The watcher and the watched: The Role of Intellectuals and Representations of 'Wahhabism'

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

ROHAN DAVIS

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Abstract

In an international context framed by heightened anxiety about ‘radical Islam’, this thesis inquires into how one kind of ‘radical Islam’ often referred to as ‘Wahhabism’ has been represented by liberal, neo-conservative and Marxist intellectuals especially, though not exclusively, in the US. The thesis begins by establishing that ‘Wahhabism’ itself is a contested category associated with how scholars have represented ‘Wahhabism’ in the literature. This opens up into a consideration of problems to do with how intellectuals represent complex social and political phenomena and issues like how competing truth claims are adjudicated and how these issues have been addressed in the sociology of intellectuals.

This matters given the roles intellectuals play as mediators or producers of knowledge in a modern political context characterised by a heightened sense of anxiety about Islamic terrorism. These representations have the ability to influence things like public opinion and the policy and decision making process including foreign policy. With a view to understanding how and why these intellectuals have represented ‘Wahhabism’ in particular ways, the thesis outlines an approach based on critical discourse analysis. In this way the thesis shows how different kinds of intellectuals use devices like metaphors and analogies as well as draw on themata to generate their ‘representations’ of ‘Wahhabism’.

The thesis argues that liberal, neo-conservative and Marxist intellectuals adopt the roles of ‘Movement intellectuals’ and treat ‘Wahhabism’ as a threat albeit in quite different ways to provide mostly negative representations of ‘Wahhabism’. For liberals influenced about ideas about ‘progress’ and individualism, ‘Wahhabism’ is typically seen as denying freedom, a threat to secular society and an obstacle to progress. For neo-conservatives influenced by religious ideas about Israel and fated endless conflict between ‘Good’ and ‘Evil’, the ‘Wahhabi’ is a savage and ‘Wahhabism’ is an enemy of Israel. For Marxists influenced by ideas about ‘progress’, atheism and man’s relationship with nature, ‘Wahhabism’ is typically seen as a ‘natural’ part of Capitalism, a tool used by the ruling class to maintain their positions of influence and as indicative of ‘backwardness’.
An intellectual is someone whose mind watches itself.

I like this, because I am happy to be both halves, the watcher and the watched.

“Can they be brought together?”

This is a practical question.¹

Albert Camus, *Notebooks*

¹ NB: In Camus’ political and intellectual tradition i.e., a European one, he understood that the word ‘practical’ means ‘ethical and political’ not whatever people here think they mean by it…probably nothing in fact…
Introduction

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

T.S. Eliot, The Four Quartets

Like so many other authors involved in writing a book or doctoral dissertation there is always some kind of deeply personal motivation involved in what may otherwise seem to be a purely intellectual or theoretical enterprise. In my case it began when my love of travelling and for a Swedish woman led me to Stockholm in 2008. Living in a small apartment in a student complex in a suburb south of Stockholm called Hammarby Sjöstad, it soon became clear to me that if I wanted to have an ‘authentic’ Swedish experience then I needed to at least understand and speak some Swedish. I decided to enrol in a beginner-level Swedish language course taught in an adult education institute in a small suburb called Huddinge located on the outskirts of Stockholm.

The beginner’s Swedish class ran twice a week for a couple of hours with no more than half a dozen people attending each class. The classes were intimate, relaxed and enjoyable. I eventually learned enough Swedish to understand the checkout girl at the local supermarket. More interesting were the friends I made in class. It was a chance encounter with one young man in particular that would forever change how I would see and make sense of the world and that would inspire this thesis.

My new friend was from Palestine. As we got to know each other during lunch and coffee breaks, my new friend began to share more and more about his life particularly what it was like for him, his family and other Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. He told me about how Israeli Defence Forces
had forcibly removed him and his family from their homes. With no place to live, they fled to Jordan where they lived in a refugee camp for the next few years. According to him he was simply ‘born in the wrong place at the wrong time’.

His subsequent application for asylum was eventually accepted and he was resettled in Kiruna, one of Sweden’s most northern, darkest and coldest cities. It could not be any more different to the parched landscape of Palestine. Following the end of his employment in a factory in Kiruna, he moved to suburban Stockholm where he lived with three other Arab refugees. Unable to speak Swedish, his desire to communicate with the people of his adopted nation inspired him to join the Swedish language class.

I had not previously been interested in the ‘situation’ in Palestine. To me the ‘situation’ was easily understood. The Palestinians were ‘terrorists’ inspired by ‘radical Islam’. It was their religious beliefs that inspired them to kill Israeli-Jews. I understood this because I relied on Australian mainstream media. However this narrative was completely contradicted by what my Palestinian friend was telling me. He was not a terrorist nor did he hate Jews. In fact he abhorred violence. Instead of making bombs and planning terrorist attacks, he played soccer, enjoyed smoking (a habit he picked up in the Jordanian refugee camp to help suppress his hunger and pass time) and drinking coffee. Like most people he dreamed of falling in love and having a family. What was most interesting was that he did not hate nor did he speak of exacting revenge against those responsible for evicting him from his home and breaking up his family.

After speaking with my Palestinian friend I began to understand there was another side to the story. He offered a competing narrative I had not heard before. Here I was in cold and dreary Stockholm getting a first-hand account of the pain and suffering inflicted on this man, his family and his people. I remember thinking if this happened to me I would be filled with such rage and hate that I would dedicate the rest of my life to exacting revenge on those responsible. The stories I had been told about the ‘situation’ in
Palestine simply did not match up with what I understood to be happening on the ground. So I began to go online searching for alternative news sites and websites. The more I read the more I was aware of the many different narratives and categories writers were using when representing the ‘terrorist threat’ allegedly posed by Palestinians. One of the categories that tweaked my interest was something called ‘Wahhabism’.

I had remembered hearing this term ‘Wahhabism’ immediately following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. Commentators used it when describing the religion of the Saudi Arabian hijackers. In 2008 I noticed that many writers online were linking it to Saudi Arabia, claiming it was their ‘state-sanctioned religion’ and that it inspired ‘radicalism’ and ‘extremism’. However the more reading I did the less sure I was about the relation between this version of Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia and the situation in Palestine. My Palestinian friend had certainly never mentioned or used the term.

My friendship with a Palestinian and my reading about the situation in the Middle East planted a seed that has since grown to become this PhD thesis. It has motivated my research and helped me to formulate the research questions I want to address.

**Research Questions**

My research seeks to understand how the phenomenon of ‘Wahhabism’ has been represented by authors writing in a post 9/11 world characterised by anxiety about terrorism between and inside states and in particular how different groups of intellectuals belonging to the liberal, neo-conservative and Marxist intellectual traditions and the different truth claims they rely on to support these representations of ‘Wahhabism’. My research is also designed to understand something of the way the different ethical, political and religious motivations might inform these representations.
I want to address a number of research questions to help me focus my research. Firstly how has ‘Wahhabism’ been represented in the scholarly literature? What kinds of problems are there with these interpretative exercises? Secondly what kinds of problems that can be found in the sociology of intellectuals warrant this enquiry? Thirdly how do liberal, neo-conservative and Marxist intellectuals represent ‘Wahhabism’? Finally how should we understand and make sense of the particular ways liberal, neo-conservative and Marxist intellectuals represent ‘Wahhabism’?

A Rationale

At this point it is important to set out briefly why I am focusing on intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’ and not whatever it is that is referred to as ‘Wahhabism’. There are a number of considerations that warrant the shape my inquiry has taken. Firstly though this proposition needs and gets some more elaboration later in the thesis, the basic difficulty with engaging with ‘Wahhabism’ itself is that there are good grounds for doubting that it has some natural or objective reality that can be ‘grasped’ immediately as if it were some natural object.

We cannot see, feel or touch the social and intellectual processes constituting it. What we can do is examine the various representations of ‘Wahhabism’. Secondly it is impossible to study a phenomena in the social world for which we do not have a standard or widely agreed upon conceptualisation or definition. ‘Wahhabism’ as I also indicate is a contested category. Let me start with the first proposition which owes a good deal to the far-reaching critique of a long standing tradition running through the history of Western philosophy after Aristotle and Augustine that treated language and its categories as if they were labels that could be simply applied to real things.

This view holds that a ‘real thing’ exists in some external reality and corresponds with the concept in human thought to which the linguistic word refers. What we can quickly refer to as the ‘Linguistic Turn’ associated in anglo-American philosophy with philosophers like Ludwig Wittgenstein and
Richard Rorty and in Europe with the deconstructionist turn announced by Ferdinand de Saussure and later by Derrida has subverted that tradition. As Saussure explains, this approach …assumes that ideas already exist independently of words; it does not tell us whether a name is vocal or psychological in nature… finally, it lets us assume that the linking of a name and a thing is a very simple operation—an assumption that is anything but true. But this rather naive approach can bring us near the truth by showing us that the linguistic unit is a double entity, one formed by the associating of two terms...²

It was Ferdinand de Saussure who pointed out that it is impossible for definitions of concepts to exist independently of or outside a specific language system. Concepts like ‘Wahhabism’ cannot exist without humans creating a name for and attaching meaning to it. Authors like Gustav Bergmen have built on these ideas, emphasising the key role language plays in constituting the representations of reality that we can then work with.³ This is why my thesis focuses on representations and because they are a major focal point of my study it matters that we have an initial understanding of what I mean when I speak about “representations of ‘Wahhabism’” and how they work.

The term ‘representation’ means ‘to bring to mind by description’ and ‘to symbolise, serve as a sign or symbol of, serve as the type or embodiment of’. It comes from Old French representer meaning ‘present, show, portray’ and from the Latin term repraesentare meaning ‘make present, set in view, show, exhibit, display’. We can trace the study of representations to Classical Greece when Plato and Aristotle considered literature to be an important form of representation. In fact Aristotle believed all of the arts to be valuable forms of representation seeing them as a distinctly human activity. According to Aristotle “From childhood, men have an instinct for

representation, and in this respect man differs from the other animals that he is far more imitative and learns his lessons by representing things.”

Since then modern philosophers like Ernst Cassirer have focused their attentions on representations. They have tended to understand man to be *homo symbolicum* or a ‘representational animal’ treating him as a creature whose distinctive character is the creating and manipulating of ‘signs’, which are understood as things that ‘stand for’ or ‘take the place of’ something else. As I will indicate later, representations are very important elements of political theory. Political theorists have focused on them since at least the eighteenth century when Edmund Burke sought to deal with the reoccurring question about the relation between aesthetic or semiotic representation (things that ‘stand for’ other things’) and political representation (people who ‘act for’ others).

W. J. T. Mitchell offers a useful way of thinking about representations. He says we should think of a representation as a triangular relation of something or someone, by something or someone and to someone. It is only the third part that must be a person. In light of this ‘Wahhabism’ can be understood as a representation of something, by an author or authors and given to an audience. The second relation in particular is of central importance in this study.

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Aristotle wrote that representations differ from one another according to object, manner and means. The ‘object’ is that which is represented, the ‘manner’ is the way in which it is represented and the ‘means’ is the material used. In this study the ‘object’ is ‘Wahhabism’, the ‘manner’ is the ways in which intellectuals use language to represent it and the document i.e. the newspaper article, magazine article or publication online is the ‘means’. Authors are then able to use language in different ways to help achieve their desired outcomes. Authors can for example use particular rhetorical techniques like analogies, metaphorical language, similes, neologisms and they can also construct violent accounts in such ways that persuade the reader to either condemn or condone particular acts of violence. A major focus of this thesis is understanding how intellectuals use these particular rhetorical techniques to help achieve their intended aims.

It is also important that we have a deeper understanding of the relation between the representational material and that which it is said to ‘stand in for’ or represent. Semioticians typically differentiate between three kinds of representational relationships, the ‘icon’, ‘symbol’ and ‘index’. It is the symbolic representation that is pertinent to this thesis. Symbols tend to be based on arbitrary stipulation rather than their resemblance between the sign and the thing signified. Authors of texts representing ‘Wahhabism’ use text to stand in for what they believe to be ‘Wahhabism’ ‘out there’ because ‘we say so’ and because we have agreed to regard it this way. Representation in language is symbolic in that letters, words and whole texts can represent or ‘stand it for’ states of affairs without actually resembling the situation ‘out there’. We are, as Ludwig Wittgenstein famously points out, playing ‘language games’.

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Ian Hacking is among the authors to have raised some important questions when studying representations. His ideas encourage us to consider whether we are explicitly or implicitly denying the existence of the natural world and if we are ignoring the possibility that some representations of the world are better than others? What I mean when I say ‘Wahhabism’ is an observer-dependent phenomenon represented by an author and to audience is that the experience of ‘Wahhabism’ in the social world comes into existence when categories are created for it, and that these categories are shaped by authors with differing prejudices operating in different social and cultural contexts.

As we will see the variability in representations of ‘Wahhabism’ across time and space (between intellectuals belonging to different traditions) are illustrative of this. Pursing this line of reasoning provides for powerful insights into the cultural fabric pertaining to the constructing ‘Wahhabism’.

I am not denying that an observer-independent reality exists in the natural world nor am I asserting that everything is socially constructed. In terms of my ontological and epistemological approach I accept that a reality does exist and my interest is in how people make sense of it. I am not deciding which representations are more ‘truthful’ or ‘better’, rather I am critiquing the different truth claims authors rely on when representing ‘Wahhabism’. Just as is the case with Hacking’s work on ‘making up people’ in which he argues the creating of classifications like ‘fugue’ creates ‘new ways to be a person’, the ideas motivating my study of representations is that authors conceptions of the phenomenon ‘Wahhabism’ shapes both the ways in which we respond to it and treat the people and groups we ascribe as belonging to it.

‘Representations’ have indeed been the source of much scholarly debate especially in the field of literature and have drawn the attention of preeminent thinkers like Plato. He accepted the common view that literature

is a representation of life and for that reason he believed it should be banished from the state. He understood representations as substitutes for the things themselves or, even more worryingly, as ‘false’ or ‘illusory substitutes’ that have the ability to inspire ‘antisocial’ emotions. In Plato’s republic of rational virtue only particular kinds of representations carefully picked and controlled by the state were allowed to exist. If we look at the situation in the world today we can see that many states think and act in the same way, however the emergence of new social media continues to challenge this control.

As will become clear in this study, this is just one reason why ‘Wahhabism’ means very different things to different people, a point accepted by some of the better studies of ‘Wahhabism’. In effect ‘Wahhabism’ is a deeply contested category.

‘Wahhabism’: A Contested Category

‘Wahhabism’ is conventionally and popularly understood to be a conservative version of Islam, which has its origins in Saudi Arabia, where it has said to have a substantial following to this day. It is generally agreed that Muhammad Ibn Abd-al Wahhab was the founder of this version of Islam and that this tradition played a decisive role in creating the modern Saudi state in 1932. Beyond these understandings ‘Wahhabism’ is a heavily

14 Ibid.
contested category. This quality is captured in the Wikipedia entry on the ‘Wahhabi’ movement. Drawing as is so often the case with Wikipedia on a rich assortment of sources of varying degrees of credibility, Wikipedia variously and tendentiously describes ‘Wahhabism’ as:

a reactionary religious movement or offshoot branch of Islam variously described as “orthodox”, “ultraconservative”, “austere”, “fundamentalist”, “puritanical” (or “puritan”), an Islamic “reform movement” to restore “pure monotheistic worship”, or an “extremist movement.”

In the ‘West’ ‘Wahhabism’ has been frequently singled out for attention as the source of modern Islamic terrorism. For example the final report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks claimed that ‘Islamist terrorism’ had found its inspiration in a ‘long tradition of extreme intolerance’ that flows ‘through the founders of ‘Wahhabism’’, the Muslim Brotherhood and prominent Salafi thinkers. As recently as June 2013 the Directorate-General for External Policies of the European Parliament issued a report whose author Claude Moniquet warns that:

The risks posed by Salafist/Wahhabi terrorism go far beyond the geographical scope of the Muslim world. The attacks on New York, Washington DC., London and Madrid reminds us of this.

Equally and given long-standing and close ties between a succession of US Administrations and the Saudi Government, it has mattered that Saudi officials have long insisted that Islam is tolerant and peaceful, and have denied allegations that their Government ‘exports’ religious extremism or

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supports extremist political movements. Likewise careful scholarship by writers like Trevor Stanley suggests the phenomenon of Islamic terrorism cannot be adequately explained as the export of Saudi ‘Wahhabism’ as many claim. Stanley for example claims that Salafism, which he identifies as a movement beginning in Egypt and imported into Saudi society during the reign of King Faisal, is the ideological heritage of groups such as al-Qaeda.

This contest also involves Islamic scholars. Different representations of ‘Wahhabism’ offered by ‘Islamic’ scholars like Khaled Abou El Fadl and Stephen Schwartz are a microcosm of a much larger intellectual debate taking place in a range of scholarly and public intellectual forums. Both are inspired and motivated by different religious and political interests when representing ‘Wahhabism’. El Fadl claims to represent the majority of Muslims he believes to be ‘moderate,’ ‘peace-loving’ and who like many in the ‘West’ believe in human rights, embrace ‘modernity’ and respect women. According to his ‘moderate’ Islamic approach ‘Wahhabism’ is a corrupted version of Islam existing on the lunatic fringe of the wider Islamic faith.

Schwartz seems strongly motivated by a desire to promote his Sufi Islamic beliefs. Based on his personal experiences with Sufism in the Balkan region throughout the 1990s, Schwartz claims Sufism can provide the much needed ‘voice of reason’ at a time when ‘radical Islamists’ like the ‘Wahhabis’ with the support of the Saudi state are inspiring terrorism. Like El Fadl, Schwartz understands ‘Wahhabism’ to be a ‘corrupted’ and ‘perverse’ version of Islam, however this is because it does not align with his own Sufi beliefs rather than the ‘modern’ and ‘progressive’ interpretation of Islam El Fadl claims to follow.

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As both intellectuals are offering different particular Islamic views both are clearly inspired by differing political and religious interests. It is unsurprising that both also rely on different kinds of evidence to support their claims. In terms made famous by Benedict Anderson, both El Fadl and Schwartz are constructing slightly different ‘imaginary communities’. The differences in approaches and reasoning only increase as we consider other scholarly representations of ‘Wahhabism’.

The Role of Intellectuals

This discussion begins to indicate why we might pay some attention to the work of intellectuals and the way intellectuals represent ‘Wahhabism’. There are a number of good grounds for doing so. As the sociology of intellectuals acknowledges, what intellectuals do matters deeply. Intellectuals writing in newspapers, scholarly journals, online and in magazines, produce a lot of what we think we know and understand to be ‘Wahhabism’. As many writers have acknowledged it is these intellectuals who are ‘producing knowledge’ in the social world in the form of representations which are informing our judgments and decisions particularly with regards to foreign policy. If we want to understand and make sense of some of the information informing the modern political debate and policy and decision making processes regarding ‘Wahhabism’ then we must pay some attention to the way intellectuals

represent ‘Wahhabism’. The pertinent issue in this study is that different intellectuals make sense of ‘Wahhabism’.

The contest I have referred to seeking to define, explain and understand ‘Wahhabism’ has been engaged by intellectuals, commentators and polemicists drawn from different intellectual and political traditions and frameworks, using different rhetorical techniques, making different claims to truth and who are motivated by different ethical, political and religious considerations. The sites of this contest include the scholarly literature, mass media publications like newspapers and magazine articles as well as the blogosphere. The significance of this becomes readily apparent when we consider the effects intellectuals’ representations of phenomena like ‘Wahhabism’ can have on politicians, public opinion and policy making in a context characterised by heightened anxiety about terrorism. This suggests there are a number of issues about the role played by intellectuals in public opinion formation and policy making worth exploring.

We currently have a situation where a rise in ‘spin’ has been accompanied by an increasing demand on the part of policy makers and governments that are increasingly relying on evidence when making policy.27 Both the use of spin and the appeal to evidence rely on appeals to a heritage of Enlightenment assumptions and approaches to securing the conditions of truth: on the one side public administrators lay claim to the rigorous collection of evidence to evaluate the value of their legislative programs and policies, while governments rely on the scientific study of the effects of the science of public relations invented by Edward Bernays in the 1920s on the state of public opinion.28

This conjunction has meant that since 2001 we have seen governments rely on the creative presentation of facts or ‘spin’ presented as ‘evidence’ to manipulate public opinion and mobilise support for policies involving armed

28Ibid., 36.
invasions of countries like Afghanistan and Iraq and dramatic increases in security and intelligence gathering measures to protect ‘the West’ from Islamic terrorism. Certain ‘Western’ government’s intent on pursuing their own political aims and goals have proved to be disingenuous and deceptive when manipulating and fabricating ‘facts’ to support their policies. The quintessential example of this was the intelligence failure inspiring the Coalition’s invasions of Iraq in March 2003. US and British governments claimed to have evidence that Saddam Hussein’s regime possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction which threatened the security of the West. The result is a situation Hannah Arendt commented on when writing about the politics of the ‘Cold War’ in the 1960s, when she argued that even factual truths have become open to manipulation.

What is interesting to me and what helps animate and legitimate this research is the role intellectuals representing ‘Wahhabism’ are playing in the modern political context. I am especially interested in intellectuals’ roles as representatives of particular interest groups keen to promote their beliefs and values. I share this interest with many prominent scholars who have dedicated a lot of time and energy to making sense of the role of intellectuals in the modern political context as part of a tradition we call the ‘sociology of intellectuals’.

This tradition began with groundbreaking work by Mannheim. Since Mannheim we have seen an evolving tradition of inquiry and debate between

29 Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction: “The Assessment of the British Government” also known as the “September Dossier”, was published by the British government September 24, 2002. It alleged that Iraq possessed WMD including chemical weapons and biological weapons. It also alleged that Iraq had reconstituted its nuclear weapons program. All of the allegations have been since proven to be false. US Senate Intelligence Committee found many of the administration’s pre-war statements about Iraqi WMD like Bush’s claim that “The people of the United States and our friends and allies will not live at the mercy of an outlaw regime that threatens the peace with weapons of mass murder,” were not supported by the underlying intelligence. See “Press Release of Intelligence Committee Senate Intelligence Committee Unveils Final Phase II Reports on Prewar Iraq Intelligence--Two Bipartisan Reports Detail Administration Misstatements on Prewar Iraq Intelligence, and Inappropriate Intelligence Activities by Pentagon Policy Office.”
http://intelligence.senate.gov/press/record.cfm?id=298775


intellectuals as diverse as Gramsci, Sartre, Aron, Shils, Nettl, Berger, Foucault, Habermas, Butler, Chomsky, Watzer and Said, who have attempted to say what is that defines an intellectual and how we are to best understand their social significance. Some of these writers like Foucault, Chomsky and Said have understood intellectuals as living on the margins or even outside of ‘society’, a circumstance warranted by their pursuit of ‘truth’ and of speaking ‘truth to power’. Others like Habermas treat them as critical to the maintenance of a ‘public sphere’ and to the health of a democratic order. There are also scholars like Gramsci who treat intellectuals as social animals bound to particular interest groups who use various ideological apparatuses like the media to help impose particular values and beliefs on society and then legitimate them. The debates about the role of intellectuals which I reprise at length in the first chapter helps shape some of the issues I explore later in this thesis.


35 Gramsci writes Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields. See Antonio Gramsci, “The intellectuals,” in Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks, trans. D Boothman (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1995), 5.
The ‘public sphere’ is an important concept I refer to numerous times throughout this study and therefore warrants closer attention. The representations of ‘Wahhabism’ provided by the intellectuals studied in this thesis appear in places like mainstream American newspapers, magazines, online and books. I maintain that we can categorise these different mediums as belonging to a ‘public sphere’. Often when we think about the nature of the public sphere we think of a community or public acting in a particular space. It is sometimes assumed civil dialogue flourishes in this setting so as long as it is free from domination and exclusion. This kind of approach fails to recognise that communication in public rarely involves widespread and equal participation. We must appreciate the fragmented nature of these spaces in which there are few who receive attention and many who give it. We must also understand that these spaces are largely comprised of audiences who are generally watching, reading or observing what is happening.

Jürgen Habermas is often credited as providing the quintessential notion of the public sphere.\textsuperscript{36} He conceptualises a public sphere as a society engaged in critical public debate and argues that certain conditions must be meet in order for a space to constitute a public sphere i.e. it must allow for the formation of public opinion, all citizens must have access to it, there must be freedom from economic and political control that allows citizens to speak about matters of general interest and there must be debate about the general rules governing relations. Habermas’ normative account has been extremely influential and is an interesting philosophical idea however I believe we need a much more pragmatic conceptualisation of the public sphere like that offered by Ari Adut.\textsuperscript{37}

Adut offers a semiotic theoretical conceptualisation of the public sphere that fits perfectly with my understanding of how representations work. Key to his conceptualisation is the idea of ‘access’. According to Adut there are three ways people can access the public sphere. One is to physically access a space like for example when we meet to talk in a street. Two we can have representational access meaning one’s name, image, sounds or words can appear in spaces like newspapers or

\textsuperscript{36} see Jürgen Habermas, \textit{The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society} (Cambridge: Polity, 1989).
magazines. Three we can have sensory access when the contents of the space are made available to our senses.

The term ‘public sphere’ implies general access however the reality is very different. Many public spaces have obstacles preventing most of us from being seen or having our opinions heard. This is especially the case when dealing with spaces that tend to receive a lot of publicity. Generally speaking the more publicity a space receives the harder it is to be heard or seen. Mainstream US newspapers like the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* and Television studios broadcasting the daily news are good examples. Conversely forums on websites that encourage inclusivity like *4Chan* provide examples of spaces that receive relatively less publicity but are easier to access.

When dealing with spaces that receive relatively high amounts of publicity physical access becomes very hard and representational access is highly valued. Nearly anyone can submit an opinion piece to these newspapers but very few if any will ever have their articles printed. Despite this few would deny that newspapers like the *New York Times* form an important part of what we conceptualise as the public sphere. As a space it does not grant general access but it does provide many with sensory access.

The public sphere as conceptualised by Adut is thus a generic term denoting all virtual or real spaces, the contents of which obtain general visibility or audibility. Key here is the term ‘virtual’ which points to the important role played by spaces online.

The internet as the new public sphere or as a key part of the public sphere continues to be a focus of much scholarly enquiry as more users go online to get information.³⁸ The integral role played by social media in the recent Arab Spring shows just how important the online world has become.

At this point it is also important to clarify whom I believe to be an intellectual and on what basis I make these claims. There has and continues to be a lot of discussion about who is and who is not an intellectual. As we

³⁸ Peter Dahlgren is a prominent author studying this—see for example Peter Dahlgren, “The Internet, public spheres, and political communication: Dispersion and deliberation,” *Political Communication* 22 no. 2 (2006): 147-162, doi:10.1080/10584600590933160.
see with authors like Gramsci, Mannheim, Foucault and Said the conceptualising of who or what is an intellectual is often tied to the role and responsibilities these authors believe intellectuals should adopt and adhere to. In this thesis I reject the narrow and arguably prescriptive conception of the intellectual offered by authors like Said and Foucault where the intellectual is someone existing on the margins of society. Instead I adopt a much more inclusive approach that aligns more with the conceptualisations promoted by authors like Gramsci. In this study I understand the intellectual to be anyone who uses ideological apparatuses like the print and mass media and the newer digital technologies to produce and disseminate representations of ‘Wahhabism’.

Whereas those adopting a more narrow definition of the intellectual may distinguish between a commentator understood here as someone who expresses a written opinion on a subject in the ‘public sphere’ and an intellectual, my relatively more inclusive approach means that I treat a commentator as an intellectual. While I am influenced by authors like Gramsci, my conceptualisation of the intellectual is not Marxist in that I do not rely on any determinist assumptions about the work of the intellectual in relation to their class origins or affiliation. I do however link my understanding to a particular group which in this study are those writers who promote liberal, Marxist and neo-conservative ideas when representing ‘Wahhabism’.

I am also interested in the broader academic question about the role intellectuals play in creating what Anderson calls ‘Imagined Communities,’ and what Said calls ‘Imagined Geographies’. These scholars in addition to those like Hobsbawn, Smith, Suny and Kennedy are among those to recognise the important roles intellectuals play as catalysts in a variety of nationalist ideologies and movements. Animating and legitimating this

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41 Eric Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Anthony Smith, Theories of Nationalism (London: Duckworth,
thesis is the desire to understand and make sense of the role intellectuals representing ‘Wahhabism’ play in socially constructing a community that is imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group and the way intellectuals use text to create a perception of space that has helped inspire the modern Global War on Terror. It is in this sense then that intellectuals play a crucial role in shaping the politics of modern societies.

The Nature of the Political

The nature of the political is the second wider intellectual problem at stake in this study. How we are to understand politics including how we define it and what we think the aims of goals of politics are has been central to much scholarly debate. Early twentieth century authors like Carl Schmitt and Max Weber offer challenging accounts of ‘the political’ that controvert the conventional liberal framework. Weber and especially Schmitt have indicated why that tradition has assumed too readily that legal, rational and ethical norms have undergirded the legitimacy of liberal democracies, a position which has long been accorded a hegemonic conceptual status in the West. Authors like Bernard Crick and Simon Critchley have also contributed to a different kind of critique of the liberal tradition. For Crick and Critchley politics is about helping to end injustice and wrongs suffered by the Other. Like these scholars it is important to understand that intellectuals representing ‘Wahhabism’ make different assumptions that influence their representations. This matters when we begin to consider the influential role these representations can play in the policy-making process.

The relation between intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’ and the policy and decision-making process is the third key intellectual problem animating and legitimating this research. Bacchi provides an important and revisionist account of policy as a product of processes that leads to a particular way of representing political or policy problems. Her work is important because it helps show how policy works, how we are governed and how the practice of policy making implicitly constitutes us as subjects. Bacchi highlights the integral role intellectuals play in this process as it is they who are framing, choosing to highlight or ignore particular aspects of problems in their representations which then inform the policy making process.44

This raises some very important questions when we think that these intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’ have the ability to influence foreign policy in an age where ‘Western’ liberal governments are obsessed with the real or imagined threat posed by ‘radical Islamists’. This circumstance requires that we ask what are the bases for these representations? What are intellectuals choosing to emphasise and ignore and why? What particular claims to truth are intellectuals relying on to support their assessments of the situation?

This takes me to my fourth and final problematic animating and legitimating this research which is making sense of and dealing with the relation between truth and politics. This issue has been raised by a number of writers including Hannah Arendt. Arendt writes that we live in an age of mass manipulation where even the status of factual truth is likely to be challenged.45 We have as Stephen Toulmin and John Caputo more recently pointed out, moved beyond a conception of truth framed in terms of timeless and universal propositions, without needing to give up on the idea of truth itself.46 This entails that we still find ways of dealing with different claims to

44 Carol Bacchi, What’s the Problem Represented to Be? (New Jersey: Pearson Education Australia, 2009).
truth particularly those that are religious and political in origin or in substance.

Unable to make certain assumptions about truth that then requires me to both defend a particular view and test the veridicity of particular representations of ‘Wahhabism’ against this view, I instead propose dealing with the role prejudice plays in truth claims. In this study I follow Arendt’s advice and deal with the relation between truth and politics by identifying and unpacking the prejudices attached to and inspiring these truth claims.\(^{47}\) This speaks to the much larger problem of how we should treat truth claims in the political sphere which has major implications for things like making foreign policy.

