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## The Worldview and Political Credo of Wahhabism

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### Abstract

*At the modern stage, Islam plays an increasingly significant role not only in the domestic and foreign policies of Muslim countries but also on the international stage. Overall, the activation of Islam has led to the growth of the political influence of various Islamic sects and movements. In this context, one particularly noteworthy trend is Wahhabism, with its distinct worldview and political credo.*

*Wahhabism, a branch of Sunni Islam, was founded by Muhammad Ibn al-Wahhab in the 18th century. The emergence and rapid rise of Wahhabism were facilitated by the political and economic conditions in present-day Saudi Arabia and the broader Arabian Peninsula at that time. By the 18th century, where Wahhabism originated—the central and eastern parts of Saudi Arabia—were politically and economically underdeveloped, with no strong centralized government.*

*The issue was equally pronounced in the religious sphere, creating fertile ground for various "heretical" currents. The cult of saints was widespread throughout the peninsula, and remnants of idolatry persisted. During that period, people in the Arabian Peninsula worshipped saints and sacred sites, having largely forgotten the true faith.*

*Wahhabism emerged under conditions that significantly shaped its character. The ideology of Wahhabism arose from a profound spiritual crisis in Arabia, rooted in socio-economic and political factors. This doctrine rejects "bida," the cult of saints, and other practices.*

*Wahhabism is based on the Hanbali legal system, with Ibn Taymiyyah being its most prominent theologian. He categorically opposed the introduction of innovations (bida) into religion and was fiercely against the worship of saints. I focus on Hanbalism and Ibn Taymiyyah because Wahhabism can be viewed as a revival of Hanbalism and the broader movement associated with Ibn Taymiyyah.*

*Followers of Wahhabism were characterized by their fervent dedication. They fought vigorously to establish their ideology, and their efforts yielded significant results. Grounded in the principles of "At-Tawhid," they battled against various religious remnants, cults of saints, dervishes, and other influences.*

*Beyond religious issues, the doctrine of Wahhabism also played an important political role, aiming to abolish feudal divisions and unite them into a single nation while resisting foreign invaders. These political objectives set by nascent Wahhabism contributed to its success.*

*This religious and political doctrine of al-Wahhab found support among the chieftains of various Arab tribes, including Emir Al-Saud. Around his emirate, Al-Saud united the Arab tribes under this new religio-political doctrine. His descendants continue to rule the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where Wahhabism is officially declared the state religion.*

*Since its inception, Wahhabism has endured various challenges and has not only become the state ideology of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia but has also spread to other countries.*

*In the 20th century, due to scientific and technological advancements and shifting global dynamics, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia adopted a more Western political course. As a result, Wahhabism has transformed into a more moderate religious trend. However, the demands of modernity have led Wahhabism to confront modernism, partly due to its politicization.*

*It is important to note that Muslim theologians have differing views on Wahhabism, influenced by the modernist-political nature of this movement. Official Wahhabism is neither extreme fanaticism nor terrorism; rather, modern Wahhabism is one of the moderate trends in Islam.*

*When discussing Wahhabism, it is crucial to differentiate between the ideology of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its official and unofficial policies, and the religious opposition that primarily operates outside the country.*

*As evidenced by practice, the spread of Wahhabism to other countries, such as those in the North Caucasus—Chechnya, Dagestan, and others—often exhibits characteristics of a new sect. I believe this warrants a separate discussion, which I will address in this article.*

**Keywords:** Wahhabism, religion, Islam, Sunni, movement, politics, ideology.

## Introduction

In the modern world, Islam plays a significant role not only in the domestic and foreign policies of Muslim countries but also on the international stage. This prominence has led to the rise of the political influence of various Islamic currents and sects. Wahhabism, one of the major currents in Sunni Islam, is particularly noteworthy in this context.

