

Saudi Salafism

in Western Writings : A Corrective View



Mohammed Al - Bishr



مركز الفكر العالمي عن السعودية
Center for Global Thought on Saudi Arabia



مركز الفكر العالمي عن السعودية
Center for Global Thought on Saudi Arabia

First Edition, 2014

cgtsa@hotmail.com

www.cgtsa.com

Fax: +966 11 2295030

In the Name of Allah
Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Contents

Introduction 6

Chapter One

Features of the Distorted Picture of Saudi Salafism In Western Writings

The Incorrect Association between Salafism and Wahhabism 12

Wahhabism: The Official Religion in Saudi Arabia..... 18

Wahhabism : The Poisoning Doctrine 22

Wahhabism: The Doctrine of Radicalism and Terrorism 25

Wahhabism of (The Petrodollar) 48

Chapter Two

Reasons Behind the Defamed Image of the Saudi Salafism In Western Writings

First: Lack of Information in Western Writings 54

Second: Ignorance About The Opposing Reality 59

Third: Absolute Generalization 60

Fourth: Deliberate Lying 61

Fifth: Westernized Muslims 65

Sixth: Westernized Saudis 67

Seventh: Mutilation of the Image of Islam and Salafism 69

Eighth: Targeting Saudi 79

Chapter Three
Rebutting the Malicious Claims'

Mutilation of the Image of Islam and Salafism	88
The Wahhabi Salafism Is the Official Religion in Saudi Arabia	92
Wahhabism is The Doctrine of Radicalism and Terrorism	96
Wahhabism of (The Petrodollar)	107
Conclusion	114

Introduction

The West has set in motion two dangerous strategies towards the Muslim world after the events of the famous September 11th under the banner of (War Against Terrorism). Regardless of the events, the reasons and the master minds behind September 11th, what concerns us are the results. The two strategies utilized two methods in their application:

First: The military war that targeted Iraq and aimed at bringing down its regime and reshuffling it according to predetermined interests. This military strategy targeted Iraq for military, geographical, and political grounds due to its close vicinity to Iran the enemy and Israel the friend and ally. The Western interest and the military strategy in Iraq ,whether for long or short term, is not the topic at hand here.

Second: The soft war (political, cultural, and media), that targeted the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its religion, its statehood, its people, and its establishments. The West understands the vital status of the Kingdom in the Muslim world, and that an armed combat against it is

very difficult, considering the entire Muslim world that would rally to the aid of its most holy lands in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and that any miscalculated military adventure is doomed to fail if it does not take this fact into consideration. Thus, the West had no choice but to seize the opportunity and unleash its campaign of soft war against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia alongside its military campaign in Iraq, in an attempt to change whatever possible in the religious and the cultural identity of Saudi Arabia, using its media, political and cultural pulpits to achieve the desired change.

Also, because it is (a soft war), and vicious at the same time, it focused on the most important source of spiritual power in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Islam, upon which the nation and the unity of its people have been founded. A variety of Western writings spoke about Islam and its influence inside and outside Saudi Arabia, targeting the pillars of its theory and its application in Saudi society. The subject of Salafism and Wahhabism was the focus of Westerners and their interest, in an attempt to distort the purity of both in the elite and the public opinion in the West, the Muslim world, and within Saudis themselves. Numerous Western writings have attempted to link these two ideologies to extremism and radicalism, to achieve the goals of the soft war that aimed at weakening the spiritual power and melting

Saudi Salafism

the religious and cultural identity of Muslims, and in pursuit of establishing the image of the (new Middle East) which these writings have promised to the Western governments, especially the United States of America.

This publication is an impassive attempt to speak about the ideology of Wahhabism, its description, and its effect inside and outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to discuss the claims of its relation to violence, radicalism and the terrorism that many Western writings blow its whistles about. Moreover, to attempt to remove the mystery that is attached to the writings that addressed the ideology of Salafism and Wahhabism, these very writings that omitted some information and surrounded other with mystery, in order to link these ideologies to an evil agenda and to humiliate the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which is viewed by such writings as the supporter and the harbinger of Salafism and Wahhabism and the source of their pervasion.

So, before reading the chapters of this book, it is necessary, for the sake of honesty and objectivity, to point out the truth that many Western writers have done their due diligence to seek the truth about Wahhabism and, its definition, and its influence inside and outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, they have made some unintentional errors but were committed to the proper scientific research and the integrity of narration from

different sources, thus their writings were fair and just, presenting the truth to the sound minds despite a few errors in some parts.

Chapter One

Features of the Distorted Picture of Saudi Salafism In Western Writings

Introduction

The Incorrect Association Between Salafism and Wahhabism

Wahhabism : The Official Religion in Saudi Arabia

Wahhabism: The Toxic Faith

Wahhabism : Doctrine of Radicalism and Terrorism

Wahhabism of (The Petrodollar)

Introduction

A great deal of Western writings have engaged Salafism as a phenomenon, and devoted large columns in newspapers, magazines, and studies for the subject, there were even conferences that were held solely to explore and discuss the topic of Salafism, and mandate papers addressing Salafism from a Western point of view were presented in these conferences.

Surely it is difficult to sum up and display all these writings and studies due to their quantity and the great similarity of their content. Yet pointing some of the content of these writings about Salafism and its so called link to Wahhabism as examples may suffice and shed some light on the topic.

The Incorrect Association Between Salafism and Wahhabism:

The first and most widespread misconception in Western writings is the wrongful link between Salafism and Wahhabism, which is clear and hard to miss, despite that some writers having admitted that there is a puzzling ambiguity in interpreting the phenomenon of Salafism, its

indications, its understanding, and the different sects and groups that are folded under its title.

The major example of this wrongful association between Salafism and Wahhabism is the attempt of some Western writers to separate between the Sunni Salafism and Wahhabism considering them to be contradicting each other, and that Wahhabism is a different religion from the widespread Sunni Salafism in the Muslim World.

One writer says: (The major difference between Sunni and Wahhabi is the beliefs and rituals. Sunnis are in majority and almost 90% of Muslims around the world belong to Sunni sect that dominates the Islamic world, whereas the members of Wahhabi movement are located in Saudi Arabia).⁽¹⁾

This view steers the Western reader to think that Wahhabism is a different religion from the majority Sunni Salafism, and it is a movement that only exists in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. And This is a clear misconception in two aspects:

First: This view implies that there is a religion in Saudi Arabia different from that of Muslims.

Second: Looking at Wahhabism describing it as (a movement) brought on by one person, rather than an (invitation for restoration) aimed at reviving and renewing the faith and religion in the spirit of the Muslims who witnessed its birth in the Arabian Peninsula. Thus, this view constitutes

(1)globalsecurity.org, Wahhabi”.In:<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/gulf/wahhabi.htm>. Accessed on: 22011/8/.

Saudi Salafism

abvious ignorance about the reality of Wahhabism.

Another aspect of mixing up between Salafism and Wahhabism by Westerners is that some believe that Wahhabism reveres the Prophetic Sunna at the expense of the Holy Quran, which happens to be the first and most trusted source of Islamic legislation. The writer Quintan Wiktorowicz wrote in his research (Anatomy of Salafi Movement) about what he calls the ambiguity of interpreting religion by Wahhabis, he says: (In gauging the intention of Qur'anic principles, scholars turn to the example of the Prophet Muhammad, who demonstrated how abstract values and rules should be applied to concrete, real world problems. Because of the ambiguity involved in translating Qur'anic verses into practice, particularly in new contexts in the contemporary world, the hadith have become critical for generating guidance, perhaps even more important to Salafis than the Qur'an itself. It is for this reason that some Salafis refer to themselves as Ahl al-Hadith (the People of Hadith)).⁽¹⁾

Also we do not know from where did the writer came up with the idea that the Prophetic Sunna had become more important to the Salafies than the Quran its self, although he is a professor of international studies at Rods college in the United States of America, he has great interest in political Islam and has several publications on the topic.⁽²⁾

(1)Ibid., page.214

(2) The management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood and the state power in Jordan), (Global Jihad: Understanding September 11), and (The Name of the Enemy: Jihadi Salafis).

Countering this claim is what Michael Savage put in The Independent newspaper its self in the issue in which he said under the title: (Wahhabism: a history) that Wahhabism (was drawn mainly from direct readings of the Koran, and the life of Mohammad. It has also been influenced by the writing of an earlier Sunni scholar, Taqi ad-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah, who shared a belief that Islamic practice needed to return to a “purer” interpretation of the religion’s fundamental texts).⁽¹⁾

This very confusion and mishmash of ideologies is what produced wrongful information about Salafism and Wahhabism, information exchanged among Western writers without verification of its authenticity or contacting reliable sources to verify the truth of what they claim to be true.

In addition, in the path of this wrongful association between Salafism and Wahhabism, wrote Alexander Vasilyev, a journalist at the Chic Republic, an article titled (Salafism: Theory and Practice), in it: (The doctrine (akida) of the Wahhabi school of thought (its second name – Salafism – is derived from the concept of as-Salaf-as-Salih, and refers to a group of righteous associates of the Prophet Muhammad whom the Wahhabis claim to follow. This doctrine was established in the Muslim world by Sheikh Mohammad ibn Abdul Wahhab on the basis of the writings of the fourteenth century theologian ibn Taymiya).⁽²⁾

Dr. Hillel Fradkin, head of the Islamic and Democratic

(1) Michael Savage. Wahhabism: A History. The Independent, 1 November, 2007

(2) <http://www.watchdog>

Saudi Salafism

Muslim Future at Hudson Institute, whose headquarters is in the American capital Washington, wrote a paper that was published by the institute's website on the internet on the 26th of March 2008, titled: (The History and Unwritten Future of Salafism).⁽¹⁾ He mentioned in it that the purpose of his paper is to address (the most important subject –the subject of the organization, or a group of organizations, known as Muslim Brotherhood).⁽²⁾

And it is a fake title aimed at talking about Wahhabism and not the Muslim Brotherhood group, and there was no scientific reason behind choosing such a title that does not fit the content of the research paper. What confirms this is that the writer proceeded in the second page to talk about Wahhabism, he wrote down the following:

(Since 9/11, for example, al-Qaeda has become a household word for more-or-less obvious reasons. It is the name of the jihadist and terrorist organizations that, not only attacked us on that day, but also has established itself as the symbolic and sometimes organizational head of transglobal Islamic terrorism. In like fashion most Americans have become familiar with the term Wahhabi, the name given to a specific and austere form of Islam that is institutionally established in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In the first instance this knowledge was also a result of 9/11 and, in particular, of the fact that the vast majority of

(1) www.hudson.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=puplication_details&id=5509

(2) Ibid.

the 9/11 terrorists were Saudis—as is Osama bin Laden, the head of al-Qaeda. But it is also the result of the vast efforts the Saudis have made to promote their form of Islam through their support of a variety of activities in the wider world, including the West. These include the production and distribution of publications informed by the Wahhabi point of view, the establishment of mosques and support of imams, and the establishment of a variety of Muslim organizations. These efforts, which began in the 1960s, were operative for many years and produced massive results, though these results were not exactly in plain view. The events of 9/11 focused a light on these activities sufficient to bring them to public attention.)⁽¹⁾

Trevor Stanley started his article titled (Understanding the Origin of Wahhabism and Salafism), with the following phrase:

(The phenomenon of Islamic terrorism cannot be adequately explained as the export of Saudi Wahhabism, as many commentators claim. In fact, the ideological heritage of groups such as al-Qaeda is Salafism, a movement that began in Egypt and was imported into Saudi society during the reign of King Faisal).⁽²⁾

This Paragraph alone is enough to understand the direction of its writer, and that he held his pen surrounded by many preconceived ideas, and ready made models without utilizing

(1) Ibid.

(2) <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1716986/posts>

Saudi Salafism

his mind, or reviewing it to verify the truth, and to establish the scientific integrity which obligates him to investigate and not rely on audio sources or unreliable writings.

Wahhabism... The Official Religion in Saudi:

Western Writers do not tire from repeating in their writings the wrong understanding that in Saudi, Saudis have their own religion separate from other Muslims.

In Trevor Stanley's previous article we read the following text:

(The official 'Wahhabi' religion of Saudi Arabia has essentially merged with certain segments of Salafism. There is now intense competition between groups and individual scholars over the 'true' Salafism, with the scholars who support the Saudi regime attacking groups such as al-Qaeda as 'Qutbists' (following Sayyid Qutb) or takfiris (excommunicators)).⁽¹⁾

Thus to the writer, Wahhabism is an official religion for Saudi according to what he named (The official Wahhabi Religion of Saudi Arabia). And Although the writer mentioned in some folds of his article some paragraphs that carried some truth and true historical events about the reform campaign of Sheikh Mohammad Abd Alwahab in the Arabian peninsula, yet he stated that Salafism was born in Egypt in the period between the middle and the end of the nineteenth century as an intellectual movement in Al Azhar

(1) Ibid.

University under the leadership of Mohammad Abduh (1849-1905), and Jamal aldeen Alafgani (1839-1897), and Rasheed Redda (1865-1935), and that Saudi imported Salafism from some Egyptian thinkers; this is a clear mix up and a distorted misunderstanding to history and the facts, because Sheikh Mohammad ibn Abdul Wahab campaign was before all these dates.

To confirm what he has claimed above, he wrote the following paragraph:

(Although Saudi Arabia is commonly characterized as aggressively exporting Wahhabism, it has in fact imported pan-Islamic Salafism. Saudi Arabia founded and funded transnational organizations and headquartered them in the kingdom, but many of the guiding figures in these bodies were foreign Salafis. The most well-known of these organizations was the World Muslim League, founded in Mecca in 1962, which distributed books and cassettes by al-Banna, Qutb and other foreign Salafi luminaries).⁽¹⁾

Kharan M says in his article about the Saudis protecting the (Wahhabi Religion) described as an especial religion they are trying to spread and force Muslims to follow:

(The Saudis in order to protect their Islam – the Wahhabi Islam that is very narrow, intolerant and literalist interpretation of Islamic sources - from the influence of Islamic revivalism taking place in other parts of the Muslim World adopted a policy of exporting Wahhabism to

(1) Ibid.

Saudi Salafism

protect Wahhabism at home. They have also tried to control the interpretation of Islam even in America to prevent Saudi students living here from discovering that there are other interpretations of Islam, some of which are even tolerant and advocate freedom of thought and claim that Islam and democracy are compatible. This Saudi attempt to protect Wahhabism and the continuity of their regime by reconstructing the rest of the Islamic world in their own image has contributed to the growth of intolerance and bigotry among Muslims.)⁽¹⁾

And if we put aside the writers accusations that Saudi Arabia is the founder and financer of the Islamic foundations and groups abroad, which is an accusation many Western writers share with him and will be addressed later, a person would be amazed at the writer's description to the coalition of the Muslim World as a foreign organization financed by and headquartered in Saudi Arabia, and that its mission is to circulate books and cassette tapes of Hassan Albanna and Sayed Qutb.