In this research I have decided to focus on intellectuals belonging to three traditions, namely neo-liberalism, neo-conservatism, and Marxism. I have identified these traditions because they are among the most prominent traditions in fields like political theory and international relations and because they have had the most influence on governments in the modern political world. Neo-conservatives for example played a major role in the Bush Presidency (2001-8), an administration determined to both wage and lead the ‘Global War on Terror’ in a project that continues to dominate the modern international political context.\(^{48}\) Liberalism has long provided a large framework of political vocabulary and ideas which have informed ‘Western’ governments and international and local activists keen on transforming totalitarian Middle Eastern regimes into liberal democratic states.\(^{49}\) Finally


while Marxism at this point in time does not exercise the same degree of political influence as liberalism or neo-conservatism, it nonetheless remains intellectually significant in the wider academic and intellectual community.\textsuperscript{50}

To access the work of intellectuals from these three traditions I have chosen to analyse texts from a variety of sources including books, journal articles, mainstream US newspapers, online magazines and sites found in the blogosphere. Part of my reasoning for deciding to focus on US newspapers when analysing texts written by neo-conservatives is that while neo-conservatism is hardly an exclusively American phenomenon it tends to be US-centric.\textsuperscript{51} While its effects are global especially when neo-conservatives have positions of influence within the US government, its intellectuals write articles aimed at a populace responsible for electing its representatives.

There are a number of reasons why I have selected a range of articles appearing in scholarly literature, newspapers, online magazines and in the blogosphere. First these different forms can be conceptualised as providing key parts of what we can call a ‘public sphere’. This means that there are sites where information can be translated from an intellectual to a wider audience. Some of these sites are very popular in terms of numbers of people that access them. For example newspaper articles written by liberal and neo-conservative intellectuals appearing in the \textit{New York Times}, \textit{Wall Street Journal}, \textit{Washington Times}, \textit{Washington Post}, online at Newsweek.com and Huffingtonpost.com and in magazine articles like \textit{USA Today} are read by large numbers of people.\textsuperscript{52}


\textsuperscript{52} In March 2013 Alliance for Audited Media reported that the Wall Street Journal (the most circulated newspaper in the US), The New York Times (2\textsuperscript{nd} most circulated), USA Today (3\textsuperscript{rd}), and Washington Post (7\textsuperscript{th}) were among the 10 most circulated newspapers including print and digital subscriptions in the US. In June 2014 Cision Research reported that USA Today, The Wall Street Journal and New
I have also chosen to include lesser-known and less popular sources. Sometimes this has been a deliberate choice and other times it has been a necessity. An example of the former is my decision to include an analysis of neo-conservative intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’ that appear in the online magazine *The Weekly Standard*. This publication is regarded as one of the most prominent neo-conservative opinion publications. In addition to applying my ideal type this helps ensure those writing about ‘Wahhabism’ are in fact neo-conservative intellectuals. It also complements my analysis of other articles because *The Weekly Standard* is a different medium than the popular US newspapers.

It was necessary for me to use less popular sources when analysing Marxist intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’. My analysis includes articles appearing on Marxist websites like www.marxist.com, www.socialismtoday.org, www.socialistworld.net, ideologicalfightback.com, magazine articles appearing on www.isreview.org and in *Proletarian Revolution* magazine and newspaper articles appearing on alternative news sources like *RT News* at RT.com. I have had to search within these lesser-known Marxist publications because Marxist intellectuals do not have the same access to mainstream news sources especially when writing about ‘Wahhabism’. Marxism is not as prominent as the liberal and neo-conservative ‘ideologies’ and consequently its proponents have been pushed to the margins of the ‘public sphere’ and have to publish in relatively more obscure locations. Again in addition to applying my ideal type choosing articles from these Marxist sources has the added value of ensuring that intellectuals representing ‘Wahhabism’ are in fact Marxist.

On Method

In terms of method I have framed my work by drawing on a dialectical tradition which Ollman has done a lot to both resurrect and clarify.53 This tradition as Ollman and Smith argue, is a way of thinking about and using a set of categories that captures the real changes and interactions happening in the social world. They explain that it offers a method for investigating social reality and presenting what we find to others. A dialectical imagination encourages us to think less about things and more about relations and processes that are constantly affecting each other, because it emphasises the evolving nature of things and the relational nature of the social world. This approach has two key elements namely a philosophy of internal relations and a process of abstraction.54

As part of a project designed to show how this process of abstraction works, I will highlight the role played by several important elements that play a major role in constituting these kinds of representations. These elements are what Gerald Holton calls ‘themata’ or what Kurt Danziger calls ‘generative metaphors’.55 I want to argue here that my ability to make sense of these liberal, neo-conservative and Marxist representations of ‘Wahhabism’ relies in part on my ability to abstract the roles both of these processes play when considering how intellectuals make sense of the world and the representing process.

This dialectical framing is particularly congruent with a Critical Discourse Analysis approach when analysing different intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’ as they appear in newspapers, magazines and in the blogosphere. Since foundational work by key figures in this approach like Ruth Wodak and Norman Fairclough and Clive Holes, this kind of approach

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has helped to focus on the ways social and political domination are reproduced in text and talk.\textsuperscript{56} As a result of this work Critical Discourse Analysis has become a well-known interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse as a social practice and seems especially appropriate when engaging the work of intellectuals whose practice is essentially discursive in nature.

That Critical Discourse Analysts treat language as a social practice means it is especially helpful in highlighting the dialectical nature of language as a constitutive medium that is made in and makes the world. This approach appreciates in particular the relational character of power, and the often opaque nature of the relations between discourse and society. It also recognises that these relations play integral roles in securing the interests of those in power.

Intellectuals have a plethora of rhetorical techniques available to them when constructing their representations of ‘Wahhabism’. The limitations associated with a PhD dissertation however means I will only focus on five specific elements of discourse namely metaphors, similes, analogies, neologisms, and the structuring of accounts of violence. The general case for focussing on metaphors, similes and analogies as crucial elements of discursive practice has been made by Lakoff, Turner and Johnson in a series of ground breaking works, and more recently by Hofstadter and Sander.\textsuperscript{57} Philosophers like Midgley have also acknowledged the way these central features of language are integral to the mythmaking process.\textsuperscript{58}


\textsuperscript{58} Mary Midgley, \textit{The Myths We Live By} (London: Routledge, 2003), 1-20.
I have chosen to focus on neologisms primarily because many neo-conservative intellectuals have chosen to use them when representing the apparent threat posed by ‘Wahhabism’. I think of how prominent neo-conservative intellectuals like Gaffney are among those who use the neologisms ‘Islamofascist’ and ‘Islamofascism’ when representing this ‘threat’. I have adapted Karen Cerulo’s cognitive approach to establishing the ways the architecture of narratives of violence works to mobilise a range of ethical and emotional responses on the part of readers. This is valuable because it allows me to ‘abstract’ and make sense of the way some intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’ characterise the relationship of it to the violence it is claimed it warrants. As I note earlier, the fact that ‘Wahhabism’ received very little if any attention from ‘Western’ scholars pre-9/11 and pre-Global War on Terror suggests its relation to violence is significant to some of the intellectuals representing it in the modern political context. Focusing on structuring of violent accounts also helps to reveal some of the more subtle rhetorical techniques writers use in their attempts to persuade their audience.

Finally I want to outline the structure of the argument found in this dissertation. In Chapter One I provide a cursory review of some of the scholarly literature dedicated to ‘Wahhabism’ and tease out some of the problems that help inspire this research. This involves looking at some of the truth claims scholars rely on when representing ‘Wahhabism,’ looking at how some scholars construct ‘Imaginary Communities’ and dealing with the problem of translation.

In Chapter Two I take a more concentrated look at the role of the intellectual. This involves looking at some of the literature on the sociology of intellectuals and establishing some of the key issues it has set loose. I also look at how we can deal with different truth claims.

In Chapter Three I outline and detail how I will go about deconstructing different intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’. This involves describing the theoretical and analytical approaches specifically dialectics, abstraction, a philosophy of internal relations and a Critical Discourse Analysis that inform my analysis of these texts. I also describe the five elements I will be abstracting from intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’.

In Chapter Four I begin the interpretative and analytic process and first deal with liberal intellectuals and their representations of ‘Wahhabism’. This involves describing the ‘ideal type’ that guides my analysis.

In Chapter Five I offer ways of making sense of these liberal intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’ which involves identifying and describing some of the key themata and generative metaphors that have influenced the way liberal intellectuals make sense of the world. Rather than include this information with the previous chapter to form one very long chapter, I have for stylistic and practical reasons decided to have two separate chapters. Not only do two smaller chapters make for easier reading but they also allow me to dedicate the space required to introducing and describing what themata and generative metaphors are and how they work.

In Chapter Six I describe my ‘ideal type’ and then undertake the interpretative and analytic process for neo-conservative representations of ‘Wahhabism’. I also offer ways of making sense of these intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’ which involves identifying and describing some of the key themata and generative metaphors affecting their thinking. Given we now have an understanding of how the concepts themata and generative metaphors work, I only need to dedicate one chapter (and not two chapters as was the case with the liberal intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’) to making sense of neo-conservatives’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’.
In Chapter Seven I follow the same process but this time deal with Marxist intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’. Again this means constructing an ideal type, deconstructing some representations of ‘Wahhabism’ and offering ways of making sense of these.

Last is the Conclusion in which I explicate and clarify the wider significance of the study particularly in the context of the sociology of intellectuals and ‘Wahhabism’ scholarly literature, speak about some of the implications associated with making policy and decisions based on the different representations of ‘Wahhabism’ provided by neo-conservative, liberal and Marxist intellectuals, note some of the limitations of the study and make suggestions for future research based on the insights of this thesis.
Chapter One
‘Wahhabism’ as a Contested Category

For last year's words belong to last year's language
And next year's words await another voice.

T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets

‘Wahhabism’ is both conventionally and popularly understood to be an extremely conservative even ‘fundamentalist’ or ‘radical’ version of Islam. Historians agree that it has its origins in Saudi Arabia in the eighteenth century. It is also generally agreed that the founder of this ‘sect’ was Muhammad Ibn Abd-al Wahhab who developed a version of Islam which insisted on a rigorous and conservative interpretation of the Koran. There is also a consensus that it is believed to have played a decisive role in creating the modern Saudi state in 1932.1 It is also generally credited with having a substantial following into the twenty first century.2 Beyond these understandings ‘Wahhabism’ is a heavily contested category. That contest starts with the way many who are said to be followers of ‘Wahhabism’ reject the use of the term and prefer to refer to themselves as ‘Salafi’. The contest continues, as I show here to claims that ‘Wahhabism’ is or is not directly linked to ‘Islamist terrorism’, or has directly shaped the growth and activity of al-Qaeda, or that it has played no such role.

The scale of the contest and the issues at stake will be more fully developed and elaborated on later in the thesis. Here I want to present some of the ways ‘Wahhabism’ has been represented. I demonstrate that there is little consensus among those writers and researchers who have dealt with ‘Wahhabism’ with what might be thought to be the kind of scholarly regard for careful, even nuanced inquiry found in academic centres devoted to the study of religions, contemporary political science or

international relations. While some would see this as the basis for setting about resolving the controversies and issues which this survey highlights by appealing for example, to some empirical or theoretical benchmarks of objectivity or accuracy, I doubt that this is possible. Though I have to leave off making the case why I think this here, I do think it provides a beginning point for indicating why we need to pay more attention to the issues of why and how it is that intellectuals represent phenomena like ‘Wahhabism’ in the ways they do.

In what follows I do not pretend to have identified and surveyed all of the literature on ‘Wahhabism’, rather I have taken some exemplars of some of the ways scholars have dealt with it. I begin with a group of scholars who emphasise the negative and dangerous aspects of ‘Wahhabism’ and I then turn to those who prefer a softer less threatening portrait of ‘Wahhabism’. In both cases there are important issues involved in translating ‘Wahhabism’ that I outline at the end of the chapter.

**Intellectuals and Imagined Communities: ‘Wahhabism’ as Threat**

Anderson’s famous account of the role played by intellectuals in constructing ‘Imagined Communities’ seems especially pertinent when we examine how intellectuals like Dore Gold, Bernard Lewis, David Commins, Margaret Gonzalez-Perez, and Muhammad Al-Atawneh represent Wahhabism. Each, albeit in different ways, draw on an historical account of a relationship between spaces and peoples to arrive at a distinctly negative portrait of ‘Wahhabism’. Whether Eyerman who claims that these intellectuals are projecting their own “needs and fantasies” and their “deep-seated needs and interests” is right or not I leave to others’ better judgement.

Gold is an intellectual who constructs an ‘Imagined Community’ when representing ‘Wahhabism’. Gold’s representation of ‘Wahhabism’ relies on a clear argument about

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the relationship of the Jewish people to the land once called Palestine that in turn informs his political position about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Gold treats ‘pro-Palestinian’ violence as acts of terrorism. Underscoring this is the fundamental proposition that the land in dispute has always belonged to the Jewish people and to the state of Israel created in 1948 and that Israel is therefore justified in its refusal to recognise a Palestinian state. According to Gold the Israeli state is only for Jewish-Israelis and he uses his representation to help create this idea of the Jewish-Israeli community. Gold represents the current Palestinian territories as ‘violent’ spaces which Israeli forces must enter into to quell the perceived ‘security threat’ it poses to Israel.

Gold’s rejection of Palestinian claims to the land in question means he has a rationale for looking for alternative explanations for what he sees as a long history of ‘pro-Palestinian’ ‘terrorism’ directed against Israel. Religion namely ‘radical Islam’ and more specifically ‘Wahhabism’ provides Gold with the relevant explanation. Gold explicitly links ‘Wahhabism,’ which he understands to be responsible for promoting and inspiring Islamist terrorism globally, to the Palestinian population. He claims the Palestinian desire to ‘wipe out’ Israel is inspired by their ‘Wahhabi’ beliefs which have been ‘imported’ from Saudi Arabia. This proposition in turn informs his argument that ‘Wahhabism’ is impelling the Palestinians to export terror to the ‘West’: his representation of ‘Wahhabism’ is in part inspired by his desire to make sense of the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the US in 2001. Gold claims Saudi-promoted ‘Wahhabism’ is responsible for ‘ideologically motivating’ these terrorists. Gold writes

The commentators are right. The United States and its allies can win the most spectacular military victories in Afghanistan; they can freeze terrorists bank accounts and cut off their supplies of weaponry; they can eliminate terrorist masterminds. But even taken together, such triumphs are not enough to

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remove the terrorist threat, for they do not get at the source of the problem. Terrorism, on the scale of the September 11 attacks, does not occur in a vacuum. People do not just decide spontaneously that they are going to hijack an aircraft, crash it into a building, and commit mass murder (and take their own lives) because of some political grievance or sense of economic deprivation. No, there is another critical component of terrorism that has generally been overlooked in the West: the ideological motivation to slaughter thousands of innocent people.\footnote{Gold, Hatred’s Kingdom, 5-6.}

While it is beyond the remit of this chapter to systematically check the veridicity of claims like this, the proposition that Palestinian resistance to the policies of the State of Israel have been shaped by ‘Wahhabist’ ideology and that it sustains a Palestinian “ideological motivation to slaughter thousands of innocent people” seems to step well beyond what the evidence warrants.\footnote{Ibid., 6.} If anything Gold frames Israel’s ongoing occupation of Palestine and its ongoing policy of aggressive security measures against Palestinians as a part of the wider ‘Global War on Terror’. On the face of it Gold’s representation of ‘Wahhabism’ seems motivated and inspired by beliefs that align strongly with the political and policy stance favoured by Israeli ‘right-wing’ and Zionist movements, as well as by the US based ‘pro-Israeli’ lobby.

David Commins is another prominent scholar whose representation of ‘Wahhabism’ provides a good example of a ‘Western’ intellectual using ‘Wahhabism’ to create an ‘Imagined Geography’.\footnote{Commins, The Wahhabi Mission.} Commins represents ‘Wahhabism’ as a religion for ‘backwards’ and ‘uncivilised’ people that flourish in ‘backward’ and ‘uncivilised’ societies like Saudi Arabia. Commins claims for example that the Saudi Arabian regime is struggling to reconcile its nation’s ‘Wahhabi’ religious beliefs with the forces associated with globalisation. He claims the Saudi ruling regime feels threatened by ‘Western’ advances which includes the return of Saudi students who have been ‘liberalised’ in the ‘West’ to their homeland. Displaying the kind of ‘Orientalism’ Said first pointed to, Commons shares with many political liberals and neoliberals the premise that ‘Western’-inspired economic and social globalisation to
be a ‘natural’ and ‘progressive’ process which ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia should welcome and embrace. Commins blames the ‘backward’ ‘Wahhabi’ religious beliefs of the Saudi rulers for resisting these changes. Commins clearly adopts the role of an intellectual keen to advance the interests of neo-liberalism and his representation helps provide ‘Western’ policymakers with some of the ‘evidence’ they need should they ever decide to invade Saudi Arabia for ‘its own good’ and in the name of ‘progress’.

Bernard Lewis has long championed the spreading of democracy and ‘freedom’ throughout the Middle East. Like Commins, Lewis represents the Middle East as a ‘backward’ and ‘regressive’ space. Lewis’ representation of ‘Wahhabism’ is inspired and motivated by the idea that the entire world and especially the nations of the Middle East can become ‘freer’ and change for the ‘better’. Lewis rejects the claim the Islamic world is impervious to change, arguing it is currently experiencing a historical low point in which it is dominated by ‘oppressive regimes’. He believes the people of the Islamic world like those in the ‘West’ and humans in general are entitled to the freedoms associated with democracy and he claims it is the responsibility of the ‘West’ to help them achieve these goals. Lewis supports ‘Western’ efforts to spread democracy in Iraq and argues that ‘Western’ nations must also focus their attention on other Middle Eastern nations that are governed by oppressive regimes. According to Lewis ‘this is what they want’.

Don’t be misled about what you read in the media about Iraq. The situation is certainly not good, but there are redeeming features in it. The battle isn’t over. It’s still very difficult …I have been told repeatedly by Iranians that there is no country in the world where pro-American feeling is stronger, deeper and more widespread than Iran…When the American planes were flying over Afghanistan, the story was that many Iranians put signs on their roofs in English reading, “This way, please.”

As a Liberal who claims membership in the Western Enlightenment tradition, Lewis believes he has an obligation to the Islamic world to show them how to ‘progress,’ ‘evolve’ and ‘modernise’. Lewis sees his work as an intellectual as contributing to a

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process of ‘Enlightenment’ in the Islamic world that began with an Egyptian Sheikh’s introducing ‘Western’ conceptions of freedom and justice at the end of the eighteenth century. This resonates with Shil’s claim that intellectuals must play a key role in ‘bringing modernity’ to ‘traditional’ societies. Lewis writes

…Egyptian sheikh – Sheikh Rifa‘a Rafi‘ al-Tahtawi, who went to Paris as chaplain to the first group of Egyptian students sent to Europe – wrote a book about his adventures and explained his discovery of the meaning of freedom. He wrote that when the French talk about freedom they mean what Muslims mean when they talk about justice. By equating freedom with justice, he opened a whole new phase in the political and public discourse of the Arab world, and then, more broadly, the Islamic world.10

Lewis blames ‘anti-Western,’ ‘anti-democratic’ and ‘anti-freedom’ forces throughout the Middle Eastern region for frustrating these efforts. Specifically he blames what he calls the ‘Islamic revivalist/awakening’ movement, which he understands to be a coalescing of interests in the Middle East between ‘Wahhabism’, al-Qaeda and those a part of the successful Iranian Revolution.

Gonzalez-Perez is another scholar whose representation of ‘Wahhabism’ is inspired by quite particular political aims and goals. In her case she is inspired by the Western feminist intellectual tradition.11 She understands her role as intellectual is to draw attention to the injustices and wrongs perpetrated against women. The focus of Gonzalez-Perez’s analysis is the experience of female bombers specifically those used by al-Qaeda, Palestine Islamic Jihad and Hamas, all of which she categorises as ‘terrorist organisations’. Gonzalez-Perez believes these terrorist organisations are using ‘radical,’ ‘violent jihadist’ and ‘un-Islamic’ interpretations of Islam to persuade women to carry out suicide bombings. She blames the writings of thirteenth century Islamic theologian Ibn Taymiyyah, ‘Wahhabism’ and key twentieth century Islamic ideologues like Sayyid Qutb, a key figure in Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, for

10 Ibid., 66.
providing these terrorist organisations with these ‘un-Islamic’ and ‘violent jihadist’ interpretations.

Gonzalez-Perez’s representation relies heavily on the assumption that Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas are terrorist organisations of the same kind as al-Qaeda. Gonzalez-Perez categorisation of Hamas as a terrorist organisation obviously leads her to including this group in her analysis of female suicide bombers. While many ‘pro-Israeli’ scholars and neo-conservative intellectuals like Gold and Gaffney certainly agree with this assessment there is an equally large group of scholars who reject this claim and instead understand the violence that Hamas has relied on not as acts of terror but as a part of a struggle for nationhood against a colonial force akin to the African National Congress during apartheid South Africa.12

If Gonzalez-Perez had treated Hamas as part of the Palestinian resistance and not as a terrorist organisation then it is likely that she might have drawn the conclusion that ‘Wahhabism’ was not among the ‘ideologies’ responsible for inspiring and promoting Hamas’ use of female suicide bombers. The important point to be made here is that one’s political prejudices i.e. how one categorises a ‘terrorist organisation,’ has implications for how one understands and represents ‘Wahhabism’. It is also significant that Gonzalez-Perez’s representation relies on an assumption that her particular interpretations of Islamic texts like those provided by ‘Wahhabism’ are ‘un-Islamic’ and that those interpreting the texts in these ways are not ‘real’ Muslims. As will become clear this premise is also relied on by those who offer a less negative account of ‘Wahhabism’. Gonzalez-Perez is only able to reach these conclusions because she assumes there is an ‘objective’ and ‘truthful’ interpretation of Islam that does not promote violence and strictly prohibits suicide bombing. She writes

The female suicide bombers of nominally Muslim groups like Hamas, the PIJ [Palestinian Islamic Jihad], and Al Qaeda are no more Islamic than the Hindu Tamil women bombers of Sri Lanka or the communist female suicide bombers

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of the Kurdish Workers’ Party in Turkey. They are not Islamic martyrs nor any other manifestation of orthodox religious faith.\(^{13}\)

To bolster her case Gonzalez-Perez provides an extensive list of authors she believes provide a ‘truthful’ and ‘objective’ interpretation of Islam which includes the founder of the Fethullah Gülen movement, Shaykh Muhammad Afifi al-Akiti of Oxford University and the Grand Shaykh of Egypt’s Al Azhar University Mohammed Sayed Tantawi. She also adds her own ‘objective’ and ‘truthful’ interpretations of Islamic texts to this category. Gonzalez-Perez writes

> Within Islam, the rules of engagement and conduct of war have been established by over one thousand years of scholarly interpretation and precedent. According to the Qur’an and Islamic tradition, warfare is the domain of the state and can only be authorized by the executive of an established government [37: 124]…Mainstream scholars are unequivocal, ‘The rules of Islam are clear. Individuals cannot declare war. A group or organization cannot declare war. War is declared by the state. War cannot be declared without a president or an army…. Otherwise, it is an act of terror’ [22: 2].\(^{14}\)

Gonzalez-Perez’s representation raises many of the key issues pertinent to this study namely whether there can ever be an objective interpretation of social phenomena.

A different case but one grounded in a close study of texts has been made by scholars whose representations of ‘Wahhabism’ are primarily based on the translating of ‘Wahhabi’ school texts. A group of ‘Western’ scholars like Eleanor Abdella Doumato and Michaela Prokop have analysed ‘Wahhabi’-infused Saudi school texts searching for ‘evidence’ of ‘anti-Western’ sentiments and ‘extremist’ ideas to establish if there is a relation between Saudi Arabia’s ‘Wahhabi’ religious education and modern Islamic terrorism.\(^{15}\) Their works seem to parallel arguments made by prominent Marxist scholars like Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci that education is a key

\(\text{\textsuperscript{13}}\) Gonzalez-Perez, “The False Islamization of Female Suicide Bombers,” 62.
\(\text{\textsuperscript{14}}\) Ibid., 51-52.
‘ideological apparatus’ that can be used to impose particular beliefs and values on a society.16

Doumato’s understanding of ‘Wahhabism’ is primarily based on her analysis of religious texts produced by the Saudi state and prescribed for Saudi students in grades 9 through 12. According to her subjective interpretation these ‘Wahhabi’ religious texts could promote hostility against non-Muslims, they could encourage exclusivity amongst Muslims and they could inspire ‘violent jihad’. Doumato writes

Hostile messages there are, but the mood of these texts is less hostile than overwhelmingly defensive…They claw with self-doubt, conjuring up enemies, real and perceived, who are not only at the gates but inside themselves.

Looking at the texts alone, the message in the religion curriculum is that “we Muslims are under siege, and it is the duty of every single one of us to man the barricades [Emphasis added].”17

Like Doumato, Prokop’s representation of ‘Wahhabism’ relies on her English translation of Arabic religious texts used in the Saudi education system which she claims are “heavily influenced by the Wahhabi ideology.”18 Prokop focuses her analysis on the content in school textbooks designed for secondary school grades 1 through 3 and also concludes that there could be a link between ‘Wahhabism’ and violence. She claims the texts occasionally promote ‘intolerance’ and sometimes incite ‘hatred,’ however they are often coupled with contradictory messages about ‘peace’ and ‘tolerance’ between people of different faiths. Prokop writes

The content of the official textbooks is heavily influenced by the Wahhabi ideology. Teaching about the ‘others’—other cultures, ideologies and religions, or adherents of other Muslim schools of jurisprudence or sects—reflects the Wahhabi view of a world divided into the believers and preservers of the true faith and the kuffar, the unbelievers. The teachings about other religions, particularly those pertaining to the ‘People of the Book’, Christians and Jews, are contradictory. While some passages denounce Christians and Jews clearly as unbelievers, people whom one should not greet with

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17 Doumato, “Manning the barricades,” 242.
Both Doumato and Prokop rely on translations from Arabic texts when making assessments about ‘Wahhabism’s’ ability to inspire feelings of ‘hatred’ and ‘animosity’ in Saudi Arabian students. Again we must remember the translating process is not an exact science and that neither Doumato nor Prokop are able to achieve equivalence in their translations.

There are a number of problems that shadow Doumato’s representation. First there is the problem of establishing the basis for claiming to have an objective or literalist way of translating texts. This seems especially problematic when it comes to capturing the ‘mood’ (as Doumato claims to do) of the texts. Many scholars could analyse the same ‘Wahhabi’ school texts and provide very different interpretations especially when it comes to capturing something so diffuse as ‘mood’. Second we cannot assume that Saudi students will uncritically accept what is presented to them in the school texts nor can we be sure they will act on these ‘hostile’ ideas. Each student is influenced by their own ways of making sense of the world into which they have been thrown. Indeed Doumato acknowledges that students can receive conflicting information from a wide variety of sources.

In thinking about what students learn we also have to think about how or whether lessons taught in schools are reinforced outside of school, in the public media, in the mosque, or in the family.20

Like Althusser, Gramsci and Doumato, Prokop recognises school education is only one element of a society’s ‘ideological apparatus’ that can be used to promote and impose a particular value and belief system. Prokop writes

Formal education is only one element in shaping an individual’s perspective and religious inclinations. The perception of Saudi students is also shaped to an equal if not greater degree by informal teachings in mosques, in homes and through the new media. The mosque is particularly important for the older generation since adult illiteracy rates remain high. Additionally, the so-called

19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 243.
‘hidden curriculum’—contextual factors, such as teacher personality, prevailing classroom dynamics, social background or place of residence—also determine how the message is received and interpreted.  

With so many qualifications it is hard to be convinced that Prokop’s analysis demonstrates that there is a strong link between the Saudi school curriculum and violence and terrorism. In this case the truth claim rests on a premise that there are secure technical and methodical paths to be taken so as to arrive at the truth. That assumption and a relevant scepticism needs to also be adopted about the work of those who claim their interpretation of the evidence warrants a quite different account of ‘Wahhabism’.

**Intellectuals on ‘Wahhabism’: ‘Not so Bad After all’**

There are any number of scholars who have made a case for a quite different representation of ‘Wahhabism’. Juan Cole is a scholar who defends ‘Wahhabism’ against the common claim that it is responsible for inspiring modern Islamic terrorism. Cole claims that a portrait of ‘Wahhabism’ as an ideological source of Islamist terrorism has been used as part of the intellectual arsenal deployed by ‘Western’ governments to help achieve their imperialistic aims and goals in the Middle East. Cole writes

> It is sometimes implied that the Saudi effort to spread Wahhabism has the effect of spreading terrorism and anti-Americanism. That outcome would be difficult to demonstrate…Further, it is not at all clear that puritanism or Wahhabism, while it may produce negative attitudes toward consumerism and libertinism predispose people to commit terrorism, as some pundits have alleged. Most suicide bombings in the past thirty years have not been carried about by Wahhabis or persons influenced by them, but rather by individuals fighting what they see as the foreign military occupation of their country…connecting a religious tradition to terrorism would require more evidence than a few instances of guilt by association…

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21 Ibid., 82.
23 Ibid., 97-98.
Cole clearly understands his role as an intellectual is to help dispel myths and misinformation promoted by ‘Western’ terrorist experts’ and ‘American hawks’ who he believes to be ‘racist,’ ‘ignorant’ and eager to wage war. Cole writes

As I’ve glared at the self-appointed “terrorism experts” who have paraded across my television screen since 2001, I’ve become more and more alarmed at the dangerous falsehoods many of them purvey. Most of them have no knowledge of the languages or cultures of the Middle East, or any history of residence there. The message of the right-wing pundits and pastors and politicians is that Muslims form a menace to the West unless they are subdued and dominated. In that sense, the military occupation of Iraq that began in 2003 exemplifies the mind-set of American hawks.24

Cole dismisses many of the ‘ignorant’ and ‘deliberately misleading’ claims made by ‘Western’ commentators about ‘Wahhabism’ including the commonly asserted claim that it “predisposes people to commit terrorism.”25 To support his claim, Cole highlights the fact that the majority of suicide bombings in the last thirty years have been motivated by anti-imperial and anti-colonial ideas rather than by ‘Wahhabi’ religious ‘ideology’. Referring to incidents like the ‘pro-Palestinian’ suicide bombings in Israel, Cole’s claims rely on the assumption that conflicts like those between Israeli and Palestinian forces are anti-colonial and anti-imperialist in nature rather than acts of terrorism. Cole’s role as an intellectual or mediator representing ‘Wahhabism’ aligns more with the approaches of authors like Chomsky who maintain that an intellectuals’ role is to ‘speak truth to power’ rather than promoting particular class and group interests.26

Muhammad Al-Atawneh is a Muslim intellectual whose account of ‘Wahhabism’ has attracted some international attention. Many of the post 9/11 ‘Western’ commentaries about ‘Wahhabism’ and Saudi Arabia have focused on the Saudi state, its promoting of ‘Wahhabism’ and their relation to modern Islamic terrorism.27 Al-Atawneh claims Saudi Arabia and the ‘Wahhabi’ religious establishment have made the necessary policy changes to ensure that ‘Wahhabism’ does not in any way promote ‘violence’,

24 Ibid., 2.
25 Ibid., 97.
26 Chomsky, “The Responsibility of Intellectuals.”
27 Gold, Hatred’s Kingdom; Schwartz, The Two Faces of Islam; Commins, The Wahhabi Mission.
‘intolerance’ or ‘extremism’ amongst Saudi Arabians. Al-Atawneh wants to dispel the notion promoted by critics of ‘Wahhabism’ that it is responsible for promoting terrorism post-9/11. He argues strenuously that the Saudi state is in no way responsible for or complicit in modern Islamic terrorism. He refers to a variety of ‘policy initiatives’ and government-organised forums in an attempt to show the measures the Saudi state and the ‘Wahhabi’ religious establishment are taking to promote tolerance, harmony, peacefulness and most importantly an embracing of the Other.28

Unlike scholars like Gold, Lewis and Gonzalez-Perez, Al-Atawneh does not assume that ‘Wahhabism’ is ‘radical’ per se. He assumes rather that we can and ought to distinguish between ‘radical’ and ‘conventional’ versions of ‘Wahhabism’. Al-Atawneh also rejects the claim that the Saudi state is engaged in the kind of politics typically associated with the political Realist tradition where the international political arena is conceptualised as a battleground of competing interests, and where anything that a state needs to do to secure its own interests is legitimate.29 Rather he claims Saudi Arabia adopts an approach to politics aimed at helping to end injustices and wrongs. This resonates with recent conceptualisations of the political provided by authors like Critchley and Crick.30 Instead of blaming the ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi state and establishment for inspiring modern Islamic terrorism, Al-Atawneh holds ‘rogue elements’ within the Saudi Kingdom as responsible for this behaviour. He argues for example that most “of the post-9/11 criticism appears to be lodged against extremist groups, described by Saudi officials as those who have ‘gone astray’ (firqa dalla).”31

On the face of it, it can be seen why some of his critics treat him as an apologist for the Saudi state. Indeed though we need to approach such claims with a certain ironic detachment, Al-Atawneh is exactly the kind of intellectual others like Chomsky are extremely critical of. According to Chomsky Al-Atawneh should instead be “….seek[ing] the truth lying hidden behind the veil of distortion and

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28 The Other refers to that which is alien and divergent from that which is given such as a norm, identity or the self. Its binary is the ‘Same’. The Constitutive Other often denotes a different, incomprehensible self outside of one’s own. This concept is key to Edward Said’s work on Orientalism. See Said, Orientalism.
29 Schmitt, The Concept of the Political.
30 Crick, In Defence of Politics; Critchley, Infinitely Demanding.
misrepresentation, ideology and class interest, through which the events of current 
history are presented to us.” 32 Whether Chomsky is in a position to make such claims 
again will have to be left to a later time and place.