Wahhabism (Arabic: الوهابية, al-Wahhābiyya) is a reformist religious movement within Sunni Islam based on the teachings of the 18th-century Hanbali cleric Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1787). It was first established in the central Arabian region of Najd and subsequently spread to other parts of the Arabian Peninsula, with its primary presence today in Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

The term "Wahhabism" is primarily an exonym—a name used by outsiders. It was not adopted by Ibn Abd al-Wahhab himself or by his followers.<sup>1</sup> The term "Wahhabi" was likely first used by Sulaiman ibn Abd al-Wahhab, who was a staunch opponent of his brother Muhammad ibn al-Wahhab's views. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and the early followers of his movement referred to themselves as "al-Muwahidun" (the monotheists)<sup>2</sup> (Arabic: الموحدون, one who

acknowledges the unity of God).<sup>3</sup> I would like to note that the term "Wahhab" should not be confused with Wahhabism, which is the dominant faith in Ibadism.<sup>4</sup>

Wahhabism was formed in the second half of the 18th century as a reformist revival movement.<sup>5</sup> The Wahhabism movement has been characterized as a "movement for the socio-moral reconstruction of society"<sup>6</sup> a "conservative reform movement"<sup>7</sup> and a movement

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doi:10.1093/acref/9780195125580.001.0001. ISBN 0195125584, p114

<sup>3</sup> . Esposito, John L. (2011). *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam* (2nd ed.). New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0199794133, p.38

<sup>4</sup> Kepel, Gilles (2006). *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*. Translated by Anthony F. Roberts (New ed.). I.B. Tauris. ISBN 978-1845112578, p.255

<sup>5</sup> Algar, Hamid (2002). *Wahhabism: A Critical Essay*. Oneonta, NY: Islamic Publications International. ISBN 188999913X, p.19

<sup>6</sup> Coller, Ian (2022). *Muslims and Citizens: Islam, Politics, and the French Revolution*. New Haven, USA: Yale University Press. ISBN 978-0-300-24336-9, p.78

<sup>7</sup> Lacey, Robert (2009). *Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Modernists, Terrorists, and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia*. Viking. ISBN 978-0670-021185, p.146

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<sup>1</sup> DeLong-Bas, Natana J. (2007). *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad*. I.B. Tauris. ISBN 978-1845113223, p26.

<sup>2</sup> Esposito, John, ed. (2003). *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

"with a strongly fundamentalist interpretation of Islam in the Ibn Hanbali tradition".<sup>8</sup>

The founder of Wahhabism, Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, was born into a Qadi family and exhibited remarkable abilities from a young age. He learned the Quran before he was even ten years old and became familiar with the commentaries on the Quran (tafsir) and the narrations about the life of the Prophet (hadith) early in his childhood. He traveled extensively to neighboring Muslim countries and various cities in Saudi Arabia, where he deepened his religious knowledge.

At one point, he lived in Medina, where his teacher was Ibn Saif, a representative of the nobility from the oasis of al-Majmaa. Al-Wahhab later recounted an experience with his Medinan teacher: "Once the sheikh (Ibn Saif) asked me, 'Do you want me to show you the weapon that I have prepared?' I answered, 'Yes.' He led me into a room filled with many books." This encounter suggested that his teacher was preparing some form of "ideological weapon" to combat the beliefs prevalent in the oasis.<sup>9</sup>

Before discussing the doctrine of Wahhabism, it is essential to examine the political and economic factors that contributed to its emergence and rapid rise.

At the time of Wahhabism's rise in the 18th century, the central and eastern regions of Saudi Arabia (Hijaz and Nejd) were politically and economically backward compared to other parts of the Arab world. Feudal land ownership coexisted with patriarchal family relations.

The level of social development in Hijaz, where Islam and subsequently Wahhabism emerged, resembled that of the pre-Islamic period. There was no centralized government or stability. The Muslim empires that rose and fell in the Middle East directly or indirectly influenced Arabia. Since the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire had become the predominant factor in Arab politics.<sup>10</sup>

Alongside feudal fragmentation over the centuries, there have always been potential forces for unification. However, as soon as a centralized state began to form, stronger forces emerged that sought to disintegrate it.

The situation was equally pronounced in the religious sphere, where a fertile ground existed for various "heretical" currents. The cult of saints was widespread throughout the Arabian Peninsula, and remnants of idolatry were also present.<sup>11</sup>

According to the Arab historian Ibn Ghanami (died 1811), during the rise of Wahhabism, Arabs engaged in the worship of saints and holy places, straying from the principles of monotheism. People

<sup>8</sup> [Kepel, Gilles \(2002\). \*Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam\*. Translated by Anthony F. Roberts \(1st English ed.\). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. ISBN 0674-008774, p.69](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Coller, Ian \(2022\). \*Muslims and Citizens: Islam, Politics, and the French Revolution\*. New Haven, USA: Yale University Press. ISBN 978-0-300-24336-9, p.75-89](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Brown, Daniel W. \(2009\). "The Wahhābī Movement". \*A New Introduction to Islam\*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell. pp. 245–47. ISBN 978-1405158077. Retrieved 1 June 2020, p.45](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Stewart, Devin J.; Zaman, Muhammad Qasim \(eds.\). \*The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought\*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. pp. 231–32. ISBN 978-069113484-0. Retrieved 15 June 2020, p.70](#)

would visit the graves of saints, asking for blessings or seeking relief from misfortune.<sup>12</sup>