It is worth pointing out here that the writer of this article, Trevor Stanley⁽²⁾, is not an immature journalist or a novice writer in order to find him excuses for errors and shaky information, rather he is, according to his biography, a writer specialized in radical ideologies and the nature of oppressive regimes, and with interest in middle and eastern Europe and

(1) Khan, M., "The Empire and the Kingdom: Saudi-US Relations in Crisis Again", *Glocaleye*, 08.01.2003

(2) <http://www.pwhce.org/trevor.html>

the Middle East. And he writes for a regular publications issued by the foundation (Jamestown) dedicated to monitoring terrorism, whose headquarters is in the American capital. The website of this foundation on the internet indicates that its goal is summarized in providing information to the decision makers and others in the community, who are interested in politics,

also providing information about current events and directions in the societies of strategic interest to the United States; societies that often place obstacles and limit the obtaining of such information.

It is quite strange that some Western writers believe that Saudis view those who do not follow the Wahhabi teachings as non-Muslims, and that Wahhabism came up with a new religion other than that which is known to Muslims everywhere on earth. Valley, the writer in the British newspaper *The Independent* says in an article titled (Wahhabism: A deadly scripture):

(Many Saudi religious leaders insist on calling themselves just Muslims, extending the implication that Muslims who do not share their particular interpretation of Islam are not proper Muslims at all)⁽¹⁾

This is a detested false claim which Saudis do not accept upon themselves, and would only be uttered by a person ignorant about Islam, not only in Saudi Arabia but in the whole Muslim world.

(1) Valley, P. "Wahhabism: A deadly scripture. *The Independent*, 1 November 2007

Wahhabism...The Toxic Faith

Amongst the most versatile and inclusive writings, and preposterous at the same time, about Salafism and Wahhabism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the private file published by the American Times magazine titled : (The Saudis : Whose Side are they on in the War on Terror?)(¹), on the second anniversary of September 11.

The report took up 26 pages of the magazine, and correspondents from the United States, Europe, and the Middle East, took part in it. The report included pictures, statistics, illustrated maps, and side line headings that were both vulgar and agitating. Under the title: (Uprooting a Culture of prejudice), the report compellingly urging the United States to fight the Wahhabi Terrorism, said:

(Minds must be changed. Many Saudis are fed up with Wahhabism being described with terrorism. It is the strict version of Islam applied in Saudi. Few Saudis are still fed up and admit that their Wahhabism produces hate to non-Muslims (or Kufar as called in Islamic term), which in turn lead to violence ... the Saudi writer Turkey Al Hammad says in the Middle East newspaper that the Head Clergies(²) in Saudi Arabia reject terrorism, but the problem is in the theoretical roots of Wahhabism. Wahhabism does not encourage violence directly, but if you analyze the doctrine you would reach this conclusion. Therefore Turki Alhamad

(1) Time. The Saudi : whose side are they on in the war on terror? September 15, 2003

(2) He means members of the Committee of Senior Scholars

says Saudis must reject Wahhabism).⁽¹⁾

We notice in this report an assault on the truth, Saudis are resentful of describing Wahhabism as the radical faith yes, but do not admit that their Wahhabism produces hate to the other, on the contrary, it is from the Islamic legislation which calls for justice and tolerance with Non-Muslim. And whoever wants to learn more and verify this, must research this topic to find the truth from its sources and not from reports of Western journalists.

furthermore, how and when does Turki Alhamad become a speaker on behalf of the Saudis and for the magazine to validate his opinion about the Scholars of the religion? According to many Saudis he is a learned person with liberal Western gravitations, and opinions that are conflicting with culture of the Saudis themselves. Therefore, he can not express the opinion of the Saudi minority, not to mention the majority. In this inclusive report, David Van Biema the American journalist writes in collaboration with Bruce Crumley, a correspondent for the Time magazine in Paris, an antagonistic topic about Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia, under a flagrant title: (Wahhabism: Toxic Faith)⁽²⁾

Both journalists say in the introduction of their topic:

(Religious movements often originate in a dream. and visions. It was said in Arabia in the 1800s that a man in Najd province dreamed that his body produced flames that spread

(1)Times magazine, Ibid., page 3

(2)Wahhabism : Toxic Faith

Saudi Salafism

far and wide, covering the desert camps and towns alike. He told his vision to a sheik, who said the man's son, would find a new faith that the desert Arabs would adopt. And so it transpired--although the founder was ultimately the man's grandson: Mohammed ibn Abdul Wahhab) whose faith is adopted by the ksayabia.

This script in the report is the very false information carried by many Westerners about Salafism and Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia, and believes it to be true. For they assert that in Saudi Arabia there is a Wahhabi version of constrictive Islam brought on by Sheikh Mohammad ibn Abdul Wahhab, as if it is a copy of Islam exclusive to him and the Saudis. Westerners have based many of their views about religion and religiousness in Saudi Arabia, on that distorted and incorrect information, and they assumed that what Saudis have is the radical and extreme version of Islam brought on by the (Wahhabi Faith), manufacturing to them an Islam different from that which other Muslims have.

And to that effect the two journalists say:

(The Wahhabi version of Islam that was conceived by Mohammad ibn Abdul Wahhab in the 1740s is now the state religion of Saudi Arabia. These days, many look at Wahhabism with a melancholy view, because it is a toxic faith synonymous with terrorism would interpret that premonitory dream in a darker light. Is Wahhabism somehow synonymous with terrorism, dictating war on the West as part of its doctrinal underpinnings?).

Also both journalists back up their claim with what was stated by Stephen Schwartz⁽¹⁾ in his book: (Islam in Saudi Arabia) where he says:

(If Wahhabism is the official religion then it will produce a terrorist country)!!

Such statements published by writers and Western media in their newspapers and magazines based on their ignorance of the facts about others, or are intended to offend them, have its influence on the decision makers and the people with influential views, thus, such statements enjoy high legitimacy, and upon which a lot of information and distorted pictures are built.

Furthermore, if the truth is not revealed and if falsehood about Salafism and Wahhabism in such writings and reports is not exposed, then such misinformation will remain as a cumulative stock of lies about the others.

Wahhabism : The Doctrine of Radicalism and Terrorism

Many Western writings confirm what it calls (The Wahhabi Influence on Salafism), and try to link both to

(1) Stephen Schwartz is an American journalist born on 1948, writer of many articles in several publishings. In the beginning of his life he was considered a left wing, being that his writings had focused on Marxism. He became a Muslim in 1997 influenced by Sufism, and claiming to belong to the Hanafi method. He was known for his constant criticism to what is called (Islamic Originism), especially (Sunni Wahhabism). He has many writings on the topic, such as : (Defeat of Wahhabism) , (The Problem with Wahhabism) , and others. He moved in many media establishment through which he was criticizing Saudi and Wahhabism. He was fired from (the Voice of America) radio for his exaggerated and unprofessional criticism to Saudi. For more about his life refer to Wikipedia.

Saudi Salafism

violence, especially the writings that followed the period of official and unofficial American news about the presence of 15 Saudis amongst the 19 that executed the September 11 attacks, and that they have adopted a violent ideology that belongs to the Al-Qaida organization which is rooted in Wahhabism and has a deep influence on Salafism.

It is clear that the writings that target and attack Wahhabism and Salafism and fires its criticizing arrows on Islam, even if it is a superficial criticism unfounded on science and knowledge, it still finds its way to being published in the West, even celebrated and passed around on the internet. An example of this is the article written by Robert Maegh titled: (Wahhabism and Salafi-Islam), in the opening of the article came the following:

(Writing about Wahhabism and Salafi-Islam, could fill many books. I will however in this article, try to make clear why it is of tremendous importance in our time. Both movements are considered as the origin of Islamic terrorism. A lot of recent Islamic terrorists such as Osama Bin Laden, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, and Abu Musab Al Zarqawi, have been inspired and influenced by Wahhabism.).⁽¹⁾

It is worth pointing out that Robert Maegh is a Belgium engineer born in Germany, and would seem that the many years he spent in Africa and the Middle East is the reason that qualified him to write and publish this article, an article that lacks the minimum degree of scientific integrity, in

(1) <http://www.talewins.com/social/wahhabism.htm>

addition to the contradiction carried in its folds. For the writer has resorted to generalization and bringing in absolute definitions and name calling as if what he went with is the truth that bares no doubt, and a sufficient indication of that is his saying: (Wahhabism and Salafism are the origin of Islamic Terrorism), as such and in few words he concludes this dangerous and outrageous opinion. And Also his calling, the reviver of the reform in Arabian Peninsula, Sheikh Mohammad Bin Abd Alwahab the “father of Islamic terrorism” is another proof of contradiction with the writer after describing him as the reformer, so how can a person be described as a reformer and a terrorist at the same time? And it is worth mentioning here that Sheikh Mohammad Abd Alwahab is considered by many “a great reformer of Islam”

With daredevilry and audacity the writer goes to describe Wahhabism and Salafism as both of them hold the most aggressive teachings and represent all Muslims. Many terrorist groups such as Hamas, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Al Quaida, Abu Sayyaf..., are followers of Wahhabism (or Salafism).

In the issue published on November 7, 2007, and under the title (Wahhabism: A deadly scripture), the British newspaper (The Independent) started its article with this phrase: (King Abdullah’s Saudi regime spends billions of pounds each year promoting Wahhabism, one of fundamentalist Islam’s most extreme movements).⁽¹⁾ In this Article of less than 6

(1) The Independent, 1 November 2007 (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/>

Saudi Salafism

pages in size (A4) Salafism and Salafies were mentioned over 30 times. The article also states that some Saudis call themselves Salafies, and that this Salafism strikes its roots amongst many British Muslim immigrants of the second and third generations searching for an identity. It has also described the ones involved in the bombing that took place in the subway train station in the city of London on the 7th of July, 2005 as Salafies, and the article added that Richard Reid, who attempted to blow the “American Airline” flight from Paris to Miami on December 22, 2001 through bombs hidden in his shoes was also a Radical Salafi and Wahhabi.

Under the title (Salafi Islam has many links to bin Ladin group), wrote both Nick Britten and Neil Tweedie in the British newspaper (Daily Telegraph) what confirms the distorted ugly picture of Salafism in the minds of Western writers as a result of the incorrect understanding of its reality, and linking it to extremism, terrorism and Al-Qaida. Both writers say:

(Salafi Islam is an orthodox interpretation stressing adherence to its founding principles and rejection of modern impurities. Several suspects terrorist linked to Osama bin Laden and al-Qa’eda are among its adherents.).⁽¹⁾

The two writers go on to say:

(Two groups in Britain, al-Muhajiroun and the Supporters of Shariah, based at the Finsbury Park mosque in north

uk/home-news/wahhabism-a-deadly-scripture-398516.html)

(1) Daily Telegraph, August 31, 2002. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1405868/Salafi-Islam-has-many-links-to-bin-Laden-group.html>

London, follow Salafi teaching. It has been proven that the link between Salafi thought and terrorism causes an embarrassment to Saudi Arabia, whose royal family spent huge amounts of money to encourage the dissemination of this thought. The Islamic University of Medina, founded in 1961, represents the leading center for the study of the salafi thought.⁽¹⁾

The two writers do not hesitate in describing Mohammad Ata, one of the accused in the September 11 bombing, as a Salafi and that he was carrying a booklet about Salafism with his personal effects, and it is believed that Richard Reid, who attempted to blow a plane with explosives hidden in his shoes had studied the Salafi thinking... since September 11 schools that teach Salafism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have been criticized as an environment that breeds terrorism.

The British newspaper The Guardian does not differ from other Western newspapers in handling Salafism and Salafis, it published an article for both John Hooper and Brian Whitaker with the title: (Extremist view of Islam unites terror suspects).

The opening of the article says:

(Investigators hunting members of Osama bin Laden's network have discovered that all the suspected terrorists arrested in Europe over the past 10 months follow an extreme Salafi interpretation of Islam).⁽²⁾

(1) Ibid.

(2) The Guardian, October 26, 2001

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/oct/26/afghanistan.terrorism2>

Saudi Salafism

And along the same view, the article goes to accuse the Islamic University of Al Madina Al Munawara of being the main center of (Salafism school of thought and its exportation), and it claims that the Islamic University of Al Madina has been known as a place of recruiting fighters for a long time, and that the official teaching in it is of the conservative radical kind which is sanctioned by the Saudi rulers.⁽¹⁾

In their definition of Salafism both article writers say:

(Salafiyya is not a sect but a way of looking at Islam. It is found mainly in areas of the Muslim world that follow the Hanbali school of Islamic law (the most rigid of the four main legal traditions) - essentially the Arabian Peninsula).⁽²⁾

Yet, if either writers were asked what is Imam Ahmad school of thought? Which both described as rigid, they would be confused and speechless, and they would be turning their heads left and right trying to cite what they often hear via satellite broadcasting or what they read in newspapers.

A just and fair reader would be puzzled and at a loss of words when reading the distributed personal opinions of people who claim to be of sound method of thinking, objective views, verifiers of truth, and who claim to refrain from jumping to conclusions and judgments unsupported by evidence.

Along this line Paul Schemm, wrote a report from Cairo for the Associated Press agency, and was carried by USA

(1) Ibid.

(2) Ibid.

Today magazine with the title (Ultra conservative Islam-Salafis- on rise in Arab nations).⁽¹⁾

Despite the report's attempt to avoid being a pure criticism to Salafism, it was not without segments of prejudice to Salafism, singing the same tunes of what was mentioned before about preconceived ideas and pre-made molds from which Western writers siphon the information they pack their articles and reports with.

The report says:

(In the broad spectrum of Islamic thought, Salafism is on the extreme conservative end. Saudi Arabia's puritanical Wahhabi interpretation is considered its forerunner, and Saudi preachers on satellite TV and the Internet have been key to the Salafism's spread).⁽²⁾

The report adds that the critics of Salafism are worried that the rising number of Salafis in Egypt and some other Arabic countries such as Jordan and Lebanon will compete the more liberal and tolerant Islam which was practiced in these countries for a long period of time. The report added that the critics of the rising number of Salafis have warned that the Salafi ideology does not differ much from the violent groups such as Al Qaida.

It goes on to saying that the salafis could very easily be pulled into violent acts, it adds: (The Algerian Salafi Group for Call and Combat has allied itself with al-Qaeda and is

(1) USA Today, August 21, 2008. http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2008-21--10islam-salafis_N.htm

(2) Ibid.

Saudi Salafism

blamed for bombings and other attacks. Small pockets of Salafis in northern Lebanon and Gaza have also taken up weapons and formed jihadi-style groups).⁽¹⁾

The mutilated and distorted ideas about Salafis and Islamic Salafism were not only the practices of Western writers, but some Muslims who were influenced by such writings, absorbed Western culture, and wrote with its language, have imitated the Western writers in tagging Salafism with terrorism, radicalism, and violence.

Tawfeek Hamid, a doctor living in the West, wrote an article in *The Wall Street Journal* titled: (The Trouble with Islam) enticing the Western governments to face what he called “Radical Islam”. The writer says:

(Without confronting the ideological roots of radical Islam it will be impossible to combat it. While there are many ideological “rootlets” of Islamism, the main tap root has a name -- Salafism, or Salafi Islam, a violent, ultra-conservative version of the religion).⁽²⁾

The writer goes even further, enticing and stirring the Muslim agencies and Scholars in the Muslim world to indict Salafism, and he sees that without indicting and casting them away, the hoped dialogue between Muslims and other religions would be pointless. He says:

(Well-meaning interfaith dialogues with Muslims have largely been fruitless. Participants must demand -- but

(1) Ibid.

