought, jurisprudence, or madhhabs. Although these schools relied primarily on the Quran, each school originally had its methodology to formulate Islamic rulings that cannot be formulated using the Quran alone.

The oldest school, the Ḥanafī, was the only school founded by a non-Arab, Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nuʿman. The school initially relied heavily on al-raʾy or informed opinion. This meant that the scholar first sought the Quran for answers and then gave their own informed opinion on what they thought was best for that legal or moral-ethical case. A few years later, another scholar, Mālik Ibn Anas, founded the Mālikī school, in Madīna, his birthplace, and native city. His school emphasized the traditions of the people of the Madīna and then the idea of ʿurf, which is local practice. These two schools created many leniencies as to what Muslims can and cannot do. This is why scholars from both schools were called ahl al-raʾy, or the people of opinion. That meant that there would be many different opinions, thus many different versions of Islam.

Something might be permissible in one place but be forbidden in another. Furthermore, it gave

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31 Ibid.
scholars a high position in Islam, as they are the sole authority on what is right and wrong in certain issues.

The inconsistency these methods encouraged some to find a solution to making Islam more standard or universal. The first of these attempts was done by the Umayyads, with ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 101/720), and his attempt to gather the traditions of Muḥammad (PBUH) in the form of ḥadīth, sayings of Muḥammad (PBUH) or his companions. However, it became more critical when the scholar Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī began to emphasize the importance of ḥadīth in Islamic jurisprudence. This does not mean that the other two schools at the time were wrong or deliberately misled people. Instead, they worked with what they had, because at the time there were not many reliable books of ḥadith. Hence why Mālik ibn Anas gathered ḥadith in his book al-Muwaṭṭa’, which is his collection of ḥadīth that he saw as reliable. Al-Shāfiʿī, on the other hand, calls for a universally accepted book of ḥadith, which we can see through his emphasis on the importance of ḥadīth in Islamic jurisprudence. However, he does not have enough ḥadiths to find answers to everyone's questions. This lack of ḥadīths led to the scholars of the Shāfiʿī school adopt the idea of qiyās, that is analogical reasoning using the Quran and the ḥadīth that are available. Thus acknowledging that there may be some shortcomings when giving Islamic rulings. Therefore, in doing so, al-Shāfiʿī is indirectly encouraging scholars to seek out ḥadiths that are seen as legitimate or valid, to help fill this gap in Islamic law.

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This would ultimately lead to the rise of one of al-Shāfiʿī’s students by the name of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. Although we can say that al-Shāfiʿī began the ḥadīth revolution, however, it was Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal who succeeded. He was born into an Arab family in Iraq during the ‘Abbasid Caliphate. He is most famous for his work on ḥadīth and spent a good portion of his life gathering them in his work called al-Musnad, that contains around 28,414 sayings of the prophet (PBUH).

His al-Musnad had two significant effects on Islamic scholars. First, it encouraged more scholars to gather ḥadīths and compile them into books. Second, it created more sources of law that would now make the use of qiyās and al-ra’y, in general, less important. Instead of thinking about whether an issue is permitted or not in Islam, scholars would just need to look up the correct ḥadīth and provide a ruling based on it.

This importance of ḥadīth is the basic idea of the Ḥanbalī school of thought. First, a scholar must go to the Quran to resolve an issue or question. If they cannot, then one must go to the ḥadīth, of which they now have a more considerable amount. However, they still could not answer every question or resolve every issue. Unlike the Shāfiʿī school of thought, the Ḥanbalīs preferred the opinion of the companions of Muḥammad (PBUH), thus creating another method of legal jurisprudence, that is the oral tradition. This school of thought later became the people of ḥadīth or ḥadith folk.

Furthermore, the school of jurisprudence was very critical of ijmʿ or consensus. The definition of consensus in Islam can be put as scholars agreeing on a specific issue in the Ḥanafī school.
jurisprudence. This meant that if one school of thought were the majority, they would be able to shape Islamic law, with the condition that all schools accept consensus as a significant source of law.

In terms of the Ḥanbali school of jurisprudence, it was evident that they would reject this idea. For starters, the 8th and 9th centuries was when many non-Arabs, primarily Persian began to convert on a larger scale. It was the first time Muslims made up the majority of Persia, putting an end to the Arabs dominance over Islam. Therefore, we can see the Ḥanbalī’s rejection of consensus as to their rejection of Persian influence into Islamic theology. Their rejection of consensus would also reemphasize their rejection of informed opinions and favor being a minority that remained faithful to the ḥadith, which encourages incorporating the companions' opinions.

This lack of opinions or individual reasoning directly led the school to take Qur’ān verses and ḥadīth at face value. It led them to become more literal in their exegesis and understanding of the Quran and ḥadith. It made the Ḥanbalī school of thought the most literal of the four schools of thought within Sunni Islam, with the consideration of the Zāhirī, that is mostly dead today. That does not mean they were not diverse in their reasoning, as there were many Ḥanbalī scholars such as al-Ḥallāj and ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Gīlānī, both of whom were Ḥanbalīs and of Iranian background. However, the literalist nature of the Ḥanbalī school of thought made it harder for such individuals or new ideas to thrive in the long run.

The Ḥanbalīs completely rejected the concept of new ideas and practices into the religion. They called it innovation or bidʿa and even quoted a ḥadith that Muḥammad (PBUH) had said:


"Every innovation is a misguidance, and all misguidances are in hell." The wording of this hadith forbids any form of innovation in Islam, going against another popular belief within Sunni Islam that some innovations are good, and some are bad. However, forbidding all innovations in Islam keeps the religion in the realm of the original Islamic community, the vast majority of whom were Arab.

Of course, this is not the opinion of all Ḥanbalī scholars, but as stated before, the Ḥanbalī school of thought would go through significant changes in the coming centuries. This Arab stance began with the founder of the school, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and his trial starting with al-Maʾmun and the miḥna against the ‘Abbasid Caliphs in 833 AD. The miḥna was a series of trials that began with al-Maʾmun enforcing the Muʿtazila doctrine, known as people of monotheism, justice, and logical reasoning. Al-Maʾmun attempted to enforce the Muʿtazila concept that the Quran is a creation of God and not the words of God. This idea becomes controversial as, in the eyes of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and his followers, it meant that the Quran could make mistakes, like all creations, thus, it could later jeopardize the Quran's position as the primary source of law within Islam, therefore the Quran is the uncreated word of God.

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, although initially did not want to confront the ‘Abbasid Caliphs, eventually led the resistance against this concept. We can also see the resistance as the clash between ahl al-raʾy, the people of opinions, and ahl al-Sunna, the people of tradition. The miḥna was eventually abandoned and all the previously enforced changes under the Caliph

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45 Sunan an-Nasa'i, hadith: 1578.
Al-Mutawakkil were reversed in 851 AD. However, many forget to mention that the miḥna was more than just the enforcement of the Muʿtazila doctrine. Instead, it also involved the role and powers of the Caliph within Sunni Islam.

In the eyes of the Ḥanbalīs, the Caliph is the head of the political body of the state and does not take part in theological debates. In other words, the role of the Caliph is to enforce the law and not create or establish it. Therefore, when al-Maʿmun proclaimed the Muʿtazila doctrine as supreme, he directly interfered with the scholarly body of the Caliphate, thus making his actions unlawful. We can also see the Ḥanbalī's rejection of al-Maʿmun’s claims as the Ḥanbalī Sunnis rejecting a Shi'ite idea that the "Imam" is both head of the state and religion, and whatever the Imam says is the law, but does not reveal new revelation from God. Furthermore, the struggle of the Ḥanbalīs against al-Maʿmun is seen as an Arab struggle against Persian influence, as Persian kings usually held the position of religious and political leaders within their communities.

These stances make the Ḥanbalī scholars stand out, as not only those who wish to keep the traditions but also critical to outside influence, in a time with many former Zoroastrian Persians beginning to convert to Islam. Modern-day Ḥanbalī and Salafi scholars, such as Muḥammad Surūr, even go as far as to say that the Persians converted to destroy Islam from within. A good portion of Ḥanbalī scholars are literalists, meaning it was more common among Arabs, as they already knew the language, unlike the non-Arabs who had to learn it, since it is

53 Surur, Muḥammad. wa ja dawr al-majus. Pg. 73.
not their household language. Of course, that does not mean that non-Arabs were incapable of
being grammarians, as many medieval non-Arabs were grammarians. However, the average
non-Arab still had to learn it.

After the death of ʻAḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, his students would carry on his legacy. One of his
most important students, who happened to be one of his sons, ʻAbdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal,
wrote a book called "Kitāb al-Sunna." He clarifies the importance of the ḥadīth in Islamic
jurisprudence and denounces the Shi‘ites for their rejection of the first Caliphs and the ḥadīth.54
Interestingly he uses ḥadīths to back up his claim that the Prophet (PBUH) did not declare ʻAlī
(RA) his successor. Instead, according to ʻAbdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Muḥammad (PBUH)
responded that the Quran is his will when asked about his will.55

This use of ḥadīth to justify the Sunni political decision of the early Caliphs, in a way,
was a test to the Shi‘ites at his time. If they reject the Caliphs, they reject the authority of ḥadīths,
thus separating the two groups into theologically based groups of Sunnis and Shi‘ism. Sunnis
being those who abide by the traditions or ḥadīths of Muḥammad (PBUH), those who reject the
authenticity of those ḥadīths being the Shi‘ites. The other Sunni schools of jurisprudence, Ḥanafī,
Mālikī, and Shāfi‘ī, who later adopted ḥadīths as a secondary source of law after the Quran
further supported this separation. However, their interpretation of the ḥadīths was less literal than
the Ḥanbalī school of jurisprudence.

Although one can theorize that ʻAbdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal was quoting his father
or using his father's work when he made those claims, thus we can safely conclude this was the
opinion of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. In additions, by this time, there was already a significant
difference between Sunnis and Shi‘ites, and many other scholars, including al-Shāfi‘ī, had

55 Ibid. Pg 588-589.
already considered Shi'ite’s heretics. So, what the Ḥanbalīs did, is that they created a formal set of ḥadīth that made it impossible for Shi'ites to accept since it rejects their central claim of 'Alī (RA) being the successor. Thus, the Ḥanbalīs had successfully separated the two religiously and legally, not just politically.

We should also note that 'Abdullāh had asked his father whom the Caliphs were, with his father responding Abū Bakr (RA), 'Umar (RA), 'Uthmān (RA), and 'Alī (RA). However, he does not mention Ḥasan (RA) or Mu‘āwiya (RA), and even references a ḥadīth in which Muḥammad (PBUH) said: "The Caliphate in my nation is thirty years, then after that will be a king." Therefore, when adding the years of the four rightfully guided Caliphs ruled, we get around thirty years, even closer if we include the reign of Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī (RA). Thus, in Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal’s eyes, the king is either Ḥasan (RA) or Mu‘āwiya (RA), with it most likely being Mu‘āwiya (RA) since Ḥasan (RA) had not ruled long enough. Therefore, in the eyes of the founder of the Ḥanbalī school of jurisprudence, the Caliphs of the Umayyad dynasty were merely kings and not rightfully guided Caliphs.

This claim is crucial because it initially disassociates the Ḥanbalīs from the pro-Arab Umayyad dynasty but does not make them appear anti-Umayyad dynasty. In which they are not seen as good or bad in their eyes, with ‘Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal not even mentioning the issue of Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiya and Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī (RA). Instead, it seems that ‘Abdullāh is using the tactic of not discussing problematic issues openly. Rather, he prefers not to reopen the dark time of the Islamic community. Even with the first civil war, ‘Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal rarely mentions the bloodshed involved and instead suggests that both Ṭalḥa ibn ‘Ubayd Allāh
(RA) and Zubayr ibn al-ʿAwwām (RA), who died fighting ʿAlī (RA), are in heaven.59 Furthermore, he blames the Kharijites for the problems and even calls them the "dogs of Hellfire."60 This shows how Ḥanbalīs valued the companions of Muḥammad (PBUH), in that they rarely mentioned their problems or issues. Instead, they preferred to present them as semi-perfect people, but not free from sin, second to only the prophets and messengers; thus, the reason for why the Ḥanbalīs considered the opinions of the companions as the third primary source of Islamic law, after the Quran and ḥadīth.

ʿAbdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal’s book also denounces the theology of the Muʿtazila. Siding with his father that the Quran is the word of God, and those who claim it to be a creature are heretics.61 Furthermore, ʿAbdullāh, like his father, denounced the Muʿtazila, which he claimed that they interpreted the Quran based on their own opinion. However, this interpretation method was much different from ʿAbdullāh's father as Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal preferred to understand the Quran more literally and claims to interpret it like how the companions of Muḥammad (PBUH) interpreted it, leaving less room for opinions.

**Division and Transformation of the Ḥanbalī School of Jurisprudence**

The rise of the ḥadīth folk corresponded to the rise of another group who called themselves the Sufi ṭarīqas. Although initially they were not seen as opponents to the ḥadīth folk, they would soon become one of the greatest opponents today. In terms of defining Sufism, there are many definitions and debates to what Sufism is. The best that we can do is create a list of constants within Sufism, like that of the Sufi expert Dr. Alexander Knysh.62 One conclusion we can make about Sufis is that a ṭarīqa or brotherhood is not attached to a specific school of thought. That

59 Ibid. Pg. 621.
60 Ibid. Pg. 639.
61 Ibid. Pg. 90-96.
means that one can have a Sufi brotherhood that has followers from any of the Sunni schools of
thought, Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfiʿī, and Ḥanbalī.

One of the first and significant Ḥanbalī Sufis was al-Ḥallāj, who was most famous for his
quote of "I am the Truth." He was later executed by the ʿAbbasid Caliphate based in Baghdad
because they considered the statement heresy. However, what is interesting is that many of
al-Ḥallāj’s followers and students were part of the Ḥanbalī school and supported him during his
trial. Al-Ḥallāj is a great example of how Sufism and the Ḥanbalī school can coexist. This
coexistence could be due to the fact that Ḥanbalīs had greater opponents at the time or due to the
Ḥanbalī nature of wanting to unite. However, regardless of what the reasons are, we know that
the ḥadīth folk and Sufis would eventually clash.

The Ḥanbalīs would remain like this for another century until the rise of two influential
scholars who would have a profound impact on the Ḥanbalī school today. The first being the Sufi
mystic ʿAbd al-Qādir Gīlānī, the founder of the Qādiriyya ṭarīqa, which is one of the most
prominent Sufi ṭarīqas today. Gīlānī himself was a Sufi Ḥanbalī Persian, who moved to Baghdad,
where he began to gain influence and followers among the various Muslims of the Caliphate’s
capital. However, this influence would later catch the attention of the second influential scholar,
Ibn al-Jawzī.

Ibn al-Jawzī, a native of Baghdad, was an Arab Ḥanbalī jurist in the Caliphate's capital. Although he initially did not see Sufism as bad, one can argue that he saw Sufism positively

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64 Ibid.
through his work Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa. However, he would later take a more hostile stance against Sufism through his book, Talbīs ʾIblīs. The reasoning behind this shift is difficult to understand, but we can categorize them into two main categories.

The first, which is obvious, is that he could have been jealous of the massive influence that Gīlānī was gaining through Sufism. If he had stuck to the pro-Sufi stance, he would support or encourage Muslims to join the Gīlānī and his Sufi ṭarīqa. This stance would jeopardize Ibn al-Jawzī's position within the city and the Caliphate. By taking this new anti-Sufi stance, he would stand out as unique, while also seen as an alternative to Gīlānī, thus reducing Gīlānī's influence while increasing his.

The second, which in my opinion is the more plausible, is that Ibn al-Jawzī became a better Ḥanbalī jurist. We know that the Ḥanbalī school of thought emphasizes the importance of ḥadīth. We can see this when comparing his two works Baḥr Al-Dumu', the sea of tears, and Talbīs ʾIblīs, the Devil's Deceptions. In the first, we see his use of many questionable ḥadīth, which modern commentators marked as weak or having no basis. While in his work, Talbīs ʾIblīs, he uses more reliable and acceptable ḥadīth, like those narrated by Bukhārī and Muslim. Through this, we can see that Ibn al-Jawzī was becoming more of a traditional Ḥanbalī scholar.

The Sunni revival in Baghdad could have also influenced Ibn al-Jawzī's stance, which sought to establish himself in the Sunni community of Baghdad after years of Buyid Shi'ite rule. One of the major, and probably best, methods of theologically denouncing Shi'i theology was the use of the ḥadīth. As we have seen previously, ḥadīth disproves the claim that Muḥammad (PBUH) had declared 'Alī (RA) as his successor. His denouncing stance on Shi'i theology

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meant that the ruling ‘Abbasids and Seljuks would be fonder of hadith as well as Ibn al-Jawzī, allowing him to gain more influence.

We can also see more of his anti-Shi’ite stance in his historical work on what happened during the second civil war or second fitnah, between Ḥusayn (RA) and Yazīd. For example, in Ibn al-Jawzī’s work, al-Muntaẓam fī tārīkh al-umam wā al-Mulūk, he gives the traditional story about how Yazīd's men killed Ḥusayn (RA), and then his head was brought to Damascus, in which Yazīd began to play with his head. However, Ibn al-Jawzī gives another account of that event, in which he accounts that Yazīd had cried when he heard of the death of Ḥusayn (RA)—making it seem that Yazīd did not want Ḥusayn (RA) dead, which was the primary narrative of the Shi’ites.  

Ibn al-Jawzī’s stance is essentially the exact opposite of the popular Sunni narratives and most commonly known outside the Ḥanbalī school. It also denounces the Shi’ite narrative of the Umayyads being these butchers of the Prophet's (PBUH) household. Ibn al-Jawzī did not just make this up, as al-Ṭabarī reported a similar event of Yazīd not wanting Ḥusayn (RA) dead in his history book.  

I should also note that Ibn al-Jawzī did mention the familiar narrative of the death of Ḥusayn (RA). However, it seems that he preferred the less anti-Umayyad tone, which was the more common Ḥanbalī view of what happened, including how Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal viewed the event. One could also say that he mentioned this account to denounce the Shi’ite narrative and thus denouncing Shi’ism during the period of the Sunni revival. Regardless of Ibn al-Jawzī’s intentions for denouncing Sufism and Shi’ism, his actions would later shape how the Ḥanbalī school of thought would transform in the coming centuries.

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In terms of the rivalry between Ibn al-Jawzī and Gīlānī, we can conclude that both individuals had won. Although it is clear that Ibn al-Jawzī won in terms of gaining legitimacy within the more literal Ḥanbalī scholars, as he remained more literal and traditional with his emphasis on the ḥadith. However, Gīlānī's Sufī ṭarīqa would go on to gain many followers around the world and in multiple schools of thought. Such as ′Uthmān ibn Fodio, the West African, Mālikī, Sufi, who was a part of the Qādiriyā ṭarīqa.  

There was also Ramzan Kadyrov, who is the current president of the Republic of Chechnya in Russia, who is a Chechen, Shāfiʿī, Sufi who is a part of the Qādiriyā ṭarīqa, hence his last name Kadyrov.  

It also survived within the Ḥanbalī school, through his sons, with scholars such as Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī who studied under both Gīlānī and Ibn al-Jawzī. However, in the long run, most ḥadith folk and the successors of the Ḥanbalī literalists, the Salafis, would emphasize the work of Ibn al-Jawzī over Gīlānī. Furthermore, the negative view of Sufism would survive within the Ḥanbalī school and literalists in general, most notably, Ibn Taymiyyah. We should also remember that Ibn al-Jawzī was an Arab and Gīlānī was a Persian. Thus, we can theorize that one of the reasons why modern Salafis, majority of whom are Arab, would prefer Ibn al-Jawzī over a Persian, majority of whom today are Shiʿite.

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**Ibn Taymiyyah and the Transformation of the Ḥanbalī School of Jurisprudence**

Ibn Taymiyyah, from the city of Harran, which is in modern-day Turkey, is an Arab Ḥanbalī jurist and scholar who lived in Damascus. Some claim he was a Sufi belonging to the Qadariya ṭarīqa, but we do not have enough information to deny or support this claim entirely. However, we know that he spoke up against many Sufi practices and beliefs and denies that Sufism existed before the 10th century. He is known for his many jurisprudence, theology, and law writings. Furthermore, he is known for his many debates with other Muslims who did not adhere to his specific beliefs in both religion and politics.

Ibn Taymiyyah's vocality and debates also made him very famous within the Ḥanbalī school and the Islamic-Arab world at the time. He also emerged after the Mongol sack of Baghdad in 1258 AD, which saw the destruction of the city, which was once home to great Ḥanbalī thinkers, forcing them to relocate or rebuild. This made his opinion very important within the Ḥanbalī school of thought as he came at a time of rebuilding the Ḥanbalī school. Thus, his teachings would later dominate the Ḥanbalī school of thought.

One of the main groups he argues against are the Sufis or Sufism's practice and ideology. Sufism had already been formally established by his time, and multiple ṭarīqas were already present throughout the Muslim world. We then see Ibn Taymiyyah taking a very similar stance to Ibn al-Jawzī, in which he claims that the Sufis are misguided. However, unlike Ibn al-Jawzī, who saw Sufis as misguided sinners, Ibn Taymiyyah refers to many of them as apostates and atheists.

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With Ibn Taymiyyah, it seems that he took Ibn al-Jawzi’s ideas a step further, in that not only is Sufism bad, but it is complete heresy.

One of his favorite Sufi mystics to criticize is the Sufi mystic Ibn al-ʿArabī. He constantly refers to him as a “mulḥid” or atheist throughout his writing. His justification for this stance is that he sees Ibn al-ʿArabī’s idea of Waḥdat al-Wujūd or the unity of existence as clear heresy. However, it is evident through Ibn Taymiyyah's work that he was fully aware of certain Sufi beliefs. Thus, he judged them by their practices of what he saw from the average Sufi and by the work they produced as it is obvious that Ibn Taymiyyah had read and was familiar with Ibn al-ʿArabī's most famous work al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya or the Meccan Illuminations.

Ibn Taymiyyah also criticizes the Shi’ites, keeping the same tone as the scholar before him. He considered most of them as heretics and even described them as more heretical than the Christians and Jews. His claims also make it seem that he is knowledgeable about the core ideology of the Shi’ites. Although his primary motive for declaring them as heretics is their rejection of the first Caliphs, he also rejects the concept of imamate within Shi’ism. He claims the Shi’ites put their Imams in a much higher position than necessary, similar to his criticism of Sufi masters and teachers. However, with Shi’ites, he implies that their Imamate concept puts their Imams too close to the position of prophethood, contrary to the doctrine that declares Muḥammad (PBUH) to be the last prophet.

Regardless of how true or false his claims are, he shows a deep understanding and willingness to understand the theology of the main Shi’ite groups. We can consider his understanding of the "fixed" view of the Ḥanbalīs and later Salafis toward the Shi’ites. Of course,

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80 Ibid. Pg. 219.
81 Ibid. Pg 137.
83 Ibid. Pg. 558-576.
Ibn Taymiyyah was not the first to describe the Shi'ites or even show a deep understanding of Shi'ism as we see other great explanations of the various Shi'ite groups such as the one done by the Sunni Arab scholar Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī who lived during the tenth century. However, Ibn Taymiyyah has the most significant impact on how Shi'ism would later be seen and interpreted in the Arab world, especially during the 20th century.

Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyyah enforces the idea of Islamic literalism. In many cases, we see him favoring the literal understandings of the Quran and the ḥadith. We see this with his understanding of God's attributes, which he uses the literal understanding of God's attributes when debating with the Ashʿarīs. Although this is not new with the Ḥanbalī school, it does show how a branch of the school still preferred the literal interpretations of the sacred texts.

The Mongol and Turkic people were also not spared from Ibn Taymiyyah's criticism. For example, one of the most famous Islamic rulings, the Mardin Fatwa, allowed Muslims to fight the Tatars. This ruling was seen as revolutionary during the time of Ibn Taymiyyah, as it allowed for Muslims to fight another group who claimed to be Muslims. However, unlike the previous fatwa on fighting other Muslims, Ibn Taymiyyah did not consider the Tatars as ahl al-baghy or the people of transgressive. Instead, Ibn Taymiyyah declared them as heretics or apostates because they rule by "man-made laws" and not the God-made law, which is the Sharia or Islamic law.