The question of the truth of claims made by scholars is again on display in work by 
Natana DeLong-Bas. She provides an historically informed account of ‘Wahhabism’ 
that leads her into a spirited defence of it. She claims ‘Wahhabism’ promotes peace, 
encourages tolerance, advocates women’s rights and is therefore not responsible for 
inspiring modern Islamic terrorism. She writes

Ibd Abd al-Wahhab’s emphasis on the importance of Islamic values and the 
intent behind words and actions, as opposed to concern for ritual perfection, 
has opened the door for reforms in Islamic law, the status of women and 
minorities, and the peaceful spread of Islam and the Islamic mission in the 
contemporary era.33

Her account is one of the most prominent—and widely criticised—representations of 
‘Wahhabism’ in the post-9/11 period.34 Her critics have amongst other things accused 
her of being an ‘apologist’ for extremist Islam. Schwartz for example claims DeLong-
Bas has “recently reached a depth of mendacity about radical Islam it is hard to 
imagine her exceeding.”35 DeLong-Bas is not a Muslim although it seems that she 
claims some adherence to Christianity. This suggests she is not likely to be motivated 
or inspired by Islamic religious beliefs in the same way that for example writers like 
Oliver are. The attacks by her critics appear to be based on the assumption that 
DeLong-Bas’ defence of ‘Wahhabism’ is also a defence of the ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi 
Arabian state which Schwartz believe uses ‘Wahhabism’ to promote and inspire 
terrorism. Neo-conservatives and hard-line pro-Israeli supporters like Caroline Glick 
share this view of DeLong-Bas.36

33 Ibid.,281. 
34 DeLong-Bas, Wahhabi Islam. 
35 Schwartz, The Two Faces of Islam, “Natana DeLong-Bas: American Professor, Wahhabi Apologist,” 
Real Clear Politics, January 19, 2007, accessed March 24, 2014 from 
36 Glick for example writes “DeLong-Bas told the newspaper that she does ’not find any evidence that 
would make me agree that Osama bin Laden was behind the attack on the Twin Towers of the World 
Trade Center. All we heard from him was praise and acclaim for those who carried out the operation’.
This was not the first time the Brandeis faculty member acted as an apologist for jihadists. Indeed, she
DeLong-Bas’ representation of ‘Wahhabism’ is not first and foremost a defence of Saudi interests but rather rests on a claim to truth. DeLong-Bas believes she offers a ‘truthful’ interpretation of ‘Wahhabi’ doctrine which is primarily based on the writings of its founder Ibn Abd-al Wahhab. Her claims to truth rest on what she believes to be an ‘objective interpretation’ of sacred ‘Wahhabi’ Islamic texts, involving comparing and contrasting between these ‘Wahhabi’ Islamic texts and the beliefs and doctrines of modern Islamic terrorists. This is not the only issue with her representation. Her case depends on an appeal to the legitimacy of her translation and interpretation of ‘Wahhabi’ texts from the eighteenth century and on her capacity to compare these to what she understands to be the beliefs of the modern ‘Wahhabi’ movement.

There is of course a problem here, that much of this exercise depends on an assumption that we are doing something meaningful when we compare and interpret the original texts of a new belief system with a much later and/or contemporary expressions of a belief system. It is doubtful that the modern nature of what we understand to be ‘Wahhabism’ can be established in this way. We use the term ‘genetic fallacy’ to describe authors who make this kind of error in reasoning. To commit a genetic fallacy is to make conclusions about a movement based on its origins as opposed to considering the contemporary expression of ideas and beliefs and doing so on their own merits and in their current context. DeLong-Bas’ interpretation of ‘Wahhabism’ fails to fully appreciate the constantly evolving nature of the ‘Wahhabi’ movement. She fails to understand that ‘Wahhabism’ now in the twenty-first century is not an exact replica of how it appeared during eighteenth century Arabia. We live in a different time and in a vastly different political context.

Finally we can consider the contribution made by Oliver. Oliver claims to be a follower of Salafism which he considers to be the only valid interpretation of Islam.

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and his defence of his faith is motivated and inspired by what he believes is an objective understanding of ‘God’s word’. Oliver’s defence includes rejecting claims that his Salafi faith, which he claims many mistakenly refer to as ‘Wahhabism,’ is responsible for inspiring modern Islamic terrorists like Osama Bin Laden. Oliver makes his motivations perfectly clear for his audience.

My objective in doing so is not to deceitfully defend anyone or anything unworthy of a defence, as Islaam commands that a Muslim speak a word of truth, even if it be against him or herself, or followers of the same faith. Rather, it is my objective to deal only with those issues which have been unjustly brought against Islaam and Salaiyyah (Salafism) in particular, as opposed to defending the actions of the contemporary “Islaamic” groups and movements, which have only aided those who wish to harm the Islaamic Nation.

…it is my objective to give the reader another perspective on some of these issues which they might never have been exposed to before. I have made every effort to avoid producing another book which is filled with opinion while lacking in textual proofs. Instead I have tried to produce a book in which Muslims and non-Muslims alike will be able to reflect upon the directives of the Qur’aan and the narrations (ahaadeetha) of the Prophet Muhammad for themselves [Emphasis added].

As we can see Oliver believes his role is to “speak a word of truth” which he believes can be supported by “textual proofs.” There are a number of issues with these claims. First the legitimacy of his claims rests on our accepting of his claim that his interpretation of Salafism/ ‘Wahhabism’ provides the ‘one big story’ about human history. If we are not willing to accept the legitimacy of this religious viewpoint then we can say as many Marxists would claim that Oliver’s representation of ‘Wahhabism’ is a relation of his religious delusion. Like some of the other

38 Oliver, The Wahhabi Myth, 1.  
39 Like Bertell Ollman I use the terms ‘relation’ and ‘Relation’ (capitalised) in different ways. As Ollman explains “I shall use the term ‘relation’ in two different senses: first, to refer to the factor itself, as when I call capital a relation, and also as a synonym of ‘connection’, as in speaking of the relation between different factors…I intend to capitalise ‘relation’ (henceforth ‘Relation’) when it refers to a factor, as opposed to the connection between factors, to aid readers in making this important distinction. Besides, such obvious alternatives to ‘Relation’ as ‘structure’, ‘unit’ and ‘system’ suggest a closed, finished character which is belied by Marx’s treatment of real social factors. ‘Relation’ appeals
scholarship dealt with here, Oliver’s defence of ‘Wahhabism’/Salafism relies on his interpretation of Koranic texts originally written in Arabic and translated into English.40

The Problem of Translation

There are a number of important issues pertinent not only to Oliver’s representation but to many other scholarly and intellectual representations of ‘Wahhabism’ that rely on translations from Arabic into English. Martin Müller points out that translation is too often treated as a process in which a translator assumes a ‘neutral relay’ role producing an objective outcome.41 This is certainly how Oliver understands his role when representing ‘Wahhabism’ for his audience. This is an issue that affects many social science researchers subscribing to Enlightenment and religious ideas of truth when making sense of phenomena in the social world. As Caputo points out we no longer live in age where one story can explain everything that happens in the social world.

Müller has these ideas about truth and objectivity in mind when he writes that “if we are to take seriously the problems of representation and speaking for/with others” then “we are called on to problematize translation as a political act.”42 Recognising translation as a political act is integral to recognising the antagonisms and struggles for meaning that are taking place in a foreign language. Also recognising the ‘observer-dependant’ roles intellectuals play when representing social phenomena like ‘Wahhabism,’ Müller writes that “[i]ncreased attention to the political

40 Haneef James Oliver joins Khaled Abou El-Fadl and Stephen Schwartz as an intellectual who represents the ‘Wahhabi’ community as existing outside of the ‘mainstream’ Islamic community. Oliver, El-Fadl and Schwartz all have particular ideas about what ‘true’ Islam is and is not and all reject ‘Wahhabism’. While they are united in their representing ‘Wahhabism’ as a ‘corrupted’ version of Islam and ‘illegitimate,’ each differ in their understanding of what constitutes ‘real Islam’ or rather what is a ‘truthful’ and ‘objective’ interpretation of Islam. Schwartz’s representing of ‘Wahhabism’ is influenced by his desire to promote a particular interpretation of Sufi Islam. Contra Schwartz, El-Fadl is influenced by his desire to promote what he considers to be a ‘moderate’ and ‘progressive’ interpretation of Islam.


42 Ibid.
implications of translation also spells out the case for broaching the translating geographer as an active agent who moulds the production of meaning.43

These concerns about translation have preoccupied many scholars including Müller, Phillips, Shurmer-Smith, Esteva and Prakash, and Temple and Young all of whom identify equivalence as a key issue.44 Phillips for example notes that achieving equivalence in translation is an intractable problem given “almost any utterance in any language carries with it a set of assumptions, feelings, and values that the speaker may or may not be aware of.” He also writes that the transferring of meaning from language into another can only ever be partial and never complete.45 Different languages structure the world in different ways and translations are never able to completely convey the richness of connotations. Müller points out that this is especially the case when translating ‘God words’.46

This problem has been addressed by one scholar who provides a more nuanced understanding of the ‘Wahhabi’ movement and who shows an awareness of these issues when making sense of what he calls the ‘Salafi’ movement. Wiktorowicz provides what he calls an ‘Anatomy of the Salafi Movement’ (he prefers to use the term ‘Salafi’ rather than ‘Wahhabi believing the latter to be a misnomer) and claims that we can distinguish between different groups within the Salafi tradition according to their interpretation of Islamic religious texts.47 This for example includes difference in reasoning and interpreting regarding the use of ‘Weapons of Mass Destruction’. Wiktorowicz writes that jihadis today cite Prophet Muhammad’s sanctioning of the use of a catapult during war as providing religious justification for their use of weapons of mass destruction.

43 Ibid.
45 Phillips, Problems of translation and menacing in fieldwork, 291.
46 Ibid.
48 Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement.”
In drawing analogies, jihadis argue that the catapult was the WMD of the Prophet’s lifetime and that his example legitimates the use of WMD today. This conclusion is not rooted in an objective reading of the religious sources: it is entirely dependent on whether one views the catapult as the historical equivalent of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. Human reasoning thus plays a critical role. 49

Wiktorowicz makes a very important point that “human reasoning...plays a critical role” when it comes to making sense of things in the social world like religious texts and different events. As Gadamer and Arendt point out ‘human reasoning’ or how we make sense of the world is influenced by our prejudices. 50 It follows that different scholar’s interpretations and representations of ‘Wahhabism’ are influenced by their ‘prejudices’.

This has important implications when dealing with intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’ whose truth claims rely on translation and which involve translating ‘god words’. The works of these scholars remind us that translating is not an exact science with an objective outcome but is instead a ‘subjective’ and political act. It is clear that Oliver’s translation of Arabic religious texts into English is influenced by amongst other things a desire to defend his understanding of his faith. This contest to make sense of ‘Wahhabism’ occurring between these different ‘Islamic’ scholars is a microcosm of a much wider debate occurring between intellectuals relying on very different analytical and theoretical frameworks and influenced by different interests commitments and what scholars like Gadamer have called ‘prejudices’. 51

Conclusion

My cursory review of some of the scholarly literature dedicated to making sense of ‘Wahhabism’ helps highlight a number of important issues that warrant and legitimate this research. It helps show that a scholar’s interests and truth claims have major

49 Ibid., 216.
51 Gadamer, “The Problem of Historical Consciousness.”
implications for how they make sense of and represent ‘Wahhabism’. I have shown how an intellectuals’ desire to promote the interests of a particular group or intellectual tradition can result in very different representations of ‘Wahhabism’. I will now turn my attention to looking at the role of the intellectual.
Chapter Two
On Intellectuals

_Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?_

_Juvenil, Satires_

For much of his adult life Socrates wandered through the Agora or marketplace in Athens, asking all those who would engage with him whether they had any knowledge to reveal to him. What we remember as his practice of the ‘Socratic dialogue’ making use of ‘Socratic irony’ (elenchthia), implied that few of his fellow-citizens knew what they were talking about.¹ Just after he had been condemned to death by his fellow Athenian citizens, he told them in what has since become one of the best-known philosophical phrases in the Western philosophical tradition, that “the unexamined life is not worth living.”² According to Socrates the more you lead such a life the more equipped you are to live a good life.

Everything we know about Socrates as one of the first public intellectuals in the western intellectual tradition tells us that he set loose several permanent puzzles for philosophy. One of the enduring puzzles was how we were to both examine our life and establish the veridicity or ‘truth’ of the knowledge we claimed to possess. That problem continues to haunt the sociology of intellectuals and provides something of the big puzzle that sits behind this thesis. Yet in this respect a non-remediable problem attends any such exercise. It does so in terms that echo the ominous question ‘who guards the guardians?’ When we ask ‘how are we to make sense of the sense-makers?’ This is a central question in the evolution of what we can call a sociology of intellectuals.

In the twentieth century Karl Mannheim did more than most to establish the modern contours of the sociology of intellectuals.³ Mannheim wrote in a time between two

³ This is not to ignore his foundational status in setting off the sociology of knowledge. See Volker Meja and Nico Stehr eds, *Knowledge and Politics. The Sociology of Knowledge Dispute* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1990).
World Wars when older and longstanding cultural values were being shaken profoundly and many of his fellow intellectuals were making dire predictions about the ‘future of civilisation’. Mannheim understood his work in Socratic terms as a search for knowledge that would help construct an equal society with a tolerant citizenry. Mannheim argued that citizens developed their freedom through self-reflection and by understanding their cultural origins. This was not however meant to be an easy or effortless task undertaken by the individual. Mannheim pointed to the all-important role of the intellectual and to the intersection between the reflective practice of the intellectual and those decision-makers like politicians and policy-makers who deal with day-to-day politics.

Mannheim began his seminal work *Ideology and Utopia* by addressing the problem of how men think. He distinguished between everyday thinking and the kind that is done by philosophers, mathematicians and physicists in ‘special circumstances’. Mannheim designed a critical method he believed intellectuals could draw on to help create a ‘better’ society. This method acknowledged both the specificities of historical context and the need to achieve a certain ‘objectivity’ which would enable us to see the world as uncontaminated by ‘ideology,’ which is understood as the kind of knowledge shaped by social interests or partisan politics.

At the same time Mannheim saw the intellectual as charged with the responsibility for developing utopian ideals without retreating into a contemplative state completely removed from political life. However Mannheim struggled to say how this would be possible. He argued that intellectuals necessarily enjoy a certain amount of freedom, because they are ‘free-floating’ and the ‘keepers of cultural standards’. According to him this allowed them to operate free from the constraints of ‘ideology’. Mannheim also offers important insights about dealing with competing value systems.

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6 Mannheim says the following about ‘ideology’. The Concept “ideology” reflects the one discovery which emerged from political conflict, namely, that ruling groups can in their thinking become so intensively interest-bound to a situation that they are simply no longer able to see certain facts which would undermine their sense of domination. There is implicit in the word “ideology” the insight that in certain situations the collective unconscious of certain groups obscures the real condition of society both to itself and to others and thereby stabilises it. Ibid., 36.
Developing a sociology of knowledge was Mannheim’s method for arbitrating this competition. He argues that intellectuals capable of operating outside particular value and belief systems or ‘ideologies’ could use this method to discover how and why particular individuals and groups see the world as they do. Mannheim writes that:

… the sociology of knowledge regards the cognitive act in connection with the models to which it aspires in its existential as well as its meaningful quality, not as insights into ‘eternal’ truths arising from a purely theoretical, contemplative urge . . . but as an instrument for dealing with life-situations at the disposal of a certain kind of vital being under certain conditions of life.7

Mannheim’s prescriptions are not designed to be as he put it “blueprints: it is neither a list of abstract desiderata for the philosopher nor a detailed program for the administrator.”8 Indeed his work might be best understood as suggestions put forward with the intent of promoting discussion about the major political concerns of the moment. Whatever the success or failure of Mannheim’s own program, his thinking about the intellectual has in part inspired the subsequent development of the sociology of intellectuals. It poses important questions that have continued to be asked throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and which are still relevant today. His work raises difficult questions about the relationship between political partisanship and ‘truth telling,’ the responsibilities of the intellectual, the relevant ethical and political motivations of intellectual practice and the standards by which we should judge intellectuals claims to truth. Mannheim’s work has certainly worked in this way and his ideas about the roles of the intellectuals have sparked a robust debate that helps inspire, legitimate and animate this study.

Mannheim’s ideas point to the wider issue of sense making with regards to the social world. The social world is distinguishable from what we typically refer to as the natural world where we can come to know reality by using scientific measures. Our major tasks as researchers when dealing with the natural world is to design and implement particular research methods that help us to understand its different

7 Ibid., 268.
elements and how they fit into the whole. Our roles as researchers are very different when dealing with things in the social world.

Unlike the natural or physical world, the social world does not exist independent of human understanding and the sense making we engage in habitually: that is to say that our understanding of it is ‘observer-dependent’. Unlike the natural world there is no objectivity in the social world. Instead it is characterised by what is usually referred to as subjectivity or what writers like Alfred Schutz and Charles Taylor have insisted is a better way of denoting this, namely intersubjectivity. This shift away from the notion of subjectivity is meant to highlight the role played by shared systems of belief, symbolic schema and the various social practices we rely on to understand and live in our world. Writers as diverse as Ludwig Wittgenstein, Rudolf Carnap and Nelson Goodman pointed out that a variety of social and symbolic systems including language, play the crucial role in both understanding and structuring the social world. Ferdinand de Saussure was amongst the first to highlight that it is our linguistic system that enables us to define concepts that we understand as existing in the social world. It is differences in meaning that structures our perception meaning things like ‘Wahhabism’ only exist because of our decision to use and manipulate symbolic systems.

A lot what we think we know about the social world and which is true for categories like ‘Wahhabism’ is produced by intellectuals. As writers of scholarly articles, books, newspaper and magazine articles, intellectuals hold privileged positions in society. It is their interpretations of what concepts like ‘Wahhabism’ mean or refer to that is both widely distributed and read by the general public and by policy and decision-makers who in many instances may have never thought about or dealt directly with this phenomenon. That is to say that we tend to rely on intellectuals’ representations to make sense of things like ‘Wahhabism’ that we assume simply exists ‘out there’ in

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11 Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics.
the social world. This becomes extremely important when we consider that policy and decision-makers can draw on these representations when making policies that have the ability to cause great harm and destruction, and that the public’s support for such policies can also rely on the same representations.

To borrow a concept from Deleuze that has since been expanded on by authors like Osborne, we can best understand intellectuals as ‘mediators’ of ideas in today’s ‘knowledge society’. Both authors emphasise the important role intellectuals play in communicating ideas about the social world to their audience. For Deleuze the modern intellectual as a mediator is a creative catalyst of ideas. Osborne writes “the mediator is interested above all in ideas…ideas which are going to make a difference…‘any difference which makes a difference in some later event’”. However the major issue with Osborne’s conception is that he considers the intellectual as a mediator to be “value-neutral” unconcerned with “the ‘big ideas’ of the epoch of ‘grand narratives’”.

The important question I want to address and which is at odds with the account offered by Osborne, is whether intellectuals are indeed ‘value-neutral’ mediators communicating ideas about what is happening in the social world to their audience or whether there is something else going on? Additionally we also need to establish whether Osborne’s claim that many intellectuals are not concerned with the ‘big ideas’ and ‘grand narratives’ of our time is adequate. As will become clear later, a case can be made that those intellectuals whose representations of ‘Wahhabism’ I pay attention to in this study, are indeed concerned with promoting the ‘big ideas’ and ‘grand narratives’ associated with popular intellectual traditions like neo-conservatism, liberalism and Marxism. It is equally likely that many are also unknowingly or unconsciously promoting key beliefs that resonate with or get their authority and appeal from these ‘big’ intellectual traditions.

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14 Reference to Osborne’s claim that his conceptualisation of the mediator as relatively ‘value-neutral’ when compared to Deleuze’s conception is taken from note 9 on p. 446. The quotation appears on p.441.
In both instances the outcome is often the same, a particular sense of order is imposed on the social world and it is created and re-created in particular ways. Contrary to Osborne’s claim I think it is crucial to consider the intellectuals’ ideas within the political context in which they have been formed and appear. We only need to look at the fact that ‘Wahhabism’ was largely ignored pre-9/11 to see that the relatively new interest in it is related to the post-9/11 period in which many ‘Western’ governments and intellectuals are fixated with the ‘Global War on Terror’.

Given the important roles intellectuals play in this ‘knowledge production’ process it matters that we pay close attention to the particular truth claims intellectuals make when justifying their interpretations and how we are best to understand this process. As has proven to be the case in the recent times, if we are going to make policies in an age of heightened anxiety preoccupied with ‘countering’ ‘Islamic radicalism’ or ‘Islamist terrorism’, it matters that we understand the claims informing and supporting these decisions. If we in the ‘West’ are going to do things like invade Islamic sovereign nations in the Middle East with the aim of ‘promoting democracy’ or bomb civilians and ‘terrorists’ in the name of ‘security’ then we must have an understanding of the claims supporting and justifying these kinds of actions. This understanding requires intense scrutiny, which I argue involves the careful deconstruction of representations.

In this chapter I set out the rationale for my research program. I argue that a review of the relevant literature points to a number of key problems or questions that have been the focus of considerable scholarly debate. These problems or questions provide the over-arching intellectual and analytical problematic for my inquiry into the ways certain groups of intellectuals represent ‘Wahhabism’.

First it is clear there is an ongoing debate about the motivation and identity of intellectuals. I show how scholars have sought to make sense of the different motivations and inspirations influencing intellectuals. I aim to answer the question ‘what is it that leads some men and women to become intellectuals?’ Related to this idea is how we define an intellectual. Here I ask ‘is the function of critique fundamental to the identity of intellectuals?’ Secondly there is discussion about the particular practices in which intellectuals play a special role. How important for
example is the proposition that intellectuals set about constituting our world? This leads me to consider their role in constructing what Anderson called ‘Imagined Communities’ and Said called ‘Imagined Spaces’.15

Among the many issues about the relationship of intellectuals to conceptions of truth, I deal with the role prejudice plays in the ways intellectuals make sense of and represent the social world. The need to do this is raised by Chomsky’s provocative suggestion that ‘it is the responsibility of intellectuals to speak the truth and to expose lies’ and Arendt’s more nuanced account of the problem of how we are to think about the relation of truth and politics.16 At stake here is how intellectuals justify their claims as ‘purveyors of truth’ including intellectuals like Chomsky.

On the Collective Identity and Attachment of Intellectuals

I began the previous section by outlining a particular approach adopted by scholars like Julien Benda when studying the sociology of intellectuals. Scholars differ in their understandings with regards to what defines or constitutes an ‘intellectual’, what their roles should be and are, and to whom or what they owe their allegiance. Charles Kurzman and Lynn Owens offer a useful typology that helps us to distinguish between three major approaches scholars adopt when considering these different issues. These are the ‘intellectuals as class-less,’ ‘intellectuals as class-bound,’ ‘intellectuals as a class in themselves’.17 I prefer to think of and describe the second category as ‘intellectuals as class, group or movement-bound’. For me ‘class-bound’ implies a Marxist or quasi-Marxist understanding while ‘class, group or movement-bound’ can be used to describe intellectuals with any affiliation to an interest group. Understanding this debate within the scholarly literature is important because it informs our understanding of and helps us to distinguish between the different roles intellectuals adopt when representing ‘Wahhabism’. More specifically this helps us to understand the different factors inspiring and motivating the intellectuals in their representing of ‘Wahhabism’ i.e. are they motivated and inspired by a desire to ‘speak truth to power’ or by particular class and group interests.

15 Anderson, Imagined Communities; Said, Orientalism
First we will deal with the group Kurzman and Owens call the ‘class-less intellectuals’. Prominent writers belonging to this long tradition include Karl Mannheim, Noam Chomsky, Talcott Parsons, Edward Shils and Christopher Hitchens. As the term suggests, these scholars maintain that intellectuals are non-partisan and not attached or fixed to any particular group or class. Their critiques of the social world for their audience are said to be inspired by ‘utopian ideals’ rather than personal glory or class-interests. If we are to consider the roles these kinds of intellectuals play in representing ‘Wahhabism’ we can say they are motivated and inspired by such things as describing the ‘way things really are’ and bringing attention to injustices and wrongs with the ultimate aim of creating a more harmonious society.

Mannheim saw intellectuals as “not too firmly situated in the social order”, “socially unattached” and as a part of an “unanchored, relatively class-less stratum.” He believed intellectuals to be motivated and inspired by a desire to encourage mutual understanding between different sections and groups of society or as he puts it “to create a form outside of the party schools in which the perspective of and the interest in the whole is safeguarded.” He believed intellectuals were entrusted with the responsibility of making sense of the current political situation for the society and he saw non-intellectuals as those members of society who are firmly entrenched in society participating in everyday activities. Incapable of having a deeper understanding of the different political forces operating and competing in society due to their relative lack of education, Mannheim believed these everyday people absorbed worldviews as if by some kind of osmosis.

…while the person who is not oriented toward the whole through his education, but rather participates directly in the social process of production, merely tends to absorb the Weltanschauung [worldview] of that particular group.”

20 Ibid., 161-162.
21 Ibid., 156.
Mannheim however was extremely worried that intellectuals in the twentieth century were not living up to their responsibilities and were instead promoting the interests of particular groups to the detriment of wider society. Chomsky expresses a similar concern about intellectuals especially ‘Western’ intellectuals in the twenty-first century whose relative “…political liberty, from access to information and freedom of expression” means they have the responsibility “…to seek the truth lying hidden behind the veil of distortion and misrepresentation, ideology and class interest, through which the events of current history are presented to us.”

Mannheim was worried that intellectuals were failing to transcend their class and instead joining or remaining in particular interest and class groups. He wrote that “the decline of a relatively free intelligentsia” during this period threatened “the comparative and critical approach which an atmosphere of multi-polar viewpoints stimulates.” As we will see Mannheim and Chomsky are right to worry. Many of the intellectuals representing ‘Wahhabism’ in the twenty-first century remain tied to particular interest and on some occasions class groups and favour the promoting of their interests instead of attempting to facilitate understanding between different groups with the ultimate aim of creating a more harmonious society.

Talcott Parsons and Christopher Hitchens have adopted similar approaches. Parsons argued that intellectuals should aim to impose ‘universalistic standards’ as a way of promoting and creating a more inclusive and harmonious society rather than engaging in partisan politics. Parsons also understood the ‘observer-dependent’ role people in general play when making sense of phenomena in the social world. He saw intellectuals are responsible for dealing with the meaning of symbolic systems arguing they should dedicate themselves to describing the symbolic interactions between competing groups. Parsons would certainly categorise my work in describing and analysing the symbolic interactions occurring between intellectuals from competing groups as that performed by an ‘intellectual’.

Hitchens also sees intellectuals as unattached to a specific class or group and believes ‘real’ intellectuals would never use the term when referring to themselves: “…I

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24 Parsons, “‘The intellectual’: a social role category.”
cannot think of any – except [Alan] Wolfe who would have said on his or her own behalf, “I am an intellectual.” Hitchens claims it is important that we distinguish between the “true intellectuals” and the rival callings of “opinion maker” or “pundits”, especially as the last two are intimately bound up with the world of television. Hitchens’ awareness of the major role television plays which is largely ignored by Mannheim and Parsons is understandable given his sociology of the intellectual has been provided in the modern political context.

Hitchens maintains that a ‘true intellectual’ does not promote the interests of a specific group or class rather he or she “…attempt[s] to soar on the thermals of public opinion.” According to Hitchens the intellectual is subversive, “…makes his or her living through the battle of ideas” and is someone …who care[s] for language above all and guess its subtle relationship to truth; and who will be willing and able to nail a lie. If such a person should also have a sense of irony and a feeling for history, then, as the French say, “tant mieux.”

While the intellectual does not necessarily have to ‘speak truth to power’ he or she should be sceptical of authority as well as claims about ‘utopia,’ ‘heaven’ and ‘hell’. The intellectual must also be able …to survey the present though the optic of a historian, the past with the perspective of the living, and the culture and language of others with the equipment of an Internationalist.

Shils’ understanding of the intellectual is somewhat similar to the accounts offered by Mannheim, Parsons and Hitchens. Like them he saw intellectuals as ‘free-floating’ and ‘class-less’. Basing his account on the political situation in post-colonial India where he saw intellectuals as playing “a great historical role on the higher levels of administration,” Shils conceded that some intellectuals were regrettably motivated by

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26 Ibid., paragraph 1.
27 Ibid., paragraph 10.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
personal glory. According to Shils the intellectual as a ‘responsible critic’ should never give in to such selfish and egoistic motivations nor should he or she get too involved in partisan politics or promote Government interests. Contra Mannheim, Parsons and Hitchens, Shils accepts that intellectuals can play minor roles in government.

However I believe there is a problem in linking Shils’ conceptualisation of the intellectual to those offered by Chomsky and Parsons. Whilst Kurzman and Owens encourage us to treat Shils’ conceptualisation in this way, there are contradictions in his work that suggest we should categorise his approach as one that treats intellectuals as tied to and promoters of particular class or group interests. There is evidence to suggest that Shils supported the view of intellectuals as key proponents of the political liberal tradition.