(2) *The Wall Street Journal*, April 3, 2007.

<http://www.opinionjournal.com/editorial/feature.html?id=110009890>

so far haven't -- that Muslim organizations and scholars specifically and unambiguously denounce violent Salafi components in their mosques and in the media. Muslims who do not vocally oppose brutal Shariah decrees should not be considered "moderates."⁽¹⁾

Tawfik Hamid ends his Article with an antagonistically enticing phrase that matches the ideas he called for in his article, and the many outcries that kept echoing in the West about facing Islamic Salafism, and encouraging what they call "Moderate Islam":

(Tolerance does not mean toleration of atrocities under the umbrella of relativism. It is time for all of us in the free world to face the reality of Salafi Islam or the reality of radical Islam will continue to face us).

As for doctor Zuhdi Jasser, president of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy (AIFD), a doctor and a former officer in the American Navy. He wrote an article with the title (Defeating Salfism and Wahhabism is the Right Way).⁽²⁾

What is said in the article does not only represent the writer's personal point of view, but it's an article with its own obvious dimensions and agenda, it addresses the call for banning the Salafi activity in Tajikistan. The writer points that the supreme court in Tajikistan have banned Salafist mosques on the 9th of January 2009, despite the fact that the court said in its statement, according to its official speaker

(1) Ibid.

(2)<http://www.muzuhdjasser.com/3332/defeating-salafism-and-wahhabism-the-right-way>

Saudi Salafism

whom the writer cited in the same segment he mentioned, (the court ruled the banning of Salafist groups.) and there is a difference between banning the mosques and banning the group itself.

The writer could not conceal the purpose of his writing, therefore he said:

(At first glance, Tajikistan seems to have all the makings of a “moderate” Muslim nation. The vast majority of Muslims in this former Soviet bloc nation are of the Sunni Muslim Hanafi School, who seem to openly reject Salafism and Wahhabism. Their rejection of the extremist, militant, and exclusivist ideologies of Salafism and Wahhabism is refreshing).⁽¹⁾

The writer celebrates the decision of the Tajikian court banning the activity of the Salafist groups, by adding more citations to reinforce his opinion about the necessity of stopping the activity of this group, but to decimate it from existence completely. Thus in a branching title (The Growing threat of Salafism) Zuhdi Jasser wrote:

(The Interior Minister of the Soghd Province Abdurahim Kakhharov said on June 30, 2008 that Salafis must be controlled “because they are associates of Wahhabis”).⁽²⁾

Zuhdi Jasser ends his article with recommendations to be executed so that Salafism is surgically removed, like his saying:

(1)Ibid.

(2) Ibid

(We need to find a way to defeat Salafism and Wahhabism openly and courageously in the public sphere and create public movements founded in universal freedom against the Salafists from within the Muslim community).

With instigating and hateful insightful phrases the writers see that banning the group's activity is not enough to restrain it, he urges to be rid of it once and for all:

(Identifying and outlawing Salafism or Wahhabism is not as straightforward as it may seem. Salafist movements have survived some of the most oppressive and despotic regimes of the 20th century. Do we actually believe that outlawing these groups in free societies will prevent their existence?).⁽¹⁾

In a research titled: (Middle East Salafism's Influence and the Radicalization of Muslim Communities in Europe)⁽²⁾, Juan Jose' Escobar Stemann discusses what he called "The Salafi Ideology" and its role in the attacks that targeted Europe such as the Madrid attacks on March 2004, and the attacks that took place in the British capital London on June 2005, and the attack's role in creating a radical operation amongst certain sectors between Muslims in Europe.

The writer goes further on a side topic Titled (Salafism as a method) that the Jihadist ideology today is built on what is known as Salafism, and it is - according to him - a mysterious concept that was used to name various movements during the past decades. He adds that Salafists aim to remove the

(1) Ibid

(2) <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2006/issue3/jv10no3a1.html>

Saudi Salafism

unsound innovations that latched onto Islamic practices across the centuries. He points that the Salafist movement has benefited from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's direction towards spreading the Wahhabi Islam.

In his talk about the Salafist groups in Europe, the writer sees that supporting and justifying terrorism, rejecting to blend with the hosting societies, and forming an Islamic state in Europe, all represent the common ideas of those who adopt Salafism as a value system and a behavioral model.

And here, the clear contradiction and obvious disturbance in what the writer went to, cannot be hidden, for he sees that the Salafist aim to remove the unsound practices in the society, yet at the same time he confirms that the Salafist in the West call for terrorism, and refuse to merge or blend with the hosting societies, and they seek to form an Islamic state in Europe.

The writer ends his paper by saying:

(Salafism is first and foremost a method for the search of the religious truth; a desire to practice Islam exactly as it was revealed by the Prophet. It is a religious method whose influence has spread throughout the Arab world and also in Europe, thanks to the support received from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, which have helped expand this unique vision of Islam which is very close to Wahhabism).

Under the title: (The Growing Problem of Islamist Salafism in Holland: Justifying Polygamy) wrote Emerson Vermaat describing Salafists:

(Salafists are ultra-orthodox Muslims who are ideologically close to the Wahhabist group that has alleged purity or Saudi Arabian version of Islam).⁽¹⁾

He adds:

(Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden is a Salafist Muslim or a “Salafist Jihadist” rather).

It is worth pointing that Emerson is a journalist working in investigations in Holland and specializing in crime and terrorism. And the entire article was to mock, ridicule and criticize the practice of multiple wives by Muslims, thus the writer introduced names of active Muslim characters in Holland claiming that they are Salafist because they call for multiple wives, amongst those characters Suhaib from Syria and his father Ahmad Salam.

We read in the article his description to this case:

(Salafists marry in their own mosques, and they do not object to polygamy – having more than one wife. The Muslim prophet Muhammed himself practiced polygamy, so why should a fanatical Salafist follower of his, decline

to do so? And the more children the better. Suhayb’s father Ahmed Salaam is married to two wives. Patrick Pouw learned that the same Ahmed also conducted the Islamic wedding ceremony for his son Suhayb in his Salafist mosque in the city of Tilburg. (According to the Dutch Intelligence and Security Service AIVD, this very mosque received

(1) <http://www.militantislammonitor.org/article/id/3499>

Saudi Salafism

money from Saudi Arabia).⁽¹⁾

In September 2007, Caitlin B. Doherty wrote in (The National Interest) magazine, a distinguished conservative American magazine published every two months from the Nixon Center, a commentary titled : (Is there any relation between terrorism, Islamism and Salafism in Europe?)(²). The article states that:

(Recent arrests of alleged terrorists in Germany and Denmark have sparked interest in the relationship between practicing salafism and carrying out jihad against the West. Two of the men arrested for plotting attacks in Germany were native German converts to salafism. The third was a Turk).⁽³⁾

The commentary written by Doherty came at the end of a discussion episode hosted by Nixon Center on September 19, 2007, and took part in it Jytte Klausen, she is a Danish professor of comparative politics at Brandeis University and author of *The Islamic Challenge: Politics and Religion in Western Europe* and Jocelyn Cesari is a French visiting associate professor of Islamic studies and director of Harvard University's "Islam in the West" program and is also the author of *When Islam and Democracy Meet*.

The episode discussed the two following questions:

_ what is the Salafist culture in Europe?

(1) Ibid.

(2) <http://nationalInterest.org/commentary/inside-track-are-terrorism-islamism-and-salafism-in-europe-connected-1792>

(3) Ibid.

_ Can this culture spread the doctrine of terrorism?

Klausen explained that salafism is a literal interpretation of the Quran-often described as “fundamentalist Islam.” She added that the Salafist groups and movements include the Wahhabis, the Deobandis and the missionary group Jamaat al Tabligh.⁽¹⁾

And according to “Wikipedia” on the internet, the Deopandi is the person that follows the Islamic Deopandist group founded in the Home of sciences school in the Indian city Deoband, founded in 1866.⁽²⁾

Despite disagreeing with Klausen in a number of observations and ideas yet her presentation and delivery of the subject was balanced and not heavily influenced by the Western tone about Salafism and Salafies in particular and Islam in general. She mentioned - for example- that there is great evidence (that individuals have accepted Islam through different Salafist mosques, then turned in to “Jihaddists”), then she recaptures pointing that the number of Salafist mosques in Europe which were behind this problem were few. She adds, there is a great number of Salafies who work with the British police, or the establishments that fight terrorism.

She goes on saying that there are programs in Britain run by Salafies that work on turning terrorist prisoners to “the peaceful Islam” instead of “violent Jihad” - according to her.⁽³⁾

(1) Ibid.

(2) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deobandi>

(3) Ibid.

Saudi Salafism

In beginning her remarks, Jocelyn Cesari observed that “salafism” is derived from the word salaf, which means “companion of the prophet” and is a positive term for any Muslim. Cesari emphasized, “Not all forms of Islam, even if they are very conservative and puritan lead to jihadism.”

She moved on after to talk about what she called the modern “Wahhabi Salafism”, she said:

(Wahhabis hold the Prophet Muhammad’s life in Medina as the gold standard for practicing Islam, particularly in terms of ethics and morality. Wahhabism rejects all other influences on Islam and attempts to “purify” the religion; it is generally seen as more conservative than Salafism. It rejects culture, history, philosophy, Sufism, and all other Muslims that do not follow its path).

Cesari concluded by saying:

(Islam is one of the most challenging alternatives to Western ideology and the discourse of globalization.).⁽¹⁾ And she warned from linking or connecting between conservative Muslims and Jihadists.

As for Roel Meijer, he confirmed in his introduction of the book he wrote under the title: (Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement) that Salafism did not gain a great deal of interest before September 11.⁽²⁾, adding that “Fundamentalism” gained the attention and interest of the

(1) <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/inside-track-are-terrorism-islamism-and-salafism-in-europe-connected-1972>

(2) Global Salafism Islam’s New Religious Movement. Roel Meijer(edit.), Hurst& Co. (Publishers) Ltd. United Kingdom, 2009.

academic circles, and became the topic of research at these circles after the assassination of the Egyptian president Anwar Al-Sadat in 1981.

This book, as mentioned by its writer, relied on what took place at a conference about Salafism as a Global movement, which was held from the 27th to the 30th of September 2007 in the city of Nijmegen in Holland. The writer goes to that Salafism when it started spreading in Europe in the nineties of the past century it attracted the attention of some academic sectors, but the research around Salafism remained local, or it was of a general format dealing with Salafism through linking it to Radicalism. He adds that despite the attention Salafism had gained after the events of September 11, and the appearance of numerous writings addressing Salafism and Wahhabism, these writings were limited to the field of “Security Studies”, or it revolved around the common point of view that puts Wahhabism as a synonymous to violence.⁽¹⁾

The importance of this book lies in that it gathered views of specialists from different specialties, such as specialists in politics, historians, Islamic affair specialists, social scientists, and researchers in security studies. The writer is commended on gathering the papers of the conference in a book, which allowed an easier and a closer look at the ideas and views of those who took part in the conference.

In the first research of the first chapter of the book, which came under the title (Salafist Doctrine), Bernard Haykel wrote

(1) Ibid, p. 2

Saudi Salafism

about the nature of the ideology of Salafism and its action, and he discussed the meaning of Salafism as a definition, and the spread of Salafism as a movement interested mainly in purifying the Islamic religion from the wrongful practices that latched onto it, and presenting the religious model as it was with pious predecessors.

As for the spreading of Salafism the writer refutes what many have gone to about that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's financing to this movement and distribution of its ideas is what lead to its spreading and entrenchment in the societies. And he says along this (this claim over simplifies the issue, being that Salfism existed before the formation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and many did not receive this Saudi financial aid).⁽¹⁾

It is of considerable importance to observe and view the thoughts and writings of Bernard Haykel through research and analysis. He is an academic and a researcher, and the teacher of Islamic and Middle Eastern studies at the department of The Far East Studies at Princeton University; he obtained his PHD from the distinguished Oxford University on his research that focused on Political Islamic Movements and Legislative Theory (sharia = the body of Islamic law).

In the research that came under the title (Jihadi-Salafis or Revolutionaries? On Religion and Politics in the Study of Militant Islamism), published in the third part of the mentioned book, Thomas Hegghammer pointed that

(1) Ibid, p. 37

terminologies such as “Jihadist”, “Salafi”, “Takfiri”, and “Jihadist Salafi” are being widely used today in academic literature, and started to enter mainstream media. He went on to say, it is believed on a wide scale that these terminologies are considered accurate and authentic tools that enable the analysis of the Islamic movement. But the writer retracts, saying: however at the same time, the academic literature suffers from a paucity of clear definitions of these terms, in addition to the contradictions in using these terminologies to describe a group or a certain ideology)⁽¹⁾.

He adds :(Despite the popularity of the term “Jihadi-Salafi” in the academic literature on radical Islamism in recent years, it is surprisingly difficult to find a politically substantial and specific definition of it.)⁽²⁾.

In the book at hand, writes Reuven Paz under the title (Debates within the Family: Jihadi-Salafi Debates on Strategy, Takfir, Extremism, Suicide Bombings, and the Sense of the Apocalypse):

(Since the appearance of the global Jihadi movement in the mid-nineties, and specifically, since the two main stages of the Salafi Jihadi terrorism: September 11 2001, and May 2003, with the occupation of US force to Iraq, this movement has been recognized as the Salafi Jihadi movement.)⁽³⁾

The writer then divides Jihadi-Salafism into three branches:

(1) Ibid, p. 244- 245

(2) Ibid, p. 253

(3) Ibid, p. 267

Saudi Salafism

The first branch, founded in Egypt by a radical group from the Egyptian Muslim brotherhood group, more specific scholars such as Said Qutb, and Said Imam Sharif, also known as Abdulkader bin Abdul-Aziz or Doctor Fudl. This group also included Egyptians living in Saudi Arabia, and the founders of the Egyptian Radical Jihad group, and the Islamic group during the seventies of the past century.

The second branch, whose roots go back to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia consisting of the new Wahhabies, led by the Mufti and the distinguished character Sheikh Abdu Al Aziz bin Baz and his students who founded, amongst other things, the Awakening movement, under the leadership of Sheikh Sulman Al Oada and Sheikh Sufr Al Hawali. During the ninety, this branch gained legitimacy with two groups of new Wahhabi Scholars belonging to it the senior men of religion such as Sheikh Mohammad Bin Othaimen, Sheikh Abdul Aziz a Algarbooh, and Sheikh Salih Alfuzan, in addition to the youthful men of religion who participated in the Jihad in Afganistan, like Ahmad Alkalidi, Naser Alfahad, Yuseph Alaeeri, Abdul Aziz Almuqrin, Abu Gundal Alzaidi, and many others.