Although this does not narrow the idea of who is a Muslim and who is not, it does have two significant effects. The first is that Ibn Taymiyyah made a clear stance about incorporating non-Islamic traditions into Islam, like incorporating Yassa into Islamic law. Ibn Taymiyyah even

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86 Ibid.
describes it as similar to the pre-Islamic Arab time or the age of ignorance. The second, and probably most important today, is the idea that the state must abide by Islamic law and only Islamic law. Therefore, if they were to abide by "man-made laws," it would be permissible for a Muslim to fight that entity.\(^\text{87}\)

In terms of Ibn Taymiyyah's role in reforming Islamic jurisprudence, and more specifically, the Ḥanbalī school of thought, Ibn Taymiyyah introduced the concept that the "Salaf," the scholars of the first 300 years after Muḥammad (PBUH), whom he considered a source for law.\(^\text{88}\) This new methodology was obviously due to the limitation of the former sources of law for the Ḥanbalīs. That being the Quran, then the ḥadith, and finally the companions' opinions. This limitation in sources of law made the Ḥanbalī school more reliant on the opinions of scholars for answering issues that the previous sources of law could not. Ibn Taymiyyah saw that as a problem but acknowledged that the former sources were not enough and incorporating opinions was inevitable.

This need for a new source of law led to Ibn Taymiyyah to accept the idea of incorporating opinions into Islamic jurisprudence on the condition that we consider the opinions of the Salaf first. His justification for putting the Salaf first comes from the ḥadith where Muḥammad (PBUH) said: "The best of people are my century, then the ones after that, then the ones after that."\(^\text{89}\) Now the ḥadith uses the specific word "Qarn," mostly translated as century; however, some translate it as a generation. The translation issue is the main reason why there is no consensus about who the Salaf are, but in terms of Ibn Taymiyyah, he accepts the idea of 300 years probably because the gathering and collection of the nine books of ḥadith occurred within the first 300 years of Islam.

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\(^{87}\) Ibid.


\(^{89}\) Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhari ḥadith: 2651.
With this interpretation of the ḥadith, it seems that the Prophet (PBUH) is declaring the first 300 years of Muslims as the best. In the eyes of Ibn Taymiyyah, that meant that the opinions of the first 300 years of Muslims would be the best.\(^9\) Thus, in terms of sources of Islamic jurisprudence, first would be the Quran, then the ḥadith, then the companions' opinions, and then the opinions of the Salaf. That includes the opinions of the founder of all four Sunni schools of thought, Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nuʿman, Mālik Ibn Anas, Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī, and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, as well as other scholars such as Ḥasan al-Baṣri, Sufyān al-Thawrī.

In a way, the incorporation of the Salaf opinions helped the school become more open to other points of view and could help end the significant differences between the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence, although the primary purpose of this new source of law was to avoid individual opinions altogether. However, in incorporating the opinions of the Salaf, he opened the door to two significant changes within the Ḥanbalī school of thought.

The first is that this method isolates the founder of the school, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and puts his opinions at a equal standing to the other three founders of Sunni schools of jurisprudence. This isolation makes the Ḥanbalī school more of the school of ḥadith and opinions of the Salaf, and not necessarily obedience to the school's founder and previous scholars. This could lead to some Muslims disregarding the school completely since there is no longer a need to call it the Ḥanbalī school.

The second significant change is that incorporating the opinions of the Salaf does not solve the initial problem, which is that the opinions of the Salaf are still not enough to answer all of the questions and problems Muslims had. This continued lack of sources forced scholars to incorporate opinions into their methodology. However, they managed to create an unofficial hierarchy for considering which scholars' opinions should be accepted first. For example, at the

time of Ibn Taymiyyah, it was apparent that the opinions of the Salafs were first, and then known  Ḥanbalī scholars such as Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī, even though Ibn Taymiyyah did disagree with al-Maqdisī on specific issues involving God's attributes. However, scholars after Ibn Taymiyyah, especially Ḥanbalī scholars, considered Ibn Taymiyyah's opinions as supreme, sometimes even putting his opinions over those of the Salaf.

Ultimately, this incorporation of scholarly opinions made the school more associated with certain scholars, thus decreasing the need for an official school of jurisprudence. However, we should also note that the opinions of Ibn Taymiyyah were not only used and associated with Ḥanbalīs. Instead, there were also scholars from the Shāfiʿī school who used Ibn Taymiyyah as a source of knowledge, like his student Ibn Kathīr, al-Dhahabī and another 15th-century Egyptian scholar Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, all of whom belonged to the Shāfiʿī school. Ibn Taymiyyah also significantly affected the Ottoman Turkish world, which was predominantly Ḥanafī, with scholars like Kadızade Mehmed Efendi and Imam Birgivi, both of whom admired Ibn Taymiyyah's work. However, his greatest admirers would remain in the Ḥanbalī school, with the most significant impact coming from his students Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Rajab, and then later again with the 18th-century Ḥanbalī scholar Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb.

Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb and the Modern Salafi Movement

Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, an Arab Ḥanbalī scholar, born in the Arabian Peninsula during the 18-century, came at a time of Ottoman Ḥanafī dominance over the Arab world.

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Ottomans, who were majority Ḥanafī, obviously differed from the Ḥanbalīs and Shāfiʿīs. One
prominent example is the concept of cash endowments, which the Ḥanbalī and Shāfiʿī scholars
rejected and proclaimed it as ribā. However, the Ḥanafī scholars allowed it, claiming that it was
in the state's best interest and thus the best interest of Muslims and God. Nevertheless, the
Ottomans did not care about whether it was permissible in Islam; instead, they sought religious
backing in any significant decision that affected the empire's population.

The Ottoman Empire's adaption of the Ḥanafī school of thought made the concept of
"informed opinion" widespread among Sunnis in the empire and the Eastern Arab world. The
Shāfiʿī scholars managed to resist the Ḥanafī expansion thanks to the Azhar school remaining
loyal to its school of thought, Shāfiʿī and Mālikī, as well as the Shāfiʿī's in Yemen, who were
mostly isolated from the Ottoman authority as well as being in an area that saw heavy resistance
against Ottoman rule by Zaydi Shi’ites. With the former strongholds of the Ḥanbalī school in
Baghdad and the Levant, they had seen massive destruction and devastation brought by the
Mongols and the Tatars, and the increase in other schools and ideas such as Sufism. Then with
the Mamluks and Ottomans later controlling those areas, that made the Ḥanafī and Shāfiʿī
schools more popular and widespread leaving the Ḥanbalīs mostly in rural areas like the deserts
of the Arabian peninsula, which were, for the most part, outside the reach of the Ottoman
Empire.

Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb preached during a time when the Ḥanafīs, Shāfiʿīs, and
the various Sufi brotherhoods dominated the Arab world. This meant that, in the eyes of the

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Hanbalis, the deviant opinions, innovations, and shirk (polytheism) had filled the world. These circumstances are what encouraged him to write his book Kitāb al-Ṭawḥīd or the book of the oneness of God. The book's main objective was to refute the ideas that he considered as polytheism and to guide the people back to, in his eyes, true monotheism. However, his concept of true monotheism and anti-Sufism aligns with former Hanbali scholars, especially Ibn Taymiyyah. The only significant difference is that Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb was more isolated in the Arabian desert, while the other Hanbali scholars spent most of their time in major cities like Baghdad and Damascus.

In terms of what was Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb ideology, he considered himself a Hanbali. Even his beliefs align with medieval Hanbali literalist scholars based on his work. However, by this time, Hanbalī scholars had evolved to become more than just the people of ḥadith. Instead, Hanbalism had become the school of Ibn Taymiyyah, and instead of naming themselves after Ibn Taymiyyah, they named themselves after the core concept that Ibn Taymiyyah preached, which was Salafism.

That is the concept of the Salaf as the best Muslims after Muḥammad (PBUH) and his companions. Thus, all Muslims should strive to be and act as close to them as possible because that is the closest, they can get to become the best Muslim they can be. Therefore, we can expect that they would name themselves after the best Muslims, in their eyes, after the prophets and companions.

Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb living in an isolated Arabian desert meant he did not have to deal with any state authority. Instead, there was the rule of tribes and local leaders and

states, one of whom was Muḥammad bin Suʿūd, the founder of the first Saudi state.\textsuperscript{99} This alliance between a religious and a political body gave way to the term al-Wahhābīyah or Wahhabism. This term was associated with the religious body and the followers of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb; and the Saudi family, who launched an offensive against the Ottoman-held areas in the Arabian Peninsula, including Mecca and Madīna.\textsuperscript{100}

The Saudi state indeed cracked down on Sufism, Shi’ism, and other issues that the followers of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb had with the local Muslims, however, they were not the only ones involved in such actions. One other group called the Qādızādali or the Kadızadelis, who were also against innovations and Sufism.\textsuperscript{101} However, the group does not get the same backlash that the followers of Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb get. The leading reasonable conclusion for this is that the only difference between the two movements is that the Saudi state and the Salafis or Wahhabis eventually succeeded in the long run.

In addition to establishing a new political entity that would later rule most of the Arabian Peninsula, they would also bring a new scholar, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, now seen as a source of authority, and like Ibn Taymiyyah, his opinions would be valid. Although this is not adding much to the group's methodology, it adds Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb as a source of authority, respect, and in the same place as scholars like Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyyim, and Ibn Rajab. This meant that, although the movement did not rely entirely on Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, he still held a high position among Salafis at the time and in the future.


\textsuperscript{100} Ibid. Pg 41-44.

Overall, in terms of methodology, Islamic jurisprudence has undergone numerous changes in terms of formulating Islamic law, with Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal focusing on the importance of incorporating ḥadīth into their methodology and making it the secondary source of Islamic law, after the Quran. Although Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī would not have a great impact on incorporating ḥadīth, his student Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal would go on to establish a school of jurisprudence that emphasizes the gathering and collection of ḥadīth to use in Islamic jurisprudence. However, what makes Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal stand out and form a whole different school, is that he was always critical of informed opinions.

Although it is evident that during this time that the ḥadīths were incredibly scarce and would not be able to answer many problems that Muslims had; unlike the Shāfiʿī school that used qiyās, analogical reasoning, the Ḥanbalī school preferred to emphasize the opinions of the companions of Muḥammad (PBUH). They also rejected the concept of consensus, mainly due to them being a minority, with the majority being non-Arabs who were slowly beginning to make up most of the Muslim world by the end of the 8th century.

The Ḥanbalī school had always had many opponents, such as the Muʿtazila, the Shi'ite, and the Murjiʿah. However, Sufism's rise in the 9th and 10th centuries forcefully divided the Ḥanbalī school into two. One group embraced Sufism, and the other opposed it, for example, Ibn al-Jawzī. In the eyes of modern Salafi’s this split can also be seen as the Arab literalist against the non-Arab innovators. Furthermore, Ibn al-Jawzī continues the reconciliation process of the Ḥanbalīs with the Umayyad dynasty. In the sense that he did not see the pro-Arab Umayyads as negatively as they were seen by earlier 'Abbasid scholars.

With Ibn Taymiyyah, he continues the work of those before him, adding the opinions of the Salaf, the first three centuries of Islam, into their methodology, after the companions'
opinions. Ibn Taymiyyah also reinforces the importance of literal interpretations in Islam, in which he supports most of his arguments about God's attributes by using more literal understandings of the Quran and ḥadith. Furthermore, he rejects any law other than Islamic law and even accuses of heresy those who use a law other than Islamic law.

By the time of Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, we have a branch of the Ḥanbalī school of thought that is as follows: literal in nature, anti-Sufi, reconciled with the pro-Arab Umayyad dynasty, favoring the opinions of the Salafīs over those of modern scholars, and even favoring the opinions of a particular group of scholars like Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn Taymiyyah, and his followers, who were associated with all four Sunni schools of thought. Therefore, it is only natural that Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb and his followers adopt a new identity that represents them and what they want to be. This new way of thinking rejects associating a Muslim with a particular school as it divides Muslims, thus the adoption of the name Salafīs. Overall, this form of Salafism has its roots in the Ḥanbalī school of jurisprudence.

In terms of the reasons, this branch of the Ḥanbalī school of thought would survive in the Arabian Peninsula. For starters, the region lacked any form of imperial governance, thus no large and powerful empire to enforce its own doctrine. Furthermore, this branch is more literal, and since the Quran and ḥadith are in Arabic, it is more likely that Arab speakers who lived far from any significant cities would accept a more literal interpretation of the holy texts. The same can be said about Sufism, as Sufism is more mystical and spiritual, which could seem unappealing to more literal and traditional Arabs. Their reconciliation with the Umayyads, an Arab dynasty that cracked down on Shi'ism, is also apparent, as the Arabs of Najd were predominately Sunni, and their ethnic rivals the Persians were predominately Shi’ite. They most likely feared the Persian
Shi'ite influence, making a more literal and pro-Arab version of Sunnism more appealing to them.