Shils understood intellectuals as playing key roles in the ‘bringing of modernity’ to ‘traditional societies’. Displaying some of the ethnocentric tendencies held by many in the political Liberal tradition, Shils advocated for the ‘modernisation’ of all ‘backward’ nations and he believed that the US provided the blueprint for this ideal society. According to Shils “Modern means being western without the onus of following the west. It is the model for the West detached in some way from its geographical origins and locus.” Acutely aware of possible charges of racism, Shils chose to use the terms ‘modernisation’ and ‘modern’ because he (wrongly) thought it steered away from implications of Western superiority suggested by the terms ‘Christianisation’ or ‘Westernisation’. This call for intellectuals to promote a particular belief system stands in contrast to the approaches adopted by authors like Mannheim, Parsons and Chomsky who champion ‘speaking truth to power’.

My initial account of these key authors helps to make an important point that needs to be acknowledged when considering the different approaches within the field of

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33 Ibid., 141.
sociology of intellectuals. It is important we understand the political contexts in which these conceptualisations were offered. While Shils was largely concerned with the decolonisation of India both Mannheim and Parsons wrote during a time in the twentieth century that was dominated by several global wars. Having experienced or learned about another global war only a few decades earlier, scholars studying the sociology of intellectuals were typically pessimistic about the future of humanity. Having seen many in the world taking sides and kill each other in the name of politics, many scholars including Mannheim and Parsons longed for a situation in which intellectuals could transcend these base instincts for the good of society and humanity. They wanted intellectuals to rise above politics, to be apolitical and to be of service to all humanity.

A second approach used to understand the roles, motivations and inspiration of intellectuals involves treating them as a ‘class in themselves’. Advocates of this approach have included Julien Benda, George Orwell, Vaclav Havel and Leszek Kolakowski. Like Mannheim, Shils and Parsons, these writers understand intellectuals as existing apart from particular class and group interests. Advocates of this approach tend to see intellectuals primarily as ‘servants of truth,’ philosophers and educators inspired and motivated by the utopian ideals of creating a better society. This idea became prominent amongst intellectuals in the early twentieth century when the Dreyfus Affair in France inspired an appeal to a conception of intellectuals as defenders of the truth. Robert Levy was among those who called for the “Intellectuals of all countries, [to] unite!”

Unite because the war, which decimated you, has reduced the survivors to the wages of misery; unite because, among other workers, your brothers, you [survivors] dare to speak of the material conditions of your miserable lives, which are brightened only by the will to learn or teach.

The Dreyfus intellectuals which in addition to Levy included prominent intellectuals like Emile Zola, Alan Montefiore, Octave Mirbeau and Anatole France, did not see

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themselves as attached to a particular class of production i.e. the Proletariat or the Bourgeoisie but instead considered themselves to be their own class. Christopher Hitchens points out the term ‘intellectual’ was also one of abuse used by critics of the pro-Dreyfus intellectuals who saw them as preferring “…the urbane abstractions of ‘the intellect’ to the verities of church and soil.”

Julien Benda, who was an early and prominent advocate for this approach, writes that intellectuals should be inspired by “non-material advantages” and not “the pursuit of practical aims.” He said they find “joy in the practice of an art or a science or metaphysical speculation…and hence in a certain manner say: ‘My kingdom is not of this world’”. Benda’s seminal work La Trahison des Clercs which along with Mannheim’s work is considered to be one of the founding documents in the sociology of intellectuals, was essentially an attack on contemporary intellectuals who failed to live up to their responsibilities as anti-class and non-partisan. “The modern ‘clerk’ has entirely ceased to let the layman alone descend to the market place” and in doing so “betrayed their duty, which is precisely to set up a corporation whose sole cult is that of justice and truth.”

Benda’s calls to ‘truth’ makes him a part of a long tradition of scholars who hold that one of the intellectuals’ chief responsibilities is to be, as is so eloquently stated by Ignazio Silone, in “the humble and courageous service of truth.” This tradition also includes George Orwell and Vaclav Havel who saw intellectuals as ‘disturbers of peace’ in constant pursuit of the truth irrespective of whether or not this infuriated authorities. Havel writes

The intellectual should constantly disturb, should bear witness to the misery of the world, should be provocative by being independent, should rebel against all hidden and open pressure and manipulations, should be the chief doubter of

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36 Hitchens “The Plight of the Public Intellectual”, 63.
37 Benda, The Treason of the Intellectuals, 43.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., 57.
systems, of power and its incantations, should be a witness to their mendacity.\textsuperscript{41}

Orwell’s legacy is so legendary that to describe a piece of writing as ‘Orwellian’ is to recognise that human resistance to terror is unquenchable.\textsuperscript{42} Orwell wrote during the mid-twentieth century which was a time dominated by imperialism, fascism and Stalinism. His claim to be identified as belonging to the ‘Left’ has proved a rich source of scholarly disagreement. He favoured an internationalist stand to nationalism and he was critical of many in the intellectual class who championed man-made ‘ideologies’. Orwell was also a fierce critic of the Catholic intellectuals who colluded with the Catholic Church to advance their religious agenda.\textsuperscript{43} However it is his anti-imperialism which is the strongest and consistent theme throughout his writings and the bulk of his efforts were dedicated to championing the emancipation of the formerly colonised world.

British involvement in India was a central concern to him given his and his family’s personal experience with the British Imperialist forces in the country. His anti-imperialist ideas are evident in both \textit{The Lion and the Unicorn} and his introduction to Joyce Cary’s \textit{African Freedom} where he demands a full and independent India free from British interference.\textsuperscript{44} Orwell lived the life he believed a responsible critic should live which meant always ‘facing power’ particularly when revealing its relationship with cruelty and force and ensuring his or her opinions are given without dilution particularly from the mass media.\textsuperscript{45}

Orwell believed that one should always ‘speak the truth’ and these efforts should be focused on the relationship between the dominated and dominator, and that one should never compromise oneself by associating with ‘ideological’ and ‘interest’ groups when doing so. Orwell’s ideas about the role of the intellectual and the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Havel, \textit{Disturbing the Peace}, 167.
\item Ibid.
\item Hitchens provides a good example of Orwell’s ‘power of facing’ where he constantly circumvented surveillance and interference during his time working at the BBC in India to disseminate ‘banned works and ideas’ like those which were critical of fascism. See \textit{Why Orwell Matters}, 23-26.
\end{enumerate}
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constant anti-imperialism that pervaded his writings are made clear in his refusal to speak on the platform of the League for European Freedom at a meeting protesting Communist brutality in Yugoslavia.

Certainly what is said on your platforms is more truthful than the lying propaganda to be found in most of the press, but I cannot associate myself with an essentially Conservative body which claims to defend democracy in Europe but has nothing to say about British imperialism. It seems to me that one can only denounce the crimes now being committed in Poland, Jugoslaiva etc. if one is equally insistent on ending Britain’s unwanted rule in India. I belong to the Left and must work inside it, much as I hate the Russian totalitarianism and its poisonous influence in this country.46

Similar conceptualisations are offered by Emile Zola, Leszek Kolakowsi and Edward Said, who used his famous Reith Lectures in 1993 to remind us that the primary responsibility of the modern intellectual is ‘to speak the truth to power’.47 These scholars have also been labelled as belonging to a ‘Moralist’ tradition within a sociology of intellectuals and it is worth noting that critics of this tradition claim they offer a normative conception of intellectuals rather than one that is apparently ‘empirically grounded’.48

A third approach offered by Kurzman and Owens deals with scholars who understand ‘intellectuals as class-bound’. To reiterate I believe we can also describe these intellectuals as ‘movement and group-bound’. This means their social class or interest group is the basis of their intellectual activity. When considering the role of the intellectual as a mediator, this approach advocates for mediations or representations of the social world by the intellectuals that serve or help advance the interests of a particular group or class. This can be understood as a political approach which often

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46 Ibid., 29.
47 For an understanding of the role of the ‘Dreyfusian intellectual’ during France in the 1890s including the prominent role played by Zola in organising the intellectuals see Lewis A. Coser, Men of Ideas: A Sociologist’s Views (New York: The Free Press, 1970), 215-225; Kolakowski, Marxism and Beyond; Said, Representations of the Intellectual, see chapter ‘Speaking Truth to Power,’85-102.
relies on truth claims inspired and motivated by partisan politics as opposed to more utopian ideals or ‘speaking truth to power’.

This approach was pioneered by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci who argued that the role of intellectuals can only be understood by locating them within the class system of modern societies. Gramsci began his analysis by asking: “Are the intellectuals autonomous and independent social group, or does every social group have its own particular specialized category of intellectuals?” Gramsci argued for the second option. According to him each social group creates with itself a set of organic intellectuals that provide the group with “homogeneity and an awareness of its function” in the political, social and economic fields. Intellectuals can be categorised as such when they use society’s ‘ideological’ apparatuses like the media and the education system to help promote their groups or class interests in an attempt to make their way of thinking the cultural norm. Gramsci’s key point was that intellectuals are not able to form their own class group but belong or work for other social classes.

It is important to understand the political context in which Gramsci offered this conceptualisation. This was during a time when the Italian Communist Party was a major player in Italy and the Communist party in the USSR was dominating the international workers movements. Gramsci was himself a part of the Italian Communist Party whose concern for the welfare and wellbeing of those belonging to the lower and middle classes inspired and motivated him to act politically. Gramsci’s account of intellectuals can be understood as a call to the lower and middle classes to adopt activist roles in an attempt to revolutionise society with the ultimate aim of bettering their economic and social conditions. Scholars like William Domhoff who have adopted a Gramscian/Marxist approach, typically identify and criticise scholars they believe are representing and legitimating the interests of the upper classes and are inspired to maintaining the (capitalist) status quo.

50 Ibid., 5.
Intellectuals and the Nation-State

Kurzman and Owens identify three key questions in this ‘class and interest-based’ approach to understanding intellectuals that have helped advance it: “under what conditions do intellectuals aspire to organicity; what does it mean for an intellectual to be ‘organic’ in a community; and can intellectuals construct the community in which they claim to be organic?”52 The responses to these questions have been particularly pertinent for scholars dealing with nationalism. Whether or not intellectuals can construct the group to which they are said to have some kind of ‘organic’ connection has been key to scholars wanting to understand another and different kind of ‘organic’ connection namely that between intellectuals and their identity with and membership of nation-states.

This scholarly debate is relevant to this study. I have already anticipated some of my argument by referring to the ways some intellectuals play in constructing ‘Imagined Communities’ and ‘Imagined Geographies’ when representing ‘Wahhabism’ in the previous chapter. As I discuss here, there is a long tradition of writers including Ron Eyerman, Eric Hobsbawn, Anthony Smith, Ronald Suny and Michael Kennedy, Benedict Anderson, Edward Said and Derek Gregory who claim that intellectuals often have a connection with particular communities and that they play key roles in helping to create these communities.53 This debate focuses on what inspires and motivates these intellectuals to act in this way and whether their constructing of particular spaces and communities has positive or negative implications for the situation on the ground.

Building on the ideas of Gramsci, Eyerman claims that we can think of those helping to construct particular groups as ‘Movement Intellectuals’ because they are a part of a particular class or other social movement, group or intellectual tradition.54 However instead of groups producing their own intellectuals as Gramsci suggests, Eyerman maintains ‘Movement Intellectuals’ are producing ‘Organic groups’. This role of the

53 Derek Gregory, The Colonial Present (Blackwell, 2004); Hobsbawn, Nations and Nationalism: Smith, Theories of Nationalism; Suny and Kennedy eds., Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation; Anderson, Imagined Communities; Eyerman, Between Culture and Politics.
54 Eyerman, Between Culture and Politics, 198.
intellectual has been central to scholarly debates about Nationalism. Eyerman is critical of intellectuals choosing to help create imagined groups claiming this allows them to project “their own needs and fantasies”—an important issue that we need to keep in mind when later considering neo-conservative, liberal and Marxist intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’.55

Scholars like Anderson, Hobsbawm, Smith, and Suny and Kennedy have emphasised the roles intellectuals play as catalysts and agents central to the constitution of national ideologies and movements.56 Anderson argues nations are socially constructed communities ‘imagined’ by the people who think of themselves as part of that group. He writes “all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact are imagined.”57 Imagined communities are not unreal by virtue of being ‘imagined’ but constitute a network of socially consequential relationships with the same degree of reality as members of communities who enjoy face-to-face relations. We may not see everyone that is a part of our imagined community however our ability to communicate helps us to know they exist. Anderson points to the crucial role print media plays in creating these communities especially the first European nation-states.

Many writers especially more traditionally inclined Marxists, have been hostile to the kinds of nationalism fostered by intellectuals in terms rendered by Anderson as ‘imagined communities’. They treat them as distractions that divert the lower and middle classes from understanding the real and true source of their subjugation and oppression. In spite of criticisms offered by authors like Eric Hobsbawm and Ernest Geller, Anderson does not see nationalism as a negative thing: he remarked “I am probably the only one writing about nationalism who doesn’t think it ugly.”58 Anderson believes that there exists a ‘valuable’ utopian element in nationalism that helps give people meaning as it inspires comradeship and encourages feelings of belonging to a group much bigger than themselves. Unfortunately the reality is that

55 Ibid.
56 Anderson, Imagined Communities; Suny and Kennedy, Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation; Smith, Theories of Nationalism; Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism.
57 Anderson, Imagined Communities, 6.
any ‘utopian element’ is outweighed by its use as force to divide and encourage hatred and violence and between people.

Edward Said’s ideas about ‘Imagined Geographies’ are similar to Anderson’s ‘Imagined Communities’. Said uses this when referring to perceived spaces created by intellectuals through the use of particular images, texts and discourses. Said’s ideas are based on his analysis of the ways in which the ‘West’ creates ‘Imagined Geographies’ of the Orient. He claims that Western culture’s modern understanding of the Orient is based on a selective imagination conjured up through intellectual representations including academic Oriental studies and travel writings. Said claims that intellectuals’ representations have feminised the Orient by portraying it as ‘open’ and ‘virgin’ space with no ability or concept of organised rule or government. Said saw the intellectuals’ ability to create these ‘Imagined Geographies’ as a powerful tool that can be used to one group i.e. ‘Western’ intellectuals to control and subordinate another group i.e. the ‘Orient’.

Said’s ideas have inspired scholars like Derek Gregory who apply his theory to the modern post-9/11 political situation. Gregory claims that the ideas motivating and inspiring the ‘Western’-led Global War on Terror against ‘radical Islamists’ builds on the same ‘Imagined Geographies’ highlighted by Said. Aware of the ability of intellectuals’ representations to influence the policy and decision making processes, Gregory emphasises the crucial role intellectuals’ representations of particular spaces in the Middle East have played in the making of ‘Western’ foreign policy. This link between representing the problems and making of policy is a key point also emphasised by scholars like Carol Bacchi.

Gregory argues that ‘Western’ culture has a tendency to represent the Islamic world as ‘uncivilized,’ ‘backward’ and ‘failing’ and that this helps justify the recent Western military interventions in the Middle East especially in Afghanistan and Iraq. He criticises prominent ‘Western’ commentators like Huntington, Lewis and Zakaria (both Lewis and Zakaria are liberal intellectuals whose representations of ‘Wahhabism’ I analyse in this study) for promoting Orientalist frames when writing

60 Bacchi, What’s the Problem Represented to Be?
about international political space and he claims that the current ‘Western’-led Global War on Terror is a continuation of the European Colonisation process: “what else is the war on terror other than the violent return of the colonial past, with its split geographies of “us” and “them,” “civilization” and “barbarism,” “Good” and “Evil”?  

The works of Gregory, Anderson, Said and Eyerman are especially pertinent to this thesis given my interest in studying the relations between intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’ (including their role in creating ‘Imagined Communities’ and ‘Imagined Geographies’) and the political, decision and policy making process. It must be noted that some scholars disagree about the flow of causality i.e. whether nationalist ideas are products of pre-existing communities with intellectuals playing the roles of midwives or whether intellectuals create and impose nationalist ideas reconfiguring communities. The roles intellectuals play in this process are pertinent to this study however issues regarding causality are not. Unlike many of those scholars engaging in this debate my view of how the world works is shaped in part by dialectics, a philosophy of internal relations and abstraction.

Intellectuals clearly play an important role in constructing imagined communities and spaces. However it might be wise to avoid treating this as an issue needed to rest on a binary in which one element is required to ‘cause’ the other. Instead I recognise and appreciate the two are internally connected and therefore influencing each other. Rather than focusing on ‘measuring’ the impact these ideas have in concrete terms like scholars Adebayo Williams and Brindusa Palade have done, I propose to focus on the role intellectuals play in the process of representing ‘Wahhabism’ in the modern political world. This brings me to the vexed question of truth.

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Making Sense of Truth

It was Julien Benda who argued strenuously that the intellectual’s essential role is to be a ‘servant of truth’. Benda argues that the intellectual’s allegiance must be to truth rather than to the interests of a particular class or group. Later Noam Chomsky joined Benda in his criticism of intellectuals who refused to ‘speak truth to power’ by favouring their material interests. But what do we mean exactly when we use this term ‘truth’? To what kind of ‘truth’ are these authors referring?

It hardly needs saying that this question has been a major focus of many philosophers and scholars in the twentieth century and has inspired many ongoing discussions-cum-controversies between contending schools of philosophy. Though it simplifies matters somewhat the case for a ‘realist’ ‘naturalist’ or ‘objectivist’ account of truth has been made by writers like Bertrand Russell, Alfred Jules Ayer, Rudolf Carnap, William P. Alston and Susan Haack in traditions like empiricism and logical positivism. Ranged against these traditions philosophers associated with pragmatism, critical theory, discourse theory and post-structuralism have made the case for a ‘constructivist’ ‘perspectivist’ and contingent account of truth. The arguments and controversies have involved writers like Hans-Georg Gadamer, Martin Heidegger, Stephen Toulmin, Hannah Arendt, Richard Rorty, Jacques Derrida and John Caputo.

63 Benda, The Treason of the Intellectuals.
64 Chomsky, “The Responsibility of Intellectuals.” See also Noam Chomsky, American Power and the New Mandarins (New York: Pantheon, 1969). Chomsky is extremely critical of the Liberal Intellectuals, the ‘new mandarins’, who provided the necessary ‘ideological cover’ for the atrocities committed by American forces against the Vietnamese people.
65 Russell distinguishes between two kinds of knowledge of truths. One is direct, intuitive, certain and infallible, the other is indirect, derivative, uncertain and open to error. See 905, “On Denoting,” Mind, in Bertrand Russell, Logic and Knowledge (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1956), 41f.
Since this is neither the time nor place to rehearse the often highly complex arguments made by these various antagonists, I want here only to briefly indicate the kinds of considerations that have influenced by account. These take off from observations made by both Toulmin and Caputo that we live in a time that has moved beyond a conception of truth framed in terms of timeless and universal propositions.67 Caputo writes that truth is ‘perpetually on the go’ and that we are currently living in an age:

… marked by modern transportation systems in which we can travel almost anywhere, and modern information systems, through which almost anything can travel to us, [now] is much more pluralistic than life in the past.68

Caputo notes that travelling is a key part of our modern lifestyle and that when we travel we are able to experience many different views of reality. This new way of being and thinking has threatened our once cherished Modernist or Enlightenment ideas of truth. During that period in time we were committed to the idea there was one big story that explained all the world’s phenomena. The one big story was science and there are still many social scientists assume that we can use a natural scientific approach to measure, explain or predict social phenomena.

The same ‘one big story’ idea was also pervasive in the age dominated by religious thought occurring immediately prior to the Enlightenment. During this period in history it was generally believed that all things could be understood in terms of God’s plan. Unfortunately and often dangerously there are still people who continue to think in this way today and who see our lives as a part of some divine plan for mankind. According to the standard Judeo-Christian interpretation this typically ends with the messiah returning to the earth and saving the ‘believers’.

Caputo’s key point is that we now live in an age defined by multiple and competing interpretations of the world. However this does not mean we must go down the rabbit hole of the post-modern conception of truth where everybody’s conceptions of truth

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are equally valid, where nothing can be confirmed or denied and where anything can be asserted in whatever style one chooses. This is tantamount to giving up on the idea of truth. Instead we must ‘save’ truth and we can do this by following a line of thought that started with Heidegger and was developed by two of his successors, Gadamer and Arendt.

This is a tradition that can be traced back to the ideas of Martin Heidegger expressed in his seminal work Being and Time. Heidegger uses the concept Dasein to describe the process and responsibility man has for understanding and making sense of the world into which he has been ‘thrown’. The German word Dasein is usually translated as ‘existence’ though a more exact translation would be ‘being there’. Heidegger uses this term to describe the specific human experience of being. Heidegger uses Dasein to help emphasise the responsibility we have as humans to be aware of and deal with a range of issues including our mortality and the dilemma of living in relationships with others whilst at the same time being alone with one’s self. It is a way of being that involves caring for the world in which one lives but at the same time remaining aware of the contingent element of that involvement, of the priority of the world to the self and the evolving nature of the self. Heidegger describes the opposite of Dasein as the forfeiting of meaning in favour of an escapist way of being.

Heidegger’s ideas about ‘one’s own truth’ and making sense of one’s existence inspired Hans-George Gadamer’s formative work on prejudice. Hans-George Gadamer takes a step back and identifies the existence of anticipatory structures that affect the way we come to know and understand the world. When it comes to ‘knowing’ the German language distinguishes between the verbs kennen and wissen. Wissen implies the knowing of a fact whilst kennen implies knowing in the sense of being acquainted with and having a working knowledge of something. The terms are often used in the field of epistemology where it is useful when distinguishing between various settings of knowledge production and emphasises their contextual

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69 Heidegger, Being and Time.
aspects. Different fields of study are endowed with their own epistemic culture prescribing what is and what is not adequate knowledge and how this knowledge can be obtained. The knowing of a fact or wissen typically applies to the natural world which is ‘observer-independent’. Here we are concerned with kennen which deals with the social world and is ‘observer-dependent’ and which is influenced by our Vorurteile.

Gadamer’s hermeneutic conception of knowledge holds that every act of understanding presupposes a pre-understanding, the elements of which are one's Vorurteile, prejudgments or prejudices. These “absolutely fundamental anticipations, that is, anticipations common to us all,” are what Gadamer calls “tradition”.73 This is an important point as we start to consider the Marxist, liberal and neo-conservative intellectual traditions. Our prejudices are affected by things like the context in which we are currently living, born into and raised or as Heidegger’s phrases it ‘the place in the world into which we are thrown’.

There is a tendency for people to hear or read the word ‘prejudice’ and think of it in negative terms. One often thinks of racial or homophobic prejudice which are both certainly negative and hateful views. Rather than understanding all prejudices as bad Gadamer maintains that prejudices can also be understood as good things. It is Gadamer who is responsible for reviving the concept of prejudice recognising the fact there can be such things as legitimate prejudices.74 What this means is that some opinions can be true in that they speak to way things really are and some opinions are false because they do not describe how things really are.

The key tasks when dealing with prejudices is not only to identifying them so as to understand the ways in which intellectuals for example make sense of the world which includes making and relying on particular truth claims, but to also consider what in those prejudices speaks to the way things really are and what do not. Gadamer writes that the fundamental epistemological question is not how can we remove prejudice or bias, a process that many social scientists mistakenly think can still be

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done today, but rather to find answers to the question ‘what make makes prejudices legitimate?’ Or as Gadamer phrases it “What distinguishes legitimate prejudices from the countless others which it is the undeniable task of critical reason to overcome?”  

This is precisely what Arendt recommends. She writes that this approach prohibits us from adopting a ‘rationalist method’ when seeking to then dispel these prejudices. We as ‘social scientists’ cannot develop ‘scientific methods’ aimed at ‘removing’ prejudice or bias from studies of phenomena in the social world because prejudice is an irremovable part of us. If we want to dispel these prejudices then we must find out and expose them for what they are which involves finding their Wahrheitsgehalt.  

Arendt recognises that we have moved beyond the idea that there is a timeless eternal truth in the social world and that we now live in age of mass manipulation where even the role of factual truth is challenged. She points to Leon Trotsky’s erasing from the ‘official’ Russian view of its recent history as a quintessential example of this manipulation: such was the fate “of a man by the name of Trotsky, who appears in none of the Soviet Russian history books,” comments Arendt. Despite this she maintains that we must still find a way of dealing with truth claims especially those that are religious and political in nature and which have the ability to influence the political and decision-making processes. She proposes that we shift our attention to the prejudices underscoring these truth claims. More specifically she recommends identifying and unpacking these prejudices with the aim of understanding what in them is true.  

Conclusion

One of my chief tasks in this research is to identify and unpack the prejudices influencing the ways in which intellectuals represent ‘Wahhabism’. ‘Wahhabism’ is an ‘observer-dependent’ phenomenon given meaning by the intellectuals representing

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75 Ibid., 277.
76 Arendt writes
If one wants to dispel prejudices, one must first discover the judgments that they contain, that is, one must identify what in them is true (Wahrheitsgehalt). If one bypasses this step, entire battalions of enlightened speakers and entire libraries of pamphlets will achieve nothing.
See Arendt, Was Ist Politik?, 19.
78 Arendt, Was Ist Politik?
it. If we are to take these representations seriously, and we must given they have the ability to inform public opinion and the policy and decision-making processes, then it is important to understand how and why these intellectuals have chosen to represent ‘Wahhabism’ in particular ways. Additionally if we are going to make decisions and policies based on these kinds of representations then it is important that we make sense of the different kinds of truth claims that support them. It is important to understand whether these claims are erroneous, products of duplicity or delusion, or if they actually speak to the way things really are.
Chapter Three
On Method, Prejudice and Understanding the Social World

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow...

T.S. Eliot, The Hollow Men

The way intellectuals represent ‘Wahhabism’ is the fundamental focal point of my study. I have made a case in the previous chapters for why this is so. It is now incumbent on me to say how I propose to do this. A conventional approach would be to understand the relation between the phenomenon we choose to call ‘Wahhabism’ and the intellectuals representing by assuming that there is some kind of causal relationship between the reality of ‘Wahhabism’ and the way the representations are then constructed.

Such an approach belongs to a philosophy of external relations which treats one thing as affecting another and which understands things as existing independently, as having a history and as having external communications with other things. It assumes an ‘observer-independent’ view of the social world and assumes we can somehow grasp, perhaps even ‘measure’, quantify or even provide causal and explanatory-predictive accounts of the processes and relations in the social world. I was early persuaded by Bologh who is one of the many authors who offer a scathing critique of this naïve-realist and positivist view of the social world.

[This approach] treats subjects and objects as separate and knowable in that separation, as if the sense of an object could be taken for granted as emanating from the object independently of any relation to the subject. In this way, the object as it is known, that is, the knowledge or meaning of the object, appears
to be natural and eternal rather than social and grounded in an historically specific form of life.¹

Though I was persuaded by this kind of critique about what I would not do, it was not clear what I would do or how I would do it. After a good deal of reading I came across several traditions of critical theory which seemed to provide both an approach and something like a method that was congruent with that approach.

The results of that intellectual journey are outlined in this chapter in two parts. First I will describe something of the way I make sense of the world and more specifically how I understand and treat intellectuals and their representations of ‘Wahhabism’. This involves describing my dialectical approach. Because I was not so naïve as to think that we can enjoy some kind of unmediated access to the social world that is separate from human experience, I found that I was able to understand and appreciate Marx’s dialectical imagination.

A dialectical imagination encourages us to think less about things and more about relations and processes that are constantly affecting each other and it emphasises the evolving nature of things. Dialectics encourages us to focus on how relationships arise, develop and fit into the larger context of which they are a part. It offers a much more complex and nuanced understanding of the social world which is sensitive to and aware of its relational nature. This approach has two key elements. These are the process of abstraction and the philosophy of internal relations.

In the second part of the chapter I detail my epistemological assumptions outline and justify my use of a Critical Discourse Analysis paradigm. I describe the particular ‘method’ I have chosen to use when deconstructing Marxist, liberal and neo-conservative intellectual’s representations of ‘Wahhabism’. This involves focusing on a number of key features of language and discourse including the use of metaphors, similes, analogies and neologisms, as well as the structuring of accounts of violence. My ultimate aim is to show some of the key prejudices influencing the ways in which these intellectuals make sense of the world.

This analysis provides the information I require to then go about describing what in these prejudices is ‘true’ or ‘speaks to the way things really are’ and what does not. This allows me to help determine whether intellectuals are making duplicitous, erroneous, delusional or accurate claims about reality when representing ‘Wahhabism’. This in turn helps me to understand the different kinds of roles these intellectuals have chosen to adopt i.e. are they ‘Movement Intellectuals’ promoting the interests of a particular group when representing ‘Wahhabism’ or did they see themselves as ‘unattached’, dedicated to highlighting injustices and wrongs and ‘speaking truth to power’.

**Dialectics**

If one were to attempt to define in a single word the focus, so to speak, of the whole correspondence [between Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels], the central point at which the whole body of ideas expressed and discussed converges—that word would be dialectics. The application of materialist dialectics to the reshaping of all political economy from its foundations up, its application to history, natural science, philosophy and to the policy and tactics of the working class—that was what interested Marx and Engels most of all, that was where they contributed what was most essential and new, and that was what constituted the masterly advance they made in the history of revolutionary thought.²


Bertell Ollman and Tony Smith point out that with such excellent press, one might think that dialectics would be well understood and that dialectical studies would be the norm rather than the exception. This however is clearly not the case. Ollman and Smith describe dialectics as a way of thinking and a set of related categories that captures the real changes and interactions happening in the social world. They say it offers a method for investigating social reality and presenting what we find to others many of whom do not adopt a dialectical imagination. Dialectics helps us to see and

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analyse relations and processes of which we are a part as they have unfolded, are currently unfolding and have yet to unfold.3

Ollman explains that the dialectical imagination takes the whole as a given. He points out the interconnections and changes that make up the whole are understood as inseparable from what anything is, internal to its being and essential to fully understanding it. We understand the world as consisting of processes in relations of mutual dependence rather than as existing of independent and ‘dead’ things. In the history of ideas this has been described as the ‘philosophy of internal relations’.4

Ollman points out that the philosophy of internal relations can be traced as far back as the Greek philosopher Parmenides (515-460 BCE) whose ideas first came into prominence in the early modern period in the work of Spinoza (1632-1677). Spinoza grounded his philosophy on Aristotle’s definition of ‘substance’ and infused it with his own religious ideas. Spinoza understood the world as made up of transient things that were the sum of interrelations. He called this manifold system of interrelations constituting everything ‘God’. A century or so later Hegel dealt with the philosophy of internal relations. Ollman notes that the distinctiveness of Hegel’s treatment of this idea lies in the many means he used to keep our attention focused on the whole while also distinguishing between its parts. Hegel described things as ‘determinations,’ ‘moments’ and ‘phenomena’, suggesting the impartial and unfinished nature of things whose full analysis requires that it be thought of as including much more than is immediately apparent.5 This is why I often choose to describe ‘Wahhabism’ as a ‘phenomenon’ throughout this study.