As per the same historian, the Arabs surpassed the inhabitants of pre-Islamic Arabia in their disbelief. Practices such as magic, sorcery, and sacrifices at the graves of saints were prevalent during this period.<sup>13</sup>

It is crucial to mention the attitude of the Bedouins (nomadic tribes) toward Islam. Those Bedouins living near the Turkish border often pretended to be Muslims for political reasons, but in reality, they were less devout. They questioned practices such as how they should perform rituals without water, how to give alms when they themselves were not wealthy, why they should fast during Ramadan when they felt they fasted year-round, and why they should travel to Mecca when God is everywhere. Some scholars believe that Islam had little impact on most nomadic tribes during the 12th century.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, before the emergence of Wahhabism, many Bedouins were often unfamiliar with Islam.<sup>15</sup>

It is important to note that the term "Bedouin" is not synonymous with "Arab" or "Arabite." This term specifically refers to the inhabitants of the steppes and semi-deserts and does not apply to farmers or urban dwellers.<sup>16</sup>

We believe that the lives of the Bedouins did not change much by the 18th century. Consequently, the primary determinant of their existence was not religion—as it was for other regions or peoples—but rather the harsh conditions of the desert. In response to these conditions, they developed a cult centered around the sun, moon, and stars. Nomadic tribes that identified as Muslims often engaged in religious practices that were completely incompatible with the principles of Islam.

Wahhabism arose in such an environment, which significantly shaped its character. The ideology of Wahhabism emerged as a response to a profound spiritual crisis in Arabia, rooted in socio-economic and political factors. This doctrine rejected "innovation," the cult of saints, and other practices.

From a social perspective, Wahhabism served the interests of the nobility while also exhibiting elements characteristic of egalitarian and leveling movements, which attracted large masses of the population.

Wahhabism is grounded in the Hanbali legal system, one of the four theological and legal schools (madhabs) in Sunni Islam. The most prominent theologian of this school was Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328), whose views warrant closer examination. Ibn Taymiyyah urged Muslims to protect the sanctity of the Qur'an and Sunnah. He rejected the principles used to resolve various theological controversies established in early Islam, particularly within the Hanbali madhhab. He categorically opposed the introduction of innovations (bida) into religion and was vehemently against the cult of saints and pilgrimages associated with them.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.islam.ru/lib/varnava/44>

<sup>13</sup> [www.Islamreligion.com](http://www.Islamreligion.com)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.ca-c.org/datarus/namatov.shtml>

<sup>15</sup> [Commins, David \(2006\). \*The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia\* \(PDF\). I.B. Tauris. ISBN 978-184511-0802, p.99](#)

<sup>16</sup> [DeLong-Bas, Natana J. \(2004\). \*Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad\*. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 0195169913, p.114](#)

According to Ibn Taymiyyah, the Qur'an required believers to perform pilgrimage (Hajj) only to three holy places:

- **Mecca**, where the Kaaba, the holiest site for all Muslims, is located.
- **Jerusalem**, where the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven to meet Allah.
- **Medina**, based on the legacy of the Prophet.<sup>17</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah constructed his Hanbalite credo on the principles of the "Golden Mean," which involves a combination of elements from Qalam (reason or aql), traditionalism (tradition or naql), and Sufism (neba or iridah). Like other Hanbalites, Ibn Taymiyyah demonstrated intransigence toward the philosophies of other religions and the followers of other madhhabs.<sup>18</sup> It is important to note that despite the categorical nature and dogmatism of Ibn Taymiyyah's doctrine, it gained considerable traction.

As previously mentioned, Wahhabism represents a revival of Hanbalism in general and the teachings of Ibn Taymiyyah in particular. Followers of Wahhabism, as strict ascetics, largely rejected the cult of saints, viewing the worship of the Prophet and the construction of mosques on sites associated with Muhammad's life as grave sins. They disapproved of extravagant clothing, revelry, and smoking, advocating against any intermediaries between Allah and the Muslim believer.