Therefore, this emergence of a new form of Ḥanbalī jurisprudence from this region was inevitable. All that was lacking was a scholar similar to Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, who just happened to accept the ideas of Ibn Taymiyyah and his incorporation of the opinions of the Salaf into his methodology, and a state like the first Saudi state to fight and expand that ideology.
Part 3:

The Fall of Pan-Arabism and the Rise of Islamism

The Crisis and the Emergence of Ideologies

With the conquest of Egypt by Napoleon Bonaparte and the French military in 1798, the Islamic-Arab world was in shock.\(^{102}\) Egypt, being one of the largest Arab regions, was the most significant producer of grain in the Middle East during that time, and was home to the capital of the Mamluk and Fatimid empires had fallen to the French.\(^{103}\) It was normal for one to be shocked when Non-Muslims conquered that land for the first time since the early Islamic conquests. However, the speed at which Napoleon conquered Egypt made it a significant problem.

The campaign began in July 1798, and by August 1798, the Mamluks of Egypt were on the road.\(^{104}\) To further add pain to the wound, Egypt was technically under the control of the Ottoman Empire of the time, which was arguably the most powerful Islamic Empire of its time. Thus, this quick conquest of Egypt by Napoleon Bonaparte revealed a much more significant problem than just the Ottomans not having enough soldiers to protect Egypt. Instead, it revealed a much greater problem that involved Europe. The conquest of Egypt revealed how powerful Europe had become and how far left behind the Muslims were.

Although one could compare the Napoleon conquest of Egypt to the Crusades, however, the Crusades did not necessarily show how strong Europe was but how weak and divided the Muslims were. The Crusade itself was an alliance and coalition of multiple Christian-dominated empires, while the conquest of Egypt was just the French Empire. For the most part, the Ottoman


Empire controlled most of the Middle East, with Safavid Iran being the only major territory in the Middle East not under the Ottoman influence. Thus, the divisions in the Ottoman era were much less than in the Crusade era. With the Seljuks, Abbasids, and Fatimids competing over control of the Levant alone.\textsuperscript{105}

Unlike the Crusades, the Muslims managed to reconquer Egypt in a short period, which was probably a result of Napoleon's departure back to France.\textsuperscript{106} However, the wound does not heal; the Muslims still acknowledge that there is a problem and need to catch up. The obvious people to lead this catch-up would be the Sultans of the Ottoman Empire. In their defense, they did make drastic changes in the Empire, such as Mahmud II, who introduced many legal reforms and began with the first Tanzimat reforms toward the end of his life.\textsuperscript{107} However, Arabs give the most credit to another figure, Muḥammad ‘Alī Pasha, who led his catching-up movement during his reign in Egypt.

Muḥammad ‘Alī Pasha was the governor of Egypt but acted as a more independent ruler of Egypt.\textsuperscript{108} He acknowledged that Europe was ahead in every way and that the Muslims needed to catch up. One method Pasha did was reinventing the education system in Egypt and promoting education in general.\textsuperscript{109} He also allowed certain scholars to go abroad, such as Rāfiʿ aṭ-Ṭahṭāwī, and see how the Europeans are acting to make them so successful.

This new education system had two significant effects. One being is that it increased the literacy rate in the region, allowing more people to read and write literary works. The second

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid. Pg 26-27.
major effect was the rise of non-religious schools, allowing more people to receive education outside religion.\textsuperscript{110} This would also mean that they were allowed to learn specific ideas that religion had previously looked down upon or denounced. Both of these effects would ultimately help give rise to new ideologies and movements that would dominate the Arab world. Nevertheless, of course, education was not the primary reason for the rise of these new movements and ideologies. Instead, the educational reforms affected the way these movements would develop.

One primary ideology on the rise that occurred in response to the growing strength of non-Muslim Empires, compared to the weak Muslim Empires, was the idea of Pan-Islamism. Prominent leaders of this rising movement were Muḥammad ʿAbduh and his teacher Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, both of whom worked to unite Muslims to resist the rising colonial threat led by predominantly Christain countries.\textsuperscript{111} Both individuals had similar goals but disagreed on the means to attain those goals. For example, al-Afghānī sought to resist colonialism through direct talks with the Muslim leadership at the time. In contrast, ʿAbduh preferred a more social approach through education reforms. However, ʿAbduh was more interested in incorporating logic, among other things, into these new education reforms.\textsuperscript{112} This method could imply the revisiting of certain Islamic texts.

When combining these new educational reforms with the traditional Islamic schools, we see the challenge of a long-term Islamic school tradition, taqlīd or imitation. In terms of taqlīd, it is essentially taking non-knowledgeable people taking ruling from knowledgeable people, most

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid. Pg 28-29.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
of the time scholars or muftīs.113 This tradition creates two major issues; the first is that it gives scholars incredible power over the population. Scholars are considered the supreme authority after God and his prophet (PBUH), and a scholar can make anything Islamic ruling without providing evidence. Instead, the scholar's reputation allows Muslims to trust them without providing the exact evidence for Islamic rulings. If these scholars were on good terms with countries' leaders, then those leaders could order the scholars to issue Islamic ruling to further their agenda or justify their rule.

The second problem is that it creates an ignorant population. Since scholars do not need to provide evidence, the average population will not be able to involve themselves in Islamic debates. It also does not encourage Muslims to do their own research and determine their own ruling. For the previous reasons, ‘Abduh was a strong supporter of challenging the idea of taqlīd.

In terms of Salafism, they take this idea a step further. In their eyes, the idea of taqlīd is nothing but a tool of tyrants to control the people and to keep them in ignorance. Some Salafi scholars, such as the famous al-Albani, even criticized Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb and indirectly the Saudi Arabian schools for practicing taqlīd and favoring their own traditional Ḥanbalī school of jurisprudence.114 This one example shows Salafists' rejection of taqlīd and how it could create problems in the long run. This hatred is how some scholars distinguish between modern Salafists and Wahhabis, in which modern Wahhabis prefer the legal ruling of traditional scholars of the Ḥanbalī school, which sometimes leads to imitating those scholars. With Salafists, it is more of a reproduction of Islamic rulings, in which the average Salafist becomes

the theologian by examining Islamic scripture and producing an Islamic ruling based on their findings.

Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, a student of both al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh, would later dominate the movement. Similar to his teachers, he also believed in Islamic unity but disagreed on how to achieve this. Initially, he was a strong supporter of the Ottoman Empire, and with its fall, he called on the establishment of a Muslim Empire or the restoration of the Caliphate. However, this put him in a very awkward situation after the fall of the Ottoman Empire because, at the time, there were no contenders who could fill the role of leading the Islamic world. The lack of contenders led to Riḍā looking toward the newly formed Saudi kingdom for answers and solutions.

We must also note that Salafism, or Wahhabism as it is commonly known, was not considered a Pan-Islamism movement during the time of Riḍā. The reasoning for this is that Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, the spiritual founder of the ideology, never explicitly called for Islamic unity. Instead, he called for cleansing of what he saw as innovations and heresy in the Muslim world. The Saudi state later took it upon itself to create and expand a state with the ideology as its core base. Moreover, the Saudi state would eventually cooperate with colonialists, most notably Britain, in the early 20th century, which is why some of the kingdom's initial warriors dissented. This cooperation put Salafism in a category of its own, one that is not necessarily Pan-Islam, at least not yet, and not necessarily a political ideology.

Riḍā would later concede to the Saudi state, as to him they seemed like the best option for restoring the Caliphate. This alignment with the Saudi state could be considered the first step

in transforming Pan-Islamism to just becoming modern Islamism. After Riḍā, more Islamic scholars align themselves with politics in the colonial and post-colonial Arab world. Even Riḍā would later align his politics on the lines of Pan-Arabism due to its popularity and frustration with the Young Turks in Turkey. The greatest of these movements was the Muslim Brotherhood, initially considered Pan-Islamist. However, with time, the movement eventually gave in to the concept of nationalism.

The second major ideology that was on the rise was the idea of Pan-Arabism. By Pan-Arabism, I will use the definition of a movement that seeks to politically, socially, and culturally unite the Arabs. This is a little different than Arab nationalism, which takes pride in the qualities and characteristics of an Arab nation. From these definitions it is evident that these movements were destined to fail, as Arab culture has evolved differently depending on where in the Arab world we are examining. However, that does not stop Arab nationalists from finding a common ground that all Arabs can relate to.

Of course, the Pan-Arabists' greatest achievement could be the initial success of the Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire. This Arab revolt was led by al-Ḥusayn bin 'Alī, who was the Sharif of Mecca during the Ottoman times. He would later rebel, with the help of the British, against the Ottoman Empire during WW1, and sought to establish a united Arab state in the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, and the Levant. However, it would seem that in the long run, al-Ḥusayn bin 'Alī's goals of achieving an Arab state would fail. This failure could have resulted from sympathy and popularity of Pan-Islamism among the Arabs, but most notably due to colonialism, with Britain and France colonizing most of the territory promised to Al-Ḥusayn bin 'Alī as a

117 Ibid.
future Arab state.\textsuperscript{118} This defeat would mark the first major defeat of Pan-Arabism to their greatest rivals, colonialists.

This ideology would later dominate the Arab world in the 1950s and 1960s, with one of its greatest supporters, Gamal Abdel Nasser, rising to power in Egypt.\textsuperscript{119} That gave hope to many Arabs who could realistically achieve the dream of forming a united Arab state in the future. However, there were two major barriers to this. The first is an external barrier, Israel, and the second is Islamists.

With Israel, it is pretty simple how they were a barrier. For starters, the Arabs saw Israel as an occupier of Arab land and seen as colonizers in the Arab world, similar to the French in Algeria. Israel also serves as a physical barrier that separates the Arab world into two. One being West Asian Arabs and the second being North African Arabs. The only possible land border between these two groups is through the land that Israel controlled. Thus, in order to achieve a full united Arab state, Israel, as a region, must be brought into the fold. Finally, with the Islamists, the Pan-Arabists saw them as an internal political threat that could gain enough influence to overthrow the Pan-Arabist government. Thus, they could have even been a greater threat than Israel in the eyes of the government.

Although Gamal Abdel Nasser tried to establish an Arab state on multiple occasions, he eventually failed. He would later die in 1970, and many marks that as the death of Pan-Arabism. The concept would survive and remain somewhat popular, but by the end of the 70s, it seemed that the concept of Pan-Arabism would survive in theory, like with Ba‘athism, but would not survive in practice.\textsuperscript{120}

The third major movement was the idea of nationalism. This movement is interesting as it seems to be against colonialism and foreign involvement in the nation's internal affairs. However, the borders of the Middle East, which would become known as nations, were drawn up by colonialists, which can be seen through the Sykes-Picot Agreement. These European-made borders meant that the borders did not consider culture, race, religion, or linguistics when forming these nations—making them, in theory, destined to fail. Except, initially, they do not. Out of the three major movements, nationalism was the most successful. After the death of Nasser in 1970, most politicians aligned themselves with the concept of nationalism. Even Islamist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood accepted the idea of nationalism, worked as a political party within a nation-state, and were no longer interested in forming a broader united Islamic state. Then came the 1970s.

The Islamic Revival and the Reasons for its Occurrence

It is not easy to fully understand what happened in the 1970s to produce an Islamic revival in the 1980s. This revival would see Muslims worldwide becoming more religious than before and adherent to more traditional doctrines of Islam. We should note that the Muslims adhered to various doctrines and not one single type. Like twelve Shi'ite adhered to Twelver Shi’ite’s scriptures, Sufis adhered to their specific brotherhood, Sunnis adhere to their specific school of jurisprudence, and even the creation of new ideologies and movements such as Salafi-Jihadism. Even Muslims in the United States saw the rise of a more traditional understanding and adherence to Islam. I was lucky enough to ask Muslims who lived in the US during the 80s and 90s. When I asked them what had happened, most implied that adhering to the religion became

the norm within the Islamic community. Muslims in the US is a great example of how this Islamic revival was a domino effect, but what caused the first domino to fall?