These ideas were again dealt with and further refined by Karl Marx who rejected Hegel’s claim that ideas somehow developed independently of man (Hegel called this the ‘Absolute Idea’). Rejecting the religious flavour that writers like Spinoza and Hegel had developed, which saw man as ultimately passive and at the will of a ‘higher’ force, Marx emphasised the role played by man in the influencing and shaping of the world. According to Marx change becomes a matter of man

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5 Ollman, Dance of the Dialectic, 39-40.
transforming his existence, he is not a passive observer of development as Hegel maintained rather he is the actor whose daily life brings about this change. This resonates with our understanding of ‘Wahhabism’ as ‘observer-dependent’ rather than ‘observer-independent’ phenomenon. What we understand as ‘Wahhabism’ and the different elements we assign it are not changing by themselves or at the will of a higher force, rather it is how we choose to think and talk about it that makes it change.

Key to the philosophy of internal relations is seeing the world as an interconnected whole rather than for example a conglomeration of loosely connected elements or things. No one thing can ever exist in isolation: rather everything in the social world is connected and in a constant state of flux. It because of this interconnectedness that changes in one element will result in changes in other elements. This helps us to understand the constant change in operational definitions and intellectual traditions as well as the phenomenon called ‘Wahhabism’ they are representing. For example contexts are constantly changing, people’s ideas and experiences and are also constantly changing and their understanding of the social world and phenomenon like ‘Wahhabism’ in it are therefore also always in a constant state of flux.

At this point we still do not really know anything specific about these relations. After assuming there exists a complex whole, the next step in dialectics is to abstract patterns in which most change and interaction occur. Seeing the world as composed of an infinite number of sense-perceptible qualities whose interdependence makes them a whole, it was Dietzgen who asked “Where do I begin and where do I stop?” Unlike Marx I am not dealing with the entire social order dominated by the capitalist mode of production. My task is somewhat easier because I am dealing with intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’. Nonetheless ‘where do I begin and where do I stop’ or put another way ‘what elements do I choose to “abstract” for closer analysis’ is a question I need to deal with.

The term ‘abstract’ which I borrow from Ollman who borrows it from Marx, comes from the Latin term *abstrahere* meaning ‘to pull from’: ‘to abstract’ is to extract or pull out. Abstraction can be used as both a verb (i.e. *abstracting*) and as a noun.

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6 Ibid., 42.
7 Cited in Ibid., 45.
(abstraction). This technique is useful because it allows us to focus on a particular element or a few elements within a complex whole. Ollman points out that the abstracting process is one of six key successive and repeating moments in the dialectical approach.\(^8\)

First is the ‘ontological moment’ of having to deal with what the world really is, which as I have already described is understanding the world as an infinite number of mutually dependent processes that coalesce to form a totality. The second is the ‘epistemological moment’ which concerns how we organise our thinking in order to understand this kind of world. This involves opting for a philosophy of internal relations and abstracting dominant patterns where change interaction occurs. Third is the ‘moment of inquiry’ where one uses categories that convey these patterns of internal relations as aids to investigation. Four is the ‘moment of intellectual reconstruction’ where one puts together what has been found. Following is the ‘moment of exposition’ which involves trying to describe the dialectical grasp of these ‘findings’ to an audience. Last is the ‘moment of praxis’ where one acts in the world, changing and testing what has been learnt which at the same times helps deepen one’s understanding of it.

The ‘epistemological moment’ especially the abstraction process is a particularly useful technique in this study when it comes to constructing a Weberian ideal type for the Marxist, neo-conservative and liberal intellectual traditions and when focusing on particular rhetorical techniques intellectuals use when representing ‘Wahhabism’. As I point out, in the ‘moment of inquiry,’ the terms ‘Marxist,’ ‘neo-conservative,’ ‘liberal’ and ‘Wahhabism’ can be understood as categories we can use to describe patterns of internal relations to help assist us in this study.

However before I describe the ideal type in greater detail and highlight its relevance to this study, it is important to recognise the inherent fuzzy nature of these and all other categories. The idea of ‘fuzzy categories’ seems especially congruent with the dialectical tradition, and because of its association with the role played by metaphors, it is also congruent with the Critical Discourse Analytic tradition.

\(^8\)Ollman, *Dance of the Dialectic*, 341.
On Fuzziness and Ideal Types

Scholars studying the social world understand that humans always divide it into categories. Many of these categories have blurred edges and what Zadeh describes as ‘grades of membership’. This is especially the case when dealing with concepts like ‘Wahhabism’ in the field of social science. Many social science concepts are contestable precisely because they do not have an exact definition. In the field of mathematics Lotfi Zadeh’s classical set theory offers a way of handling categories that allow partial membership. Inspired by Zadeh’s work researchers like Charles Ragin have advocated the use of ‘fuzzy sets’ in fields like sociology and political science while Lakoff has pointed to the central and constitutive role played by metaphors in human language and thinking.

When we hear the term ‘fuzzy’ we tend to associate it with terms like ‘unclear’ and ‘muddled’. It takes on a very different meaning when we think about ‘fuzzy set theory’ and ‘fuzzy categories’. Zadeh was amongst the first writers to use the term when using it to describe the ability of categorical types to refer to varying degrees of membership. A fuzzy set contrasts with a ‘conventional set’ where a thing is normally ‘in’ or ‘out’. This is comparable to a binary variable with two values. Unlike the conventional set, a ‘fuzzy set’ allows for membership between these two values.

Fuzzy sets are particularly useful for imprecise and complex categories like those with which I am dealing in this study i.e. ‘Wahhabism,’ ‘neo-conservatism,’ ‘Marxism’ and ‘liberalism’. As Ragin points out, ‘fuzzy sets’ give social scientists like me the ability to enliven, intensify and extend the dialogue between ideas and the information studied.

In short, with fuzzy sets researchers can analyze evidence in ways that directly reflect their theoretical arguments…fuzzy sets have the potential to transform

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10 Ibid.
research that is oriented towards “discovery,” toward gaining new insights about the world.\textsuperscript{13}

Ragin describes a number of advantages when using fuzzy sets to study the social world.\textsuperscript{14} Chief among these is it encourages social science researchers to give up the idea of homogenising assumptions that typically underscore quantitative analyses of social phenomena. This is an idea that continues to motivate and inspire researchers stuck on the Enlightenment idea that there is a big (scientific) story that can explain all the happenings of the social world. Instead ‘fuzzy sets’ encourage researchers to focus on and appreciate diversity. They attend to heterogeneity and difference especially to differences in kind. They promote a configurational approach to analysing social phenomena meaning they encourage treating cases as specific configurations of aspects and features. This encourages the search for heterogeneity within given population, conceives of difference in terms of kinds and types of cases and allows for degrees of membership. As Ragin notes “Thus, the incorporation of fuzzy sets allows for ‘variation’ without forsaking the core emphasis on types and kinds of cases.”\textsuperscript{15}

For a better understanding of the differences between how ‘fuzzy set’ and the conventional approaches work we can refer to Ragin’s use of the concept ‘Protestantism’. Ragin writes

Imagine that the conventional measure is based on a variety of indicators of Protestant behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs and that these different indicators strongly correlate with each other, justifying their combination into a single index of degree of Protestantism. Assume that this scale is both valid and reliable. But where on this scale is a full-fledged Protestant? Where on this scale is a full-fledged non-Protestant? Where on this scale is the cut-off value (or values) separating those who are more in the set of Protestants from those who are more in the set of non-Protestants?\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13} Ragin, \textit{Fuzzy-Set Social Science}, 2.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 5-7.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 6-7.
To help answer these kinds of questions of who belongs, who does not and who partially belongs, Ragin would insist that the researcher possess and demonstrate substantive knowledge about each of three intellectual traditions I am dealing with, have a solid grasp of their theoretical relevance and provide some kind of index of each. “Without this infusion of theoretical and substantive knowledge the fine-grained measure of Protestantism remains vague and imprecise – *uncalibrated.*”¹⁷ I do precisely this when constructing the liberal, Marxist and neo-conservative categories. As Ragin notes it is my responsibility as the researcher to specify and justify my categorisation process and for Weber’s ideal type is an important tool I can use in this process.¹⁸

Weber wrote that “an ideal type is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view” according to which “concrete individual phenomena … are arranged into a unified analytical construct *(Gedankenbild).*”¹⁹ He said that we can think of an ideal type as a “thought-picture” whose “conceptual purity…cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality.”²⁰ Its purpose as pointed by Susan Hekman is to synthesise meaningful and characteristic aspects of individual phenomena in order to help explain the occurrence of social events.²¹

While ideal types provide ‘thought-pictures’ against which a particular phenomenon may be compared that is not to say the particular phenomenon under investigation resembles the ideal type in every way. Weber understands social reality as more complex than any ideal type might be able to be used to investigate, meaning the ideal type can never totally resemble the object of investigation: “All knowledge of cultural reality ... is always knowledge from particular points of men?”²² An ideal type does not copy but instead ‘accentuates’ various features of a given social phenomenon for closer analysis.²³

¹⁷ Ibid., 7.
¹⁸ Ibid., 6.
²⁰ Ibid.
²³ Ibid., 90-91.
The Weberian ‘ideal type’ is an extremely useful tool and makes the studying of social phenomena like intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’ a manageable task. However we must acknowledge the various limitations and implications associated with this approach. For example Weber highlights the role an individual’s prejudice plays in how he or she constructs the ideal type as well as the fact that all ideal types are necessarily ‘partial’ and ‘preliminary’. Weber writes

Insofar as [an ideal type] traces a specific element of cultural life through the most diverse cultural contexts, it is making an historical interpretation from a specific point of view, and offering a partial picture, a preliminary contribution to a more complete historical knowledge of culture.24

Following Weber, I appreciate the complexity of the social world and understand that we can only expect so much from the abstraction process. In this study that means I often only use a handful of key beliefs when it comes to identifying intellectuals as belonging to particular intellectual traditions. There are authors who provide long lists of different beliefs they believe characterise the neo-conservative, liberal and Marxist intellectual traditions. These lists can include many differences, however they also tend to feature a number of similar core beliefs and it is these that help form my ideal type. Compiling an extensive list of all these beliefs and then looking for traces for each of these in an intellectual’s representation of ‘Wahhabism’ is far too great a task. It is much more manageable and suitable to this kind of study to focus on or ‘abstract’ what are generally understood to be at this point in time the key beliefs for closer analysis.

This process points to what Weber describes as the inevitable breakdown of every ideal type. While my ideal type may reflect the prevailing ideas at this point regarding what does and does constitute the core beliefs of the Marxist, liberal and neo-conservative traditions, the evolving nature of things, the fuzzy nature of categories and a changing in context means these ideas are bound to change. Weber points out that every ideal type will eventually break down in the face of the infinite multitude that is social reality.25

24 Ibid., 66.
The selecting of particular rhetorical techniques is also an act of abstraction that has its limitations. Intellectuals have a wide variety of rhetorical techniques available to them when representing ‘Wahhabism’. This can include everything from their ordering of words and sentences to framing and creating particular images for the reader. It is far too great a task to analyse all of these rhetorical techniques. To make this task more manageable we can focus on or ‘abstract’ a few of these. It is important to note that my selection of particular rhetorical techniques is a process influenced by my own prejudices and historical context, which we can call at this time an age of heightened anxiety created by the perceived threat of ‘Islamic terrorism’.

My ‘moment of inquiry’ which involves using particular analytical techniques to deconstruct intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’ occurs within a specific research paradigm which carries with it its own epistemological assumptions. The paradigm I have chosen to use is a Critical Discourse Analysis. However before describing the analytical process it matters that we have an understanding of the assumptions and prejudices associated with this paradigm that is shaping or influencing my ‘moment of inquiry’.

**Critical Discourse Analysis: Language is Made in and Makes the World**

Like the scholars and intellectuals whose works I analyse, I necessarily make and rely on any number of epistemological assumptions when making sense of the social world. I am also cognisant of the fact that in order for my research to be both coherent and sound my assumptions about the theory of knowledge must align with my dialectical imagination. It is because of these reasons that I have chosen to draw on the Critical Discourse Analysis research paradigm. This kind of discursive approach goes beyond treating language as a mere mirror of a phenomenon existing ‘out there’ in the social world. Critical Discourse Analysis treats discourse as playing a major role in the constructing of ideas, social processes and phenomena that constitute the social world. As James Paul Gee explains, this kind of approach recognises that “we fit our language to a situation or context that our language, in turn, helped to

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create in the first place.”27 Put another way, Critical Discourse Analysis treats discourse as socially produced and socially constitutive.

As Gee’s description suggests, this kind of approach perfectly aligns with a dialectical imagination. This is because a Critical Discourse Analysis paradigm appreciates the dialectical nature of language and because it treats language as a social practice. That is to say it appreciates that language is both made in and makes the world. Prominent discursive theorist Norman Fairclough also make this point, insisting that Critical Discourse Analysis understands discourse as having a dialectical relationship with social identities, social relationships and systems of knowledge and belief.28

A Critical Discourse Analysis also provides the analytical framework necessary for exploring the relations between discursive practices which in this case is ‘text,’ events and social and cultural processes. This approach allows me to appreciate the role relations of power and struggles over the constructing of text i.e. it helps me to understand why different groups of intellectuals are assigning a different set of characteristics to the phenomenon ‘Wahhabism’ and why they are using the term ‘Wahhabism’ in different ways. Critical Discourse Analysis appreciates the opaque nature of the relations between discourse and society and recognises these play integral roles in securing positions of influence and achieving hegemony. In describing these relations as ‘opaque’ I like Norman Fairclough am suggesting the links between discourse, ‘ideology’ and power are often unclear and that our social practices bounded to these relations are not always apparent.29

Like Fairclough I understand ‘ideology’ here to mean those “representations of aspects of the world which contribute to establishing and maintain relations of power,

27 James Paul Gee, An Introduction to Discourse Analysis (London: Routledge, 1999), 1.1
29 See Norman Fairclough defines Critical Discourse Analysis as ...

...discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.

domination and exploitation.”30 In this sense we can understand intellectuals’
representations of ‘Wahhabism’ as sites of struggle between ‘Movement Intellectuals’
belonging to different intellectual traditions each of whom are trying to create and re-
create the social world in ways that often align and reflect their own interests.
Representations of ‘Wahhabism’ can therefore be understood as a microcosm of a
much bigger struggle between intellectuals with competing ‘ideologies’.

My interest in how text is used by groups of people to promote particular
‘ideological’ interests builds on a long tradition of scholarship that includes theorists
like Said, Jørgensen, Phillips, Wodak and Meyer. Said for example, argues that
discursive narratives help create ‘structures of feeling’ that support, elaborate and
consolidate imperialistic interests. At the same he recognises that discursive narratives
can also be used to challenge, resist and provide alternate ‘structures of feeling’.31
Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips also highlight the ability of Critical
Discourse Analysis to be used in the “struggle for radical social change.”32 Wodak
agrees:

For CDA, language is not powerful on its own – it gains power by the use
powerful people make of it. This explains why CDA often chooses the
perspective of those who suffer, and critically analyzes the language use of
those in power, who are responsible for the existence of inequalities and who
also have the means and the opportunity to improve conditions. In agreement
with its Critical Theory predecessors, CDA emphasizes the need for
interdisciplinary work in order to gain a proper understanding of how
language functions in constituting and transmitting knowledge, in organizing
social institutions or in exercising power.33

An important point made by Wodak and Meyer is that we often fail to question or
challenge the ideas endorsed by proponents of dominant ‘ideologies’. Rather than
critiquing and challenging the representations of the social world these intellectuals

30 Fairclough, Analysing Discourse, 218.
2002), 64.
33 Ruth Wodak, “Aspects of Critical Discourse Analysis,” http://userpages.uni-
koblenz.de/~diekmann/zfal/zfal36_1.pdf.
provide we often take them to be ‘common sense’. A Critical Discourse Analysis emphasises the importance of not taking these ideas at face value rather it advocates for a thorough critique and challenging of these dominant ideas which have the ability to influence things like public opinion and the policy and decision making processes.

There is no one style of Critical Discourse Analysis approach that is applicable to all the kinds of research where ‘it’ might be applied. Rather it is best understood as a style of critical reading that allows for the use of many different kinds of techniques and approaches. Fairclough maintains that different kinds of approaches are acceptable as long as they satisfy three basic criteria. First there must be some kind of analysis of language. Second the researcher must explore the relation between the different ways in which language is used and the author’s belief system. Third the researcher must consider the relation between the author’s belief system and reality. My research questions have been designed with these conditions in mind. I shall now turn my attention to describing how I will go about meeting the first of these criteria.

Abstracting Five Elements

So many different elements can make up a representation of ‘Wahhabism’ and in a study like this it is impossible to consider all of these. The abstraction process makes this a manageable task as I am able to ‘abstract out’ particular elements for closer analysis. In this study I have chosen to focus on five different kinds of elements. They are the authors’ structuring of violent accounts and their use of metaphors, similes, neologisms and analogies. I shall now describe each of these in greater detail.

Metaphors and similes are two of the most basic and fundamental elements I abstract from intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’ for closer analysis. Both are different kinds of analogies which play key roles in how we make sense of the world. This is a key point emphasised by Douglas Hofstadter and Emmanuel Sandel in *Surfaces and Essences*. Hofstadter and Sandel describe our ability to make analogies

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as the “driving force behind all thought.”\textsuperscript{36} “Faced with a seething multitude of ill-defined situations...our poor besieged brain is constantly grappling with this unpredictable chaos,” and our minds respond by constantly assimilating things we see and feel to mental categories constructed by long chains of previous analogies. \textsuperscript{37} For example when we see a tree we recognise and identify it as a tree by ‘building a bridge’ of similarity between this new tree and the amassing of all trees we have seen before.

Hofstadter and Sander show how “concepts designated by a single word are constantly having their boundaries extended by analogies.”\textsuperscript{38} They define a concept as “an abstract pattern in the brain that stands for some regular, recurrent aspect of the world and to which any number of words ... can be attached.”\textsuperscript{39} They use a boy’s (who they call ‘Tim’) understanding of ‘Mother’ as an example of how the boundaries of a concept can constantly change for an individual. They describe how Tim’s first understanding of this term is shaped by his own experiences with his mother. “But as new instances of the concept \textit{mommy} are superimposed and start to blur in his memory, the mental mapping that Tim will automatically carry out...will start to be made...onto the nascent and growing concept of \textit{mommy}.”\textsuperscript{40}

The important and pertinent point for this study Hofstadter and Sander are making is that our mind’s mental representing of a concept is always changing. Our understandings of the situations in which concepts are used are constantly blurring together and creating new mental structures, and it is analogies that are driving these changes. “It’s this idea of concepts extending themselves forever through a long series of spontaneous analogies.”\textsuperscript{41} This is important as we begin to consider how we make sense of the concept ‘Wahhabism’ and the role mediators like intellectuals play in this process.

None of us can ever directly experience the concept ‘Wahhabism’. While we can grab and hold onto our Mothers like Tim does we cannot do the same for observer-

\textsuperscript{36} Hofstadter and Sandel, \textit{Surfaces and Essences}, 296.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 89.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 79.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 90.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 92.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 93
dependent phenomena like ‘Wahhabism’. We do however as Hofstadter and Sandel describe make sense of both things in our minds in the same way. What therefore becomes important are the messages our brains are receiving that are helping us to make sense of phenomena. When it comes to ‘Wahhabism’ many of those messages we are receiving are coming from intellectuals writing about it in places like magazines, in the blogosphere and in newspapers. As I describe earlier, and to again borrow ideas from authors like Gilles Deleuze and Thomas Osborne, we can understand these intellectuals as ‘mediators’ of ideas in today’s ‘knowledge society’. These intellectuals are also using particular rhetorical techniques with the aim of influencing our understanding of ‘Wahhabism’. This includes using analogies which as Hofstadter and Sandel point out play crucial roles in how we make sense of concepts.

Again it is important to understand that intellectuals have a vast array of rhetorical techniques at their disposal. When it comes to using analogous language for example they can use things like exemplification, comparison and allegories when trying to influence our understanding of phenomena like ‘Wahhabism’. We can understand analogous language as a complex whole comprised of many different elements. Given the scope of this study analysing the entire whole is a daunting and unmanageable task. This task is however made possible by our ability to ‘abstract out’ particular elements for closer analysis. In this study I have chosen to focus on metaphors, similes and neologisms.

A metaphor describes a subject by claiming it is the same as another unrelated object. The important roles they play in our cognition is emphasised by scholars like George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. They describe how metaphors encourage us to understand one conceptual domain which they call the ‘target domain’ in terms of a dissimilar conceptual domain which they call the ‘source domain’. This activates a system of entailments that are understood as correspondences between selected elements of the two domains in metaphoric relation. The corresponding elements can

43 Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors we live by*. 
be either entities or attributes that are common to the structure of both concepts and to the relational structure. We then use language to express these entailments.

Here it is important to distinguish between the terms ‘metaphor’ and ‘metaphorical expression’ given I use the two terms throughout this study. Lakoff encourages us to use the term ‘metaphor’ to describe the cross-domain mapping that is happening in the conceptual system while ‘metaphorical expression’ is used to describe the surface realisation in the form linguistic expression of this cross-domain mapping.⁴⁴ As we will see later liberal, Marxist and neo-conservative intellectuals draw on metaphors but they use metaphorical expressions in their writing.

In her book *The Myths We Live By* Mary Midgley points out that metaphors play important roles in what she calls the ‘mythmaking process’.⁴⁵ While the term is often understood as ‘a widely held false belief or idea,’ Midgley defines ‘myth’ as “…imaginative patterns, networks of powerful symbols that suggest particular ways of interpreting the world.”⁴⁶ ‘Myths’ help to both constitute our world and shape its meaning, and they play formative roles in the liberal, Marxist and neo-conservative traditions. This is because they provide them with the imaginative patterns they need to make sense of and impose order and meaning on the world.

A good example is the myth held by many intellectuals in the Marxist tradition which holds that the purpose of mankind is to create a utopic society on earth that is Communist. There are a number of metaphors that are integral to this myth. As we will see there are many Marxist intellectuals that will draw on and use nature metaphors and metaphorical expressions to describe and represent the ‘natural processes’ of society moving towards the creation of a Communist state. A key element of this Communist myth is a society free from religion. Many Marxist intellectuals will therefore also draw on metaphors and use metaphorical expressions that represent the ‘unnaturalness’ of religion. I will describe these as well as some of the myths and metaphors integral to the liberal and neo-conservative traditions in more detail later.

Similes are the second kind of analogous language I abstract from intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’ for closer analysis. While metaphor asserts the identity of unlike things simile asserts the similarity of things. The standard view holds that simile is a figure of speech typically understood as an explicit comparison between things using the terms ‘like’ or ‘as’. In contrast a metaphor makes implicit comparisons between things. The parallelism of simile means it is commonly understood as a paradigm of allegory. Allegory here is understood as an extended metaphor. Like metaphor, allegory has its origins in myths and it continues to play an integral role in mythmaking today.

Metaphors and similes use different sentence patterns, as Shibata and others explain “a metaphor is a figurative statement expressed by means of a copula sentence (An X is a Y) whereas a simile is a figurative statement using a hedge word such as ‘like’ or ‘as’ (An X is like a Y).” However the traditional view holds that they express almost the same figurative meaning and that a metaphor can be paraphrased as a simile. It was Aristotle who wrote “The Simile is also a metaphor, the difference is but slight.” This approach understands metaphors as abbreviated similes, for example “the ‘Wahhabi’ is a savage” is treated as an abbreviation of “the ‘Wahhabi’ is like a savage.”

Recent psycholinguistic studies have however shown that similes and metaphors are much different than what we have traditionally thought. It has been pointed out that both promote different comprehension processes in the human brain suggesting that metaphors are not in fact abbreviated similes. Glucksberg and Keysar are proponents of this view, which has been called the ‘class-inclusion model,’ maintain

52 Ibid.
54 Midori Shibata, “Does simile comprehension differ from metaphor comprehension?”
that simile is best understood as a process of comparison using explicit marks and metaphor is best understood as a categorisation process.\textsuperscript{55} They write

In the sentence “My lawyer is like a shark”, “shark” refers to the marine creature, whereas in the sentence “My lawyer is a shark”, “shark” does not refer to the literal creature. In the latter case, the lawyer is categorized as a predator, and the shark is used to represent predators. Thus, the class-inclusion model argues that the comprehension processes used in understanding metaphor and simile differ.\textsuperscript{56}

Further differences in how our brains make sense of metaphors and similes are also highlighted in studies conducted by Dan L. Chiappe and his colleagues.\textsuperscript{57} It is now widely accepted that the two play distinct roles in the rhetorical, mythmaking and cognitive processes. The implication for this study is that I should and am justified in adopting a more nuanced approach that treats the two as different elements and which recognises the important role both play in influencing how our brains make sense of all the information we are constantly bombarded with.

While similes and metaphors are both different kinds of analogous language I focus on, I have also chosen to look at what is more broadly and commonly understood as analogy. I understand an analogy as a comparison between two objects or systems of objects that highlight respects in which they are thought to be similar.\textsuperscript{58} It follows that I understand an analogous argument as a logical argument where the user demonstrates how things are alike by pointing out shared characteristics with the aim of showing that if things are alike in some ways then they can be alike in other ways as well.


\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 254


Neologisms are the final element in the intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’ I abstract for closer analysis. In Fifty Years Among the New Words, John Algeo writes

A community is known by the language it keeps, and its words chronicle the times. Every aspect of the life of a people is reflected in the words they use to talk about themselves and the world around them. As their world changes - through invention, discovery, revolution, evolution or personal transformation - so does their language. Like the growth rings of a tree, our vocabulary bears witness to our past.59

Algeo highlighted the way that vocabulary is a major indicator when tracking changes in culture and language and that new words or neologisms are useful tools for understanding how culture is evolving. He is commenting on our experiencing of great shifts in how we live and how we talk about the world. We are always introducing new words into our lexicon to describe new concepts and at the same time old words are continually falling out of use as we assign them less cultural significance.

‘Neologism’ is the name we give these newly coined words, terms or phrases that are not yet prevalent in mainstream language. The word comes from the greek néo- meaning ‘new’ and logos meaning ‘speech or utterance’. David Crystal, John Ayto, John Algeo and Adele Algeo all offer similar descriptions regarding the formation of neologisms.60 These descriptions include the creating, borrowing, combining, shortening, blending and shifting of words. We can see some of these processes at work when we look at neologisms like ‘Islamofascism’ which is the combining of the words ‘Islam’ and ‘fascism,’ and the adding of an ‘o’.

Neologisms like ‘Islamofascism’ encourage a new interpretation or understanding of something and are often attributable to a particular person, period or event. This term

for example, which I will later describe in greater detail when analysing the neo-conservative intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism,’ was first used in 1990 by Scottish writer Malise Ruthven in the *Independent* newspaper.\(^{61}\) He used it to describe the way in which traditional Arab dictatorship used religious appeals in order to stay in positions of power. Since then prominent intellectuals like Christopher Hitchens have used it when describing “fascism with an Islamic face.”\(^{62}\) As we will soon see neo-conservative intellectuals like Frank Gaffney Jnr. have recently used it when describing ‘Wahhabism’ with the aim of likening the twentieth century European fascist movements with this particular interpretation of Islam.\(^{63}\)

It should be acknowledged that different fields of study treat neologisms in different ways. What is particularly interesting is how the field of psychiatry for example has traditionally understood neologisms. If we refer to *The American Heritage Medical Dictionary* we can see that it has traditionally understood neologisms as newly coined words whose meaning may be known only to the patient using it. Because of this it has often been viewed as a symptom of psychosis.\(^{64}\) This is interesting as we start to consider that the using of neologisms when representing ‘Wahhabism’ is a practice largely confined to neo-conservative intellectuals. Remembering it is the neo-conservatives especially those holding influential positions in the recent Bush Administration who are largely responsible for both constructing the largely phantasmic ‘radical Islamist’ threat and for initiating and supporting the Global War on Terror. There are many who would see these acts as related to psychopathic or psychotic disorders.\(^{65}\) This assessment is given further weight when we consider the religious and political beliefs held by many in the neo-conservative intellectual tradition. I will explore what can be best described as the ‘delusional’ aspects of this belief system in greater detail later on.

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\(^{62}\) Ibid., paragraph 3.

\(^{63}\) Gaffney, “Seeing the threat for what it is.”


\(^{65}\) As I explained in the literature review, Stephen Schwarz strongly adheres to Sufism and can therefore be understood as suffering from a religious delusion. Both Clifford May and Frank Gaffney Jnr are neo-conservative intellectuals intent on causing destruction and are also influenced by delusions beliefs (sometimes religious in nature) about how the world works. I will discuss this in greater detail in the chapters dedicated to analysing and making sense of the neo-conservative intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’.
Finally Cerulo’s *Deciphering Violence* is a detailed study focusing on the different ways authors, reporters and artists depict violent acts and how audiences respond to these violent representations.\(^6\) She finds that these mediators initially interpret the violent act they plan to represent as either ‘normal,’ ‘deviant,’ or ‘ambiguous’. On the basis of this moral judgement the writers then choose from a number of possibilities when representing the violent act to their audience. These possibilities include things like assigning particular characteristics to the perpetrator i.e. ‘in’ vs. ‘out-group’ status, having ‘instrumental aims,’ and a ‘clear intention,’ representing the nature of the violent act i.e. representing physical or non-physical acts of violence, and assigning the victim of violence particular characteristics i.e. emphasising their gender.

These different representations are aimed at arousing specific emotional reactions in the audience, encouraging them to make moral judgements about the violent perpetrator. Cerulo finds the audience typically reacts in one of two ways, either they interpret the violent act as justifiable, legitimate and warranted or they understand it as unjustifiable, illegitimate and unwarranted. For example an author’s representing a violent perpetrator as having ‘instrumental aims’ or a ‘clear presence of intention’ generally arouses negative emotions in the audience and they tend to see these violent acts as unjustifiable. On the other hand violent perpetrators represented as using violence ‘in the spirit of the community’ meaning to protect or ‘benefit others’ in the community is likely to be viewed by the audience as warranted and justified.

**Conclusion**

I have dedicated this chapter to describing some of the ways I make sense of the social world and have approached doing my research. Key here is my dialectical imagination which includes a philosophy of internal relations and the process of abstraction. These help make the study of intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’ a manageable task whilst also encouraging me to understand the different elements involved as processes and relations that are in a constant state of flux and which are continually affecting each other. I have also emphasised the key

\(^6\) Cerulo, *Deciphering Violence*. 
role language plays in the making of reality. This is especially important when I consider that ‘Wahhabism’ is an ‘observer-dependent’ phenomenon whose meaning differs depending on the intellectual (who has his or her own political aims, interests and prejudices) representing it. A Critical Discourse Analysis helps capture the dialectical nature of language recognising that it both makes and is made in the social world. While an intellectuals’ representation of ‘Wahhabism’ is made of many elements I have chosen to focus on the five particular elements, the structuring of violent accounts, metaphors, similes, analogies and neologisms. Now that I have clearly outlined how I will go about deconstructing different intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’ and the different prejudices influencing this process, I will now turn my attention to deconstructing how the first group of intellectuals, the political liberals, have chosen to represent ‘Wahhabism’.
Chapter Four
Spreading the ‘Rule of Reason’: Liberal Imaginings of ‘Wahhabism’

… total liberty for wolves is death to the lambs …


Intellectuals writing about ‘Wahhabism’ in newspapers, magazines and online media are exposing their readers to a particular kind of interpretation or representation. As Bacchi’s work illustrates, these intellectuals are representing a ‘problem’ or a social phenomena in a particular way.¹ There are some elements they choose to emphasise, others to de-emphasise and others they chose to ignore altogether. Many of us reading these representations are like novices gazing at Claude Monet’s famous painting *Snow at Argentuil*. We look at this picture and we see snow blanketing a town. What many of us with untrained eyes fail to see and appreciate are the green, yellow, red and dark blue strokes Monet has chosen for us.