The third branch, grew in Palestine, it consists of the Palestinian trio: Abdullaah Azam, Omar Abu Omar Abu Katada, and before them all, Easam Albarakhawi known as "Abu Mohammad Almaqdisi". He is the Godfather of the melding between the Wahhabi Tawheed and the violence of the Takfeeri Jihad and isolating the Kufaar, and they are

inspiring to the new generation of the Jihadi men of religion who graduated from the Saudi Islamic Universities, amongst them mainly are Jordanians of Palestinian origin such as Abu Omar Sayaf, and Abu Anus Alshami, who had a great role in both Chechnya and Iraq.⁽¹⁾

Mohammad- Ali Adraoui spoke, in his turn, in the fifth part of this book about the topic of Salafism in France. He began his research which was titled: (Salafism in France: Ideology, Practices and Contradictions), by talking about Islam in France and how that Islam was amongst the topics that dominated the French political dialogue even before the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001.

Mohammad- Ali-Adraoui says:

(While in the 1980s intellectuals, opinions markers and politicians used to talk about full citizenship, the struggle for equality (in the labour market, or in the housing sector) and the integration of immigrants and their children, during the last few years, the religious dimension has in many ways replaced the ethnic and social criteria in public debate).(2)

Pointing out the research of this writer is considered important when talking about the distorted picture of Salafism in Western writings. For the writer is French Muslim, lived in France and absorbed its culture, and graduated from the Sorbonne University specializing in Economy and Business, Political Science and International Relations, and worked in

(1) Ibid , p. 269

(2) Ibid, p. 364- 365

Saudi Salafism

the French Republican Presidential, in the Elysee Palace, for two years.

Mohammad-Ali- Adraoui followed the same style followed by his peers of Western writers in shelling up accusations to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, describing it as active in exporting the Extreme Salafism using its long reaching financial arm.

Confirming the above is his saying:

(One of the reasons why Salafism has become one of the main forms of re-Islamisation among young French Muslims, as well as young French converts to Islam, is that it is directly imported from the "country of two holy sanctuaries"(bilad al-haramayn), Saudi Arabia. Salafism strength lies in their

claim to be simply Muslims, who act according to the religious doctrines coming from a region where Muslims practice Islam in its pure form, the gulf and especially Saudi Arabia, the country that has established its official ideology on the teachings of one of the most important historical Salafi clerics, Mohammad ibn Abdul Wahhab (1703-1792), the founder of Wahhabism).⁽¹⁾

Then he says:

(Saudi Arabia is , in their eyes, the most perfect political and religious system in the world and comes closest to emulating the model of the pious ancestors"(al Salaf al Salih)).

(1)Ibid ,p. 368-369

A long his talk about the longing of the young French Muslims to immigrate to Saudi Arabia to gain economical and religious benefits, he brings up a story about a young man who immigrated to one of the Gulf countries and became wealthy. It is a story riddled with weakness and fabrication and does not stand as a witness or a proof to what the writer wants to stir or convince the reader with

The writer says:

(A good example is the life story of a twenty-eight year old Salafi, whom I interviewed, and who had adopted the Salafi method (Manhaj) almost eight year ago. Whereas in the past he used to be hired only for low skilled, badly paid, temporary jobs, such as work in call centers, one day he decided to migrate to Dubai where some of his “Salafi brothers” started to buy and sell high quality goods such as mobile phones or pocket computers. By reselling them in France, where they were more expensive, to his neighbors and friends, he started to earn a considerable income, which he invested in restaurant in the United Arab Emirates. Today, he is a wealthy man and explains his current prosperous situation as a gift from Allah who has rewarded him materially for his decision to join Salafism and have faith in God and walk the straight path on the true Islam).⁽¹⁾

One does not require much difficulty to notice the weak story and its unsuitability to the subject the writer is discussing. And the story, even if it was true, it does

(1) Ibid, p.370

Saudi Salafism

not represent a proof or a witness to the validity of what he claims, it could happen to anyone regardless of their religious belief. There are hundreds of thousands of non-Muslims who immigrated to the Gulf countries and work there, and some who became wealthy in their own countries, and it was not because they were Salafis. Actually this story is a proof of the writers' attempt to force Salafism in the path of a deliberate subjective criticism. And on the other hand, it is an insult to the intelligence of the Western reader.

Wahhabism of the (Petrodollar)

Due to the wrongful understanding in the Western writings of the reform mission of Sheikh Mohammad ibn Abdul Wahhab, which appeared in the Arabian peninsula, spreading the teachings of this reform mission became a criminal violation the Western writers attach to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, both the government and its establishments. These writings have attempted to link the economic and financial power of the Kingdom of Saudi to what they call (exporting Wahhabism to the world).

Let us observe the following script:

(With the Saudi monarchy becoming the custodian of two holiest shrines of Islam in 1924 with an independent kingdom since 1932, it has also emerged as the richest oil-exploring country in the world, taking upon itself to export its version

of militant Islam that went by the name of Wahhabism).⁽¹⁾

Here we find that the script have displayed the wrong understanding of Wahhabism by describing it as a radical copy of Islam and that the Saudi Government is marketing it. Yet, the Western researcher, not to mention the common reader, when reading it, would consider it the truth upon which he will build his understanding of Wahhabism.

Another writer expands in explaining how the Saudi Government support spreads Wahhabism in the world by saying:

(Saudi laypeople, government officials and clerics have donated many tens of millions of dollars to create Wahhabi-oriented religious schools, newspapers and outreach organizations... In addition, various sources alleged that Saudi Arabia is one source that has supported and funded the spread of Islamic extremism, or Wahabbism, globally).⁽²⁾

As for The Sun Day Times newspaper, it published an article on March 28, 2010 with the title: (Saudis fund Bulkan Muslims spreading hate of the West).

The article starts with the following phrase:

(Saudi Arabia is pouring hundreds of millions of pounds into Islamist groups in the Balkans, some of which spread hate of the West and recruits fighters for jihad in

(1) , South Asia “SAUDI EXPORT OF WAHHABISM to India “Upadhyay, R., Analysis Group, paper no. 3725, 19- March-2010.

(2) Kouri, J., Dec “Saudi Kingdom Continues to Export Radical Wahhabism” Mon 15, 2008.

In: <http://www.islamdaily.org/en/wahhabism/6968.saudi-kingdom-continues-to-export-radical-wahhabis.htm>

Saudi Salafism

Afghanistan.).⁽¹⁾

And without any introductions or evidence the newspaper goes to pile on accusations to the Kingdom about spending its money to spread hate of the West, and recruiting fighters to fight in Afghanistan.

The newspaper adds:

(According to officials in Macedonia, Islamic fundamentalism threatens to destabilise the Balkans. Strict Wahhabi and Salafi factions funded by Saudi organisations are clashing with traditionally moderate local Muslim communities).⁽²⁾

And the newspaper states: what says:

(Fundamentalists have financed the construction of scores of mosques and community centres as well as handing some followers up to £225 a month. They are expected not only to grow beards but also to persuade their wives to wear the niqab, or face veil, a custom virtually unknown in the liberal Islamic tradition of the Balkans.).⁽³⁾

The writer points in one of the segments in the article that the West has spent great financial and political efforts to help build democracy in Bosnia after the civil war in the nineties of the past century, Saudi establishments have had great influence, as they have spent 450 million pounds to build more than 150 mosques and Islamic centers.⁽⁴⁾ It is as if the

(1) http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article7078771.ece

(2) http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article7078771.ece

(3) Ibid.

(4) Ibid.

Balkan region is exclusively for the Western culture despite the fact that a great percentage of its people are Muslims and in need of mosques that preserve their identity which they have fought the Serbs in order to protect. it.

Chapter Two

Reasons Behind the Defamed Image of Saudi Salafism in Western Writings

First: Lack of Information in Western Writings

Second: Ignorance About The opposing Reality

Third: Absolute Generalization

Fourth: Deliberate Lying

Fifth: Westernized Muslims

Sixth: Westernized Saudis

Seventh: Mutilation of the Image of Islam and Salafism

Eighth: Targeting Saudi Arabia



Saudi Salafism

For every phenomenon there are reasons and theoretical roots which form the mental image of this phenomenon engraved in the minds, regardless whether these reasons were true or fabricated. The case of Saudi Wahhabism in Western writings has its own fabricated and deliberate reasons that contributed in forming a false mental image in the psyche of the Western writers, and in turn in the collective mind of the Western public opinion.

In the following is a display of the reasons of the distorted image of Saudi Salafism which led to a bias and subjective transference and presentation of the case at hand, and it is, as we will see, reasons some of which are linked to personal motives of Western writers, others are ideologies with their own specific goals where the Western writers were tools in achieving; some as willing participants in achieving these ideological goals, others are simply ignorant due to lack of understanding.

First: Lack of Information in Western Writing

Despite what was engraved in the minds of many people about Western writings being of depth, inclusivity and accuracy of sources, yet when it comes to subjects about Islam and Muslims, Western writings are either deliberately

antagonistic, or receive information from secondary sources that lacks legitimacy and truth verification.

To that effect, Western writings that handled Salafism and Salafi ideology, especially in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, vary in their dealing with the definition and of this term, implications, and vary in the presentation. Some lacks the authenticated information and tries to distort the facts on purpose or deliberately, and some show an honest effort in following strict academic and research methods that distant itself from taking ideas or information without tracing it back to reliable sources, although the latter writings are few, and do not enjoy the same publication and distribution as the former.

Such problematic aspects of Western writings about Salafism and Wahhabism are summed up in the following points:

- (1) Western writings lack the right authenticated information about Salafism and Wahhabism.
- (2) Many Western writings that deal with Islam in general and Salafism and Wahhabism in specific, rely on previous writings, or sayings, or common assumptions which do not rise to believability and lack authentication.
- (3) Using definitions or terms such as Salafism, Salafists, Wahhabism, and Jihad as synonyms to violence, radicalism, and terrorism and linking it to Al' Qaida. The direct result of this outrageous mistake is that

Saudi Salafism

commitment to Islam and its teachings became, in the Western psyche, a synonym to all which is linked to terrorism.

- (4) Certain circles in the West deal with Salafism as a dangerous political ideology that threatens the world and cultures, assuming it to be rejecting of the other and resorting to radicalism and extremism. But such circles never attempted to analyze or investigate the groups and individuals who ignite this radicalism and violence, taking into consideration their numbers as a very small minority in comparison to the number of Muslims who reject such behavior.
- (5) The rising intensity of attack and criticism against the Salafis after September 11.
- (6) Pointing the negative, and sometimes harsh, criticism at Islam and Salafism in general and Muslim countries in specific after any terrorist attacks that take place in the West, to the point that any news about violence, killing, and terror in Western media is linked automatically to Islam and Muslims. In fact, the media does not hesitate in pointing the finger of accusation at Muslims after the occurrence of these acts; even after the fact that many of such accusations are proven to have been hasty and untrue.

- (7) The attempt to market and popularize the so called “ Liberal Moderate Islam” by the West and some Muslims who took up the West as a home, and working it to make it a replacement to what they call “ Strict” Islam which criticizes current situations.
- (8) Campaigning against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and shoving it into any event that does not suit the influential lobbies in West, and pointing the fingers of accusation at the Saudi government and the Saudi people and establishments of taking part in supporting the radical groups.

Many Westerners, if not the majority, receive their information about Islam from newspapers and other media venues. These sources are not completely authentic or trustworthy to be relied upon when it comes to understanding the different sides of Islam. Some American writers themselves share this view with us.

For example, Philip Bennett, the chief editor of the Washington Post pointed out in his lecture on March 3, 2008 in California-Irvine’s Center for the Study of Democracy, which was published in the Daily Pilot newspaper, that Americans lack the proper understanding of Islam, and that modern media is to be blamed for that, therefore the media must correct the situation through hiring more Muslim journalists, and skilled translators.⁽¹⁾ The chief editor of the

(1) http://articles.dailypilot.com/200804-03-/features/dpt-bennett03042008_1

Saudi Salafism

Washington Post openly accused the media of contributing to the misunderstanding of Islam and Muslims.

It clearly appears through looking at some Western writings that dealt with Salafism that these writings use the term “Salafism” as a synonym to “Wahhabism”, these are writings that lack the true understanding of the meaning of “Salafism” and “Wahhabism” and their indications with the exception of what serves Western values and causes.

And it is what Ali Abd Alaal confirms in his research: (Salafism and the West...The Reality of the Relationship and Future Implications), by saying:

(The West does not only lack the sufficient knowledge about Salafism and the occurring classifications in the Muslim world, but deals with the groups and movements that are under such classifications only on the basis of their standings toward the West and its issues).

And he also says:

It is important as we are talking about (Salafi) to refer that the Western consciousness has not sufficient knowledge of classifications occurring in the Islamic world, and moreoften does not understand their reality and meanings. Westerners generally do not differentiate between (Sufism, and call it “moderate Islam”, and Salafi) only to the extent they know their positions towards the Western world and its values and its issues.).⁽¹⁾

[islam-muslim-readers-massive-protests](http://www.felixnews.com/news-4123.html)

(1) <http://www.felixnews.com/news-4123.html>

Second: Ignorance About The Opposing Reality

Western writers' ignorance of the reality of the Arabian region, and thus their ignorance of its values and beliefs is what Western writers have admitted to themselves.

Barbara Ferguson the journalist says while talking about the ignorance of her American colleagues of journalists and correspondents, in the reality of the region and their dealing with this reality on the basis of a preconceived picture:

(From a personal point of view and a journalistic experimant, it certainly doesn't help that many U.S. reporters are woefully ignorant of the Middle East. While embedded with the Marines during the invasion of Iraq, I was surprised to see how many of my colleagues, even before they were embedded, resisted learning about the Iraqi people as they prepared to cover a war in their land).⁽¹⁾

There is another problematic fact that feeds into Western writers' ignorance of Salafism in Saudi Arabia; it is the fact that newspaper correspondents, some responsible politicians, and human rights activists, under the influence of the distorted image of Salafism in their sources, are incapable of clearly presenting the positive image of Islam in Saudi Arabia as they see it. Thus, when the Head of the Canadian House of Commons, Dr. Noel Kinsella was asked about the media campaign against Saudi Arabia in some Western newspapers despite the fact that many Western media personnel never

(1) Barbara Ferguson." why does the West carry a distorted picture of the Saudi woman", part of researches published in the book: (Saudis and Terrorism: Worldly Views), gheenaah publishing house, Riyadh, 2008, p 165.

Saudi Salafism

visited the Kingdom to know the truth up close and from direct sources, he said:

(This does not make any sense or logic, a person who did not see something must not talk about it or criticize it; and those Western writers must visit the Kingdom to see, hear and interview the people in charge and the common people on the street before they write about it, none the less, these are poisonous campaigns orchestrated by people with shady agenda, and by no means serve the relation between their countries and Saudi Arabia, nor the relation between the nations)⁽¹⁾.

Third: Absolute Generalization

It is fair to say that the actions of selected few Muslims have contributed tremendously in supporting the defamed image of Islam and Muslims, and in turn of the ideology of Salafism, considering the fact that Salafism is a call to revive Islam back to what it truly was at the time of Prophet Mohammad peace and blessings of God be upon him and his companions and followers, may God be pleased with them all.

It must be affirmed here that such actions are rejected by Islam, and was detested and condemned by Muslims themselves, as a matter of fact, many of these acts of violence and radical consequences have targeted and harmed Muslims themselves, causing economic and social damages in several Muslim countries.