Wahhabis preached the principles of social harmony and urged all Muslims to adhere to the ethical teachings of Islam. They declared as heretics those who questioned the predestination of behavior and events.<sup>19</sup>

The Wahhabis' opposition to the cult of saints gradually escalated into a struggle against saints and holy sites. Consequently, they destroyed the holy places revered by Arabs and Muslims in general, including the city of Mecca and the Kaaba. They even distorted the Black Stone embedded in the wall of the Kaaba.<sup>20</sup>

Socio-politically, Wahhabism represented the first major Arab revolt against not only Turkey and Persia but also the foreign empires that dominated the Islamic world after the Mongol invasions and the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate. The movement emerged under the slogan of "Jihad" (Holy War) and later became a revolutionary impetus for the pan-Arab tendencies of the 19th century. The Wahhabis also fought to overcome feudal fragmentation and unify the region into a single country.

This political function of the newly emerging Wahhabism contributed significantly to its success. The doctrine of al-Wahhab was supported by warriors from various Arab tribes, including

Emir Muhammad bin Saud in the mid-18th century. In 1744, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab forged a pact with the local leader Muhammad bin Saud, establishing a political-religious alliance between them. Their bond was further strengthened when Muhammad bin Saud married al-Wahhab's daughter.

Al-Saud united the Arab tribes around his emirate based on this new doctrine. His descendants continue to rule the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where Wahhabism is declared the official state religion. Achieving this status was a long and arduous process, taking nearly two centuries for the final unification of the country and the declaration of Wahhabism as the official ideology.

Over time, the Wahhabi movement gradually became recognized as an anti-colonial and reformist force in the Islamic world, advocating for the re-establishment of Muslim social and political unity. Its revolutionary ideology played a role in the revival of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>21</sup>

Wahhabism has been a determining factor in the current political, economic, and religious processes in the Arabian Peninsula. One of the key conditions for its success was the religious fanaticism and holy war waged against those who did not adhere to the teachings of al-Wahhab. Wahhabism is often regarded as a pan-Islamist ideology; it functions as a political movement within Islam that seeks to gain power rather than being merely a religious movement. Unlike other movements, it lacks unique rituals or interpretations of religion that deviate from mainstream Sunni Islam.<sup>22</sup>

The term "Wahhabism" has frequently been used in a sectarian and Islamophobic context.<sup>23</sup> Since the colonial period, the epithet "Wahhabi" has often been misused by various external forces to inaccurately or pejoratively label a wide range of reformist movements in the Muslim world. During this era, the British Empire commonly employed the term to describe Muslim scholars and thinkers whom they viewed as obstacles to their imperial interests, seeking to suppress them under various pretexts. Many rebellious Muslims targeted by the British were deemed part of a "Wahhabi" conspiracy. In the eyes of the British government during the colonial period, the term "Wahhabi" was synonymous with "traitor" and "rebel." Consequently, this epithet became an insulting label for the religio-political movement of Wahhabism.<sup>24</sup>

In general, followers of al-Wahhab dislike the term "Wahhabi." Ibn Abd al-Wahhab himself opposed elevating scholars and prominent figures, rejecting the use of their names to label any Islamic school.<sup>25</sup> Thus, members of this movement historically identified themselves as "Muwahhidun." Another preferred term was simply "Muslims," as they viewed their faith as representing "pure Islam."

<sup>17</sup> Halverson, Jeffrey R. (2010). *Theology and Creed in Sunni Islam: The Muslim Brotherhood, Ash'arism, and Political Sunnism*. Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 978-0230106581, p.135

<sup>18</sup> Bonacina, Giovanni (2015). "1: A Deistic Revolution in Arabia". *The Wahhabis Seen through European Eyes (1772–1830): Deists and Puritans of Islam*. Koninklijke Brill nv, Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill. ISBN 978-90-04-29301-4, p.85

<sup>19</sup> Stewart, Devin J.; Zaman, Muhammad Qasim (eds.). *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. pp. 231–32. ISBN 978-069113484-0. Retrieved 15 June 2020, p.96

<sup>20</sup> Lacey, Robert (1981). *The Kingdom: Arabia and the House of Sa'ud*. New York and London: Harcourt Brace Javonovich, p.86

<sup>21</sup> DeLong-Bas, Natana J. (2007). *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad*. I.B. Tauris. ISBN 978-1845113223, p.97