I am not suggesting that any of the intellectual’s representations of ‘Wahhabism’ I deconstruct are masterpieces constructed with the same brilliance. What I am suggesting is these representations are particular kinds of artistic constructions whose many elements may not be clear to see on first appearances. Sometimes these creations require closer analysis by a trained eye in order to help highlight and describe the many different elements for the audience. Like the *critique d’art* who makes his living providing tours of the gallery my job is to highlight and describe or ‘abstract’ some of the many different elements that comprise an intellectual’s representation of ‘Wahhabism’.

The first step on my tour is a representation of ‘Wahhabism’ provided by the liberal intellectual Maureen Dowd.² She writes

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¹ Bacchi, *What’s the Problem Represented to Be?*
The word progressive, of course, is highly relative when it comes to Saudi Arabia. (Wahhabism, anyone?) But after spending 10 days here, I can confirm that, at their own galactically glacial pace, they are chipping away at gender apartheid and cultural repression [Emphasis added].

Dowd is making an important point that is pertinent to the ways in which many liberal intellectuals represent ‘Wahhabism’, namely that ‘Wahhabism’ which is understood to be the official doctrine of Saudi Arabia, violates the freedoms of men and women. Liberals like Dowd hold a particular view of freedom that they believe we are all entitled to. While we can understand Dowd as belonging to the liberal tradition, she is also an individual influenced by her own life experiences, interests and prejudices. Here she chooses to focus on two particular kinds of freedoms, those associated with women and culture, which she believes ‘Wahhabism’ as practiced in Saudi Arabia is responsible for violating.

An intellectual of any persuasion can be presumed to be wanting to make claims that speaks to the way things are. Yet these claims cannot help but be made by relying on the conventional resources found in any language like metaphors, analogies and similes that are used to convince an audience about the ‘true’ nature of ‘Wahhabism’. Liberal intellectuals have the ability to choose from a wide variety of techniques when representing ‘Wahhabism’ to their audience and as I have said, I am focusing my attention on five particular elements. In this extract we can see Dowd’s use of two of these namely the use of metaphor and neologisms.

When using the neologism ‘gender apartheid’ Dowd is referring to a particular political system using different kinds of practices i.e. physical and legal aimed at relegating women to subordinate positions (relative to men) in society. Throughout this study I will show many instances when liberal, neo-conservative and Marxist intellectuals use particular language devices that can serve to disclose the world as it is or that promote erroneous, duplicitous or delusional claims about reality. It is not my intent here to subject every account to some kind of truth testing. On this occasion we can note that Dowd is relying on any number of human rights organisations.
reporting on the current situation in Saudi Arabia that draws attention to the plight of Saudi women to inform her reference to ‘gender apartheid’.³

It is noteworthy that Dowd chooses to use the neologism ‘gender apartheid’ when describing the current situation. ‘Gender apartheid’ is a much more powerful phrase than for example ‘gender discrimination’ or ‘sexism’. Writers use neologisms to encourage us to view particular situations or events in certain ways. This neologism derives much of its power from its likening of the situation of Saudi women living according to ‘Wahhabi’ religious doctrine to South Africa’s racial apartheid which instituted a system of white supremacy subordinating the nation’s majority black population. The implication is that gender inequality in modern ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia is as horrible and worthy of the same condemnation as the institutionalised racism in South Africa throughout the mid to late twentieth century.

The salience of this is arguably reinforced by investigations into the current Saudi laws regarding guardianship which according to a report by Amnesty International “subordinates women’s autonomy to the authority of male guardians” and the ‘rights’ or rather the lack thereof of women abused by their partners or male relatives.⁴ On the question of whether we can blame this phenomenon on what she calls ‘Wahhabism’, it may be more accurate to say that Saudi men are responsible for the ways in which they treat women and that ‘Wahhabism’ acts as a religious legitimation for these practices.

Metaphorical expression is the second pertinent rhetorical technique that Dowd uses and which I highlight in the excerpt above. Dowd uses the metaphorical expressions “galactically glacial pace” and “chipping away” when representing the ‘progress’ currently taking place in ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia. Both can be understood as ‘Progress is Movement’ metaphors used to represent the slow, incremental and ‘positive’ changes taking place in ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabian society. This is a popular

metaphor amongst liberal intellectuals representing ‘Wahhabism’ that I will also explore in greater detail later.

This metaphor considers ‘forwards movement’ to be indicative of social progress and treats ‘backwards movement’ as indicative of societal regression. The metaphorical expression “Galactically glacial pace” draws on the extreme slowness in which a glacier moves while ‘chipping away’ is often used when describing a process where smaller parts are gradually removed from a bigger and usually solid whole i.e. the woodchipper uses his axe to ‘chip away’ at the tree trunk. In both instances Dowd represents this slow and incremental change as a positive thing for Saudi society. Dowd is making the point ‘Wahhabism’ is a force that must and will be slowly overcome and that there are positive signs that things are ‘progressing/ ‘heading in the right direction’. This metaphor also has strong ‘nature’ elements, which as I will describe later is also a key feature of how liberals make sense of and represent ‘Wahhabism’.

At this point the reader may well ask, how do I know that Dowd is a liberal and what does it mean anyway to say that someone is a liberal? As I want to indicate initially there is no easy answer to these questions.

**Understanding Liberalism: Many freedoms?**

Jeffrey Lustig famously wrote “There are many rooms in the liberal mansion.” This is an apt metaphor when describing the many themes and approaches that make up the liberal tradition. ‘Liberalism’ is an umbrella term we use to describe a range of approaches and because it is a fuzzy category it has no clearly definable boundaries. Nonetheless for the purposes of this study we need some understanding of what we understand liberalism to be, that is to say we need an ‘ideal type’ that not only helps to identify a liberal intellectual who is representing ‘Wahhabism’ but which also helps us to ‘abstract’ particular elements from their representations for closer analysis. What can be said is that there are certain themes like a preoccupation with freedom or liberty that marks out the mansion with many rooms. Ideas about freedom are central

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to Dowd’s representing of ‘Wahhabism’ and they form a key part of ‘ideal type’ for the Liberal intellectual tradition can be traced back to the twentieth century to the liberal theorist Isaiah Berlin.

Berlin was very interested in what we as individuals value and how we get along with others who hold different values. In his seminal essay *Two Concepts of Liberty* he writes that we as individuals can hold many values we consider to be genuine however many of these may be incompatible with each other producing an internal conflict. This conflict can also occur between groups of people with conflicting commitments to values. While he understands this conflict to be the great tragedy of human life, Berlin recognises this conflict is “an intrinsic, irremovable element in human life.”6 “These collisions of values” writes Berlin, “are of the essence of what they are and what we are.”7 A world where these conflicts are easily resolved writes Berlin is not one we know nor understand.8

These ideas are a part of what we call the doctrine of value pluralism. Berlin is a key figure in the political liberal tradition and these ideas provide us with insight into some of the key ideas the modern liberal intellectual tradition is founded on and which continue to influence many liberals. That said it is also important to point out that the political liberal tradition to which I refer is a particular kind of tradition that is at odds with more idealist and rationalist kinds of liberalism. The important point Berlin is making is that the idea of the perfect whole or an ultimate solution is practically unattainable and conceptually incoherent, a position some who promote a more idealist and rationalist kind of liberalism would have trouble accepting.

The notion of the perfect whole, the ultimate solution, in which all good things coexist, seems to me to be not merely unattainable that is a truism but conceptually incoherent; I do not know what is meant by a harmony of this kind. Some among the Great Goods cannot live together. That is a conceptual

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8 Ibid.
truth. We are doomed to choose, and every choice may entail an irreparable loss.⁹

Overcoming these internal and external conflicts between values demands a transformation tantamount to abandoning those same values. According to Berlin this is not something that will never happen in this world.

Given we can never reconcile our internal conflict much less that between different groups of people who are also holders of different values, liberals are faced with important questions like ‘to which values do we give priority for the purposes of creating a functional society?’ Unable or unwilling to abandon our own values that we hold dear Berlin emphasises the inescapable need to choose between different kinds of values.¹⁰ Berlin’s value pluralism holds that in most cases there are no clearly right and wrong answers when making this decision.¹¹ This is why Berlin and many liberal intellectuals inspired by his ideas emphasise the importance of liberty. Because this conflict between values which implies different ways of living is unavoidable, it is essential that the individual has the freedom to make his or her own decision within reason about whom they will be and what they choose to do with their time on this earth.

This freedom to choose is a core part of the political liberal tradition and as we will see it plays a major role in influencing the ways in which liberal intellectuals represent ‘Wahhabism’. This focusing on freedom is certainly a commendable idea many would support. However there is a fundamental problem in the political liberal tradition that is unavoidable and which one can only assume modern liberal intellectuals are either ignorant of or deliberately choose to ignore so as to remain content in their delusion. The glaring problem I am referring to is the paradoxical belief that freedom of choice must take place within a specific kind of state. Liberals believe the modern secular liberal democratic state provides the best framework in which this choosing of values can take place. However if we are to truly enjoy and exercise our a priori liberty, our freedom to choose, then surely we should

¹⁰ Cherniss and Hard, “Isaiah Berlin.”
¹¹ Ibid.
be able to choose what kind of state we want to live in? This seemingly obvious internal contradiction which says ‘we will choose the kind of state in which we all will live in and you can within reason choose how you want to live’ has not deterred liberal intellectuals from promoting this ‘ideological’ (as Bernard Crick uses the term) belief system.

This internal contradiction has wider implications meaning many liberals are left struggling with a variety of other issues pertinent to the governing of any modern secular liberal democratic state. While it is beyond the scope of this study to detail all these issues, I would like to quickly focus our attention on one of the major issues I believe is pertinent to modern liberal intellectuals representing ‘Wahhabism’ in an age of heightened anxiety due to the perceived threat of ‘radical Islam’. The problem is when totalitarian or fascist movements, groups or parties use the freedoms afforded to them by the modern liberal democratic state to then impose non-democratic systems of government.

A recent example of this occurred during the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ with the election of the Egyptian faction of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Prior to their election, Egypt had what one could reasonably call a liberal democratic system of government. This system certainly afforded its people the right to elect representatives responsible for governing a country of just over 80 million people. In 2012 the Egyptian people elected Mohamed Morsi’s Brotherhood in spite of its long and demonstrated commitment to ‘Islamist’ ideals. In conjunction with other ‘ultra-conservative’ ‘Islamist’ parties like the Salafist Nour, Morsi’s government then began implementing ‘non-democratic’ reforms i.e. making changes to the constitution that gave him far-reaching powers a la Hitler and Mussolini’s totalitarian and fascist regimes, aimed at strengthening and maintain its positions of power. The important point I am making is that this ‘Islamist’ political party with the support of other parties who valued a particular interpretation of Islam over key liberal democratic ideals, was able to use the political liberal state against itself. The events in Egypt since 2012 i.e. the military

12 For a basic understanding of some of the changes implemented by Morsi’s government, collusion between his party and other ‘ultra-conservative’ Islamist parties and some of the implications of these actions see “Profile: Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood,” BBC News: Middle East, December 25, 2013, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12313405.
coup and summary executions of Muslim Brotherhood members, have been nothing short of disastrous.

Another major problem worth mentioning is the relation between modern liberal democratic regimes and imperialism. John Gray is among those to point out that ‘modern liberal’ regimes like the US have invaded sovereign nations using the justification they are ‘spreading democracy and freedoms’. While the US and its coalition of allies maintain their ‘interventions’ aim to replace oppressive regimes in places like Afghanistan and Iraq with ‘democratic regimes’ entrusted with the responsibility of safeguarding its people’s liberties, the reality is that we now have situations in Iraq and Afghanistan that are arguably much worse for their people than before “Western’ intervention.”

Gray claims the destruction in Iraq has signalled the death of the global liberal project and as forces belonging to the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant continue to expand their influence throughout Iraq and neighbouring nations, it is becoming increasingly difficult to argue that the alleged ‘spreading of freedom and democracy’ in the region has been a positive thing for the millions of people killed since their ‘liberation’. Despite liberalism’s internal contradictions and the situations in places like Egypt, Iraq and Afghanistan, many liberal intellectuals continue to have faith in the intellectual tradition.

I want now to turn to developing an ideal type as a prelude to examining a selection of these intellectuals whose liberal Weltanschauung has influenced they way they have made sense of and represented ‘Wahhabism’. To reiterate, I make use of the abstraction process that is the Weberian ‘ideal type’ when constructing my ‘Liberalism’ fuzzy category.

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14 Ibid.
Understanding Liberalism: Towards an ‘Ideal Type’.

My ‘ideal type’ consists of four key elements. The first as I have already alluded to and which I will describe in more detail is the assumption that all people are entitled to freedom/liberty. Second and closely related to the concept of freedom is the belief in individualism. Third is a belief in secularism as a way of ordering society. Fourth is the liberal belief in progress. It matters that we have a basic understanding of each of these concepts given the major role they play in my deconstructing of liberal intellectual representations of ‘Wahhabism’.

Maurice Cranston rightly points out that “By definition a liberal is a man who believes in liberty.”\textsuperscript{15} John Locke and John Stuart Mill join Berlin as prominent liberal thinkers who emphasise the integral role liberty plays in the liberal imagination. Locke writes that humans naturally exist in “a State of perfect Freedom to order their Actions…as they think fit…without asking leave, or depending on the Will of any other Man.”\textsuperscript{16} Mill also emphasises the man’s right to enjoy his freedom, arguing that

\begin{quote}
the burden of proof is supposed to be with those who are against liberty; who contend for any restriction or prohibition…The \textit{a priori} assumption is in favour of freedom…\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

Locke and Mill are referring to what is commonly called the Fundamental Liberal Principle. According to this principle liberty is essential to man and the responsibility of justifying the limiting of man’s freedom falls on those doing the limiting.\textsuperscript{18} Those for example who want political authority and who want to legislate laws must ‘reasonably’ justify their need given both have the ability to limit liberty of citizens. Gaus and Courtland point out that this is especially the case when the limiting of freedoms involves the use of coercive measures. “Consequently a key question of

\begin{itemize}
liberal political theory is whether political authority can be justified and if so, how.”\textsuperscript{19} What counts as ‘reasonable justification’ is of course the focus of much debate as we have recently seen with the introduction of new ‘counter-terror’ legislation implemented in ‘liberal democracies’ like the US and Australia.

Closely related to the Fundamental Liberal Principle is the liberal belief in individualism. Mill argues that individualism is one of the major bases for endorsing freedom.\textsuperscript{20} Individualism is the idea that the interests of the individual must take precedence over the interests of the state or any other kind of social group. According to this view the state or any kind of institutions in society i.e. religious bodies should not interfere with an individual’s interests. This is a point made by Locke who argues that an individual’s rights exist pre-politically and are therefore above the discretion of the state.\textsuperscript{21}

A ‘classical’ liberal view advocated by authors like Locke, and which informs my ideal type, views these rights in a more formal or legal way. Rights are understood as negative in the sense that the state should not interfere or impinge on those rights. This view also understands those rights as subject to the ‘no harm’ principle. Mill describes this principle as the right for individuals to do what they want as long as it does not harm other individuals.\textsuperscript{22} Mill maintains that man’s liberty can only be rightfully interfered with when his actions bring harm others. Mill distinguishes between ‘harm’ which he understands to be a physical kind of harm and ‘offense’ which he understands as actions that may offend the moral sensibilities of others.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} Gaus and Courtland, “Liberalism.”
\textsuperscript{22} Mill describes this principle in the first chapter of \textit{Liberty}.

Another aspect of this approach pertinent to this study is the relation between the liberal theory of individualism and their ideas about our development as human beings. Again we can refer to the work of Mill for a ‘classical liberal’ understanding of this relation. He writes

Individuality is the same thing with development, and…it is only the cultivation of individuality which produces, or can produce, well-developed human beings…what more can be said of any condition of human affairs, than that it brings human beings themselves nearer to the best thing they can be? or what worse can be said of any obstruction to good, than that it prevents this?²³

Mill’s point is that individualism is crucial to our development as human beings. Gaus and Courtland point out that this is not just a theory about politics rather it is a moral theory about the ‘good’. They write that according to this view the ‘right’ thing to do is to promote development or perfection, and that only a particular kind of government that secures extensive liberty for its people is able to accomplish this.²⁴ This kind of government is a modern secular liberal democratic regime.

A belief in secular state forms the third key element of my ‘ideal type’ for liberal intellectuals. A conventional interpretation of liberal political theory holds that the liberal state must not espouse any specific kind of religion. Rather than aligning itself with any religious belief the liberal secular state should be committed to tolerating all religions. Paul Starr points out that “the logic of liberalism” is “exemplified” by religious toleration.²⁵ He writes that the secular state should help cultivate many points of view while at the same time averting “internecine…conflicts.”²⁶ According to Stanley Fish religion, which is considered to be “the most volatile and divisive of issues,” in a liberal state must be removed from political debate and confined to the private realm where it can be tolerated.²⁷ What the state gets by excluding religion from the political debate is a religion that ‘fits’ with a modern secular liberal democracy. Fish describes this process.

²³ Ibid., 179.
²⁴ Gaus and Courtland, “Liberalism.”
²⁶ Ibid.
²⁷ Fish, “Liberalism and Secularism.”
The liberal order does not extinguish religions; it just eviscerates them, unless they are the religions that display the same respect for the public-private distinction that liberalism depends on and enforces. A religion that accepts the partitioning of the secular and the sacred and puts at its center the private transaction between the individual and his God fits the liberal bill perfectly.28

Starr writes that according to this view religions that do not ‘stay in their place’ and encroach on public life are understood as the homes of “extremists…fascists…enemies of the public good…authoritarian despots and so forth.”29 According to Fish this “harsh judgement” is inevitable if liberalism “is to be true to itself,” because liberalism opposes any measures or actions that seek to curtail the individualism and liberty of its people.30

Fish points out that this idea has always been a key part of the liberal tradition and can be traced back to the works of John Milton and John Rawls. Milton tolerates all religion (except Catholicism which he claims undermines “civil supremacies”) so as long as they do not encroach upon the individuals right to free expression.31 Centuries later Rawls sought to construct a political framework that legitimated all “reasonable comprehensive doctrines.”32 As Fish describes, the major issue at stake here that continues to remain a source of conjecture amongst liberal intellectuals, is what constitutes ‘reasonable’. The liberal values of pluralism and moderation help provide rough boundaries about what is and what is not considered ‘reasonable’ within the tradition, however ultimately ‘reasonableness’ is a subjective notion which is influenced by one’s prejudice. That is to say it, like liberalism and all other categories is ‘fuzzy,’ meaning it has no clearly definable boundaries and has what Zadeh calls ‘grades of membership’.33

The idea of ‘progress’ is the fourth element that makes up my ideal type. Liberal proponents of this idea maintain the human condition has improved over the course of

28 Ibid.
29 Starr cited in Fish, “Liberalism and Secularism.”
30 Fish, “Liberalism and Secularism.”
31 John Milton cited in Fish, “Liberalism and Secularism.”
32 John Rawls cited in Fish, “Liberalism and Secularism.”
33 Zadeh, “Fuzzy Sets.”
history and are motivated by the idea that it will continue improving.\textsuperscript{34} Doctrines of progress in general first appeared in Europe in the eighteenth century, these ideas then flourished throughout the nineteenth century before slightly retreating in the twentieth century after many horrific events like two World Wars, the Holocaust and the use of nuclear weapons.\textsuperscript{35} The liberal tradition traces its ideas of progress to key Enlightenment thinkers like Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, Marquis de Condorcet and Immanuel Kant and more recently to thinkers like John Rawls and John Stuart Mill.\textsuperscript{36} Modern liberal intellectuals typically believe that a modern Secular democratic state is the ideal society we should be aiming to create. Rawls states that this kind of society should be ‘well-ordered’ and ‘supportive of basic political and civil freedoms’\textsuperscript{37} Like most liberal intellectuals, Rawls is optimistic about our abilities as humans to create such society and once attained he believes that it is capable of lasting “in perpetuity.”\textsuperscript{38} Rawl’s ideas are also useful when understanding the different steps humans must take and stages societies must go through to create this kind of society. Pertinent to this study is Rawl’s description of how a state must deal with religion. While religion has no place in the affairs of the liberal state, Rawls claims that it does have a place in a liberal society and that people must eventually learn to respect and value freedom of religion.\textsuperscript{39} This ‘learning process’ is considered to be ‘progress’.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{37} Rawls, A Theory of Justice, 4.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 131.
\textsuperscript{39} Fish, “Liberalism and Secularism.”
Rawls refers to Europe’s transition through the early modern period as the quintessential example of this ‘progress’. Rawls specifically refers to the conflict between Catholics and Protestants where both sides endorsed freedom of religion as a practical solution to their constant warring. Following this Europeans eventually came to realise that freedom of religion was in their self-interest. I have made a point of including Rawls referring to the situation between Catholics and Protestants because some liberal intellectuals make the same comparisons when representing ‘Wahhabism’ in the modern Islamic world.

‘Progress’ for the modern liberal intellectual also typically involves the creating, establishing and maintaining of ‘free institutions’. I have already pointed out the major roles ideas about freedom and individualism play in liberal political theory. Further to this, liberals tend to consider the establishing of institutions free from political interference as a key part of an ideal society. These institutions serve many important functions in a liberal state including helping to ensure no policies, measures or other forces that are impinging upon the liberties of the citizenry and providing spaces in which people can work to ‘better themselves’. This idea of humans working and living in the proper environment that allows them to ‘better themselves’ or ‘progress’ is related to liberal ideas about individualism. According to these beliefs the individual’s commitment to ‘progressing’ or ‘developing’ him or herself is an important part to society’s overall ‘progression’ or ‘development’. A ‘standard’ reading of liberal political theory holds that it is individuals that make society.

Key Enlightenment thinkers like Turgot and Condorcet are among those to emphasise the importance of ‘free institutions’ to our development as human beings. Making sense of Enlightenment views on progress which has influenced the modern liberal political tradition, Lange points out that both Turgot and Condorcet agreed that scientific discoveries and political freedoms reinforced each other and together helped further human wellbeing. Focusing on the relation between science, political freedom and ‘progress,’ Turgot was of the view that ‘free’ political institutions provided the necessary framework in which scientific genius can flourish, and that it is institutions

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40 Rawls, *Political Liberalism.*
42 Lange, “Progress.”
and not the concentration of genius that is primarily responsible for differencing levels of scientific achievement and hence human advancement.

They key point is that it is political institutions that either suppress or encourage these processes. Condorcet claimed that the spreading of scientific knowledge would help create a more ‘enlightened’ population allowing them to then escape the ‘shackles of religion’ and demand greater freedoms. Reiterating Rawls’ point, this gradual moving away from religion is considered to be ‘progress’. Again there is a specific reason why I have chosen to refer to these particular key thinkers in my ‘ideal type’. Turgot and Condorcet’s focusing on the relation between science, liberty and ‘progress’ helps highlight an important aspect of the liberal imagination in general and ideas of progress in particular. Liberal intellectuals tend to see their implementing of ideas as a ‘scientific process’. Also pertinent are the ideas of Immanuel Kant.

Kant played a formative role in developing the liberal conception of progress. He saw the ‘development of humans’ in the social world as similar to the development of animals in the natural world. Kant worked from the a priori assumption that all animals have natural faculties and that these faculties have the ability to be developed. Applying this idea to humans, he claimed that if we humans are to take advantage of this situation then we must commit to the developing of our human faculties over time. Our ‘progress’ as humans can be ‘measured’ by our development of human faculties. Echoing the sentiments of Turgot, Condorcet and Rawls, Kant maintained that we humans require a very particular kind of society if we are to ‘progress’ / fulfil our potential. According to Kant this ‘ideal society’ is one in which the rule of law values and guarantees freedom and equality for its citizens. That is to say, a modern secular liberal democratic state is crucial to providing the framework necessary for our development as individuals.

These four interrelated ideas about progress, individualism, secularism and freedom make up my ‘ideal type’. Again it should be reiterated that my ‘ideal type’ is an

43 Ibid.
44 Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose.”
45 Ibid., 42-44
abstraction designed with very specific purposes in mind. Liberalism is a large and complex fuzzy category. Providing an exhaustive list of what we understand to be liberal beliefs and then using this list to help guide my deconstruction of liberal intellectual representations of ‘Wahhabism’ is an unmanageable task that is beyond the scope of this. My ‘ideal type’ combined with my focusing on five particular elements apparent in liberal representations of ‘Wahhabism’ (the intellectuals’ use of metaphors, neologisms, similes, analogies and constructing of violent accounts) makes my deconstruction process a much more manageable task. I shall now turn my attention to implementing these analytical processes.

‘Wahhabism’ Restricts Freedoms

Individual freedom is key to the liberal imagination. According to many liberal intellectuals a major problem with the ‘observer-dependant’ phenomena called ‘Wahhabism’ is that it violates people’s liberties. Liberals tend to represent ‘Wahhabism’ as fundamentally ‘Illiberal’ given its perceived restricting of thought and behaviour. While there are a variety of societies throughout the world that liberal intellectuals see as affected by ‘Wahhabism’ most tend to their focus on the situation in Saudi Arabia. Like many other scholars these intellectuals see Saudi Arabia as the ‘home’ of ‘Wahhabism’.

Liberal intellectuals differ in their representations of the freedoms they understand ‘Wahhabism’ as violating. This is understandable given both the fuzzy nature of liberalism and the role prejudice plays in how each individual makes sense of the world. Maurice Cranston points out that ‘a liberal believes in liberty’. However our different prejudices which are related as Heidegger puts it, to ‘the time and place into which we are thrown’, means liberals will often differ with regards to the particular kinds of liberties they value. Some like Thomas Farr, echoing popular arguments made by key liberal thinkers like Rawls, value religious freedom and therefore focus on this when representing ‘Wahhabism’.  

Adopting the role as a ‘movement intellectual’ for the political liberal tradition, Farr blames ‘Wahhabism’, as currently practiced in Saudi Arabia and enforced by the Saudi ruling regime, for depriving people of their freedom to choose whether to be religious and what religion they want to practice. Like many liberals, Farr believes the state should not align itself with a particular religion and that people should be free to practice religion privately so as long as it does not interfere with running state or encourage harm to others. According to Farr ‘Wahhabism’ as practiced and enforced in Saudi Arabia violates these key liberal principles. Farr goes as far to suggest that liberalism is responsible for stunting the personal growth or ‘progression’ of Saudi Arabians and for encouraging people to embrace a ‘radical’ version of Islam that encourages the harming of others, or as he puts it ‘Wahhabism’ encourages “religious-based terrorism.”

The IRF Act [International Religious Freedom Act] was passed unanimously because millions are denied religious liberty. An exhaustive Pew Forum study revealed in December that 70 percent of the world's population lives in countries where religious freedom is severely restricted. A few recent examples:

A senior Saudi cleric issued a fatwa mandating the death of anyone arguing that men and women could work together professionally. Such edicts emerge from Wahhabism, a malevolent political theology that nurtured Osama bin Laden and continues to be exported worldwide...

These stories and thousands like them represent more than humanitarian tragedies. They signal a national security threat -- and a diplomatic opportunity -- for the United States. The absence of religious freedom is highly correlated with unstable democracy, low economic growth, low female literacy rates and religion-based terrorism. Religious liberty could help solve these problems...

Pertinent here is Farr’s use of a particular rhetorical technique when persuading readers of the ‘Illiberal nature’ of ‘Wahhabism’. Farr uses the metaphorical expression “nurtured” to describe the process where ‘Wahhabi’ doctrine influences Osama Bin Laden’s personal development. ‘Nurture’ is commonly understood to be the act of caring for and protecting someone or something whilst they are growing or
getting older. A religious ‘ideology’ like ‘Wahhabism’ cannot literally be responsible for raising, caring and protecting a person, in most instances it is a person’s parents who are responsible for this task. However this is precisely what Farr is suggesting when using this metaphorical expression. Farr is claiming that it is ‘Wahhabism’ and not any other factors (like those ascribed to domain of nature—the ‘nature’ versus ‘nurture’ debate is a common narrative) responsible for radicalising Osama Bin Laden and inspiring him to commit acts of terror.

The metaphorical expression ‘nurtured’ is linked to what George Lakoff identifies as the Nurturant Parent Model.48 Lakoff claims this model is popular amongst ‘Leftists’ in America (who are referred to there as ‘liberals’) and provides a conceptual framework for how they make sense of the world. Lakoff writes

> The principal goal of nurturance is for children to be fulfilled and happy in their lives and to become nurturant themselves. A fulfilling life is assumed to be, in significant part, a nurturant life, one committed to family and community responsibility…what children need to learn most is empathy for others, the capacity for nurturance, cooperation, and the maintenance of social ties…when children are respected, nurtured, and communicated with from birth, they gradually enter into a lifetime relationship of mutual respect, communication…49

Lakoff emphasises the relation between those who understand morality in terms of nurturance and the using of the conceptual metaphor ‘the Community is a Family’.50 According to Lakoff these individuals tend to view “community members…as having a responsibility to see that people needing help in their community are helped.”51 When considering the ‘Nature and Nurture’ debate, Lakoff maintains these individuals generally consider nurturance to be “an environmentally determined factor” leading them “to look almost exclusively at environmentally determined factors in social and political explanations.”52

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49 Ibid., 109-110.
50 Ibid., 117.
51 Ibid., 118.
52 Ibid., 204.
This provides some insight into Farr’s use of the metaphorical expression “nurtured” when describing the influence ‘Wahhabism’ has had on Osama Bin Laden. Farr is assuming that the community is in part responsible for helping raise Saudi Arabians like Bin Laden, assuming that it plays a major role in helping instil in individuals what he sees as important values i.e. empathy, cooperation, communication and respect. According to Farr’s representation, this has not happened with Osama Bin Laden and Farr looks at environmental factors like religious, political and social forces to help explain why he has become a ‘violent’ individual. He blames “Wahhabism” suggesting it is the community’s embracing of this “malevolent political theology” that has failed to encourage the instilling of the values liberals believe are necessary to producing ‘good’ and ‘responsible’ members of society.

The implication is that if Bin Laden and the society in which he lived enjoyed religious freedoms then it is possible he would not have committed “religious-based terrorism” nor would he have become another “humanitarian tragedy.” The important point is that religious liberty is a fundamental right of humans and that without this liberty humans will likely fail to reach their potential and will therefore be more likely to commit tragic acts like ‘Wahhabi’ inspired terrorism.

Like Farr, Bandow is a Liberal intellectual who focuses on the civil liberties he believes Saudi-style ‘Wahhabism’ is responsible for violating. Bandow also presumes to treat the USA as a ‘liberal’ regime which should not have an “alliance” with an ‘illiberal’ regime like Saudi Arabia. While the US values things like a secular and democratic state which guarantees individualism and respects freedom of religion, religious regimes like ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia believe it is within their rights to “violate [the] privacy [of its people] whenever it chooses” and prevent its people from enjoying things like “freedom of expression and association.” Bandow writes

For American administrations that loudly promote democracy, the alliance with Saudi Arabia has been a deep embarrassment. As the Human Rights Watch reported in 2001, “Freedom of expression and association were nonexistent rights, political parties and independent local media were not permitted, and even peaceful anti-government activities remained virtually

unthinkable. Infringements on privacy, institutionalized gender discrimination, harsh restrictions on the exercise of religious freedom, and the use of capital and corporal punishment were also major features of the kingdom's human rights record”…

Religious totalitarianism. Most ugly, however, is the religious totalitarianism enforced by Riyadh. Citizens and foreigners alike are prohibited from engaging in non-Muslim worship as well as proselytizing…[Emphasis added].