(1) An interview with Al-Wattan Saudi newspaper on Feb 4, 2011

Thus, a Muslim who attacks the innocent, and practices violence in the name of Islam causes great harm to Islam and contributes greatly in boosting the distorted picture of Islam and Muslims. And a Muslim who popularizes and spreads false slogans that say Islam is built on eliminating opposers others and using any violent means necessary to achieve that goal, does nothing but destruction on earth and reaffirms the negative image that many Western nations carry about Islam and Muslims. But many western writings do not present this positive side of the majority of Muslims; instead, these writings seek to generalize the bad image on all Muslims especially in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Fourth: Deliberate Lying

A researcher of the direction of many Western writings published by media and research and study centers about Saudi Arabia and Saudis, would reach an inevitable conclusion about how they deal with matters related to religion and society. For many of these writings do not go beyond the following two situations:

1. It is either built on false and wrongful information.
2. Or it is a lie.

Even the information built on false and wrongful perceptions were originally founded on deliberate lies and premeditated falsification. The process starts by Western media correspondents who come to the kingdom of Saudi Arabia to prepare reports about certain topics, but when

Saudi Salafism

they return to their countries they write something that is completely opposite to what they have actually saw and heard. They tell distorted facts to influential persons, or the scientists, or the educated or the public in general.

They do this on purpose and with a premeditated intention to lie, forge, and falsify for two main goals:

1-Sensational claims or false shock value, through fake headlines that irritate or agitate the Western reader or arouse his/her interest to read and follow further publications, or through other means of wrong information.

2-For their personal agenda to go hand in hand with the policies of the media establishments they belong to.

Three examples of different time lines can be mentioned here to stand as a proof and a witness to the above mentioned, and many other examples:

1-In the first gulf war” liberation of Kuwait”, the newspaper writer Christian Amber, a correspondent for the Christian Science Monitor newspaper, came to Saudi Arabia and prepared a newspaper and a television report about the social life in the Kingdom. Upon her return to the United States she was invited as a guest on the ABC television channel that spoke to her about (the old ragged and backward costumes of the Saudi society) which does not agree with the American culture, especially in the matters of Hijab, merging or mixing of genders, and education. The journalist said: (that society still lives in the sixteenth century).⁽¹⁾

(1) Jason Burke. Saudi Arabia’s clerics challenge King Abdullah’s reform

2-After the events of September 11, the Kingdom (government, people, culture and establishment) was hit by a western media storm aimed at shaking the religious and social structure of the Saudi society. Several of these media contents about the Kingdom carried with in it deliberate offences, and premeditated defamation to its culture and religion, to the extent that some Western media people had exaggerated in their platen criticism in a way that embarrassed their own establishments.

Among those is Stephen Schwartz who was known for his constant criticism to what is called (Fundamental Islam), and (Sunni Wahhabism) as he calls it, and has many writings such as (the Defeat of Wahhabism), (the Problem with Wahhabism), and others. Also because of his (unprofessional and nonobjective) criticism of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, he was fired from (Voice of America) radio.

Straying away from standards of professionalism and objectivity was the reason behind his dismissal according to the radio channel, but behind that reason indeed was his lying and exaggeration in the harsh criticism that Stephen Schwartz was known for when he writes about Saudi subjects or issues.

3- Western correspondents come to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through visits aimed at preparing reports about the Saudi society and its issues; they meet with people in charge, scholars, and the educated, they debate with them, they talk

Saudi Salafism

to them and with them, then they return back and lie in reports and falsify the very words of the people they interviewed and spoke to. The latest of such is a correspondent for the British newspaper The Guardian, Jason Burke, who wrote a series of reports about the Kingdom¹, in it he lied about a number of religious scholars, accusing one of them of defying the reform policy of the King, taking up his own small Masjid” Mosque” as a base to counter the reform steps, and accused another of being fond of Westerners’ life style because it approves alcohol drinking!!

The contradiction between what Westerners write and publish after their visits to Saudi Arabia have ended and what they have seen in reality is a known matter amongst them, not only the writers and the educated but also the politician and the people in charge. In a question to the president of the Canadian House of Commons about this issue, the fact that many Western senior officials, some of them Canadian who visit the Kingdom and are exposed to the reality of the situation but don’t clarify these facts to the media in their countries, the president of the Canadian House of Commons replied that some media venues do not want to hear good news, he said:

(I will personally submit a very positive report to the Parliament soon after my return to Canada, presenting through it the facts and the realities we encountered in the three days of our visit, whether in the field of economical and commercial partnership between our two countries, on a

parliamentary cooperative level, or on the interrelation level between Saudis and Canadians as individuals)⁽¹⁾.

What the president of the Canadian House of Commons has said in addition to other violations, has become a repeated practice in the last few years. To this effect, officials, journalists, and educated Westerners who visit the Kingdom offer statements about the Kingdom and publish writings about Islam different from what they present in their countries. This is a deliberate lying that has become one of the main problems in clarifying the truth about the stand towards Islam and Salafism. So when we think that Saudis have succeeded in correcting the wrongful picture about Salafism and clarifying how positive the effect that Salafism has on the Saudi society and the Kingdom, to the visiting individuals when they are in Saudi Arabia, we find that the situation is completely different when these individuals return to their countries and relapse back to regurgitating the distorted images that have become engraved in their psyche, or because they wanted it to be that way.

These are but examples of the lying of Western correspondents, and many aspects of these lies integrate together to form the untrue picture of the Saudi society.

Fifth: Westernized Muslims

The Western media and research and study centers

(1) Ibid.

Saudi Salafism

are not the only ones describing Salafism and Salafists as violent, radical, and terrorist, or the only ones stirring the public opinion and the circles of Western decision makers to take the necessary action to face this” Radicalism”, and” Violence”. But there is also amongst Muslims who dedicated themselves to assume that role, and to work side by side with Western establishments to face Islam and Muslims, and even claiming that there is no point of having a dialogue with Muslims, because these dialogues according to them are” unfruitful” and that the dialogue must be carried out with moderate Muslims who oppose “the Savage rules of the Sharia law.”

Testaments to the above are too numerous to sum up here, we mention one written by a Westernized Muslim; Tawfeek Hamid in an article of his, published by The Wall Street Journal under the title (The Trouble with Islam), he poured the accusations in it to Muslims, and enticed Western establishment to face what he called “Salafi Islam.” He even went further than that calling for no dialogue between followers of other religions and Muslims, claiming that there is no point in such dialogue; this is a radical stand taken by the writer and would not be taken even by those most opponents of Islam in the West⁽¹⁾.

Like him is Doctor Zuhdi Jasser, the president of the (American Islamic Forum for Democracy AIFD), a physician and a former officer in the American Navy, he published an

(1) The Wall Street Journal, April 3, 2007

article with the title (Defeating Salafism and Wahhabism is the Right Way)⁽¹⁾. Although the article focuses on the issue of banning the activity of Salafism in Tajikistan at the time of its publication, yet, the writer goes to attack what he calls the enclosed ideologies represented by Salafism and Wahhabism, and calls for banning these groups, better yet eliminating them from existence.

No doubt, the agreement in presentation and perception between some Muslim writers in one hand, and the media and study centers in the West in the other hand, sends negative signals and reinforces many of the preconceived distorted images about Salafism, especially in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Sixth: Westernized Saudis

In every society there is a small fraction of writers, intellectuals, and media people who adopt ideologies that oppose the main stream and culture of the societies they belong to. Saudis are no exception to these societies. Thus among their writers and their media people there are a few who absorbed the Western culture and believed that the philosophical, political and social Western system is the suitable system for any nation aspiring to rise in civilization and in keeping up with scientific advancement; This segment of Saudi citizens were praised in the Western writings that

(1) <http://www.mzuhdijasser.com/3332/defeating-salafism-and-wahhabism-the-right-wa>

Saudi Salafism

addressed Salafism and Wahhabism in the Kingdom, and they were used as references and citations whenever these writings needed to reinforce their view, describing them as testaments to their claim.

This is confirmed when Western writings raise issues that have religious undertones, such as the Committee of Senior Scholars(Elder Clergies) in the Kingdom, or the educational system, or the woman, or the judgment court system, or the Committee of the dose and dose not (the Religious Police), or others, on which the Western writers proceed to authenticate their opinions and their relation to Wahhabism in Saudi by citing testimonies of Saudi citizens amongst the educated and the media personals in order to boost the legitimacy of their views before the reader.

Western writers have several ways to achieve this, such as:

1-direct contact, as one person would give his own personal opinion about the issue presented by the writer in a way that coincides with the goal behind the discussed case.

2-going into websites on the internet and translating any views that agree with what is being presented by the Western sources, such as the Saudi Liberal Network, and personal blogs and others, then including citation from these sites in the publication.

3-visiting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and holding interviews with certain individuals in a selective way that serves the inclinations of the Western sources and does not represent the public view in Saudi Arabia towards the case

presented for discussion.

The goal here is not to mention names, for this is a fact known by many readers of Western publications about the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, but the goal is to confirm that some Saudis -knowingly or unknowingly- are contributors in the defamation of the image of Wahhabism and Salafism in Saudi Arabia by taking part in the views about subjects that have already saturated Western publications.

Seventh: Mutilation of the Image of Islam and Salafism

Interest in research and writings about Salafism, its trends, and how to deal with it have increased after the events of September 11, 2001, along what became to be known as (Islam phobia), which won the interest of many research and study centers, decision makers, politicians, and the public opinion in the West. This can be noticed through viewing the Western general dialogue which discussed Islam, rummaged in researching it, and criticized it with unprecedented boldness in the past decade.

Martijn de Koning, affirms as he discusses, in a research of his, the lives of two Salafist females in Holland, that Muslims and non-Muslims in Holland have realized that since September 11 criticizing Islam and Muslims is no longer a taboo, and in some cases such criticism is acceptable if done with the firmest ways possible, meaning that criticizing Islam is expressed sometimes with harsh words.

He adds that since September 11 and after the

Saudi Salafism

assassination of the movie director Van Koch on November 2, 2004, talking about Islam in a public discussion is no longer a mixture of topics related to the role of religion in the general public of a secular state, and no longer limited to subjects such as immigration and blending with the society, it actually began to take another direction, and discuss topics related to security and” war against terror”, and the Salafist movement became the center of attention, as it was being tied to intolerance, propagating violence against “Kuffar”, and instigating hate against politicians and other leaders.⁽¹⁾

Professor John Esposito, teacher of Religions, International relations, and Islamic Studies, and founder and manager of the Christian –Muslim Dialogue Center in George Town University in the American Capital Washington, sees that the very little information about Islam, the misconceptions with many Americans, in addition to some events that took place since the seventies of the last century such as the Iranian revolution and the American hostages in Iran, the first Gulf war between Iran and Iraq, and other factors have formed an image of Islam as being strict, hostile and anti-Western.⁽²⁾

This opinion is confirmed by Doctor Ralph Salmi, a member of the education board in the department of Political Science and National Security Studies in California State University, he sees that the Western writings that aim at

(1) Martijn de Konning in: Changing Worldview and friendship an exploration of the life of two female Salafis in the Netherland. Roel Meijer(edit.),Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd. United Kingdom, 2009,PP. 408409-

(2) <http://www.aljazeera.net/Cahnnel/archive/archive? Archive Id=89803>

putting Islam in a frame similar to that of Samuel Huntington in his book “Clash of Civilizations” are present. He points to some examples of these writings, among those are: Steven Emerson’s book, *American Jihad: The Terrorists Living among Us*, Dora Gold’s book, *Hatred’s Kingdom*, and many other works by Daniel Pipes, such as: *The Hidden Hand: Middle East Fears of Conspiracy*, and *Armed Islam Reaches America*, and others.⁽¹⁾

Western fear of Islam appears clearly in the results of public polls held by media establishments and study centers, especially after the events of September 11 and after every bombing or armed attack that takes place in the West.

One of these public polls, for example, was published by the British newspaper the *Daily Telegraph* of that a growing number of people fear that the country faces “a Muslim problem” and more than half of the respondents to the ebsite YouGov survey said that Islam posed a threat to Western liberal democracy.⁽²⁾

This poll took place recently after the attacks that targeted the train station in the British Capital; London, these are the attacks that received wide coverage and sharp criticism in the British daily newspapers. And There is no doubt that a great percentage of such political and ideological views

(1) Ralph Salmi.” the sources linked to American ideology about” Islam andTerror”,part of researches published in the book: (*Saudis and Terrorism: A World View*), Ibid., p 368.

(2)<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1527192/Islam-poses-a-threat-to-the-West-say-53pc-in-poll.html>

Saudi Salafism

resulted from the effect of the event's media coverage.

Another poll held by the Pew Research Center for People & the Press, and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life from the 19th to the 22nd of August 2010 showed that the public in United States continues to express conflicted views of Islam.⁽¹⁾ The poll pointed that, among 1,003 adults, opinions about Islam are less favorable than in the summer of 2005. Currently, 30% say they have a favorable opinion of Islam while slightly more (38%) have an unfavorable view. It was said that this poll took place during a great controversy in the United States of America about the proposed construction of an Islamic center and mosque a few blocks from the site of the former World Trade Center in New York.

Concerning the deliberate miss construction and distortion of facts Barbra Ferguson says: (Many reasons for the media's negative portrayal of Saudi and Arab women are fairly easy to explain. With a few colleagues I sense an agenda and a deliberate effort to distort, but more often I chalk it up to a simple lack of understanding, knowledge, and appreciation of another culture, religion, language and people).⁽²⁾

And not far from this direction, Dr. Philip Seib, professor of journalism at Marquette University in the American State of Wisconsin sees that the handling of the information related

(1) <http://pewforum.org/Muslim/Public-Remains-Conflicted-Over-Islam.aspx>

(2) Barbra Ferguson. "why does the West have a distorted picture of the Saudi woman", part of researches published in the book: (Saudis and Terrorism: World View), Ibid., p165 -167.

to the news about Saudi Arabia and Islam is not good.

He says to that effect:

(Television news, and other audience oriented media venues do not deal very well with the complexity of the Saudi cultural and political relation with the West).⁽¹⁾

And he adds:

(The complicated affairs related to Islam and petroleum do not present itself to journalistic analysis, thus; dealing with these writings remains mostly negative such as one dimensioned issues which can be described with broad strokes or abrupt generalization).⁽²⁾

This view of an Academic American is what Bassil Akel explains in his article about Islam and the Western Media, pointing that (Islam is the fastest growing religion in the West. Nevertheless, the West has many stereotypes and misconceptions about Islam that are due to the media, prejudice, and ignorance. Islam is often looked upon as an “extremist”, “terrorist”, or “fundamental” religion. Many people hate Islam and do not want to acknowledge its true teachings. In many cases, the media’s reports about Islam are incorrect due to ignorance).⁽³⁾

This fact was confirmed by the Gallup center that performed a sweeping study about the opinions of Americans

(1) Philip Seib.” The Western Media Coverage of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s dealing with terrorism”, part of researches published in the book: (Saudi and Terrorism: World View), Ibid., p 521.