When looking at the events of the late 60s and 70s, one stands out above all, that being the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli War or Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur war. These wars saw the defeat of Egypt and Syria, with the help of other Arab states, at the hands of the Israelis.\(^\text{122}\) This defeat was a major blow to the Arab world since Egypt was considered the greatest Arab country at the time, and yet it was still defeated by a much smaller state, and Israel would still occupy the Sinai furthering the humiliation of the Arabs states.\(^\text{123}\) Moreover, these defeats would expose the flaws of Pan-Arabism, making it more unpopular among the masses, forcing the former supporters to look elsewhere for a more successful ideology. Finally, these losses also made Israel seem like a force that could not be stopped unless through intervention from God. Add this to the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, it would only fuel Islamism.\(^\text{124}\)

Another reason could be the failure of Western culture within the Muslim world. This failure would stem from the idea that they were acting like the West and thus should have economic prosperity as the West. One major initial attraction of Western culture for Arabs is the great economic prosperity these European countries had, and many thought and still think that if we act like them in terms of culture and adopt political and judicial systems similar to theirs, then perhaps we would be prosperous like them. However, by the 1970s, that had been proven false since Arab countries adopted customs and traditions similar to the West. But, their economic situations were not as good as the West. Of course, the problem is that some countries, like


Egypt, sided more with the USSR during the Cold War; therefore, we cannot expect economic prosperity similar to the West.

The following reason would be the Cold War reason. The Arab world mostly sided with the USSR in the 50s and 60s, most notably in Egypt and Yemen. Therefore, a new ideology challenging the status quo of those countries would be welcomed and encouraged by the Western states, and what better way to challenge communism than through Islamism. Communism, for many Islamists, is considered institutionalized atheism, and although Islamists do not like the West, the West was still majority Christian, and allying with Christians was still considered, Islamically, better than allying with atheists. This explanation would explain the Saudi-American alliance to support the Afghan Mujahideen against the USSR and the communist-aligned Afghan government of the time. The coincidental collapse of the USSR shortly after their retreat from Afghanistan would fuel Islamists, as they had now brought down one of the world's superpowers.

Another successful Islamic movement during that time was in Iran, with Khomeini taking power. However, they were Shi’ite, and their rise could be, and was, considered a threat to the Sunni world. This Shi’ite rise encouraged other Sunni states, such as Saudi Arabia, to promote a more "Sunni" message to counter the rising Shi’ites in Iran. This would mean that money and support from both Iran and Saudi Arabia were being given to promote their particular doctrine of Islam, thus promoting a more "Islamic" lifestyle worldwide.

An additional reason for the rise of Islamism could be rooted in the secularization of the state. This is different from Western influence because one could argue that secularism existed in the Muslim world long before the arrival of the Europeans. One example of this is the Ottoman

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Kanun, which many Islamists consider secular Sultanic law, despite some Ottoman historians disagreeing with that particular wording. During Ottoman rule, the difference is that Islamic courts and qadis were still common throughout the population. While with the modern nation-states, Islamic law had become integrated with other sources of law, such as the Napoleonic code and Western civil codes. This would make Islamic courts mostly involved in marriage and inheritance cases, while civil courts determined criminal cases, commercial transactions, and type of government. Of course, regardless of corruption, all courts will leave someone unsatisfied, and wanting to blame someone for their dissatisfaction, they look toward the court system itself. In other words, they would claim, "if we had an Islamic country, this would not have happened." Overall, this reason is unappealing as a major reason for Islamic revivalism. However, it still holds weight in the debate on Islamic revivalism.

Furthermore, the Islamic revival could have been a result of foreign influence. We are all aware of the Suez Crisis of 1956 and how France, Britain, and Israel conspired together to gain control of the Suez Canal. Although this plan would be exposed and both the United States and the USSR made all parties return to the pre-crisis state, it would create a greater issue: the fear of the foreign hands in Arab affairs. This fear would lead the Arab and Muslim populations to accept conspiracy theories in which foreigners are to blame for their bad conditions. Some would even go as far as to say that their local Arab leaders are conspiring with the foreigners to make sure the population remain in terrible conditions and thus never achieving the means to overthrow those government.

129 Ibid. Pg 130-192.
There is some evidence suggesting a foreign influence in the Arab and Muslim world in their defense. However, those fears are exaggerated in other cases, sometimes without reason and sometimes to support specific agendas. Regardless of the motives, by default, it could be a means of support of Islamism. The reason being is that Arabs and Muslims have the same debate they had before, which is how to get foreigners out of our local affairs. It is essentially another form of colonialism that never died. The Arabs had previously attempted Pan-Arabism, but it failed, as we see in the early 70s. The other two options are nationalism, which means smaller divided states, or Islamism, a large, united body that could challenge the foreigners, with the Afghan Mujahideen supporting this idea.

Of course, we cannot discuss the Middle East in the 1970s without discussing why the region is so important, that being oil. The 1970s witnessed two major oil crises globally, involving Saudi Arabia. Although the crises resulted in the weakening of OPEC on a global scale, we did see Saudi Arabia obtaining massive amounts of money. This massive wealth made Saudi Arabia seem like a rising power in the Middle East, and with their newly obtained wealth, it could overthrow Egypt as the leader of the Arab world. It should also be noted that millions of Arabs worked in Saudi Arabia in the 70s and 80, which meant that they saw the wealth and prosperity firsthand.

However, we must keep in mind that Saudi Arabia was still partially ruled by the descendants of Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb. Thus, placing the country under the influence of Salafis/Wahhabis, and with this newly obtained wealth, it seemed that they obtained it through the grace and blessing of God. This wealth and religious alliance made it seem to outsiders that God had blessed Saudi Arabia with wealth because of their religiosity and religious doctrine.

Therefore, encouraging other Muslims to act like the people of Saudi Arabia in hopes that God would similarly bless them.

**The Emergence of Salafi-Jihadism**

The reasons for the Islamic revival in the 1980s are important in understanding the rise of Islamism in the coming years because these reasons show how certain ideologies like Pan-Arabism, became less appealing when compared to Islamism. Furthermore, the reasons show why the average Muslims would want to become more socially religious, and this social religiosity would turn into political religiosity and thus make Islamism more appealing.

In this atmosphere, we begin to see the rise of Salafi-Jihadism, which, unlike average Salafism or Wahhabism, which we witness mainly in Saudi Arabia, seeks to use violence or Jihad to achieve their goals. They are also different from regular Islamists or Islamic political parties like the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas because this new group does not want to get involved in local politics. Instead, this group evolved to a point where they no longer wished to participate or even defend the local Islamic party; instead, they sought to destroy the former system and establish a completely new system. Of course, the greatest modern example of these groups is ISIS or IS as they call themselves today.

However, there is still the question of the members and leaders of IS didn’t establish their Islamist party or merge with other groups like the Muslims Brotherhood. Many of these new Salafis-Jihadi groups see Sayyid Quṭb, who was part of the Muslim Brotherhood, as an inspiration, and he also sought to establish a more Islamic country to replace the Pan-Arabist countries. The answer to this can be seen in the 1970s and later on.

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133 Ibid.
One ideology that existed but was not as popular as Pan-Arabism at the time was the idea of nationalism. The 1970s saw the death of Pan-Arabism, and supporters of that ideology had to choose between joining the Islamic revivalism or joining the nationalists. Of course, it is hard to understand what most people had chosen, but we know that they split between both ideologies. The general atmosphere after the Israeli wars saw the switch of political alignment from secular Arab Nationalism to Islamism.\textsuperscript{134} It is very common among the older generation of Arabs today who, liked the concept of a united Arab front led by Pan-Arabists such as Gamal Abdul Nasser, yet prefer more Islamic aligned parties in power, such as the Muslim Brotherhood group that Nasser sought to destroy. We also know that Pan-Arabists, such as members of the Ba'athists parties in Iraq and Syria, claim to be Pan-Arabists, but it is clear from their foreign agenda that they prefer nation-states over a united Arab state.

With Pan-Arabism becoming obsolete in the coming years and Islamism adopting nationalism, groups like the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas incorporating a national tone into their ideology. This national tone left no other option to compete against nationalism. Therefore, as long as the nation-states do not fail, nationalism will be universally adopted throughout the Arab world.

However, there is still a major issue here; they still have not solved the initial problem, which is Palestine. By the 1980s, there was still no state of Palestine, meaning most Palestinians did not have a national state to which they could call home. Instead, they had the Oslo accords, which gave them a partial state with the promise of full statehood that would never come.\textsuperscript{135} However, a lack of a nation-state does not necessarily mean that one cannot have nationalism. Nevertheless, when up against a powerful nation like Israel, it seems that nationalism would not


be enough for national liberation, and the Oslo accords are a prime example. Instead, some thought they needed to adopt a stronger unifying ideology, and with the failure of Pan-Arabism, Pan-Islamism was the best option. Except that there were no Pan-Islamism groups at the time, as most groups incorporated nationalism into their ideology. Therefore, to achieve liberation for the Palestinians and all Muslims around the world, they needed a new ideology that did not believe in modern borders, and they needed an opportunity to test this new ideology. This opportunity was the Soviet-Afghan war; this new ideology was Salafi-Jihadism, the liberation was the victory over the USSR, and the newly established group was Al-Qaeda.

Of course, this movement and ideology were nowhere near as dominated by Palestinians as one might think. Instead, it was dominated by Arabs throughout the Arab world, which raises the question of why. There are many reasons for this, but two reasons I find most interesting and appealing have to do with the internal politics of the nation's states.

For starters, many nation-states saw political Islam as a threat, resulting in brutal crackdowns. Some Islamic parties, the greatest being the Muslim Brotherhood, who preferred a pacifist approach and refused to take up arms against the government, and their leaders even spoke up against violent acts.\(^\text{136}\) This pacifist approach would result in some Islamists breaking off from political Islam and joining and establishing more violent based groups.\(^\text{137}\) Of course, there are exceptions to this, such as Hamas, which started and remained violent, but if a time comes and they choose to be more pacifist, we would likely see similar break-offs.

The second reason would be the idea that nationalism did not succeed. The brutal crackdowns by dictators could be seen by the Islamists as the country becoming more of a dictatorship than an actual nation-state that cares for its nation, which was obviously due to

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\(^\text{137}\) Ibid.
massive corruption by these Arab leaders. Thus, they did not feel as if they were part of a nation, which would result in Pan-Islamism gaining more popularity, and the last true Pan-Islamists were Salafi-Jihadists. That would become more evident in the coming years with the Lebanese civil war, the US invasion of Iraq, and the Syrian civil war, in which we witness all three of these populations preferring religious identity over national identity. Thus, some of the population preferred Pan-Islamism, with some Shi'ites rallying around Iran and some Sunnis rallying around Salafi-Jihadism.

Furthermore, Pan-Islamism was now the only path for Arabs to unite under one banner. Since most Pan-Arab and pro-unified Arab country supporters were decreasing, the dream of a unified Arab state was long gone. However, a unified Islamic State would have most Arabs united into one state, thus another chance to achieve the dream of unification. This time, the cost would be the preference of Islamic law over non-Islamic law, which some were willing to accept. Additionally, the second cost would be the incorporation of non-Arabs into the state. However, the solution would be to incorporate them into the Arab identity, which some might argue is possible.

This idea is further supported when we look at where Salafi-Jihadism spread. We see it gaining a solid foothold in regions like the Caucasus in Russia, Central Asia, Afghanistan, Levant, Iraq, Libya, and East and West Africa. All regions and countries with a weak sense of national identity. While in countries such as Turkey, Pakistan, and Malaysia, we do not see much appeal from the native populations. We should note that just because I use the term "national identity," that does not mean I am referring to the country as a whole. In Pakistan, for example, there are numerous separatist’s groups. However, even those separatist groups have a national identity, such as Baluch nationalism with the ethnic Baluchs and Pashtun nationalism with the
ethnic Pashtuns. While with Afghanistan, we witness many ethnic identities in the country, but a very small sense of unity, even among members of the same ethnicity. Hence, the Pashtun majority province of Kunar has a significant Salafi population.\textsuperscript{138}

It is no doubt that Salafi-Jihadism would become more relevant in the post-Cold War world. It is also apparent that the ideologies' rise resulted from complicated events that shaped the pre and post-colonial Muslim world. However, we can say with some certainty that Salafi-Jihadi is the strongest Pan-Sunni Islamic ideology today, with no real competitors, and its popularity is due to the failures of Pan-Arabism and nationalism throughout the Muslim world.

Part 4:

Modern Salafi-Jihadism

The Definition of Salafi-Jihadism and how it’s Different from Other Forms of Salafism

The formation of Salafi-Jihadism occurred; it is difficult to determine when precisely. This is due to controversies about what is considered Salafi-Jihadis, and when the formation occurred. We can consider the Afghan Jihad the first instance when we see the formation of Salafi-Jihadism on a global scale. However, events such as the early al-ʾikhwān of Saudi Arabia, who were allies of the early Saudi State in the early 20th century, can be considered Jihadis and Salafis. However, in that instance, and others similar, they were merely Ḥanbalīs, who were associated with a state and wished to expand that Ḥanbalī-dominated state. With Salafi-Jihadism, it seems more complicated than that.