It should be acknowledged that the relationship between ‘liberal’ and ‘illiberal’ regimes is a source of much debate in the political liberal tradition.\(^{54}\) While liberals are typically united in their beliefs with regards to things like individualism, secularism, progress and freedom, they can hold a range of beliefs when it comes to foreign policy decisions like whether or not liberal regimes should work with illiberal regimes and to what extent. Also at stake are key questions like what constitutes an illiberal regime?

Bandow clearly belongs to the school of thought that liberal regimes should not work closely with illiberal regimes “enforce[ing] the extreme Wahhabi form of Islam at home.” His ideas resonate with Rawls’ argument that liberals must distinguish between ‘decent’ and ‘indecent’ states i.e. ‘outlaw states’ which he says have no right to ask liberal regimes for tolerance or support.\(^{55}\) Rawls argues that ‘decent people’ should not tolerate outlaw states that ignore human rights.\(^{56}\) Bandow clearly categorises Saudi Arabia because of its ‘Wahhabism’ as one of these ‘outlaw states’. Accordingly he champions a ‘liberalising’ or ‘modernising’ project that would guarantee the freedoms of its people. However he does not see foreign interventionism as a way of achieving this nor does he think that the US should enjoy a close relationship with the Saudi Kingdom until it becomes, or at least takes major steps to becoming a modern liberal democratic state.

In the excerpt above I highlight a pertinent rhetorical technique we can abstract from Bandow’s representation for closer analysis. Bandow uses the metaphorical

\(^{54}\) Gaus and Courtland, “Liberalism.”
\(^{56}\) Ibid., 81.
expression “ugly” to describe the ‘religious totalitarian’ ‘Wahhabi’ doctrine implemented by the Saudi government. This draws on the metaphor ‘(political) State as a Form of Attraction’. As humans we are naturally drawn to and appreciate beautiful things as they tend to arouse positive emotions in us. In contrast visually displeasing or ‘ugly’ things tend to arouse negative emotions in us and often leave us feeling disgusted and repulsed.

In using this metaphor Bandow is clearly suggesting that particular kinds of political states specifically liberal democratic states can be understood as beautiful while ‘Illiberal’ regimes like the ‘religious totalitarian’ ‘Wahhabi’ state in Saudi Arabia can be viewed as ugly. These states are ‘ugly’ because they do not have the same qualities that make a liberal state ‘beautiful’. According to Bandow these qualities are democratic freedoms particularly religious freedoms. Beautiful things are expressions of man’s greatest talents and Kant would argue that the development of ourselves, which best occurs within a liberal state that guarantees our individualism and freedom, would greatly increase our ability to create and produce beautiful things. Echoing Kant’s sentiments, liberals like Bandow believe the modern liberal democratic state is one of man’s greatest creations as it provides the framework necessary for man to realise his full potential as a human being. The implication is that regimes living according to ‘Wahhabi’ doctrine limit and stunt the development of its people.

A belief in freedom is a key part of the liberal tradition. However each liberal influenced by their personal preferences/prejudices will focus on a particular freedom they believe to be most important. As we can see the relation between ‘Wahhabism’ and (the lack of) religious freedoms is of major importance to intellectuals like Bandow and Farr. Liberal intellectuals like Dowd, Zakaria and Ibrahim also blame ‘Wahhabism’ for violating freedoms however they focus their attention on women’s freedom.

Earlier I described how Dowd used the neologism “gender apartheid” and the metaphorical expressions “galactically glacial pace” and “chipping away” when describing the situation for women forced to live according to ‘Wahhabi’ religious
doctrine in Saudi Arabia. Zakaria and Ibrahim share these concerns. However they use different rhetorical techniques when representing this situation to their audiences. For example Zakaria writes

…”Every noxious version of Wahhabism has had free rein in Saudi Arabia, and yet all liberal ideas and debates have always been closed down…”

The tragedy is that Saudi Arabia has one of the largest groups of reform-minded liberals in the Middle East. It’s an odd combination: the most conservative society and a vast swath of modernists. But because of its oil money, the country has sent tens of thousands of young Saudis to the West (mostly America) over the past few decades. Unlike most other Arabs, these students did not return home espousing socialism, Arab nationalism and anticolonial rhetoric. For the most part, they liked the West, especially America, business and the modern world. They support the royal family, but want to see change. Many of them are greatly encouraged by Crown Prince Abdullah's reforms. They hope that Saudi Arabia will soon become a member of the World Trade Organization and that this will unleash even more economic reforms, that events like the Jidda Economic Forum will grow, that educational reform will flourish, that women will be moved out of the shadows of everyday life.

I want to be hopeful—and there are some hopeful signs. But I fear that governments change when they have to. Saudi Arabia will probably weather this storm and beat back the terrorists. The oil money will buy off other critics for at least another decade or two. The royal system will muddle along. But without wrenching change, Saudi Arabia will not achieve the promise of genuine modernization that its liberals and reformers hope for. The young Saudi who lamented the lack of role models ended our conversation poignantly: “Perhaps history will call us the country that could have been” [Emphasis added].

57 Dowd, “Loosey Goosey Saudi.”
Pertinent is Zakaria’s use of the metaphorical expression “out of the shadows” when describing the situation for Saudi women forced to live according to “noxious…Wahhabism.” A shadow is the point between lightness and darkness and the general understanding is that it owes more to the latter than the former. Zakaria is suggesting there are many people (men) living their lives in ‘full view’ (in ‘lightness’) and there are many people (women) forced to live in places where they are largely unseen or unnoticeable (‘in the shadows’). This metaphorical expression can be interpreted in a number of ways.

For example we in the ‘West’ will often associate light with good entities like God and angels. Conversely popular myths in the ‘West’ typically associate evil entities like monsters and vampires as living in darkness. According to this interpretation ‘Wahhabism’ is represented as responsible for encouraging Saudi men for treating women as evil entities. The implication is the liberalisation or modernisation of Saudi Arabian society would create the necessary conditions that would allow Saudi women to ‘emerge from the shadows’ and be treated like human beings rather than as evil entities.

Ibrahim also represents ‘Wahhabism’ as responsible for denying women their freedoms. Like Farr, he believes the denying of freedoms is in part responsible for inspiring ‘Islamic radicalism’. However while Farr links the lack of religious freedom to “religious-based terrorism,” Ibrahim links the denying of women their freedoms to ‘Islamic radicalism’. Ibrahim writes

> The U.S. has always been aware of Saudi Arabia's role in funding and spreading Wahhabism -- an extremist ideology which provides the ideological foundation for groups like Al Qaeda… the conservative cult of Wahhabism, advocates anti-Semitism, misogyny and inter-action with non-Muslims only in cases of necessity. It therefore provides the ideological justification for animosity and hatred of wider society thus providing the perfect foundation for radical preachers to then advocate violence as a religious duty [Emphasis added].

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Here I ‘abstract’ two elements for closer analysis. The first concerns Ibrahim’s use of the term “misogyny” and its relation to ‘Wahhabism’ and ‘radicalism’. According to Cerulo this technique is called the assigning of ‘gender characteristics to the victim’. Cerulo writes that the emphasising of the victim’s female gender is likely to result in the reader understanding and categorising the violent act as deviant, illegitimate and unjustifiable. In contrast focusing on the male gender of the victim is more likely to result in the reader understanding the violent act to be normal.60

Ibrahim’s choosing to use the term ‘misogyny’ clearly identifies females rather than males as the subject of concern. The word ‘misogyny’ comes from the Greek term misogynes meaning ‘woman-hater’ and is today typically used when referring to the ‘dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women’. Ibrahim’s point is ‘Wahhabism’ promotes discrimination against women and that this is in part responsible for promoting ‘radicalism’.

Also pertinent is Ibrahim’s use of the phrase “religious duty” involving what Cerulo calls the assigning of ‘instrumental aims’ to the perpetrators of violence, which in this instance is the ‘Wahhabi’ “radical preachers.”61 Ibrahim represents the “radical preachers” as promoting acts of violence with clear religious aims (they are said to have a “religious duty”). Using the phrase “religious duty” implies there are religious rewards for the perpetrators of the violence. Cerulo maintains readers are more likely to condemn violent acts if they believe the perpetrator will receive some kind of reward.62 In using this technique Ibrahim is making use of a common political narrative in modern ‘Western’ discourse and often promoted by ‘Islamic militants’ which says that Muslims committing violence as a way of defending their faith will be rewarded in the afterlife (often with seventy two virgins).

‘Wahhabism’ as ‘Backward’ and an Obstacle to Progress

There is a strong tendency among modern liberal intellectuals to represent ‘Wahhabism’ as indicative of a society that is ‘backward,’ ‘anti-modern’ and

60 Cerulo, Deciphering Violence, 24-26.
61 Ibid., 17-21.
62 Ibid.
‘regressive’. Liberals often claim that backward societies need to rid themselves of ‘Wahhabism’ in order for them to ‘progress’. ‘Progress’ is typically understood as the adopting of measures that lead to the creation of a modern liberal secular democratic state. Friedman, Dowd and Zakaria are among key liberal intellectuals who represent ‘Wahhabism’ in these ways.

Friedman blames ‘Wahhabism’ for the poor relationship between the ‘Western’ and ‘Islamic’ ‘worlds’. He sees the prevalence of ‘Wahhabism’ in the ‘Islamic world’ as indicative of its ‘backwardness’ and he is extremely critical of its promotion by the Saudi Arabian ‘Wahhabi’ clerics. Friedman writes

> What's going on in Iran today is, without question, the most promising trend in the Muslim world. It is a combination of Martin Luther and Tiananmen Square -- a drive for an Islamic reformation combined with a spontaneous student-led democracy movement. This movement faces a formidable opponent in Iran's conservative clerical leadership. It can't provide a quick fix to what ails relations between Islam and the West today. There is none. But it is still hugely important, because it reflects a deepening understanding by many Iranian Muslims that to thrive in the modern era they, and other Muslims, need an Islam different from the lifeless, anti-modern, anti-Western fundamentalism being imposed in Iran and propagated by the Saudi Wahhabi clerics [Emphasis added].

Pertinent are the terms “modern era” and “anti-modern” which we can look at more closely. Friedman is referring to the ‘Modern Period’ in ‘Western history’ (which includes the Early Modern Period roughly between 1500 and 1815) which is so important to many in the liberal intellectual tradition because this is when the Protestant Reformation and French Revolution took place. In both instances people began challenging the dominant role religion played in the governing of the state. In the Reformation it was the authority of the Catholic Church that was criticised and challenged and in the French Revolution saw the end of medieval Christianity and the welcoming of a ‘new secular phase’ in mankind’s development. The implication is that the ‘Islamic world’ in which ‘Wahhabism’ is pervasive is stuck in a period that is

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roughly four to five centuries ‘behind’ the ‘West’ in terms of development. ‘Wahhabism’ is part of responsible for this ‘backwardness’ because it champions the ruling of a society according to religious doctrine and opposes secularisation. In this sense Friedman represents ‘Wahhabism’ as a ‘brake on’ or an ‘obstacle’ to ‘progress’.

Friedman is suggesting there is no way that nations in the liberal democratic ‘West’ can enjoy cordial relations with the ‘Islamic world’ as long as religions like ‘Wahhabism’ continue to dominate the latter. The ‘Islamic world’ including ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia must ‘progress’ meaning it must have its own Reformation in order to free itself from the hold oppressive religions like ‘Wahhabism’ have on it. This can be understood as an ethnocentric point of view that relies on the historical development of the ‘West’ as a yardstick for progress.

Zakaria makes similar comparisons when representing the current situation in the Middle East.  

The Middle East is in the midst of a sectarian struggle, like those between Catholics and Protestants in Europe in the age of the Reformation. These tensions are rooted in history and politics and will not easily go away.

Zakaria uses an analogy when suggesting the entire Middle East including ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia is ‘backward’ and ‘less developed’ when contrasted with the liberal democratic ‘West’. To reiterate, an analogy can be understood as a logical argument where the user demonstrates how things are alike by point out shared characteristics with the aim of showing that if things are alike in some ways then they can be alike in other ways as well. Again the implication is the ‘West’ has successfully moved past this point in time where religious ideas inspired violence and has ‘evolved’ into modern liberal secular democratic regimes. “The Middle East ” is still however “in the midst of a sectarian struggle” and is therefore further away from reaching this ‘ideal society’. The suggestion is that this region must experience a transition to a modern liberal secular democratic government if it wants to bring an end to

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religiously inspired violence.

Like Zakaria and Friedman, Bandow also likens the situation in ‘Wahhabi’-affected nations like Saudi Arabia to a particular historical period in ‘Western’ history that nations in the ‘West’ have ‘progressed’ beyond. Bandow writes

> Repression and corruption. Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy, an almost medieval theocracy…Political opposition and even criticism are forbidden. In practice, there are few procedural protections for anyone arrested or charged by the government … The government may invade homes and violate privacy whenever it chooses, and travel is limited. Women are covered, cloistered, and confined, much as they were in Afghanistan under the Taliban…[Emphasis added].

As is the case with the previous examples, Bandow uses analogy when describing the ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi state as “an almost medieval theocracy.” Bandow is making the point that while ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia is technically understood as “an absolute monarchy” it shares many similar characteristics with “medival theocracies” i.e. “Repression and corruption,” forbidding of political oppression, lack of “procedural protections,” the state’s violating of individuals’ privacy, travel restrictions and the discrimination against women. Bandow wants to convince his readers that modern states like Saudi Arabia ruled according to ‘Wahhabism’ are just like medieval forms of government that appeared in ‘Western’ history centuries ago.

Bandow like Zakria and Friedman is a ‘Movement Intellectual’ for the political liberal tradition who is influenced by the idea that we can rank different kinds of governments on a linear scale from least developed/regressive/backward to most developed/progressive/modern. Bandow situates Saudi Arabia because of its adherence to ‘Wahhabism’ near the beginning of this spectrum akin to the Medieval period in ‘Western’ human history. The standard political liberal understanding is that the Medieval period in ‘Western’ human history was characterised by an irrational belief in religion that needed to be overcome in order for society to ‘progress’. The implication is that societies in which ‘Wahhabism’ plays a crucial role like Saudi

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65 Bandow, “Befriending Saudi Princes.”
Arabia must go through this same process in order to ‘progress’ and ‘catch-up’ to the ‘West’.

Friedman provides another interesting example of how some liberal intellectuals represent the ‘backwardness’ of ‘Wahhabism’ when choosing to use the term “evolution” to describe the current situation in the Gulf States which includes ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia. Friedman claims ‘Wahhabi’-ruled Saudi Arabia like the other Gulf nations needs an “evolution” and not a “revolution” which is what he understands as currently occurring in other Middle Eastern nations (these are a part of what Friedman calls the “Arab Awakening”; the use of this term suggests that the Arab nations have ‘been asleep’ and are only now becoming consciously aware of what it is happening in their countries). Making sense of the recent turmoil in the Arab and Muslim world for his readers, Friedman writes

There are the radical revolutions you’ve read about in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Yemen and Libya, none of which yet have built stable, inclusive democracies. But then there are the radical evolutions that you’ve not read about, playing out in Saudi Arabia and other Arab Gulf monarchies [Emphasis added].

Friedman also writes

I heard many of these stories during group conversations with young Saudis and Emeratis, who I found to be as impressive, connected and high-aspiring to reform their countries as any of their revolutionary cohorts in Egypt. But they want evolution not revolution. They’ve seen the footage from Cairo and Damascus. You can feel their energy — from the grass-roots movement to let women drive to the young Saudi who whispers that he’s so fed up with the puritanical Islam that dominates his country he’s become an atheist, and he is not alone. Saudi atheists? Who knew? [Emphasis added]

Friedman’s choosing to use the term “evolution” says a lot about how he sees the world. ‘Evolution’ comes from the Latin evolution meaning the ‘unrolling (of a book)’. During the seventeenth century it was commonly used by scholars working in the fields of medicine, mathematics and literature to refer to the ‘growth to maturing and development of an individual thing’. Scottish geologist Charles Lyell gave the
term a sense of ‘progress’ when using to describe changes in nature. These connotations have stuck with the term and when writers like Friedman use it when describing the current political situation in places like ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia, we can see an underlying belief in the ‘natural progression’ or ‘maturing’ of a society.

The implication is that societies like Saudi Arabia are currently ‘immature’, ‘infantile’ or ‘under-developed’ because of the influence religions like ‘Wahhabism’ continue to have on them. Friedman sees the Gulf nations like ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia as still in the early stages of the ‘maturing’ process. Friedman is clearly influenced by the Communitarian approach within the liberal tradition as well ideas about human perfection promoted by key liberal writers like J. S. Mill. Friedman understands states and societies as groups of people working towards an end goal of human perfection and the term “evolution” helps to describe this journey.

Liberal ‘movement’ intellectuals Maureen Dowd and Thomas Farr represent the ‘backwardness’ associated with ‘Wahhabism’ in slightly different ways. In describing the situation in ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia, Dowd writes

The attempts at more tolerance are belated baby steps to the outside world but in this veiled, curtained and obscured fortress, they are '60s-style cataclysmic social changes. Last week, Sheik Abdul Rahman al-Barrak, a pugnacious cleric, shocked Saudis by issuing a fatwa against those who facilitate the mixing of men and women. Given that such a fatwa clearly would include the king, Prince Saud dismissed it. “I think the trend for reform is set, and there is no looking back,” he told me. “Clerics who every now and then come with statements in the opposite direction are releasing frustration rather than believing that they can stop the trend and turn back the clock” [Emphasis added].

Here we see the using of a variety of metaphorical expressions i.e. “no looking back”, “opposite direction” and “turn back the clock” that all draw on the ‘Progress is Movement’ metaphor. This metaphor considers forwards movement to be indicative

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69 Dowd, “Loosey Goosey Saudi.”
of societal progress whilst backwards movement as indicative of societal regression. Like many liberal intellectuals, Dowd considers the modern Liberal democratic state to be the ideal form of government and she uses instances of democratic freedoms as a yardstick against which this progress is measured. Dowd represents democratic reform in ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia as a natural, incremental, progressive and positive process that cannot be undone, reversed or stopped. That is to say there is no ‘turning back of the clock’.

I have also highlighted Dowd’s use of the phrase “60s-style cataclysmic social changes.” Again we see a liberal intellectual using the ‘West’ as a yardstick against which progress can be ‘measured’. In this instance the ideal kind of society to which Dowd refers is the U.S.A and the state that fails to measure up to this ‘progress’ is ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia. We know she is referring to the US because it was during the 1960s in which “cataclysmic social changes” were taking place in that country. The implication is that the Liberal Democratic ‘West’ typified by the US state is far more advanced than a nation like Saudi Arabia which is held back by ‘Wahhabism’ and therefore still has a lot of ‘catching up’ to do.

Like Dowd, Farr also draws on the metaphor ‘Progress is Movement’ when representing ‘Wahhabism’ as an obstacle to the development / ‘progress’ of a society. Farr joins Dowd in critiquing the role ‘Wahhabism’ plays in Saudi Arabia, however for Farr this is a part of a wider critique of the role Islam plays in the modern ‘Muslim world’. Farr writes

> A senior Saudi cleric issued a fatwa mandating the death of anyone arguing that men and women could work together professionally. Such edicts emerge from Wahhabism, a malevolent political theology that nurtured Osama bin Laden and continues to be exported worldwide…

> Among other things, Muslims need religious liberty to undermine Islamist extremism and to **advance** women's rights…[Emphasis added].

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70 This period in the US is well known for its counter-culture and revolutionary movements which included the US Civil Rights Movement and the ‘second-wave’ of the Feminist movement. The counter-culture movement played a major role in ‘liberating’ many aspects of US society including sexual identity and relations, questioning of authority and the role of government and the demanding of freedoms for women and minorities.

71 Farr, “How Obama is sidelining religious freedom.”
We can abstract the metaphorical expression “advance” for closer analysis which Farr uses when describing the relation between religious liberty and women’s rights in Saudi Arabia. This draws on the metaphor ‘Movement is Progress’ which as the name clearly suggests sees ‘forwards movement’ as indicative of individual and societal progress. In drawing on this metaphor and using this particular metaphorical expression, Farr is suggesting that Saudi Arabian society does not currently provide women the liberty to which they are entitled and which forms key part of a ‘modern’ society.

Farr’s choosing to use the term “advance” also provides valuable insight into the ways some liberals think about history. The liberal intellectual tradition typically promotes a linear understanding of human history where the purpose of mankind is to ‘progress’ and ‘advance’ to the creating of a liberal democratic utopia. A woman’s ability to enjoy their liberty is an integral part of this ‘ideal society’. According to Farr this is the opposite of what is currently happening for women in Saudi Arabia who are forced to live according to ‘Wahhabism’. Farr represents ‘Wahhabism’ with its restricting of religious and women’s freedoms as an obstacle that needs to be overcome.

‘Wahhabism’ is a Threat to a Secular Society

What Farr is getting at here and what many liberals have intimated is the crucial role they believe secularism plays in the ordering of a modern democratic liberal society. A society like Saudi Arabia governed according to ‘Wahhabism’ violates many of the core principles typically valued by liberal intellectuals. Liberal intellectuals typically believe an ideal society to be secular meaning the state does not espouse or promote any particular kind of religion. Instead it should be committed to tolerating all religions so as long as they do not impinge upon the daily operations of the state, impinge upon individual freedoms or harm individuals in any way. For many liberals the problem with a state like Saudi Arabia which is organised according to ‘Wahhabism,’ is that it violates these principles. Liberal intellectuals (rightly) do not
tend to see ‘Wahhabism’ as a religion that “accepts the partitioning of the secular and sacred.”\textsuperscript{72}

Fareed Zakaria is among those liberal intellectuals whose belief in secularism plays a major role in his account of ‘Wahhabism’.\textsuperscript{73} Zakaria provides an assessment of the current religious and political situation in the Middle East claiming it “has become an even more violent place than usual.” Zakaria blames ‘Wahhabism’ for inspiring and motivating a lot of this violence. He writes

The second factor at work has been the \textit{rising tide} of Islamic fundamentalism. Its causes are various - the rise of Saudi Arabia and its export of puritanical Wahhabi ideas the Iranian revolution and the discrediting of Westernization as the secular republics in the region morphed into military dictatorships [Emphasis added].

Apparent is the belief that secularisation is a way of countering Islamic extremism. The implication is that “secular republics” which is the ideal form of government championed by liberal intellectuals provides people with the liberty to which they are \textit{a priori} entitled. In the absence of this freedom people are likely to become frustrated with oppressive forms of government like “military dictatorships” that limit their freedom. They are then likely to turn to “Islamic fundamentalism” to help express their anger and frustration.

Pertinent is Zakaria’s use of the metaphorical expression “rising tide” to describe the increased popularity in “Islamic fundamentalism” in the Middle East. “Rising tide” literally means the occurrence of incoming water between a low tide and following high tide. Rising tides are the result of gravitational forces exerted by the Moon and the Sun and the rotation of the Earth. Rising tides especially when accompanied by strong winds often result in severe flooding. Zakaria uses this metaphorical expression to help represent “Islamic fundamentalism” as a ‘natural’ relation of non-secular governments that deny people their liberty and of Saudi Arabia’s global promotion of ‘Wahhabism’. His point is that where there is ‘Wahhabism’ and “military dictatorships” there will also be “Islamic fundamentalism.”

\textsuperscript{72} Fish, “Liberalism and Secularism.”
\textsuperscript{73} Zakaria, “U.S. fuel to the Middle East fire.”
A belief in secularism also influences how Bilefsky makes sense of the current situation in Bosnia. Bilefsky represents ‘Wahhabism’ as a threat to the modern and secular Bosnian nation that values separation of “mosque and state” and an individual’s right to practice religion privately. Bilefsky maintains that it is secularism and not its enemy ‘Wahhabism,’ that is the will of the majority of Bosnian people noting that “…[a] recently conducted detailed survey of 600 Bosnian Muslims, said 60 percent favored keeping religion a private matter.” Like many other intellectuals belonging to different intellectual traditions, Bilefsky also represents ‘Wahhabism’ / ‘Salafism’ (he uses the terms interchangeably) for motivating and inspiring violence in Bosnia.

Of most concern to Bilefsky is the influence that Islam in general and ‘Wahhabism’ in particular are having on the Bosnian secular education system especially in public kindergartens. Bilefsky communicates this concern to his readers by ‘giving voice to’ / citing the opinions of locals and “a prominent liberal Muslim intellectual” who is critical of Islam’s encroaching on civic life. Bilefsky writes

Mustafa Effendi Spahic, a prominent liberal Muslim intellectual and professor at the Gazri Husrev-beg Madrasa in Sarajevo, went further, calling the introduction of religious education in kindergarten “a crime against children.” “The Prophet says to teach children to kneel as Muslims, only after the age of 7,” said Professor Spahic, who was imprisoned under Communism for Islamic activism. “No one has any right to do that before then because it is an affront to freedom, the imagination and fun of the child's world.”

This excerpt helps illustrate many of the beliefs that liberal intellectuals value i.e. individualism (which in this instance deals with children), the relation between freedom and the development of the self (which is evident in Bilefsky’s implying that religious education for children hinders their “imagination.” Remembering that key early modern liberal thinkers like Turgot and Condorcet treated imagination as a key part of individual genius and therefore a key part to the ‘progressing’ and ‘developing’ of a society) and the separation of church and state (the introduction of

Islamic education which includes ‘Wahhabi’ education is described as “a crime against children.”

Also pertinent is Bilefsky’s use of analogy when likening the current situation in Bosnia particularly its capital city Sarajevo both of which have experienced an increase in popularity of ‘Wahhabism,’ to the situation in Iran. Bilefsky writes

Muharem Bazduj, deputy editor of the daily Oslobodenje, the voice of liberal, secular Bosnia, said he feared the growth of Wahhabism, the conservative Sunni movement originating in Saudi Arabia that aims to strip away foreign and corrupting influences.

Analysts say Saudi-financed organizations have invested about $700 million in Bosnia since the war, often in mosques.

Wahhabism arrived via hundreds of warriors from the Arab world during the war and with Arab humanitarian and charity workers since, though sociologists here stress that most Bosnian Muslims still believe that Islam has no place in public life...

Milorad Dodik, prime minister of Bosnia’s Serb Republic, has referred to Sarajevo as the new Tehran, and talks of a “political Islam and a fight against people who don’t share the same vision.” [Emphasis added]

Understanding the context in which these remarks are made is crucial. Bilefsky’s article is relatively recent (published in December 2008) and appeared during a period of time when Iran was understood by many as an ‘Islamic superpower’ keen to spread to its version of Islam throughout the world. Iran is widely considered to be a relatively wealthy nation and many saw its global promoting of Islam in poor areas particularly those recently affected by war as a way of spreading their influence. In more recent times the supposed ‘threat’ of Iran has taken a backseat to the ‘threat’ posed by ISIS which now tends to dominate ‘Western’ media commentary.

Bilefsky’s analogy makes the point that Saudi Arabia with its spreading of ‘Wahhabism’ in Bosnia is acting in a similar way to Iran. Like the Islamic regime in Tehran, Saudi Arabia wants to encourage the implementing of a version of Islam (in

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75 Lange, “Progress.”
this instance ‘Wahhabism’) as a way of ordering civic society. While both nations adhere to different versions of Islam (Iran is predominantly Shia and Saudi Arabia is ‘Wahhabi’ which can be understood as belonging to the Sunni branch of Islam), Bilefsky wants the reader to think of the two as the same, as both belonging to “political Islam.” Bilefsky represents ‘political Islam’ as a threat to many of the values like the separation of religion and state that liberals value.

Like Bilefsky, Friedman is a liberal intellectual who wants to promote the triumph of secular Liberal democratic regimes throughout the world. Friedman focuses his attention on the Middle East, particularly Syria which currently finds itself in the midst of a civil war which now also involves international forces. Friedman provides his readers with an assessment of the aims and goals of the major players in the conflict and picks the groups he believes ‘Western’ nations understood as global promoters of liberalism should support.

Friedman sees both Qatar and Saudi Arabia as key players in the Syrian conflict. He describes both as “Wahhabi fundamentalist monarchies” and as “the two main funders and arms suppliers of the Syrian uprising.” He blames their adherence to ‘Wahhabism’ for their nations’ failure to embrace democracy and for the sectarian violence each are currently experiencing. According to Friedman their adherence to ‘Wahhabism’ means it is impossible to accept that they will want to create a stable, secular, multisectarian, multiparty democracy in Syria, which of course is what ‘Western’ Liberal democratic states want. Friedman also implies that there is a relationship between their non-democratic ‘Wahhabi’ beliefs and their supporting of violence. Friedman writes

> What are Qatar's and Saudi Arabia's goals? Are we to believe that these two archrival Wahhabi fundamentalist monarchies, the two main funders and arms suppliers of the Syrian uprising, are really both interested in creating a multisectarian, multiparty democracy in Syria, which they would not tolerate in their own countries?

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Friedman claims there are currently three rebel groups in Syria engaged in the conflict that could potentially emerge as rulers of a new post-Assad Syria. He writes

Syria's rebels fall into three groups: those democrats who want to be free to be citizens in a country where everyone has the same rights; those who want to be free to be more Islamic; and those who want to be free to be more sectarian -- to see Syria's Sunni majority oust the ruling Alawite minority.

He claims the ‘West’ should support the group that is more likely to get Syrians “to think and act like citizens than sects or tribes” [Emphasis added].” Echoing the thoughts of many liberals, Friedman understands the term ‘citizen’ in liberal terms meaning someone who values things like a democratic secular government. Here we see a clear ranking of different kinds of people and societies. At the top are citizens and below them are those who belong to “sects or tribes.” The implication is that ‘Wahhabism’ is incompatible with the liberal belief in a secular state because it encourages people to act in ways contrary to what liberalism values. We tend to associate the term ‘tribe’ with an earlier period in human history where society was organised according to a common ancestry. It also a biological term used to describe a taxonomic category placed between a subfamily and a genus or between a suborder and a family. These understandings support the claim that Friedman is categorising adherents of ‘Wahhabism’ as ‘behind’ or ‘below’ non-‘Wahhabi’ and non-religious people living in an ‘advanced’ liberal secular democratic state.

This helps us to understand why Friedman believes the “secular-nationalist rebels” who are “those democrats who want to be free to be citizens in a country where everyone has the same rights” are the only potentially viable group the ‘West’ can support. According to Friedman, the ‘West’ must not support the Sunni groups who are themselves supported and armed by a “Wahhabi fundamentalist monarchy” because if they emerge victorious then it is likely they will create a state that rejects democracy, secularism and ‘stability’ in favour of a monarchy ruled according to ‘Wahhabi’ religious doctrine. They will likely create a state that encourages treating its people as “sects or tribes” rather than as “citizens” who respect the freedom others including religious freedom. Friedman writes

I'm dubious that just arming “nice” rebels will produce the Syria we want; it could, though, drag us in in ways we might not want. But if someone can
make the case that arming the secular-nationalist rebels increases the chances of forcing Assad and the Russians into a settlement, and defeating the Islamists rebels after Assad falls, I'm ready to listen.