(2) Ibid., p 522

(3) <http://www.islamfortoday.com/media.html>

Saudi Salafism

regarding other religions⁽¹⁾ in the period from the 31st of October until the 13th of November, 2009. The title of the study was: (Religious Perceptions in America: An In-Depth Analysis of U.S Attitudes toward Muslims and Islam).⁽²⁾

This is a study of Americans' opinions regarding a number of world religions with a special focus on Islam and Muslims. The results are based on the Gallup World Religion Survey, which explores Americans' opinions of four major religions— Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism — and their followers. This analysis examines Americans' self-reported level of prejudice toward members of those faiths. When asked about their level of knowledge about Islam, many Americans tell Gallup they have either “very little knowledge” (40%) or “none at all” (23%).⁽³⁾

What is strange about the results of this study was that it pointed that the number of Americans who express negative feelings toward Muslims is more than double the number of Americans who express similar negative feelings toward Buddhists, Christians, and Jews.⁽⁴⁾ The survey by the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies, called “Religious Perceptions in America: With an In-Depth Analysis of U.S. Attitudes toward Muslims and Islam,” also shows that almost two-

(1)[http://www.forwardthinking.org/data/documents/MWF World Religion Report en-US final.pdf](http://www.forwardthinking.org/data/documents/MWF_World_Religion_Report_en-US_final.pdf)

(2) Religious Perceptions in America: An In-Depth Analysis of U.S Attitudes Toward Muslims and Islam

(3) Ibid.

(4)<http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/cairo-poll-on-anti-islam-bias-shows-need-for-us-muslim-outreach-82282817.html>

thirds of Americans say they have little or no knowledge of Islam. Respondents who did not personally know a Muslim exhibited a greater level of bias.⁽¹⁾

If media today is considered one of the main information sources about nations, cultures, and religions for politicians and the educated elite, in Western societies media is considered the number one source for the public to gain knowledge and information about the world around them. But this very media continues to spread inaccurate, wrongful, and contradictory information about Islam and Muslims, and continues to have huge influence on the public, especially the fixation of the negative preconceived image, such as insistent calling of Muslims as radicals, terrorists and murderers.

The major headlines in Western newspapers, magazines, and news bulletins in television station carry many contents that support these views. As a matter of fact Western media plays a pivotal role in mutilating and distorting the image of Islam and Muslims in general, and Salafism and Salafist in particular, not only in the West but in many places around the world; this world that has become positively and negatively influenced by Western media broadcasting, a media to which massive budgets and human resources have been allocated.

There is no doubt that Zionist pressure groups and others amongst the anti-Islam groups have their impact through their media, political, and financial influence, these groups

(1) Ibid.

Saudi Salafism

play a role, that cannot be ignored, in damaging this image, and steering the public view in the direction they desire.

Reading the following headlines, for example, proves the truth about the western media's deliberate distortion and damaging of the image of Islam and Muslims and steering the public view toward the goals they seek:

- A Muslim kills his daughter for the dishonor of having a boyfriend.⁽¹⁾
- A Muslim husband kills his wife and children because of their Westernized conduct.⁽²⁾
- A suicidal Muslim accused in relation to the worst attack in “India Terrorism Day”.⁽³⁾
- Muslim terrorists killed in pursuits in China.⁽⁴⁾

Yet when the news are related to a non-Muslim, the headlines in these newspapers are completely different. There is no mentioning of belonging to any religion, for instance writing in the headline: Christian man kills his son or daughter, or Jewish, or Buddhist, or Hindu, the headlines however appear as the following:

- A policeman kills his wife and two of his children.⁽⁵⁾
- American teenager arrested for killing his mother in India.⁽⁶⁾
- 6 people dead including the armed assailant in Northern

(1) The Times, September 30, 2003

(2) The Independent, Feb 21, 2007

(3) AFP, 192006/9/.

(4) The Telegraph, July 9, 2008.

(5) Pittsburgh Tribune Review- July 11, 2008.

(6) AP August 16 2010.

Illinois's University.⁽¹⁾

- A man from Iowa kills his wife, his four children then himself.⁽²⁾

The content carried in the headlines of newspapers and magazines has a strong impact in distorting and damaging the image of Islam and Muslims, and steering the public opinion and even turning it against everything relating to Islam and Muslims. Thus, these headlines are carefully crafted and phrased to achieve specific goals. Why is it then, when the news is about a Muslim, it clearly points to religion, but when the news is about a non-Muslim, the headline carries a lot of vagueness not pointing to any religious background, and the person of interest is not described as suicidal or terrorist?

In addition to that it is important to point out that a number of major media establishments in the West carry specific previous agenda that serves the policy of the corporations they work for, and their correspondents cannot deviate from such policy, and if they do they will have to face criticism, mockery, and maybe even dismissal.

Since Islam represents a fertile topic for criticism and defamation to these Western media establishments, they do not tolerate their employees who deviate from their goals. Perhaps in the story of media man and news analyst in the NPR (the National Public Radio), Juan Williams who stands as a witness to that.

The NPR terminated Juan Williams' contract after his

(1) CNN, August 14 2008

(2) USA Today- March 28 2008.

Saudi Salafism

interview on Fox News channel on October of 2010. The reason is that Williams was a guest on “The O’Reilly Factor” show presented by Bill O’Reilly, where he was asked to comment on the phrase that the United States of America faces a problem with Muslims. O’Reilly’s purpose from asking that question was to gain support for his comments on a previous episode of “The View” program on ABC, where he directly accused Muslims of being behind the attacks of September 11, 2001.

But Williams replied by warning from the danger of blaming all Muslims and describing them as terrorists, saying: who says that, must also in turn blame all Christians for the terrorist attack carried by Timothy McVeigh in Oklahoma city in 1996. After the show Williams’s comments received severe criticism, and the NPR issued a statement commending Williams as a valued member, but despite that it stated that he was given a notice terminating his services. The NPR justified this decision by saying that Williams’s comments on The O’Reilly Factor “do not agree with our editorial standards and methods” and that his comments compromise his integrity as a news analyst in the NPR.

Editorial standards and methods are definitely not the reason behind his dismissal, but the reason was his deviation from the ideology and his defending of Islam using the sound and logical method of answering the question directed to him, but his answer was not satisfactory to that media corporation and it did not serve the ideology that aims at distorting and damaging Islam in the Western public view.

Eighth: Targeting Saudi

It was previously pointed out that Western writings in general widely uses the term” Salafism” as a synonym to” Wahhabism” , and to violence, terrorism, and radicalism. And It became clear from researching Western writings that addressed Salafism and Salafis that these writings deliberately shove the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in any attack or criticism directed at the Salafist movement, or even at groups, or Islamic centers or establishments operating outside the Kingdom.

This might be acceptable if the presentation is founded on objective and constructive criticism that shows the facts and views backed by indisputable evidence, such approach is accepted by any sane and just person looking to correct his own mistakes. However, the criticism at hand came in an aggressive campaign against the Kingdom and its policy, and against the Scholars and Rulers, and in a way that undermines the aid the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia present to Muslim countries and Muslim minorities, and the humanitarian aid for all in need everywhere on earth, but to even cast the shadow of doubt on the purpose behind the aid and rescue describing it as a way to lay the seeds of radicalism and violence, and a way to raising a generation filled with hate toward other opponents.

The attack on the Kingdom and defamation of its image had not started after the events of September 11, 2001, or the bombings that kept taking place here and there in the

Saudi Salafism

past decade, targeting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its regime started long time ago, as indicated by Richard Curtis, and Delinda Hanley:

(The vicious media campaign against Saudi Arabia and the Arab world did not start on September 11, 2001. It started in Hollywood decades ago. The fact that cinematic films and television programs continued on purpose or accidentally to feed the minds of Americans with images such as: “The rich and corrupt oil Sheiks and princes”, “ The Bedwins(nomads) bandits and mercenaries”, “ The radical, evil, anti-American Arabs”).⁽¹⁾

Having said that, one cannot ignore the fact that the events of September 11, and the wars and escalations that followed have casted more light on the Kingdom, and some pens have used these events that involved some Muslims, to launch more attacks and criticism on the Kingdom, being the focal destination of Muslims and the protector of the two most sacred places (Alharamine).

Many Islamic organizations in the West and other places have monitored this Western directive that targeted Saudi after the events of September 11, 2001, the Council of American-Islamic Relations in the United States (CAIR) observed that the media campaign against Islam in Saudi Arabia started on the next day after September 11, although the identity of

(1) Richard Curtis and Delinda Hanley. “ the Zionist lobby in America and the Campaign Against Saudi”, part of research published in the book: (Saudis and Terrorism: World View), Ibid., p 552.

the attackers was not even discovered yet.⁽¹⁾ Moreover, the council presented a documented statistics on the scope of what was written about Saudi Arabia in the American media alone, it stated that in October of 2001 the number of articles written about Islam in Saudi Arabia reached 4212 articles, and the total number of articles of that year reached 14639 articles compared to almost 2900 articles in year 2000, that is an increase of 400%⁽²⁾, in addition to other newspaper reports.

As for the nature of the subject matter of these articles, the (CAIR) report explained that these articles addressed subjects such as the school curriculum and education in Saudi Arabia, the affairs of the Muslim woman in Saudi Arabia, the linking between the term “terrorism” in Western ideology and Saudi Arabia, the case of Scholars and Missionaries in Saudi Arabia.⁽³⁾

Dore Gold, by his role wrote a book published in 2003 called: (Hatred's Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism). Dore Gold is a former Israeli ambassador in the United Nations; perhaps this is enough to realize the content of the book and the stand of its writer which was not neutral nor honest in its presentation. The writer sprayed all his poisons and toxins as accusations toward Saudi Arabia, linking the attacks on the World Trade

(1) Mohammad al Sallomi. Charrity Sector and Terrorist Calls. Albayan magazine publication series, Riyadh, 2004, p387

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid.

Saudi Salafism

Center in 2001, the attacks in the Indonesian Island Bali in 2002, and others to what he called “the hatred ideology taught in schools and mosques in Saudi Arabia.” The writer did not forget to point to the main role that Wahhabism has played in forming the current radical Islam.

Nothing proves the cohesion of hateful desires that bless any attack on the image of the Kingdom, than the barrage of comments published soon after the publication of this book; these are comments that were published in very prestigious news papers with a wide base of readers. For example; Toby Harnden wrote in the British newspaper the London Daily Telegraph his comment on Dore Gold’s book:

(Some senior officials, most notably in the Pentagon, echo the views of Dore Gold, a former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, whose recent book, *Hatred’s Kingdom*, cites the Wahhabi extremism of Saudi Arabian clerics as a root cause of terrorism).⁽⁴⁾ As for Alex Alexiev, he wrote in the *Commentary Magazine* in its May issue of 2003 the following:

(Gold also explains the central role played by the Wahhabi sect in shaping the broader current of Islamic extremism).⁽⁵⁾

Even King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz’s (Servant of the two holy Haramine) gesture and initiative to open the dialogue between religions was faced with criticism, it was actually used by Western pens to execute its own agenda in criticizing

(4) <http://www.jcpa.org/hkingdom.htm>

(5) Ibid.

the Kingdom. Such as the lengthy article published in the Christian Science Monitor newspaper penned down the following:

(Not only is Saudi Arabia the birthplace of Islam, but it is also the wellspring of an austere, fundamentalist version of Sunni Islam. Sometimes called Wahhabism, it bans the open practice of other faiths in the kingdom and tends to reject inter-religious dialogue with non-Muslim “infidels.”)⁽¹⁾

Through addressing the school curriculum in Saudi Arabia, some parties seek to aim a sharp criticism to the Kingdom and its policies and establishments. Such criticism takes place despite the global fact that school curriculums are an internal affair determined by the proper establishments according to the directional values and policies of each country. No country in the world would agree or allow any foreign force to interfere with its school system or to design its school curriculum. However it seems that dealing with Saudi Arabia and its curriculum is an exception to the norm in the eyes of the Western research and study centers. To this effect, here is the Center for Religious Freedom in the American Hudson Institute in cooperation with the Institute of Gulf Affairs headquartered in the city of Washington, publishing reports about the condition of the Saudi school curriculums, pointing in its 2008 report under the title: (Saudi Arabia’s Curriculum of Intolerance) in several places the report claims that Saudi’s school curriculums instill hate

(1) <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/20080708//p01s03-wome.html>

Saudi Salafism

for the other ideologies, and spread violence, radicalism and intolerance.

Before the previous report, this center published in 2006 a report stating, the following:

(Wahhabi teachings, if one reads their fatwas and these Saudi Ministry of Education textbooks, are murderously intolerant toward the Shi'a, Jews, Baha'i, Ahmadiyya, homosexuals, apostates, and "unbelievers" of all kinds).⁽¹⁾

This report also addresses in another part what was described as (the Saudi Government's nurturing of a Curriculum that promotes violence and intolerance), stating the following segment:

(Saudi government sponsorship of textbooks that promote violent and intolerant teachings constitutes a threat to American interests, and violates both international and bilateral human rights obligations that Saudi Arabia has freely assumed).⁽²⁾

Attacking the school curriculums in Saudi was but an excuse to attack the Kingdom itself, because these very curriculums that are being accused of marketing and spreading hate and violence are the very same curriculums that have been taught in the Saudi school system for decades sending thousands of graduates to complete their university and post university education in the West, none of them were ever described as a terrorist just for studying the so-called

(1) Saudi Arabia's Curriculum of Intolerance, Center for Religious Freedom of the Hudson Institute, with the Institute for Gulf Affairs, 2008, P.11

(2) 2 Ibid. P. 22

extremist Salafi religious curriculum.

It is absolutely illogical to accept that the religious curriculums have influenced a small section of the generation that studied it in the last ten years, but it did not influence the rest of that generation or all the other generation before that.

Chapter Three

Rebutting the Malicious Claims

Mutilation of the Image of Islam and Salafism
Wahhabi Salafism Is the Official Religion in Saudi Arabia
Wahhabism is The Doctrine of Radicalism and Terrorism
Wahhabism of (The Petrodollar)

Mutilation of the Image of Islam and Salafism

We Saudis are aware and the whole Muslim world too that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the fortress of Islam that proven resistant to Westernization, and it is the sole country in the Muslim world that was founded on the two sources of Revelation in Islam: the Holy Quran and Prophetic Sunna, and the two are the sole rulers over the state and the lives of the community, in all aspects of politics, governing, judiciary, education, and other different facets of life of the Saudi citizen and the residents of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The two sources from which life's teachings are derived, are Revelations descended from Allah upon prophet Mohammad peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, applied in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and no monetary law, no constitution put by a parliament, and no man made legislative council ever crowds them.

Due to the fact that Saudi Arabia is the land of the Revelation, the birth place of the Islamic message, and the home of the holiest places for Muslims, Saudis took upon their shoulders both government and people, the responsibility of preserving, protecting and defending Islam and delivering its message inside and outside the Kingdom.