<sup>22</sup> [www.Islamreligion.com](http://www.Islamreligion.com)

<sup>23</sup> <http://gposilama.ru/news.php?id=4427>

<sup>24</sup> Lacroix, Stéphane (2013). "Chapter 2: Between Revolution and Apoliticism: Nasir al-Din al-Albani and his Impact on the Shaping of Contemporary 18.Salafism". In Meijer, Roel (ed.). *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0199333431. OCLC 5713616619, p.217

<sup>25</sup> <http://gposilama.ru/news.php?id=6404>

The term "Muwahhidun" is associated with various sects, both surviving and extinct.<sup>26</sup>

It should be noted that Wahhabism has withstood various challenges since its inception, evolving into the state ideology of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and spreading to other countries. In the 20th century, advancements in science and technology, along with shifts in the global balance of power, led the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to adopt a more Western political course, transforming Wahhabism into a relatively moderate religious current. This ideology has become a key determinant of the country's domestic and foreign policy. As a result, Wahhabism now navigates the demands of modernity and experiences modernism, influenced in part by its politicization.<sup>27</sup>

The attitude of Wahhabism toward holy places has evolved; these sites have been restored and are now under state protection, often utilized for mercantile purposes by the authorities. Some Muslim theologians recognize Wahhabism as a pioneer of the Islamic movement, although its extreme fanaticism has limited its wider spread. The birth of al-Wahhab is even described as miraculous. According to accounts, his grandfather, Sulstiman, dreamed of a fire emerging from his navel that illuminated the entire desert. This dream was interpreted as a sign that a significant figure would arise from Suleiman's lineage, destined to create a great kingdom and guide people to the right path.<sup>28</sup>

There is also a contrary opinion aimed at discrediting al-Wahhab and Wahhabism as a whole. Some claim that an English spy in the city of Basra bribed al-Wahhab and established the sect of Wahhabism under his guidance.<sup>29</sup>

We believe that this opinion may have some foundation, particularly when considering the interests of English colonizers in the Muslim East. Proponents of this view argue that Wahhabis do not recognize Sunni scholars, the elders of Sufism, or Shiism, often condemning and questioning them. They consider only themselves to be true Muslims, labeling others as apostates.<sup>30</sup> Such varying attitudes toward Wahhabism stem from the modernist-political nature of the movement itself.

To gain a clearer understanding of modern Wahhabism, we should consider it in light of the official and unofficial policies of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As previously mentioned, Wahhabism is declared the official ideology of the country. However, it would be a mistake to equate Wahhabism in any country with the policies of the Saudi government.

<sup>26</sup> Kepel, Gilles (2002). *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*. Translated by Anthony F. Roberts (1st English ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. ISBN 0674-008774, p.145

<sup>27</sup> Valentine, Simon Ross (2015). *Force and Fanaticism: Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia and Beyond (First ed.)*. London: C. Hurst & Co. ISBN 978-1849044646, p.326

<sup>28</sup> Wiktrowicz, Quintan (2006). "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement". *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. 29 (3): 207–39. doi:10.1080/10576100500497004, S2CID 20873920, p.129

<sup>29</sup> Kepel, Gilles (2006). *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*. Translated by Anthony F. Roberts (New ed.). I.B. Tauris. ISBN 978-1845112578, p.163

<sup>30</sup> Stewart, Devin J.; Zaman, Muhammad Qasim (eds.). *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 231–32. ISBN 978-069113484-0. Retrieved 15 June 2020, p.56

It is noteworthy to point out that the official stance of the Saudi government is not characterized by extreme fanaticism or terrorism. Both the government and the highest clerics of Saudi Arabia condemn any form of extremism and terrorism, whether directed at Muslims or followers of other religions, and advocate for a tolerant approach.

Regarding the early stage of Wahhabism, the aggressiveness of the Wahhabis can be understood within the context of the era in which it emerged and the challenges it faced. Modern Wahhabism, in fact, represents one of the more moderate trends in Islam.

The religious opposition within Saudi Arabia engages in an irreconcilable struggle against any innovations and calls for the revival of al-Wahhab's doctrine in its original form. This faction of Wahhabis pursues its agenda both domestically and abroad. Unable to operate freely within the country, they finance various Muslim organizations outside Saudi Arabia in an effort to promote "true Wahhabism" in other nations.<sup>31</sup> As practice shows, their goal is not to revive the "true religion" but to implement desired policies cloaked in religious rhetoric in regions of interest to them, for which they expend significant amounts of money. They often resort to Muslim extremism and terrorism to achieve these ends. In this context, the unofficial policies of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia—also framed with Wahhabism slogans—are noteworthy, as they pursue similar objectives.