Before we can discuss the developments of Salafi-Jihadism, we must first adopt an identity that could successfully reflect the identity of the majority of its followers or perhaps some characteristics that we can conclude about them. Salafi-Jihadism is different from the other two types of Salafism: the daʿwiyya and the ḥarrakiyya. However, they still have similarities that place them all in the Salafi category.

The first argument we need to make is that Salafi-Jihadism is different than the other types of Salafism or Wahhabism. The first significant difference is in the contrast of the names, the word Jihad. Salafi-Jihadism believes in uniting Muslims through their determination to liberation from what they see as oppression. This liberation, in their eyes, can only be achieved through waging Jihad, and if we look at the legality of Jihad, it is something that all Muslims can take part in and are obligated to take part in, in other cases. Here the mujahid or the person
engaging in Jihad doesn't necessarily mean they have prior Islamic knowledge. Instead, they are educated on Islam once they engage in Jihad.

The Quran awards those who emigrate and engage in Jihad as we see in the Quranic verse, "Surely those who have believed, emigrated, and struggled (Jihad) in the Way of Allah—they can hope for Allah's mercy. And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful."\(^{139}\) This Quranic verse clearly shows that God will forgive the Muslims if they commit themselves to struggle in the path of God, which most Salafi-Jihadis agree that that struggle is fighting for the sake of God. Another example supporting Jihad that Salafis-Jihadis use can be found in the hadith, in which Muḥammad (PBUH) said: "The example of a Mujahid in Allah's Cause-- and Allah knows better who strives (Jihad) in His Cause---- is like a person who fasts and prays continuously. Allah guarantees that He will admit the Mujahid in His Cause into Paradise if he is killed; otherwise, He will return him to his home safely with rewards and war booty."\(^{140}\)

It should also be clear that we can consider people Salafi-Jihadi if they're Salafi scholars who call for Jihad or financially support Salafi-Jihadi groups. Support for this comes from the hadith, in which Muḥammad (PBUH) said: "Fight the polytheists with your wealth, lives, and tongues."\(^{141}\) Here wealth would be financially supporting efforts against polytheists, lives being physically fighting, and tongues would be speaking up against them or calling for fighting against them.

Compared to the other types of Salafism, one type is Salafī daʿwiyya, also known as scholarly or missionary Salafism. This type is also the dominant type of Salafism in Saudi Arabia, with many being known as Jamis and Madkhalis. This type focuses heavily on quietism

\(^{139}\) Quran verse (1:218).
\(^{140}\) Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī hadith number: 2787.
\(^{141}\) Riyaḍ al-Ṣālḥīn hadith number: 1349.
and pledging allegiance to the ruling authority.\textsuperscript{142} This group also forbids engaging in politics and violence to achieve goals, as it will cause strife and division among the Muslims.\textsuperscript{143} We should note that their arguments fall completely under the shared methodologies that all Salafis have in common, which I will explain later.

This group is different from Salafi-Jihadis, as this group tends to focus more on educating the Muslim population. However, Salafi-Jihadis would agree on the necessity of educating Muslims. However, this group's stance on Jihad and obedience to rulers differs. Although Haykel initially claimed that they were against violence, we see in the Libyan civil war people who consider themselves Madkhalis, fighting on the side of Haftar, such as the Ṭāriq Ibn Ziyad battalion, who himself isn't even Salafi. While Salafi-Jihadis, on the other hand, are fighting against Haftar.\textsuperscript{144} Both sides claim they are engaging in Jihad, and both consider themselves Salafis, so what is the difference?

The main difference between these groups, in this case, tends to be more toward obedience. In Islam, this concept of "obedience to the ruler" tends to be a major focus for the Madkhalis. This idea is also supported by the Quran "O believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you."\textsuperscript{145} According to all Salafis, those of authority mentioned here would be the rulers. Therefore, it should be clear that all Salafis believe in this concept, except they differ in who "the people of authority" are.

Madkhalis here tend to be more favorable to Saudi Arabia and its allies. At the same time, Salafi-Jihadi’s loyalty is more to their direct group leader, as long as their leader supports

\textsuperscript{145} Quran verse (4:59).
the enforcement of Sharia. Here is the crucial difference: obedience regardless of what the ruler enforces, as Haftar does not implement Sharia law. Instead, they tend to be more of what would keep that status quo and keep the country stable, which is stability under Haftar. On the other hand, Salafi-Jihadis tend to see insurgencies and instability as an opportunity to gain support, with IS being the best example.

We can also witness a connection between Salafi-Jihadis and Sayyid Quṭb. Sayyid Quṭb was an Egyptian teacher who, after traveling to the US, he would join the Muslim Brotherhood. He would later introduce this idea of jāhiliyya, in which all nationalists, monarchists, socialists, and theocrats were all jahilis or ignorant. Then he explains how Muslims must fight the greater Jihad, which is against the desires and interests of anything that is not Islam. Once complete, then one can see the true path.

I mentioned this because Salafi-Jihadists see themselves as victors of the greater Jihad by rejecting nationalism, secularism, communism, and monarchs. Their rejection of these ideologies would mean that they are on the right path, and as stated before, the right path is that closest to the Salaf. Thus, they are the true Salafis and the ones who fight for monarchs and nationalists; in their eyes, Madkhalis cannot be true Salafis. This is why present Salafi-Jihadi’s prefer to call them Madkhalis, which comes from Rabī’ al-Madkhalī, a strong supporter of the Saudi monarch.

The second type of Salafism is the ḥarakiyya branch or the surūriyya, as it's known in Saudi Arabia. They're primarily interested in getting involved in the politics of the state and tolerance toward other political parties. This group is different from Salafi-Jihadis mainly due to the ḥarakiyya non-violent stance, regardless of how bad their status gets. We can see this

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147 Ibid. Pg. 131.
148 Ibid. Pg. 132.
through the example of al-ṣaḥwah movement, a Saudi politically active faction, lead by Salmān al-ʿAwdah. He was imprisoned multiple times and currently a political prisoner in Saudi Arabia. Yet the followers of this still choose to remain non-violent and keep their activism through awareness to pressure the Saudi State politically.

If the same events of imprisonment of the leaders was done to the Salafi-Jihadis, they would've begun violent and probably launched revenge attacks in response to the imprisonment of their leader. However, it should be clear that the goal of the ḥarakiyya seems to be to establish a more Islamic state. Thus, we can say that they have similar goals as the Salafis-Jihadis. However, it seems that the groups differ more on the means and not the ends.

In terms of how Salafism is different from other movements, it seems to be a little more complex than the inner Salafi differences. In terms of the methodology of Salafis, they tend to emphasize the concept of ḥadīth and tawḥīd in answering theological questions. This emphasis seems to be the most significant difference between the theological beliefs of Salafis and appears to be the major indicator of who is a Salafi and who is not. However, Ḥanbalīs tend to hold similar beliefs, so how could we differentiate between the two.

As stated before, there is no doubt that modern Salafist thought does have its roots in Ḥanbalism and medieval Ḥanbalī scholars. However, the main difference between the two groups is the Salafi rejection of taqlīd or imitation. This taqlīd tradition was practiced and incredibly incorporated into all four primary Sunni schools of jurisprudence. However, the practice's main opponents came to rise in the 19th century with ʿAbduh, and the modern Salafis would later inherit the rejection of taqlīd.

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152 Ibid. Pg 7.
It is hard to say for sure the roots of the Salafi rejection of taqlīd. However, we know it was not Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, as his main emphasis was on tawhid or monotheism and not really on the concept of taqlīd or the importance of ijtihād (striving).¹⁵³ Instead, the importance of ijtihād within Sunnism became more popular during the educational reforms that began in the 19th century and then developed into ijtihād within religious studies.

We also witness that the concept of ijtihād seems to be more critical for the Salafis than any of the other Sunni schools in the modern world. This importance is because the Salafis tend to favor ijtihād for the average Muslims, unlike more traditional scholars. This idea most likely comes from the medieval scholar Ibn al-Qayyim, a student of Ibn Taymiyyah.¹⁵⁴ However, we would not witness ijtihād for all until the education reforms. Therefore, we can also say that it resulted from the failure of traditional Islamic schools, which is why the educational reforms occurred. But also, the result of the failure of modern scholars, especially those who defended the Arab regimes. In the eyes of the Salafis, the religious institutions, which are mostly government-backed, were incredibly corrupt, and thus they needed ijtihād to create new religious institutions.

Another major difference in Salafism from other Islamic movements is the emphasis on literalism and the works of Ibn Taymiyyah. These differences are the only major differences between Salafis and other groups in some instances. The Muslim Brotherhood, for example, is sometimes mistakenly referred to as Salafis. However, there are connections between the two groups, like the member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Sayyid Quṭb, and his influence on Salafis. The Muslim Brotherhood further influenced the Salafi ḥarakiyya. However, the influence seems to be more political than theological.

¹⁵³ Ibid.
¹⁵⁴ Ibid. Pg. 8.
It should also be clear that Jihad is not only a Salafi-Jihadi practice. Jihad has always existed throughout Islamic history, and Salafi-Jihadis is just another chapter. Moreover, Salafi-Jihadis are not the only modern Islamic Sunni movements engaged in Jihad. For example, the Taliban had been waging Jihad against the US and the US-backed Afghan government. Yet the Taliban do not share many qualities with the Salafi-Jihadis other than being Sunni and engaging in Jihad. Thus, we must understand the true nature of Salafis and Salafi-Jihadis.

**The Expansion of Salafi-Jihadism**

Now that we understand the Salafi-Jihadi doctrine, we must understand why and how it expanded. When we try to understand the expansion of the doctrine, there are many routes one can take. Here I will investigate where it expanded, what kind of environment allowed it to expand, and who they would target for recruitment.

With why Salafi-Jihadis would need to expand, that reason comes from the name. They’re Salafi-Jihadis, which means they engage in Jihad, and to wage a physical Jihad successfully, you need soldiers. However, even before discussing their recruitment methods, we must ask why they would need soldiers, to begin with or why they wage Jihad? To answer that question would require an investigation into why and where these Salafi Jihadis fought.

The first instance we witnessed Salafi-Jihadism, was when they were fighting on a large scale in Afghanistan during the 80s war against the USSR. However, despite Afghanistan being the first significant instance when we witnessed Salafi-Jihadism on a large scale, most of the Salafi-Jihadis were among the foreign volunteers, most of whom were Arabs. They would later be known as the Afghan Arabs.\(^{155}\)

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There are many conflicting opinions about who the Afghan Arabs were. When investigating their motives, we find that not all Afghan Arabs traveled to Afghanistan to fight. Instead, many traveled to help the Afghans, hear the stories, and preach. Only a minority of those engaged in fighting would later join al-Qaeda. There could be multiple reasons why only a minority would join al-Qaeda, but the explanation I find most compelling is that the battle wasn't on their land. They considered themselves foreign and only fought to liberate the Afghan people and not necessarily liberate themselves.

The original goals of al-Qaeda can support this idea. The term itself "al-Qaeda" means the base, and it is commonly associated with the idea of the group being the base for global Jihad. Although they took Afghanistan as a base after the Soviet retreat, their many goals were to drive out the United States from Saudi Arabia and other Islamic countries. In other words, they remained in Afghanistan and joined al-Qaeda to liberate the Arab-Islamic world. The ones who fought and didn't join al-Qaeda probably did not see al-Qaeda as the path to liberation, or they probably didn't think their home countries needed liberation. But when examining the ones who joined al-Qaeda or at least the organization's founders, their end goal was to liberate their home countries, and since most were Arabs, it would be the liberation of Arab countries.

The local Afghans initially preferred local Islamic movements over the foreign Salafi-Jihadi identity. We witness this through the modern demographics of Afghanistan. Only one province, Kunar, has a significant Salafi population, and the process of becoming Salafis had begun before the arrival of the Afghan Arabs. Despite the country having perfect conditions

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157 Ibid.
for the spread of Salafism, with the multiple ethnicities, languages, state of warfare, instability, and lack of national unity. In the end, we don't see any appeal among the locals to join the Salafi movement.