Therefore the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with its Islamic

core faith and the identity of its citizens which manifested Islam as a religion and a way of life, have been a target for many politicians and Western strategists who aim at extinguishing the glow and the light of Islam in the Arabian peninsula, curbing its influence outside the peninsula, and to stand against its global message; this message which conflicts with the secular Western culture and its ambition to dominate the entire world, and especially the Muslim world. In the West there were those who always waited in anticipation for the opportunity to slander the image of Islam and to launch the accusations to Salafism at its birth place in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia but did not succeed, because the Saudi government was always exemplary in its course, justly balanced in its religion and its dealings with the others, and of wisdom and temperance in delivering the message of Islam; wanting the goodness for all regardless of religion or culture; therefore, they could not find the opportunity to convince others and to legitimize their cause to slander Islam at its birth place and to criticize Salafism.

Then along came the events of September 11, 2001, and the opportunity and the door was wide open for radical Christians and the New Evangelists, who managed to gain great influence in the administration and the decision making in the United States, to target Islam and tarnish its pure image in the minds of the world and Muslims alike. So it wasn't long before the Western governments, with their centers of strategic studies and their media, declared

Saudi Salafism

the ideological and cultural war on the Muslim world. As mentioned in the introduction, the West has set in motion two dangerous strategies towards the Muslim world after the events of the famous September 11th under the banner of the (War Against Terror). The two Strategies utilized two methods in their application:

First: The military war that targeted Iraq and aimed at bringing down its regime and reshuffling it according to predetermined interests. This military strategy targeted Iraq for military, geographical, and political considerations due to its close vicinity to Iran the enemy and Israel the friend and ally.

Second: The soft war (cultural, and media), that targeted the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its religion, its statehood, its people, and its establishments. The West understands the vital status of the Kingdom in the Muslim world, and that an armed combat against the Kingdom is very difficult considering the entire Muslim world that would rally to the aid of its most holy lands in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and that any military miscalculated attempt is doomed to fail if it does not take this fact into consideration. Thus the West had no choice but to seize the opportunity and unleash its campaign of soft war against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia alongside its military campaign in Iraq, in an attempt to change whatever is possible in religion and the cultural identity of Saudi Arabia, using own media and political pulpits as tools to achieve the desired change.

Also because it is (a soft war), and vicious at the same time, it focused on the most important source of spiritual power in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Islam, upon which the nation and the unity of its people have been founded. A variety of Western writings spoke about Islam and its influence inside and outside Saudi, targeting the pillars of its theory and its application in the Saudi society. The topic of Salafism and Wahhabism was naturally the focus of Westerners and their interest, in an attempt to distort the purity of both in the elite and the public opinion in the West, the Muslim world, and in the Saudis themselves. Numerous Western writings have attempted to link these two ideologies to extremism and radicalism, to achieve the goals of the soft war that aimed at weakening the spiritual power and melting the religious and cultural identity of Muslims, and in pursuit of establishing the image of the (new Middle East) which have been drawn and promised by the Western governments and especially the United states of America. Research establishments and strategic centers in the United States were the theoretical and philosophical planners of this religious war, therefore many studies of carefully planned mandates to mutilate the image of Islam and Salafism have appeared and were of tremendous help for the decision makers to execute the goal they have long awaited. One of the most famous studies was published by the Rand Corporation for Tactical Research under the title: (Civil Democratic Islam: partners, resources, and strategies), this study was prepared by the researcher Cheryl

Saudi Salafism

Benard and published in 2003, it contained a collection of ideas, and executive blue print to face Islam and change its origins to become an American Islam with Western standard, the report is on the Internet for anyone to read it and to find out about its goals and methods.

The Western world continues to seek the application of its strategy to change the collective roots and origins of Islam and to distort the image of Salafism until today, whether by its own means or through its agents in the Muslim world.

Wahhabi Salafism Is the Official Religion in Saudi

The falsehood that Wahhabism is the official religion in Saudi, and that Saudis have their own fundometalist version of Islam different from what is present in the Muslim World, is the result of incorrect deductions that settled in the collective mind of many Orientalists and others concerned with religion and culture in the West. This falsehood which was meant to spread in the Western culture and many other places in the world is contradictory to the truth that Westerners could very easily find if they searched. However, the plot must take place to serve the directives that aim at ideological domination and decimation of any culture that opposes the Western culture, or proves resistant to melting in the desired universal identity.

King Abdulaziz, the founder of the Saudi state stated clearly on more than one occasion that the Saudi State is committed to the pure and clean Islamic faith which Prophet

Mohammad peace and blessings from God be upon him and his companions were committed too, and that the reform mission of Sheikh Mohammad Bin Abd Alwahhab in the Arabian peninsula, upon which the Saudi State was founded, was a blessed call to revive the correct and sound faith in the minds of people after ignorance about Islam had spread in the peninsula. It was from that blessed call of reform that King Abdulaziz was inspired to find the United Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

To that effect, Dr. Abd Alrahman Alzinaidy says:

(in the twentieth century –the fourteenth in Hijri calendar– King Abd Alaziz bin Abd Alrahman Al Saood built the third Saudi State on the legacy of Sheikh Mohammad bin Abd Alwahhab’s call for reform, and made his awareness of this reform clear to his people and the pilgrims visiting the Kingdom:

_in the core faith (Akeeda) of what the revealed verses stated and the companions and the Prophet followed.

_in the Sharia (Muslim law), adopting what the Prophet (P) and his Companions have applied, and what the Great Scholars of Jurisprudence have authenticated in their chronicles.

And taking from the social human affairs whatever is produced by the human mind, Muslim or non-Muslim, so long as it does not oppose or disagree with the principles of the Revelation, and thus benefitting from what modern civilization has to offer to improve the community. In turn

Saudi Salafism

adopting these directives in school curriculums, cultural corporations, judiciary systems and building the young state, fully confident that what is adopted is the path of Islam in building lives as it was with the Prophet (P) and his Companion).⁽¹⁾

Therefore King Abdulaziz firmly and clearly denied and denounced the erroneous term (Wahhabism) and said: (they call us Wahhabis, and they call our path Wahhabism, it's as if it is a special religion, this is an outrageous mistake born from the false propaganda spread by others with hidden agendas).⁽²⁾

This was a formal testimony of innocence by King Abd Alaziz from the term (Wahhabism), confirmed by all official Saudi government documents that are completely free from any Wahhabi terminology. Yes, there is nothing in the main ruling system in Saudi Arabia or any amendment in the constitution that says (Wahhabism is the official denomination of the state), on the contrary, the main ruling body in Saudi states that Islam is the official religion of the state, and the state is founded on the Holy Book and the Sunna. Yet the detesters insist that Saudis are (Wahhabis) by force and submission !! .⁽³⁾

Describing the call of Sheikh Mohammad ibn Abdul

(1) Abd Alrahman bin Zaid Alzinaidi. Salafism. a paper presented in the Janaderian Festival of Heritage and Culture held by the National Guard in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Riyadh in 2010.

(2) Zain Alabedeen Alrekabi, article titled: (towards a better course to address our causes: ideally the reform cause), the Middle East newspaper, May 5th, 2010.

(3) Ibid.

Wahhab and his uprising as (Wahhabism), has a scent of (degradation), and carries within it the desire for agitation and instigation against the call and the caller, injustice and erroneous claims as well, the Sheikh himself (Mohammad bin Abd Alwahhab) never gave his cause that name, and how could he knowing that such term was invented by his hateful opponents? The Alsheikh clan themselves (Al Alsheikh) denounce the term (Wahhabism).

Sheikh Hassan bin Abdullah Al Alsheikh for example says: (the Sheikh and the followers of his cause never chose the name Wahhabism for themselves, or agreed to be called by it, but they were called with it by their enemies to scare and discourage people from his cause, and to trick the people into thinking that the Sheikh came up with his own denomination different from the four major schools of jurisprudence, it's true, the enemies of his cause invented naming it the(Fifth Denomination), while in reality his cause is built in its faith and doctrine (Akeeda) on the faith of the Sunna majority, and in its jurisprudence(Feqh) on the Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal's school of jurisprudence).⁽¹⁾

Sheikh Zain Alabideen Alrekabi explains the hidden goals behind the false propaganda and the attack on the so called (Wahhabism) which King Abdulaziz warned about, among these goals are:⁽²⁾

- 1- The indirect attack on the Saudi political regime

(1) Ibid.

(2) Ibid.

Saudi Salafism

being that it was originally founded on the principles of the Sheikh's cause in cooperation with Imam Mohammad bin Saood to secure the stability and victory of Islam. There are many reasons preventing the direct assault on the Saudi regime, thus they chose attacking it through attacking its roots and origins and background under the cover of the erroneous term (Wahhabism).

2- Enticing Saudis to (hate) the original reform cause, as a prelude to form a Saudi (popular view) to separate religion from state at some point in time.

3- Isolating the Sheikh's reform cause from its wider Islamic circumference in order to surround it and starve it as an outcast, and thus negatively influencing the Saudis both society and state.

These are the main goals that made the term Wahhabism as a source of criticism and defamation for the reform cause, and it is only a link in a bigger chain aimed at destroying the image of Islam.

Wahhabism is The Doctrine of Radicalism and Terrorism:

Many Westerners imagine that the Muslim Saudi society is a strict Wahhabist society, and that radicalism has seized most of its life facets, and that the Salafi version of radical Islam turned the Saudi society into a society longing for terror and murder for any who oppose its beliefs. This outrageously wrong image engraved by Western writings in the collective minds of the West cannot even take place in

Hollywood movies not to mention reality.

In the midst of this wrong mental image and under the massive pile of media and cultural writings marketed by Western media, we could not find any Western writer stopping to explore or seek the lost truth.

The truth we like to state here is that Saudi Salafism is considered the just and balanced version of the tolerant Islam, one which prohibits and denounces terrorism, murder and corruption on Earth, it is a fact the Muslim World knows about Saudis, and the West must realize it too.

The land from which the light of Islam beamed, and upon which the Angel of Revelation descended from heaven, and from which the Message of mercy was launched for the whole world, this land refuses to be a country for terrorism, a home for hate, and a launch pad for violence.

Saudis receive their religion from the teachings of the Holy Quran which strictly forbids unjustified killing of any soul, and considers the unlawful killing of a human soul as the equivalent of murdering all humans, and regards the saving of one life the equivalent of saving the lives of all humans. Saudis also receive their religious guidance from the authentic Sunna (teachings) of Prophet Mohammad peace and blessings of God be upon him, teachings that established the rights of animals let alone humans, it was said in one of the Prophet's narrations(Hadeeth) that a woman deserved her place in Hellfire over a cat, she locked her cat with no food or water and prevented it from seeking its own food and water

Saudi Salafism

until the cat died; if that was the punishment of a woman for tormenting her cat according to the Prophet, then how about the punishment for killing an innocent human soul, this very human that the Quran praised by saying “ we have honored the descendants of Adam..” . So, is it fathomable for a religion with such merciful teachings to condone the criminal terrorism against innocent victims?!

This is the merciful and tolerant Islam, and this is the Salafi faith that Saudis adhere to, such faith and religion could never produce a person satisfied with murder or a person who take up corruption on Earth as a conduct or a way of dealing with others of different religions or cultures.

The Salafi or so called (Wahhabi) society in Saudi was the first to burn in the fires of terrorist activity, and long before the world witnessed the events of September 11 and after. Saudis suffered the attack on the Holy site of Mecca by a radical group in 1979, the bombing of the Alia neighborhood in Riyadh in 1990, the bombing of al Kubr in 1996, the bombing of three residential complexes in Riyadh in 2003, the bombing of the National Security building in Riyadh in 2004, and many terrorist attacks after that date involving few Saudis and many other Arabs (non-Wahhabis)!!

So, is it possible for a society that tasted the destructive outcomes of terrorism on lives, and properties to condone or accept terrorism?

the Saudi Society is directed by a leadership well known around the globe for its genuine and vigorous efforts

for combating, with the help of the religious leadership, terrorism and the rejection of its ideological orientation and destructive activities.

The kingdom of Saudi Arabia has committed itself to fight terrorism, not only in Saudi Arabia but in the entire world. Therefore, the political leadership dedicated all its security resources to track terrorists and destroy their cells in Saudi and their extensions outside, and at the same time holding regional and international conferences calling for surrounding and destroying of terrorism, one was the National Conference for Fighting Terrorism held in Riyadh and organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Saudi Arabia on February, 2005, with close to 60 countries taking part. One of the conference's recommendations was:

(Terrorism poses a continuous threat to Islam and security; it is guilty regardless of the circumstances or the motives of the Terrorists).

It also stressed that:

(Terrorism has no religion, ethnicity, nationality, or geographical territory, and to this fact it must be stated firmly that any attempt to link terrorism with any religion actually helps terrorists...).

In this conference, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia suggested the formation of an International Center to fight terrorism, this became a reality as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signed an agreement to form the United Nations Center of Fighting Terrorism in the United Nations' headquarters in

Saudi Salafism

New York on September 19th 2011, signed by the Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs prince Saud Al Faisal, and the Secretary General of the United Nation Ban Ki-moon, the Saudi government granted ten million dollars as funding for the Center's budget. It is important here to remember what the Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs said after signing the agreement:

“Terrorism has no religion, and it does not represent the religion or the community to which terrorists belong....there is over one and a half billion Muslims all over the world representing a noble and a great culture and civilization that calls for peace, cooperation, and tolerance.... Like other countries the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia suffered from terrorism and dealt with it swiftly and firmly as the Saudi people stood behind their leadership in fighting this pandemic”.

As for the Saudi religious leadership, it was always integrated with the political leadership in stating the rule of Islam against terrorism and those who commit terrorist crimes, it also condemned terrorism and its practice long before the world watched the events of September 11 and after. Moreover, as a fact, the Council of Senior Scholars (Clergies) in Saudi had issued a statement after the terrorist bombing of the Alia neighborhood in the city of Riyadh in 1995 as follows:

(....the Council of Senior Scholars in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have become aware of the bombing that took

place in the Alia quarters in the city of Riyadh close to the main street in the late morning of Monday 14/11/1995, and that innocent souls have perished as victims of that bombing, others have been wounded, faithful subjects and passer byes have been terrorized and scared, therefore the Council clearly and firmly states that this assault is sinful, it is a heinous crime, high treason and betrayal, and a violation of the religious sacredness of souls, property, safety and security, and can only be done by a person with a sinful cursed soul; filled with hate, betrayal, envy, aggression, and hate for life and common good, and Muslims do not disagree that it is a Capital Sin and a horrific crime...).

The Council continued to condemn and deny the terrorist events that took place after that date including the events of September 11. These are the Salafi Scholars in the Kingdom, who always condemned terrorism and its actions according to what they were taught by the pure Islam in Saudi Arabia. So, can a religious society lead by such enlightened scholars accept terrorism, let alone be involved in it? Only a person hateful to the truth or blinded by his\her own agenda and desires would answer yes to that question and would cast the shadow of doubt on the soundness of the Saudis' faith and belief.

One Western writer may argue asking the question we heard over and over again:

But you Saudis; haven't your Salafism and Wahhabism produce terrorist individuals from your own society and

Saudi Salafism

country?