Thus, when discussing Wahhabism in general, it is essential to distinguish between the ideology of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, including its official and unofficial policies, and the opposition we have described, which primarily operates outside the country.<sup>32</sup> This is why Wahhabism has spread to other regions, such as the North Caucasus—particularly in Chechnya, Dagestan, and others—where it often takes on the characteristics of a new sect. Therefore, we find it appropriate to discuss this issue further.

Wahhabism also shares the principles of Islamism, the most current current in the Muslim world at the modern stage. Islam In modern Islam, there is an ideological movement, which can be considered a synonym of fundamentalism and others. Islamism is year The main ideology of the Islamic movement.<sup>33</sup> This is a movement that seems to strive for the development of society to conform to the original norms and dogmas of Islam. That's why this movement has supporters in different currents and sects of Islam.

One of the characteristic features of Islamism is the shift of focus from religious morality to political ideology. This change is accompanied by a growing interest in Islam as a socio-political theory rather than merely as a religious worldview. Today, Islamism is often associated with the emergence and development of Muslim extremism, which is frequently linked to terrorism.

It is vital to point out the processes that have recently unfolded in post-Soviet countries, where tensions have arisen in the relationship between the state and religion amid socio-political and economic crises. The Caucasus region, in particular, stands out, experiencing significant religious expansion. Alongside established denominations, several new religious movements, groups, and

<sup>31</sup> Algar, Hamid (2002). *Wahhabism: A Critical Essay*. Oneonta, NY: Islamic Publications International. ISBN 188999913X, p.156

<sup>32</sup> http://gplosilama.ru/news.php?id=6404

<sup>33</sup> DeLong-Bas, Natana J. (2007). *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad*. I.B. Tauris. ISBN 978-1845113223, p.97

sects—both foreign and local—have emerged, leading to complex interdependencies among them. This dynamic has threatened the longstanding tradition of peaceful coexistence and tolerance.

The situation has deteriorated to the point where religious sects are interfering in state governance, violating the boundaries of religious freedom, and infringing on the rights of followers of other faiths. Compounding these issues is the politicization of religion, with politicians manipulating religious sentiments for their own ends. Additionally, many local populations lack familiarity with the attitudes toward religion and religious sects that characterize the countries from which these ideologies originate.

In this context, Wahhabism—a prominent and influential current of Islam officially recognized as the state religion and ideology in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia—merits particular attention. Interest in Wahhabism is growing as various political forces attempt to use its banner to pursue their political and economic interests in different countries and regions.<sup>34</sup> Clarification of the issues mentioned is particularly interesting, especially considering that among the religious currents spread in the Caucasus region, the movement labeled "Wahhabism" draws special attention for reasons that remain unclear and inexplicable.

A deeper examination reveals that this so-called Wahhabism in the Caucasus is not the same as the Wahhabism that emerged and was declared the state religion in Saudi Arabia. Instead, the form of Wahhabism spreading in the Caucasus resembles more a new sect, distinct in its essence and worldview. It is important to note that this movement, often referred to as Wahhabism, could not remain solely a manifestation of fundamentalism. In a remarkably short period, it transcended the boundaries of fundamentalism—if it could even be classified as such—and evolved into a new trend characterized by extremist tendencies.

Those who identify with this movement exhibit intransigence toward other sects and religions, along with their own interpretations of sacred texts. Their approach is marked by an isolationist policy typical of sectarian groups and is supported by a strict internal hierarchy.<sup>35</sup>

If we closely examine Wahhabism, it clearly exhibits all the characteristics typical of religious sects in general.<sup>36</sup> Thus, what we refer to as "Wahhabism" in this context can be seen as a new sect. This is evidenced by the religious literature circulating in the Caucasus region, which expresses ideas that have little in common with the contemporary movement of Wahhabism in modern Islam.

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<sup>34</sup> M. Zarabozo, Jamaal al-Din (2005). *The Life, Teachings and Influence of Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhaab*. Riyadh: The Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Dawah and Guidance The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. ISBN 9960295001, p.138

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.islam.ru/lib/varnava/44>.

<sup>36</sup> <http://gposilama.ru/news.php?id=4427>

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