The best answer for this is that, unlike other nations, Islamic movements seem to exist in Afghanistan and eventually thrive after their victory over the communist government and Najibullah. Each ethnicity and division seem to have a distinct local Islamic group representing their local customs, the greatest being the Pashtun Taliban. We also did not witness Taliban control over non-Pashtun areas long enough for them to consolidate their control. Thus, it did not create an environment where the minorities would unite and look for a more unifying identity that did not give any local ethnicity supreme authority. However, now that the Taliban are in control, we might witness a rise in Salafism among the population, with IS officially having a branch in Afghanistan, to probably monetize on the potential failure of the Taliban, whom they regard as apostates.

In the next instance, we see Salafi-Jihadis, which could be in Bosnia. Many volunteers, most of whom were Arabs, traveled to Bosnia to fight alongside their Bosnian Muslim Brothers against the Christian Orthodox Serbs.\(^{160}\) These fighters became known as Bosnian Mujahideen, perhaps to replicate the Afghan experience. Like Afghanistan, the Salafis failed to appeal to the local population. The failure can be seen as most Bosnians did not adhere to the Salafi doctrine. However, unlike Afghanistan, Bosnia was not home to multiple ethnicities. There were Serbs who were Orthodox Christians, Croats who were Catholic, and Bosnians who were Muslims. Here their religion seems to be the main identifier to be Bosnian; you most likely had to be

Muslim. The Bosnians lacked that need for a unifying identity, and in their eyes, the local Islamic sect and customs were enough to unite the people in the long term.

The next conflict and perhaps the first instance of Salafi doctrine successfully infiltrated the local population in the Caucasus. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Muslim majority Russian region of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria rebelled against the newly formed Russian Federation.\(^{161}\) Wanting to replicate Moscow's failure in Afghanistan, many Arab volunteers, some of whom were Afghan veterans, traveled to fight the Russians in the Caucasus.\(^{162}\) Unlike Afghanistan, though, many of the volunteers were Salafi-Jihadis and had explicitly traveled to fight. This meant that Salafi-Jihadis would have the most outside influence on the region would be done by Salafi-Jihadis. Later, after the arrival of these Salafi-Jihadis, we witnessed the rise of a local appeal to Salafism that was not present in Afghanistan.

This appeal is most likely because the Caucasus is home to different ethnicities and ideologies, including different Sufi ṭarīqas and different madhabs that could cause local divisions.\(^{163}\) In addition, similar to other regions, one particular race or madhab or ṭarīqa can't be declared supreme. These divisions were not as severe during the first Chechen war, mainly due to Russia being the "common enemy." However, after their victory and establishment of an independent Chechen state and the expansion into the diverse Dagestan, these divisions resurfaced and threatened the future of their newly formed state. These divisions meant that the locals needed to unite under one common identity to unite successfully. However, instead of establishing a new national identity, some sought to inherit the Arab/Islamic identity through Salafism.


\(^{162}\) Ibid.

\(^{163}\) Ibid.
This preference for Salafism over any other ideology came from the unifying nature of Salafism. Salafism, at that time, did not have many divisions into the three different types, Jihadi, ḥarakiyya, daʿwiyya. On the other hand, the Salafis claimed that Sufism has multiple brotherhoods, with some having distinct traditions and customs, thus dividing Islam. Moreover, the madhhabs or schools of jurisprudence also seemed as a divider, with Ḥanafī and Shāfiʿī having different rulings and opinions in the region; thus, preferring one over the other could result in more divisions.

Both Sufism and the schools of jurisprudence also don't solve the linguistic issue, as many languages still exist in the region. The only main contenders for the national language were Russian, the enemy's language, and Azeri, which might make it seem that Azeris are better than everyone, and thus everyone must learn their language. With Salafism, Arabic was the obvious choice as a unifying language, as it is the language of the Quran and the ḥadith. It was the only language everyone could relate to without depicting one local group of people as supreme, since Arabs were not local.

Of course, their effort to enforce Salafism would result in significant divisions, most notably the Sufis, who, under Kadyrov, would aid the Russians in reconquering the region during the second Chechen war, thus putting an end to the independent state and the Russian establishment of the Chechen Republic. However, although bringing an end to the independent Chechen State, this defeat would be an ideological victory for Salafism. The group is now the only group against Russian, non-Muslim rule over Muslim majority regions in the Caucasus.

The next major area in which we see Salafi-Jihadism is in Iraq. This Salafi-Jihadi emergence came after the US invaded Iraq in 2003, which put an end to the rule of the Sunni

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164 Ibid. Pg. 187.
165 Ibid. Pg 192.
166 Ibid. Pg 208.
Arab leader Saddam Hussein. Unlike Caucasus and Afghanistan, Iraq was majority Arab, with a significant Kurdish minority. However, by this time, 1991, the Kurds had established an autonomous region in the North, isolating them from the Arabs. This isolation meant that the Arabs were the main group affected by the invasion and overthrow of Saddam Hussein. In terms of the Arabs, they were religiously split between Sunnism and Shi'ism, with Shi'ite making up the majority. This division meant that any form of unity must disregard religion, informing that unified identity.

However, the exact opposite occurred, with the Arab lands of Iraq divided into lines of Sunnis and Shi'ites. The situation worsened when the US instituted policies known as "De-Ba'athification," which resulted in the removal of Ba'ath employees from positions and the military. We should note that most members of the Ba'ath party were Sunni Arabs, making the invasion seem like an "Anti-Sunni Arab" war and not just about Saddam Hussein. Furthermore, it made it harder for Sunni Arabs to accept any post-war political system, which would lead them to boycott the 2005 election, furthering the isolation of the Arab Sunnis. This isolation, among other things, would eventually lead to a civil war in 2006, mainly on the lines of Sunnis and Shi'ites.

We should remember that not all resistance forces among the Sunnis were Salafi-Jihadis. However, the more violent and sectarian the conflict got, the more support Salafi-Jihadis got. Therefore, Sunni would also be more open to working with the US during the surge against the country's more violent and radical forces. Although, on the surface, we can consider this as

170 Ibid. Pg. 46-47.
bringing the Sunnis back into the community. However, it probably did more harm than good. It
did not solve the sectarian issues in the country, and it delegitimized the moderate Sunnis and
made them appear as pro-occupiers. Thus, this would lead the Salafi-Jihadis as the only Sunni
groups still against the US and the Shi'ite-dominated government. Eventually, these
Salafi-Jihadis would merge and form ISI or the Islamic State in Iraq.\textsuperscript{172}

The effects of this would be massive, as ISI would now see themselves as the protectors
and representatives of Arab Sunnis in Iraq. This would be incredibly appealing to the former
Arab nationalists who were formally a part of the Ba'ath government. Most of their core
supporters would be Arab nationalists. ISI would also later become the strongest and largest
Salafi-Jihadi group in the world. The group would only grow in size during the Syrian civil war
in 2011, and although their Syrian branch, Jabhat al-Nusra, would break off from them. They still
had a significant presence in the region, which would lead to them rebranding themselves as ISIS
or the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

This massive presence and influence made them the strongest Salafi-Jihadi group by far,
and their growth would continue with the recruitment of foreigners throughout the world. This
recruitment would lead to another rebranding, which they would now refer to themselves as IS or
simply the Islamic State. This rebranding came at a time when they were in control of territory
all over the Muslim world, including Libya, West and East Africa, the Philippines, and
Afghanistan, as well as having branches in other regions, such as the Caucasus, that were not in
control of any significant territory.\textsuperscript{173} This expansion made IS the greatest and strongest
Salafi-Jihadi group in the world. Thus, it is safe to say that their doctrine could be a successful
case study to understand the ideology of Salafi-Jihadism and its root in Arabism.

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid.
Pg. 237-272.
Part 5:

Arabism Within the Islamic State

Before I examine the roots of Arabness within IS, I must first disclose the sources I will be using. Most of my written sources are primary sources from IS's office center for research and studies. Based on my readings of their work, it seems that the purpose of this office is to answer Islamic questions people might have, educate the readers on what Islam is to them, and what are the overall beliefs of IS. Therefore, I will only examine the works directly involving their overall ideology and its relationship to Arabness.

For starters, IS's scholars strongly emphasize establishing a state and how Muslims need to so or at least fight for one. They even reference a ḥadith in which Muḥammad (PBUH) said: "who dies without having bound himself by an oath of allegiance to an Amir (commander or leader) will die the death of the ignorance (jahiliyyah)." Their reference to this ḥadith comes with commentary on how this ḥadith emphasizes how Muslims should join a larger group and that group should have the intention of establishing a state. IS would then discuss who is eligible and how they choose a leader.

In terms of how they choose their leaders, they reference two methods. The first is that a group of people, primarily scholars, leaders, and local leaders, gather together and decide who is most eligible to rule. The second method is through the sword, in which they claim that if a group of Muslims defeats another group of leaders, then the losing group must swear allegiance to the victorious group. With the condition that the victories group is an Islamic State and abides by Sharia.

175 Ibid.
176 Ibid. Pg. 930.
177 Ibid.
In terms of the conditions that the leader must meet, IS's scholars reference the medieval Syrian judge and scholar Imam Badr al-Dīn bin Jamā'a (d. 733/1333), who said: "The Imam must be male, free, adult, sane, Muslim, just, brave, Qurayshi, scholar, sufficient for the nation's policies and interests."\(^{178}\) At first glance, nothing stands out since we can find most of these conditions in constitutions worldwide. However, one condition that stands out decreases the pool of eligible leaders that is Qurayshi, which references Muḥammad's (PBUH) tribe. This condition meant that for one to be the leader, they must be from the Quraysh tribe and thus must have Arab roots.

This condition explains why all of the IS leaders claimed to be from the Quraysh tribe, and specifically, from the lineage of Ḥusayn (RA), the grandson of Muḥammad (PBUH). IS had to take this seriously, and an attack on this condition is an attack on the whole state, which is why when speculations arose about the lineage of their former leader Abū Ibrāhīm were taken so seriously. Although Abū Ibrāhīm claimed to be from the lineage of Muḥammad (PBUH), some sources claim he was of Turkmen origins.\(^{179}\) If these allegations were true, his claim to be the leader was illegitimate. Hence, he and IS leadership insisted that he was of Arab origin. Although IS were not the first to enforce this leadership condition, they still empathize with its importance today, showing that Arabs are given a special status within Islam. Similar to how the US president must be a natural-born citizen, the IS leader must have Arab roots in the Quraysh tribe, with no possible way for a non-Quraysh person to be the leader legitimately.

IS's scholars also extensively reference the importance of the Arabic language throughout its works. One reference is in their Mu'allifāt, a collection of Islamic research that the IS scholars

\(^{178}\) Ibid. Pg. 931.
conducted in two years. In one chapter, they discuss the importance of the Arabic language. For starters, they reference a ḥadith that claims the people of heaven will have Muḥammad's (PBUH) tongue, which means the people will speak Arabic in heaven. Furthermore, they mention how Arabic is the language of the Quran and Sunna, making it the perfect language. Moreover, they reference Abū Manṣūr al-Thaʿalībi, a medieval Arab poet who lived in Persia, who said: "Whoever loves God the almighty loves his messenger Muḥammad (PBUH), and whoever loves the Arab messenger loves the Arabs, and whoever loves the Arabs loves Arabic (the language) in which the greatest book was revealed in, onto the greatest 'Ajam (non-Arabs) and Arabs, and whoever loves Arabic, cares about it, preserves it, and spend their effort on it." IS's choice for choosing al-Thaʿalibi is fascinating. He was not necessarily an Islamic scholar; instead, he was a literary and linguistic. Furthermore, after they mention his name, they did not write "may God have mercy on him," which they do when they mention scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah, al-Shāfiʿī, and Ibn Ḥazm. The lack of the phrase "may God have mercy on him" is interesting because it could signal that the IS scholars who wrote this did not see him as an Islamic authority figure or even an extraordinary figure worthy of asking God to have mercy on him. Nevertheless, they found him important enough for them to quote him on the importance of Arabic and Arabs.

The reference to al-Thaʿalibi could indicate that IS were perhaps searching for a medieval scholar who could justify their stance on Arabic and even Arabs, as al-Thaʿalibi's quote puts Arabs, as a people, before the Arabic language. Their choice of this quote would be known in today's age as cherry picking or argument by selective observation. They did not choose an

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182 Ibid. Pg. 2463.
Islamic scholar; rather, they chose an Arab literary who would defend and glorify Arabic. We should note that al-Tha'alibi is an Arab who lived in Persia; thus, perhaps referencing him could signify that Arabs and Arabic are better than non-Arabs and non-Arabic languages. It is also normal for an Arab who lives in a non-Arab land to see Arabic as superior.