The answer to that would be the answer of the sound mind that offers the evidence in the following four arguments:

First: the modern history of the Saudi society is a little over a hundred years, since its unification by King Abdulaziz and its foundation on the legacy of the reform cause of Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulwahhab; regional and international relations have been established between Saudis and other countries, and Saudis have opened up to the world around and lived and mixed with different nations both inside the Saudi community and outside. This history of over one hundred years old of this society that was built on the teachings of the so-called Wahhabism, testifies and bare witness that this society never occupied the land of any other, never violated the rights of others, never supported mercenary factions in any prosperous country in order to spread chaos in it, and never interfered in the sovereignty of another nation. The reports of the United Nations and the testimony of the sound minds of many different nations confirm through experience that the Saudi Kingdom is a country that honors treaties, national agreements and peace keeping; and it is a country that promotes reform, and positive contribution in the organizations that seek justice and human rights.

As for the Saudi people, thousands of Europeans, Americans and others have lived and mingled and dealt with them for decades yet never experienced any violence or

terrorism from them- not even from the strictly religious-, it is also the testimony, chronicles and memoirs of those who visited the Arabian Peninsula in old and modern time, have painted the most positive image of its people.

Also likewise, the impression the Saudi individual gives outside the Kingdom in the past decades was never associated with violence or terrorism, not from its exchange students or from its Saudi tourists in general, so is it fair to marginalize all that and only focus on a small and minute number who are considered an anomaly that plagued this community? ⁽¹⁾

Second: in the face of this limited and small number of terrorists, there are the massive majority of Muslims and Muslim scholars and legislators who, out of their Wahhabi ideology which is firmly founded on the Islamic path, condemned the oppressive acts of violence, corruption and all forms of terrorism committed against individuals and properties; the Council of Senior Scholars officially representing the highest level of legislative authority has issued numerous statements condemning terrorism from a clear Islamic stand point, in one of these statements issued by the Council of Senior Scholars concerning the actions of those who terrorize the innocent, it said: (it is forbidden in Islam and it is a betrayal, high treason, oppressive assault and a criminal violation of the rights and security of Muslims and non-Muslims alike, such criminal conduct is

(1) Abdulrahman Alzinaidi. "Wahhabism and Exporting Terrorism". Part of researchs issued in the book: (Saudis and Terrorism: World View), previous reference, p 440 -446.

Saudi Salafism

detested and loathed by God, his Prophet and all the faithful followers), the Council further explained (Islam is Innocent of such acts and so is every Muslim who believes in God and the Day of Judgment, such criminal acts belong to a person with a twisted ideology and a dark belief system, this person is responsible for his own sin and crime and his crimes in no shape or form belong to Islam and Muslims guided by the Holy book and the Sunna, in actual fact these actions are absolutely corruptive and criminal rejected by Sharia law and basic human instinct, and many verses in the Quran firmly criminalize such actions and warn from companionship with those who do such actions).⁽¹⁾

Many statements to that effect were issued by Islamists and other educated crowds.

So who is the true representative of Wahhabism?

Is it the Saudi society and its scholars, citizens, and intellectuals? Or is it the youth who many of them admitted to receiving their terrorist ideology from active movements produced by the frustration and suffocation of many in the Muslim World who suffer under tyranny and the continuous insults and assault on Muslims at the hand of major powers; spearheaded by America and others who insist on submerging Muslim communities in Westernization.

Third: Is it logical or normal if a person comes out of a society and commits terrorism, that his behavior be generalized to condemn all the individuals of that society?

(1) Abdulrahman Alzinaidi, previous reference, p 446- 447.

Such a concept is outrageous and unacceptable by any sane person with a sound mind. Thus if that was the case then the entire American society is a terrorist Society, because Timothy McVeigh (an American National) was the one behind the bombing of the Federal building in Oklahoma City in 1996, and according to this –twisted logic- the Norwegian society is also a terrorist society, because Anders Breivik (a Norwegian National) was the one behind the bombing in Oslo in July 2011, especially considering that the motive behind his actions was a religious and racism prejudice ideology.

So then how can the Saudi society be described as a society dominated by a Salafi Wahhabi Doctrine that produces and exports terrorism?! It is a skewed and twisted logic uttered only by unjust oppressors and hypocrites who display to people the opposite of what festers in their hearts. Also if sane and sound minds accepted such twisted logic, then the whole world would be a terrorist and safety and security would only be on uninhabited planets.

Fourth: the non-existent relation between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and terrorism is a fact asserted and proved by the highest investigative authority of the events of September 11, it is the committee of the events of September 11 formed by the former American president George Bush (junior) and the Congress, to investigate all which is related to the attacks, and the committee's report is on the internet for whoever is interested in viewing it. Furthermore, the committee declared

Saudi Salafism

the innocence of the Kingdom from any involvement in the events of September 11. The astonishing thing was that even though the committee found that the Kingdom gave no aid or support to the terrorists, yet the news papers' headlines continued to speak about the relation between Saudi Arabia and terrorism as an absolute fact, but what was worse than that reckless hatred flowing from the mouths and pens of commentators, was the fear and ignorance that took hold of their minds, often to the point that it became very difficult for journalists to stand against what had become a given fact.⁽¹⁾

Finally, it must be said with no hesitation for the generations to understand; terrorism in the world is caused by specific political and ideological circles in the West to achieve their ambitions and interests.!!

Yes , those beneficiary circles, especially in America, are the reason behind terrorism, because if Al Qaida is the movement behind all the terrorist activities the world have witnessed in the last few years, it was America who supported and provided it with money, weaponry, and equipment to curb the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979 and after), and when the mission was over and America no longer needed the Arab youth to fight the Soviets in order to prevent them from having access to warm waters, it abandoned them and left them after training them in combat. Not long after that; as America became more and more anti-Islam and pro-

(1) Khalid Al Maena: "The Saudi Government and Al Qaida". Part of researches published in the book: (Saudis and Terrorism: World View). Previous reference, p 406

Israel in Palestine and other, Al Qaida declared war against America and all who follow in its political shadow.

Future generations may not accept this frightening and shocking truth, but it must be written and documented, because many who witnessed it today refuse to believe it, and continue to repeat and echo what the Western writers say; that Muslims in general and Saudis in particular are the causers and makers of terrorism, in order to turn the facts upside down and forge the events and documents.

Wahhabism of (The Petrodollar)

The third sector (charitable work) in the West enjoys great admiration from governments and people alike, and billions of dollars flow annually to support active charitable organizations of different causes; religion, culture, rescue, humanitarian activities and other. As a matter of fact many business giants in the West allocate big chunks of their wealth to generate revenues for charity during their lives and after their death. Large numbers and statistics show the importance of the charitable third sector's programs in the West. In 2001, the year Western governments launched a vicious war against the charitable organizations in the Muslim World in general and in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in particular, non-profit religious organizations in the United States received over 80 billion dollars in donations, and the United States of America supported the local charitable organizations with more than 212 billion dollars, considering that the number of non-profit

Saudi Salafism

charitable organizations in the United States in 2001 reached close to 1,429,219.(1)

Long before that date and after it in the United States and other countries, governments, people and the wealthy people gave support to Christian missionary campaigns all over the world, offering academic grants and scholarships to Muslims and others, and Christian missionaries and priests roamed the world supported by their governments and people, offering food and medicine to the poor and needy with one hand and the Bible with the other hand in an attempt to bring them in to Christianity. They see that as their right and that no one should object to that. Yet, history never once recorded that The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia or any other Muslim country ever declared any religious, media or political war against the charitable organizations in the West or objecting to the spreading of Christianity or Western culture in the countries which these Missionary organizations reach.

Every person in the world is aware that Western establishments offer donations from Western governments and Western nations to every spot on Earth, giving aid, building Churches, schools, orphanages and infirmaries, not to mention sending armies to enforce what they see as democracy and human rights, and they consider all of that legitimate work and ethical practice celebrated by international organizations, the media and decision makers.

(1) Mohammad Abdullah Alsaloomi. The Charitable Sector and Claims of Tterrorism. Previous reference, p 342- 344.

However, when the issue involves Muslims, the case takes a completely different direction unacceptable by any religion, ethical standards or humanity. The fact is that Western writings, that accuse the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia of funding Salafi activities in the world in support of what the West calls (Saudi Wahhabism), lack the minimum degree of neutrality and the standards of objectivity and constructive criticism. Therefore when Saudi establishments perform their Islamic role in building Mosques (Masjids), Islamic schools and centers, and in offering aid to the poor Muslim countries and Muslim minorities in different parts of the world, it is considered as spreading terrorism, radicalism and hate against the West, and an attempt to turn Muslim nations against all which is non-Islamic!!

Targeting the Kingdom and attempting to distort its image appears clearly in the discussions of what the Western writings call (the shady activities of the Saudi-Salafi establishments). Also when Western writings bring up this issue, they actually mean the charitable and educational organizations in the world, those which receive aid from the Saudi government, its scholars and business men, and many of its citizens.

The reports that attack the Saudi role ignore the fact that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia maintained its important role in humanitarian and rescue aid in different parts of the world, none the less in the poor regions of Africa and Asia and other continents of the world, over 70 countries have

Saudi Salafism

benefited from the Saudi aid in humanitarian, educational and rehabilitative fields offered by Islamic organizations and establishments in the Kingdom. In addition to the humanitarian aid, the strong funding of building Mosques, drilling wells and erecting Islamic centers, the Kingdom has dropped its debts that are owed by over 11 Muslim countries in the sum of over 6 billion dollars in support of the economy of those countries. A gesture greatly praised by the United Nations as a humanitarian role offered by the Kingdom. These positive aspects of aid, efforts, and Saudi initiatives are met with deliberate dismissal by Western writings, and the focus is only on the attempt of linking any hostile actions, committed by groups or individuals deviating from the proper Islamic conduct, to Islam and Salafism in Saudi Arabia, as if these writings are saying: (these are the Salafis, the extremists, the Wahhabis that are supported by Saudi Arabia and its establishments).

It is quite ironic to link Saudi with funding extremism and radicalism that leads to terrorism, when in fact Saudi Arabia was one of the first countries that suffered from this plague, and were targeted by many terrorist attacks on its civil and military establishments. Also the Saudi government made it clear on more than one occasion that Islam is against violence, assaulting others and seeking destruction on Earth, and that terrorism has no religion or country. It has also stressed on the importance of working on a clear definition of terrorism, and in turn joining international efforts to fight it.

The Saudi government also called for conferences to address this phenomenon, study its causes and form solutions to defeat it. The Saudi government took the initiative in hosting a national conference to fight terrorism held in the Capital Riyadh in 2005, and other conferences held by many other Saudi establishments. The Kingdom continued to deal with terrorism as a complex and negative phenomenon that must be faced and combated on all levels: ideological, social, economic, and political. In addition, the Kingdom called for the swift and immediate resolution of the many suspended international disputes as an effective way to sever the life line of terrorism and its causes, it has also called for signing national agreements and treaties to fight terrorism and to execute punishment and penalties to all who are found to be involved in terrorist activities. The Kingdom explained as well the necessity to establish a new international world order focused on fighting poverty and promoting growth.

While Western writings perceive the Kingdom's efforts with ridicule and dismissal, and view its support to countries and organizations and its adoption to charitable and human relief as a way of supporting Salafism, Wahhbism, and radicalism, the truth and facts stand strong as a testimony to the contrary. In fact, Adnan Khalil Basha, the secretary general of the International Islamic Relief Organization said that the United Nations issued a report stating the pivotal role played by the Kingdom in different regions of the world. He further explained, during his speech on the Kingdom's

Saudi Salafism

efforts in serving the Islamic affairs, in the first International Conference's sessions which was organized by the Islamic University in al Medina al Munawara from the 13th to the 15th of the month of Muharam 1432 of the Hijri calendar, that the United Nations stated in its report that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia gave 1.9% of its gross national revenue in 2011 as humanitarian and relief aid to Muslim countries and nations around the world, exceeding by that all the world's countries including the United States of America.

The Kingdom remained the largest country in the world in offering unconditional humanitarian aid in the past three decades, leading as the number one on the list of countries that offer voluntarily unconditional aid as funding for humanitarian relief work in 2008 and after, by donating more than three billion Saudi riyals to the Anti-Poverty Fund in the Muslim World, in addition to its financial contributions in balancing the budgets of 18 international funding organizations.

The Kingdom also contributed in offering parcels, grants, and facilitated loans to many Muslim and non-Muslim countries in the past three decades in amounts exceeding 375 billion Saudi riyals(100 billion dollars), benefiting close to 95 growing countries in the equivalent of 4% of the gross national revenue of the Kingdom. Furthermore, the Kingdom waved its due debts on poor countries in amounts exceeding 22.5 billion Saudi riyals (6 billion dollars).⁽¹⁾

(1) <http://www.iu.edu.sa/web/news.aspx?id=946>

Such vital statistics are never positively mentioned or appreciated by Western writings; on the contrary, these writings only focus on the Kingdom's contribution to building Mosques and supporting educational institutions, claiming that it is a way of spreading extremism and radicalism, deforming this support into a controversial issue in order to tarnish Saudi money and link it to the terrorism phenomenon. Thus this is a matter that requires the just and fair people with sound minds in the West to review and reconsider, in order to reveal the truth about the charitable work of Saudi Arabia and prevent it from being buried under the mountains of lies that fill Western writings.

Conclusion

The reform cause of adhering to the correct and sound Islamic path has faced many obstacles, attacks and criticism of different means and methods through the ages.

Also adhering to the path of the virtuous successors continues to face monumental challenges, challenges tainted with disputes and huge controversy. Thus, the need for wide movement on many fronts had become more important than ever, in order to clarify the many doubts and controversies that continued to surround Salafism and Salafis in the mind of the Western general view, at both the popular and elite levels, and went further than that in an attempt to nail Islam as a religion and a way of life.

In addition for this movement to ever be successful, it must be truthful and legitimate, and the issue must be laid on the negotiation table through calm dialogue far from violence and respectful of the other. And It becomes more apparent from reality and previous experiences that clarifying the image of Salafism, its truth and ideology, collides with many obstacles and challenges that require continuous efforts, given the fact

that confusion and doubt surrounding the ideology and truth about Salafism had become more complicated than ever in the world today.

In turn, many doubts have become given facts in the Western public view, many stereotypes and uncertainties have become absolute facts widely popularized by advanced media tools backed by great financial and human resources. Yet still much of the claims presented against Salafism and Islam in Saudi Arabia by Western media and research centers in the West under the banner of freedom of speech and human rights, lack evidence and logic and in need of hard facts. Also in the midst of this campaign of defamation, along came the books and articles that attack Islam and Muslims and describe them as terrorists, radicals and violent, and along came the cartoonist satires mocking and ridiculing the Prophet of mercy, peace and blessings of God be upon him.

In reality, and based on personal dialogues with academics and Western media personnel who visited the Kingdom in the last few years, it became more apparent that they do not have information relating to what they write about Salafism and Islam in Saudi Arabia. Many have admitted to the weakness of their information about this matter.

There is a big problematic issue when dealing with the Westerner. The Westerner has taken in a belief that is beyond any doubt about what they think of Islam and Muslims, in fact he grew up in an environment where media and research



Saudi Salafism

centers have constructed the preconceived and traditional image which continue to dominate Western thinking, and what the media and centers circulate have become the reliable source and reference for Westerners and others, even some Muslims, when speaking about Islam and Saudi related issues.