In further support of Arabic, IS scholars presented the importance of Arabic in understanding the religion, which they quote ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭab (RA): "Learn Arabic for it is from your religion and learn the obligations for it is from your religion." This quote places learning the Arabic language on the same level as a Muslim's obligations, such as praying and fasting. Furthermore, the quote numerous medieval scholars such as Ibn Hazm and al-'Alama al-Azhari say all Muslims must learn Arabic. While other such as al-Shāfi‘ī and Abū ‘Amr Ibn Śālah, claim that a scholar must be knowledgeable of the Arabic language. They also reference Ibn Taymiyyah, who essentially claims that language knowledge affects a person's mind, manners, and religion, thus reemphasizing the importance of the language. The overall opinion of IS on the Arabic language seems to be that it is an obligation, with some differences on whether it is a communal or personal obligation. However, if we look into other works by the Islamic State’s official department for producing the groups Islamic rulings, the office of research and studies, they tend to lean toward knowledge of Arabic being a personal obligation to all Muslims.

IS scholars then explain the importance of speaking Arabic and its relationship to eloquence. They reference multiple scholars on how the most important characteristic of an eloquent man is their language. In another work from the office of research and studies, IS

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185 Ibid. Pg. 2463 - 2465.
186 Ibid.
scholars debate the legality of giving the Friday sermon in a non-Arabic language. Although IS do mention all the historical arguments to this debate, they seem to be more supportive of giving the sermon in Arabic, even if some people do not understand.\textsuperscript{188}

In the same work, IS scholars explore the idea of the permissibility of speaking a language other than Arabic. They make multiple references to ’Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭab, in which he orders people not to learn the gibberish of non-Arabs (’Ajam), and if one speaks Farsi, then he decreases in his eloquence.\textsuperscript{189} They also reference a ḥadith in which Muḥammad (PBUH) said: "whoever is good at speaking Arabic, they should not speak in Farsi, for it bestows hypocrisy."\textsuperscript{190} This ḥadith clearly shows IS's stance on non-Arabic, how if they knew how to speak Arabic, they must speak Arabic. Therefore, if they teach Arabic to their population, then the population must speak Arabic. In a way, this is the first step to Arabizing the population, in which, in theory, after a few generations, the population would only see themselves as Arabs.

Even the initial borders of the Islamic State can support this idea of "Arabness." Since the group first referenced themselves as ISI or the Islamic State in Iraq, meaning that, at the time, they had no real ambitions to expand their borders outside Iraq. This clearly shows their nationalistic background, how the idea of "nationalism" still existed in the group despite the group denouncing it. Even their expansion into Syria was mainly due to capitalizing on the situation and not necessarily out of a pre-planned expansion operation. Syria, a majority Sunni country, had been ruled by an Alawite family for the past forty years. ISI, at the time, was a minority in Iraq that needed to broaden its support base if it wanted to survive and capitalize on the suffering of the Syrian people.

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid. Pg. 8.
For these reasons, along with the rise in popularity of its Syrian branch, al-Nusra, ISI, decided to branch into ISIS. However, this was not necessarily an issue as Syrians are Arabs, and the modern border that separates them was not on the lines of ethnicity, culture, or language. Instead, Europeans drew up the border, and they relatively did not care about the populations when drawing up the borders. We can see evidence of this in the people who live in the Raqqa and Deir al-Zor provinces in Syria, who have more in common with Iraqis from Anbar than with Syrians from Damascus, and also share numerous tribal networks. Thus, the branding into ISIS was not as complicated as one might think.

To further support the idea of ISIS not interested in expanding its borders can be seen in opening one of their poems titled "soon soon." ISIS released a Turkish form translated as "yakında yakında," and in some versions of the poem, we can hear the former leader of ISIS, Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī, claiming that the Turks have now attacked them, so they should put their trust in God and attack the Turks and disrupt the security of Turkey. The statement came after Turkey attacked ISIS-held territory in Syria. The statement is a great example of further evidence that ISIS did not want to expand outside the Arab lands of Iraq and Syria.

The biggest problems came when foreigners from all over the world began to migrate and join ISIS. On the surface, this might seem only to be a positive aspect for ISIS. However, many people come from different backgrounds, and unlike al-Qaeda, ISIS wished to establish a state, and the greatest difficulty in establishing a state is establishing a unified identity. This unified identity would be Sunni Muslim, with Arabic being the national language. However, there was still an issue with that.

We can divide Arabic into two main categories: fuṣḥā, which we divide into classical Arab, and modern standard Arabic or MSA. The second is ʿāmmiyya, which is colloquial Arabic and can vary depending on where one is. For example, the Moroccan dialect of Arabic is different from the Iraqi Arabic to the extent that they are unintelligible to each other. Today, there is still a debate on whether Arabs should keep colloquial alive in the Arab world. Amid these debates, we also witness ISIS participating in this debate.

With ISIS, it was a much greater issue because their initial state encompassed both Iraq and Syria, two counties with distinct dialects. Furthermore, many foreigners joining ISIS came from other Arab countries such as Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Egypt, and Tunis, all of whom brought their local dialects with them. Thus, ISIS had a difficult decision to make. Doing nothing makes it harder for people to communicate and a barrier for the non-Arabs to incorporate themselves into the state. Instead, to make one dialect supreme, which might cause internal divisions. Alternatively, make fuṣḥā the common language of the people, which would involve speaking Arabic at events and teaching the broader population fuṣḥā.

It seems that ISIS had gone with the latter to make the fuṣḥā supreme. We see evidence of this in ISIS documentaries, in which ISIS officials attempt to speak fuṣḥā on many occasions. In one documentary titled "The Islamic State" by “vice news”, we see officials attempting to speak fuṣḥā. Regardless of the policies and views of vice news itself, the attempts to speak fuṣḥā did not catch the interest of the vice news employees. Even the employee spoke ʿāmmiyya whenever he could, and along with the English subtitles, there was no real motive for the ISIS officials to


\[193\] Ibid. Pg. 4.

attempt to speak fuṣḥā, but they did. The documentary also depicts a Belgian foreigner speaking fuṣḥā, making it seem that fuṣḥā was the preferred language of the group.\footnote{Ibid.}

Their final rebranding from ISIS to IS or the Islamic State or the Caliphate came at a time of political isolation from the Salafi-Jihadi community and the Sunni community overall. This isolation resulted from their disagreements with Syrian revolutionary factions that followed infighting between ISIS and the other factions, including Jabhat al-Nusra. However, this rebranding also involved the foreigners who were migrating. By 2014, ISIS began to make headlines worldwide, making it harder for its supporters to travel to Iraq and Syria. So, instead of turning down and rejecting their supporters, they rebranded to the broader IS. This rebranding meant that one no longer needed to migrate to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, instead establish the state or Caliphate in their land. This expansion would result in IS taking control of territory in Libya, Afghanistan, West and East Africa, and more.

IS were no longer a regional Salafi-Jihadi group; rather, now, they are a global Salafi-Jihadi network that aims to establish an Islamic State everywhere. However, despite becoming a global organization, most of its support will still be in the Arab world. Most of their news networks that report on the organization's operations worldwide still report in the Arabic language, as it is the common language for the group.

In their defense, they do seem to address the concept of nationalism (qawmīya) and Ba’athism in their work. They mention Ba’athism, criticize its founding member Michel ‘Aflaq, and mention that he was a Christian and how he founded the party in order to restore ignorance within the Islamic community and to replace Islamic brotherhood with Arab brotherhood.\footnote{Majmūʿ Rasā’i’l Wa Mu’allīfūt. 1. 1st ed. Vol. 1. 6 vols. Maktab al-Buḥūth wa al-Dirāsāt, 2016. Pg. 48.} This rejection of Ba’athism makes IS seem as if they are completely against Arabism. However,
before they mentioned the founder of Ba’athism and his goals, IS claimed that Ba’athism sought a comprehensive revolution of Arab concepts and values and wanted to transform them into the image of socialism.\(^{197}\) This statement clearly shows how IS saw original Arab values and concepts as Islamic values and concepts. Moreover, they don’t seem to mention the Iraqi Ba’athism, and whenever the Syria branch is mentioned, they call it the Nuṣayrī (Alawite) government, perhaps to not confuse their readers with Saddams Sunni Ba’athist government. Furthermore, it shows us that perhaps this pro-Arab stance within the organization could not necessarily be intentional. Instead, it could have been inherited from the various pro-Arab events that led to their emergence and expansion.

It is not only IS that have this Arabness embedded within them; one example is the work called “Kuffū al-ʾAyādī ᾿An Bayʿat al-Baghdādī,” which translates as “stop the hands from giving Baghdadi (former leader of IS) the oath of allegiance.” This work was written by a former IS jurist named Abū Muḥammad al-Hāshimī, and in this work, he criticizes the organization. He criticizes many aspects of the organization, like corruption and their rejection of meeting other Islamic groups in court to solve issues.\(^{198}\) However, nowhere in the book does the author mention the Arab nature or Arabism within the organization. He only mentions how most issues were about a specific person and his group or corruption.\(^{199}\) Although this is not the only work done on criticizing IS, it gives us an inside look into why Salafi-Jihadis did not like the group. None of those reasons is Arabism.

\(^{197}\) Ibid.


\(^{199}\) Ibid. Pg. 30.
Conclusion

When studying modern Islamic movements, many take the movement for its word that it is “Islamic” and no traces of non-Islamic elements can be traced within it. The definition and understanding of movements cannot be based solely on their statements and writings. Furthermore, it is difficult to understand these movements by examining their goals and achievements. Instead, to truly understand these movements, we need to investigate further into their theology, history, and development. In the context of the Islamic State, this task is more difficult as there are many factors to consider to understand how the movement came to be. Many scholars always seem to associate the movement’s rise with the US invasion of Iraq, and had the US not invaded; the movement would not have risen to the extent that it had. Although that is partially true, the US does not seem to be the main cause leading to their rise.

Salafi-Jihadism indeed thrives on political and economic instability. However, the movement had already existed by the time of the US invasion and was somewhat popular in the Middle East. We can even trace the existence of IS back to al-Qaeda, another Salafi-Jihadi group that already had a considerable amount of influence throughout the Muslim world, especially in the Arab world. Thus, this association of Salafi-Jihadism as an “anti-American” movement does not seem to hold any weight on the reality of these movements. To successfully examine this movement, we first need to identify and define them.

However, even the various attempts to identify and define Salafi-Jihadism seem more difficult than expected. The movement has branched off into multiple groups, each having its distinct quality or characteristic that makes them different from the rest. Even in some cases, two Salafi groups are entirely identical in ideology and beliefs, yet we still witness disagreements and
fighting between the two. This shows the complexity of Salafism and the need to further research and examine the ideology.

This thesis examines the Salafi-Jihadi movement, as a whole, through the lens of Arabism. This choice of examining them from this angle comes from one of the few similarities all Salafi groups have in common: they were founded in the Arab world. This being the fact, we need to understand Islam, the way Salafi-Jihadism portrays it, which involves reexamining Islamic history, jurisprudence, and the politics of the Muslim World. Overall, we must be able to answer the question of whether a proud secular Arab is more likely to join a Salafi-Jihadi group than a proud Uzbek, Pashtun, and Desi. If the answer is yes, then we must understand why that is. Why would an Islamically proclaimed movement that preaches for the unity of all Muslims have elements that would make it more attractive to Arabs?

When examining modern Salafi-Jihadi movements, the Islamic State seems to be the best study case. The group was tasked to govern the massive territory and people they controlled. This task involved producing documents that explain the group’s overall ideology. By examining these documents, it is evident that the group has pro-Arab qualities. On the one hand, they do not seem to be doing this intentionally, but they also condemned nationalism in every form, including Arab nationalism. Thus, there must be a greater force involved that influenced this group.

When looking deeper into this greater force, we must begin with the beginning and examine Islamic history, emphasizing the Arabs to understand who the “Salaf” or early Muslims that Salafis praise are and how they’re different from the later Muslims. Furthermore, the modern Salafi ideology can be rooted in the Ḥanbalī school of jurisprudence. Finally, the environment
that led to the rise of Salafi-Jihadism must be taken into account, and how it is different in the Arab world compared to the non-Arab Muslim world.

If we examine the roots of Salafi-Jihadism and Salafism as a whole, we find evidence to support that Arabism has a much larger role in Salafism than we expected. Although this thesis attempted to examine the roots of Arabism in the modern Salafi-Jihadi movement, there is still much work to be done. However, there is no doubt that the connection between Arabism and Salafi-Jihadism exists.
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