**Conclusion**

Many liberal intellectuals treat ‘Wahhabism’ as an affront to most of the values they hold dear. Liberals value freedom, a modern liberal democratic secular government and a political environment that provides its people with the best chance to develop their abilities. As we have seen, liberal intellectuals tend to see ‘Wahhabism’ as denying individual freedoms especially religious and gender freedoms, as rejecting secularism in favour of a state ruled according to ‘Wahhabi’ religious doctrine and as creating a political environment that hinders an individual’s development. I will now take a close look at some of the underlying themata and generative metaphors that are influencing how liberals make sense of the world in general and consider the implications this has for how they understand ‘Wahhabism’.
Chapter Five
Making Sense of Liberal Representations of ‘Wahhabism’

Most of the evil in this world is done by people with good intentions.

T.S. Eliot

I have argued to date that liberal intellectuals representing ‘Wahhabism’ rely on particular notions about human nature, the relationship between persons conceived of as individuals and their society, the ideal ordering of a community and history. These notions add up in some way to a tradition that is recognisably ‘liberal’ even if in each instance there are important controversies and differences between those claiming to belong to a liberal tradition. I then set about showing how these beliefs that characterise and define how liberals make sense of the world and understand the aims and goals of human existence began to shape the way some liberal intellectuals represent ‘Wahhabism’. Hence the characterisation of societies in which ‘Wahhabism’ is prevalent as relatively ‘backward,’ ‘un-evolved,’ ‘anti-modern’ and ‘regressive’ when compared with states in the ‘West,’ and we saw many championing the introduction of measures with the aim of creating a modern secular liberal democratic state that guarantees and values the liberties of its people.

Yet it seems there is still more to be understood about the ‘why’ of the liberal representation of ‘Wahhabism’. Here we confront the allure of various kinds of interpretative or even explanatory approaches. As I have noted there is certainly a rich tradition of the sociology of knowledge which offers a structural and determinist account of ideas couched in terms of class and gender. Other thinkers like Arendt in her *Life of Rahel Varnhagen* have offered a rich historical and phenomenological account of how “personal preferences”/prejudice intersect with historical circumstance to play a major role in how individuals make sense of the world.¹ For reasons already spelled out and without seeking to controvert the findings generated by these traditions, I have determined on the use of a more formal analysis couched in

terms of significant metaphoric and discursive features. Here I show how if we dig deeper we establish several important elements that play a major role in constituting these kinds of representations.

These elements are what Gerald Holton calls ‘themata’ and what Kurt Danziger calls ‘generative metaphors’. My ability to make sense of some of these liberal, Marxist and neo-conservative representations of ‘Wahhabism’ relies in part on my ability to abstract and describe the roles both of these processes play in how these intellectuals make sense of the world and the representing process. I dedicate the first part of this chapter to describing precisely what these two concepts are and how they work. I then identify and describe the some of the key thematas and generative metaphors liberals rely on and the implications these have for the ways in which liberals represent ‘Wahhabism’.

It should be noted from the outset that Holton and Danziger are historians seeking to make sense of the history respectively of European physics from Kepler to Einstein and the rise of modern psychology. They have set out to demonstrate the role by two kinds of discursive and generative factors at work in these rich and complex intellectual projects. On the premise that the proof of the pudding is in its eating, I propose to establish the value of drawing on these two discursive ‘devices’ by applying them to situations in the social world i.e. when looking at the different ways intellectuals represent ‘Wahhabism’. In adapting and using these theories in this way I am building on a tradition of scholarship in social science that includes authors like Robert Nisbet.

**Themata : Holton and Nisbet**

Gerald Holton’s account of the origins of scientific thought established the value of studying what he called ‘themata’. Holton defines themata as those presuppositions that often exist for long periods of history and which are not derivable “from either

observation or analytic ratiocination”.\(^5\) As such these presuppositions “… required a term of their own, and thus the author called them *themata* (singular, *thema*, from the Greek ἰδέα: that which is laid down; proposition; primary word).”\(^6\) Holton sees themata as “often-hidden mechanisms[s]” that have and continue to play powerful and motivating roles in the advancing of science.\(^7\) Holton maintains they have been so influential that they have “repeatedly fashioned the foundations of sciences.”\(^8\) Holton also describes them as “motivating aids” inspiring and motivating researchers that also “tend to be suppressed or disappear from view.”\(^9\) Other authors have used alternative terms when referring to these same assumptions or presuppositions authors tend to take for granted when making sense of the world and which are often taken as literal truth. A popular term is “master-themes” which for example is used by Robert Nisbet in his study of the parallels between sociology and art.\(^10\)

Holton’s account of the thematic origins of scientific thought lead him to argue that there were a number of presuppositions each with their own discreet set of thematic elements pervading and silently shaping the work of modern scientists. These included themata like evolution/steady-state/devolution and mechanistic/materialistic/mathematical models which have proven to be fundamental frameworks that have shaped the development of scientific thought especially in terms of the process Popper insisted was the critical process of testing and refuting established theories.\(^11\)

Holton’s studies have concentrated on themata that have influenced researchers in the physical sciences, however as he notes the same findings are applicable to the other sciences.\(^12\) Holton’s indexing of themata in the physical sciences helps highlight an important point that is pertinent to our considering of the themata used by liberal, Marxist and neo-conservative intellectuals. Namely that different groups of people...

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\(^5\) Holton, “The Role of Themata in Science,” 456
\(^6\) Ibid.
\(^7\) Ibid., 454.
\(^8\) Ibid.
\(^9\) Ibid., 455.
\(^10\) Nisbet, Sociology as an Art Form, 29.
\(^12\) Holton, “The Role of Themata in Science,” 458.
tend to use different themata and that these absolutely fundamental beliefs tend to influence the ways in which these different groups of people make sense of the world before them. Holton finds that

All these [themata] become visible most strikingly during a conflict between individuals or groups that are committed to opposing themata, or within the developing work of a scientist holding on to a thematic concept before the data have given sufficient confidence in its value.13

Because they are not usually acknowledged or explicitly taught, Holton maintains that the influential role themata play are often ignored by historians of science wanting to understand things like what motivates and inspires scientists in their research, why they select particular conceptual tools and why researchers treat data in particular ways.14 Holton observes how some scientists, consciously or otherwise

... use highly motivating and very general presuppositions or hypotheses that are not directly derivable from the phenomena and are not provable or falsifiable ... these motivating aids which the author has termed thematic presuppositions or thematic hypotheses – tend to be suppressed, and disappear from view.15

Holton is very critical of those adopting what he calls a ‘two-dimensional approach’ that fails to appreciate the integral and influential role themata play in how researchers make sense of the world.

Holton identifies four major problems with this kind of approach. One is that by consciously or unconsciously ignoring or overlooking these themata, researchers also tend to overlook the “positive, motivating and emancipatory potential of certain presuppositions, as well as the negative and enslaving role that sometimes has led promising scientists into disastrous error.”16 Two failing to recognise the influential role played by themata “does nothing to explain why at any given time the choice of

13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., 454-455.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., 456.
problems or the reception of theories may be strikingly different among individuals or like-minded groups who face the same corpus of data.”17 Three

…this limited view does not explain what a historian, looking at laboratory notebooks or drafts of a distinguished scientist, often sees with stark clarity: the willingness, particularly at the early stages, privately to cling, firmly, and sometimes at great risk, to what can only be called a suspension of disbelief about the possible falsification of their hypotheses, emerging from the data before them.18

And four this kind of two-dimensional definition treats ‘science’

…as if it were a cold and lifeless imposition of an authoritarian, dogmatic excess of rationalism, one that le[aves] no room for creative play of the intuition or personal preferences.19

This last point is especially pertinent to this study and speaks to the point raised by others like Gadamer and Arendt about the effect of “personal preferences” or what Gademer calls ‘prejudice’ on how individuals make sense of the world. Recognising the major role themata play and undertaking a ‘thematic analysis’ aimed at drawing some of these out for closer analysis is therefore crucial to our understanding of what motivates and inspires researchers in their creative processes. This becomes especially important when we consider many of these themata can “…persist for long periods in the individual case as well as throughout long periods of history.”20

While Holton is concerned with research undertaken in the ‘physical sciences’ this approach can as he recommends be applied to other sciences to which we can also include the ‘social sciences’. Holton claims that “the role of… themata is not so different from the guiding presuppositions and framing worldviews expressed in other creative activities, from the arts to politics.”21 In many instances “some themata in a particular science are exemplifications of the same fundamental themata in other

17 Ibid., 458
18 Ibid., 456
19 Ibid., 461.
20 Ibid., 456.
21 Ibid., 462.
sciences, or even in cultural productions far from that of the sciences.” Robert Nisbet is among those authors who have heeded Holton’s advice, using his ideas to study the parallels between sociology and art.

As has been the case with ‘Western’ science, Nisbet finds that researchers working in the sociology and art fields have tended to draw on and interpret a set of ‘master-themes’ when undertaking research. One of the dominant ‘master-themes’ identified by Nisbet and which is pertinent to how liberals make sense of the world is ‘individualism’. Nisbet writes

> The rise of the modern conception of the individual, free and secular, liberated, as it were, from the religious community, is of course a hallmark of the painting of the Italian Renaissance, Individuality in its own right thus becomes a theme…In more recent times, roughly since the 1950s, the individual self, consciousness, reflexive awareness, have given a certain priority to subjectivism in literature and art. And no one acquainted with the history of sociology during the last decade or two will be unaware of the dominance of precisely these same styles and themes in this area.23

Some of the representations provided by Liberal intellectuals in this study would suggest that this search for the self is best traced back to the Protestant Reformation rather than the Renaissance. Irrespective of this, individualism continues to be a key thematic element that has become a central imperative of contemporary thought including contemporary political liberal thought. As I point out in my ‘ideal type,’ freedom, secularism and progress are also key thematic elements central to contemporary liberal thinking.

Nisbet points out that modern researchers in modern social science have also been preoccupied with and pursued other common themata including ideas dealing with ‘community,’ ‘authority,’ ‘status,’ the ‘sacred’ and ‘alienation’. As we will soon see, the alienation ‘master theme’ has had a major influence on how Marxist intellectuals make sense of the world and more specifically how they make sense of ‘Wahhabism’. Nisbet maintains that these themata have helped form a “thematic palette” that has

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22 Ibid., 461-462
23 Nisbet, Sociology as an Art Form, 29.
been used by the founders of sociology when creating portraits of the “European social landscape.”

Nisbet also suggests there are three dominant metaphorical systems namely growth, genealogy and mechanism that have influenced and motivated scholars using these themata.

Growth is change, yes, but when we declare some change a manifestation of growth in the social sphere we are speaking metaphorically. We are endowing an institution or social structure with a process drawn from the organic world. Few perspectives, few themes, have been more vital in Western thought than that of growth or development, which is a conceptual product of metaphor.

Generative Metaphors and Danziger

While these specific metaphors are of varying relevance to this study, what is important is the relation between a researcher’s use of themata and the metaphors helping ‘constitute,’ ‘generate’ and support this kind of thinking. We can refer to the seminal work of Kurt Danziger for a deeper understanding of the generative role or ‘theory–constitutive function’ metaphors play in this process.

Danziger’s analysis of metaphor takes us beyond the literal surface of discourse and into the realm of assumptions and preoccupations, an important point when we start to consider the ways in which liberal, Marxist and neo-conservatives make sense of the world. Danziger argues that individuals and groups of individuals who have contributed to the evolution of psychology tend to draw on similar metaphorical descriptions that have been used over long periods of time and which have come to be thought of “as expressing some kind of literal truth.” This makes the role played by

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24 Ibid. 40.
25 Ibid., 33
27 Ibid., 332.
metaphors historically significant as it allow us to “improve our understanding of patterns of... thought...characteristic of a period, or a culture, or a particular intellectual community.” The study of generative metaphors can therefore be understood as pertinent to our making sense of the liberal, Marxist and neo-conservative intellectual representations of ‘Wahhabism’ in the post 9/11 period characterised by a heightened anxiety about ‘Islamic radicalism’.

Danziger provides an illuminating example of the ways in which psychologists Bain and McDougall used metaphors when writing about psychology. This account is illuminating in the sense that it can help us to understand the ways in which intellectuals in this study use metaphors and the ‘theory-constitutive function’ role metaphors can play. Danziger writes that Bain describes the learning process in terms of “tracks” and “turning off steam” and that McDougall describes an organism without instincts would be a “steam engine whose fires had been drawn.” Danziger writes that both Bain and McDougall are very deliberate in the language they choose to use and that their use of particular metaphors that help create particular images fit their psychological theories in fundamental ways. Danziger writes that Bain and McDougall’s use of metaphorical language has a ‘theory-constitutive function’ and that our studying of these can provide us with valuable “insight into some of the underlying assumptions and concerns that received expression in Bain’s and McDougall’s psychological theories.”

Danziger finds that both authors for example employ a similar image of ‘the mind as an energy system’ yet they emphasise different aspects of this image. This illuminates an important characteristic of fundamental psychological metaphors and metaphors in general including those used by intellectuals belonging to the same tradition providing representations of ‘Wahhabism’. Danziger writes

They [basic metaphors] provide a basic common framework within which communication is possible, while at the same time providing scope for differences of emphasis. Basic metaphors, like that of psychological energy, provide a kind of rough schema that, when held in common, can constitute one

28 Ibid., 331-332
29 Ibid., 332.
30 Ibid..
of the minimal conditions for effective human communication. But because
metaphors link two domains (such as mind and energy) in rather undefined
ways, these schemata leave open the issue of precisely which assumptions and
questions are to be transferred from the one domain to the other. So
metaphorical schemata not only provide a framework for shared discourse, but
encourage differences of emphasis and therefore provide conditions
favourable for theoretical development.31

Similarly Nisbet finds that authors influenced by the ‘master-theme’ individualism are
influenced by a number of common and basic metaphors namely those relating to
growth, genealogy and mechanism. Nisbet for example emphasises the key role
‘growth’ has played in the way ‘Western’ intellectuals have made sense of the world.
Growth is change, yes, but when we declare some change a manifestation of
growth in the social sphere we are speaking metaphorically. We are endowing
an institution or social structure with a process drawn from the organic world.
Few perspectives, few themes, have been more vital in Western thought than
that of growth or development, which is a conceptual product of metaphor.32

The key point is there are common metaphorical systems that provide a framework
for a shared discourse for intellectuals belonging to a particular tradition. As Danziger
puts it, “underlying metaphorical systems have generative properties that give a
certain cast to surface discourse” and “the identification of such schemata is therefore
important from the point of view of understanding the cognitive factors that provide
some of the conditions of both coherence and novelty in the historical development
of…discourse.”33 Identifying these metaphorical systems in addition to identifying
the key thematic elements is therefore integral to making sense of liberal, Marxist and
neo-conservative intellectuals representations of ‘Wahhabism’.

It is also important to point out that metaphors are more than just cognitive
constructions. They have what Danziger calls a ‘programmatic aspect’. Reiterating
the important point made by Donald Schön, Danziger writes that “When we define a

31 Ibid.
32 Nisbet, Sociology as an Art Form, 33.
certain part of the world metaphorically, this is not just an invitation to think about it in a certain way, it is also an invitation to act in terms of certain implied assumptions.” Danziger points out that by using metaphors to define an object in a particular way encourages certain expectations, focuses our attention on particular features and highlights priorities for practical action.

**Making Sense of Some Key Liberal Themata and Generative Metaphors**

The idea of the individual’s right to freedom including the right to religious liberty has existed in American political culture and has been taken for granted by many American intellectuals at least since the founding of the American republic in 1783. Zhenghuan Zhou is among the authors to write about the prominent role this themata has played in the American political experience.

While the republic was founded upon the values and beliefs that go to the heart of modern individualism, the absence of a historical tradition, the vastness of uncultivated and rich land, and ultimately a divinely ordained sense of mission, combined to foster a strong and unique form of individualist culture that is unparalleled in any other nation in the world…to read American history- from the Puritan settlers in pursuit of religious liberty to the revolutionary war that led to political independence, from the lonesome frontiersman chasing his “manifest destiny” to the economically self-made capitalist- is to watch individualism grow. To observe the ordinary lives of ordinary men and women in America is to see individualism in action.”

Zhou is expressing an opinion commonly held by many sociologists studying the American political experience, that the US is the embodiment of individualism par excellence. This themata extends beyond the American experience and also plays a central role in the political liberal tradition, acting as a motivating aid for many modern liberal intellectuals making sense of and representing ‘Wahhabism’.

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34 Ibid., 351
While these authors do belong to the intellectual tradition we call political liberalism, it must also be pointed out that all of those liberal intellectuals whose representations of ‘Wahhabism’ I deconstruct in this study are Americans writing in some of the US’ most popular and widely circulated newspapers i.e. the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* primarily for American audiences. It is therefore no surprise that such an influential American themata like individualism that has dominated the modern American experience should play such an influential role in the American intellectual tradition. What is key for American liberal intellectuals is that this presupposition resonates with the similar ideas about individualism that have also played such an integral role in the modern political liberal thought.

In my analysis we saw that there were some liberal intellectuals who refer to a very specific period in time in ‘Western’ history namely the Protestant Reformation when representing ‘Wahhabism’. For example Thomas L. Friedman describes the modern Islamic world in which ‘Wahhabism’ is pervasive as currently undergoing a much needed “Islamic reformation” that will help push it into the “modern era.”36 Fareed Zakaria likens the current sectarian struggle in the Middle East which involves ‘Wahhabi’ forces as similar to the past struggles “between Catholics and Protestants in Europe in the age of the Reformation.”37 The liberal intellectuals’ use of the term ‘reformation’ and their analogising of this period in time when making sense of the current situation in the Middle East is telling.

Holton points out that themata often exist for long periods of time and this is certainly the case when we consider the prominent and long-term role individualism has played in the liberal intellectual tradition. This idea at the very least dates back to a time that intellectuals like Zakaria and Friedman are referring to, that is the Protestant Reformation that took place during the eighteenth century. Neither Zakaria nor Friedman nor any other liberal intellectual explicitly refer to the importance or lessons of this period, however as Holton describes this lack of explicit acknowledgement is a key aspect of themata. Despite this lack of explicit acknowledgement about the importance of this era we can see that some of the key ideas associated with this period namely the concept of individualism are clearly acting as ‘motivating aids’ for

36 Friedman, “An Islamic Reformation.”
37 Zakaria, “U.S. fuel to the Middle East fire.”
some liberal intellectuals when making sense of ‘Wahhabism’ in the modern political environment.

A cursory review of the Liberal tradition tells us that the Reformation played a prominent role in laying the foundation for emergence of the ‘master-theme’ individualism and the ideas typically associated with it i.e. freedom of religion and secularism. This themata has been so prominent that liberal intellectuals have since taken it as expressing a kind of literal truth about the ‘modern’ existence of mankind. What authors like Zakaria and Freedman do not explicitly acknowledge is that the Reformation marked an important transition in the ‘Western’ world namely a moving away from the idea that the church and state (which were interlinked) controlled the individual and an embracing of the idea of an individual’s freedom to make his and her own decision free from the coercion and interference from state and faith institutions. This was a transition from the church and state’s control of the individual to an individual freedom free from the interference and coercion from state and faith institutions.

In the religious age immediately prior to the Reformation it was generally accepted that it was the key function of the (religious) state in the ‘West’ to define and articulate a specific (religious) conception of the good for its citizens. The events taking place during the Reformation period helped to challenge and usher in a new understanding regarding the function of the state. Influenced by the writings of key Protestant intellectuals like Martin Luther and John Calvin, and by key (liberal) thinkers like John Locke, John Stuart Mill and Immanuel Kant, a conception of Individualism emerged that continues to pervade liberal thinking. In the new post-religious and secular age people began to value an individual freedom that allowed them to think and act as they pleased so as long as they did not harm or impinge on the freedom of others and which occurred within a state that valued and guaranteed its people’s liberty. That is to say people were free to develop and pursue their own conception of the good.

Closely related with this way of thinking and which has also influenced the ways in which liberals represent ‘Wahhabism’ is the themata regarding ‘progress’. We saw how many Liberal intellectuals described ‘Wahhabism’ and societies in which this
religion was enforced or practiced as ‘backward’ and ‘anti-modern’. Doug Bandow for example uses the phrase “medieval theocracy” to describe a state like Saudi Arabia that is ruled according to ‘Wahhabi’ doctrine and therefore does not value or grant their people this individual freedom to make their own choices. Thomas Friedman describes ‘Wahhabism’ as “anti-modern” and suggests that changes must be made in Middle Eastern nations in order for them to “thrive in the modern era.” What these authors are getting at but are often not explicitly stating is that they are motivated and inspired by the idea/assume that people and the societies they make up have the ability to become ‘better’, ‘progress’ or rather ‘realise their full potential’. The implications associated with this kind of thinking is that we can measure ‘progress’ or the lack thereof of individuals and societies on some kind of continuum and that there exists a ‘bad’ and ‘good’ or rather ‘worse’ and ‘better’ ways of living. This themata has a long tradition in ‘Western’ ‘scientific’ thinking in general and liberal political theory in particular and this ‘master-theme’ can at the very least be traced back to the work of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, Herbert Spencer, and John Stuart Mill.

It was Lasmarck who provided the first modern attempt to account for the diversity of life on the planet without relying on the ideas of divine creation. Inspired by Lasmarck’s ideas, it was Spencer who then used materials from the biological sciences to construct a framework aimed at describing the ‘development’ of the human race. Spencer promoted the idea that the human race like the animal kingdom is constantly evolving/progressing and that this evolution/progression was just one element of a universe also in constant state of evolution/progression. Spencer’s evolutionary theory also holds that there exists a hierarchy according to human development, that we can ‘rank’ humans according to ‘race’ and ‘mental ability’ and that ‘progress’ can be understood as “an advance from homogeneity of structure to heterogeneity of structure.”

38 Bandow, “Befriending Saudi Princes.”
39 Friedman, “An Islamic Reformation.”
40 Lange, “Progress.”
These ideas resonate with modern European Literature about progress, in which authors typically claim that European science, culture and institutions are the most superior in the world. “In other words, the paradigmatic progress narrative shows Europeans setting the standards and then the rest of the world catching up until everyone is a full participant in an enlightened order.”42 As Margaret Meek Lange points out, this introducing of scientific theories about biological evolution into writings about the progress of mankind helped to create a new kind of Eurocentrism that was based on biologically racist ideas. Inspired by this evolutionary theory, Spencer argued that different races of human beings exist and form a clear hierarchy: “The civilized man departs more widely from the general type of the placental mammalia than do the lower human races.”43

This kind of thinking inspired many prominent liberal theorists like Mill who combined it with other key ideas like those associated with individualism. Mill for example argued that the ‘development’ of man could be best achieved within a liberal democracy given the individual freedoms it values and guarantees. According to Mill it was liberal secular regimes that provide the necessary conditions for a conflict between ‘ideologies’ which he saw as a powerful driver of ‘ideological’ development.44 Like many of the modern liberal intellectuals representing ‘Wahhabism,’ this kind of thinking would mean that Mill would also have major problems with ‘Wahhabi’ nations like Saudi Arabia that do not allow for a conflict of ideas within a liberal democratic state which is necessary for the learning and development of a society. It is also important to note that unlike many Marxists who consider the human and societal progress to be an inevitable process, Mill believed progress was possible and desirable but not assured.

We can understand many of the modern liberal intellectuals representing ‘Wahhabism’ as influenced by a similar themata about progress. Friedman for example shows signs of the same racist beliefs associated with progress that are espoused by thinkers like Spencer, arguing that “young Saudis” forced to live according to ‘Wahhabi’ doctrine in Saudi Arabia want “evolution” and not

42 ‘Lange, “Progress.”
“revolution.” Friedman also ‘ranks’ the different societies in the Middle East categorising non-‘Wahhabi’ societies like Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Yemen and Libya as ‘above’ or ‘more enlightened’ than the ‘Wahhabi’ societies in Saudi Arabia and the other Arab Gulf states. He writes

There are the radical *revolutions* you’ve read about in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Yemen and Libya, none of which yet have built stable, inclusive democracies. But then there are the radical *evolutions* that you’ve not read about, playing out in Saudi Arabia and other Arab Gulf monarchies [Emphasis added].

It is people and not animals that tend to experience ‘revolutions’ whilst we tend to use the term ‘evolution’ generally when we are talking about biological theories that deal with animals. The implication is that ‘Wahhabism’ does not provide the individualism or freedom that is provided by the modern liberal democratic state and which is needed for humans and societies to ‘progress’.

There are also important (what Danziger calls) ‘generative metaphors’ that help constitute this ‘master-theme’. Danziger points out that metaphors commonly used by authors belonging to particular traditions often take them “as expressing some kind of literal truth” and that we must identify and analyse these metaphors if we are serious about “improve[ing] our understanding of patterns of…though characteristic of a period, or a culture, or a particular intellectual community.” Abstracting the “underlying metaphorical systems” that “have generative properties” and “that give a certain cast to a surface discourse” is therefore of major importance when making sense of Liberal representations of ‘Wahhabism’.

An important metaphorical system I identify in my deconstruction of Liberal representations of ‘Wahhabism’ and which fits perfectly with the Liberal themata about progress is the metaphor ‘Progress is Directional Movement’. In one example Maureen Dowd describes ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia as making “galactically glacial”

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46 Ibid.
48 Ibid.,333.
‘progress’ with regards to gender and cultural freedoms. In another example she maintains there is “no looking back,” that ‘Wahhabi’ clerics are “looking in the opposite direction” and “that they [the ‘Wahhabi’ clerics] can[not] stop the trend and turn back the clock.”49 The “trend” she is talking about is the granting of new freedoms to Saudi Arabians forced to live according to ‘Wahhabi’ doctrine. Thomas Farr draws on the same metaphorical system when representing ‘Wahhabism’ as an obstacle to the development/‘progress’ of a society. He describes the need to “advance women’s rights” so as to create a modern liberal secular democratic state.50

As we can see these liberals literally believe that there is a purpose, endpoint or a highest state of evolution for mankind and that we as individuals and a society must always be working to ‘move forwards’/‘progressing’ until we reach this goal. For many liberal intellectuals it is taken as granted that this end goal is a world full of modern liberal democratic states that value and guarantee its citizens freedom. However not all people think in this way. Not all people have a linear conception of human progress and believe that we can rank or order people and societies. There are some people for example who have a cyclical understanding of the universe and human nature while others believe life is chaotic and there is no rhyme or reason. This was pointed out by David Hume in 1757 and more recently by Terry Eagleton. Hume writes

> We are placed in this world, as in a great theatre, where the true springs and causes of every event, are entirely unknown to us; nor have we either sufficient wisdom to foresee, or power to prevent those ills, with which we are continually threatened. We hang in perpetual suspense betwixt life and death, health and sickness, plenty and want; which are distributed amongst the human species by secret and unknown causes, whose operation is oft unexpected, and always accountable.51

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49 Dowd, “Loosey Goosey Saudi.”
50 Farr, “How Obama is sidelining religious freedom.”
While Eagleton writes

The cosmos is something of the whirling, spiralling, self-involved quality of traditional Celtic art. Like such art, it exists purely for its own self delight, not to accomplish some mighty goal. Like [James] Joyce’s fiction, the world is not designed to get anywhere in particular. For [John Scottus] Eriugena, as for modern physics, Nature is a dynamic process which varies according to the observer’s shifting vantage point. It is an infinity of partial perspectives, an endless sport of multiple viewpoints…\textsuperscript{52}

In this sense the linear thinking held by many liberals can be understood as a coping mechanism designed to impose a sense of order and purpose on a world and universe that for many lacks both. The inability of many liberal intellectuals to accept the whirling nature of the universe and their desire to believe that we as a society are heading towards an end goal can be understood as a refusal to accept the seemingly inherent meaningless and emptiness of our own existence. In this sense, developing and subscribing to a particular linear conception of history that places themselves and the societies to which they belong ‘ahead’ of other people and societies that for example live according to ‘Wahhabi’ religious doctrine can be understood as an egoistic attempt to instil meaning in their lives by showing they are somehow ‘better’, ‘more advanced’ or ‘more evolved’ than those ‘Wahhabi’ Muslims.

Alasdair McIntyre is among those to highlight the important role teleology plays for intellectual traditions.\textsuperscript{53} ‘Teleology’ comes from the Greek \textit{telos} meaning ‘end’ and \textit{logos} meaning ‘reason’. McIntyre writes that a teleology can be any philosophical account that holds final causes exist in nature meaning nature inherently tends toward definite ends. Without a religious belief in God and an eternal afterlife filled with rewards, the liberal teleology helps to provide the sole standard by which to judge the quality of a life. Put another way it helps provide meaning where there is otherwise none. The liberal’s representing of ‘Wahhabism’ can therefore be understood as an exercise designed to imbue the liberal intellectual’s life with meaning and purpose, as they are able to point to it and say ‘huh, we are better \textit{them} and we can show \textit{them} how to create a heaven on earth’.

\textsuperscript{53} Alasdair McIntyre, \textit{After Virtue} (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).
Chapter Six

‘Wahhabism’ is the Enemy of Us: Neo-conservative Representations of ‘Wahhabism’

Both read the Bible day and night,
But thou read'st black where I read white.

William Blake, The Everlasting Gospel

On September 20, 2001 President George W. Bush delivered an influential speech to a Joint Session of the US Congress. In that speech he declared:

The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends; it is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them …Every nation, every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.¹

Many see this as the precise moment in time in which the Bush Administration divided the nations of the world into one of two groups. Either they were friends of the US who supported their ‘Global War on Terror’ or they were enemies who sided with the terrorists.

This speech is pertinent for a number of reasons. Not only does it highlight the Bush Administration’s simplistic and stark binary central to what became known as the Bush Doctrine (‘either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists’) but it also revealed a number of key beliefs that have come to characterise what is referred to as a neo-conservative worldview.

While President Bush gave this speech, it has been generally understood that it was testimony to the influence that a group of neo-conservative intellectuals now had in

shaping US foreign policy in the first decade of the twenty first century.\(^2\) Shapiro is among the many scholars who argue that the Bush Administration in partnership with its neo-conservative allies constructed a coherent worldview that attempted to account for why the recent terrorists attacks on the US had occurred—‘they hate us because we’re free’ and the policies that needed to be adopted so as to prevent these kinds of attacks from happening again—‘go on the offensive to spread democracy in the Middle East’.\(^3\)

In this chapter I begin as I did in my treatment of the liberal tradition, by outlining a Weberian ‘ideal type’ to help with my deconstructing of neo-conservative intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’. I then characterise some of the ways neo-conservatives represent ‘Wahhabism’. In the last part of this chapter I then turn to making sense of these representations by paying attention to the central role religious themata, specifically those concerning the Jewish state of Israel and the coming of the Saviour play in neo-conservative thinking. Second and closely related to this, I describe the important role the themata ‘good versus evil’ plays in how neo-conservatives understand the world and the implications this has for how they represent ‘Wahhabism’. Finally I describe the influential role two generative metaphors namely the neo-conservative intellectuals’ understanding of the ‘Wahhabi’ Other as ‘animals’ and ‘savages’ has played in neo-conservative representations of ‘Wahhabism’.

**Introducing the Neo-Conservatives**

The neo-conservative movement to which I refer and which had wielded significant if not hegemonic influence on the making of US foreign policy by the Bush Administration (2001-2008) is a US political movement widely understood as originating in the 1960s. Its sponsors include prominent intellectuals like Samuel Huntington who is well-known for his ‘Clash of Civilisations’ theory, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Gertrude Himmelfarb and Irving Kristol. Among the prominent second-generation intellectuals are Carl Gersham, Penn Kemble, Charles


\(^3\) Ian Shapiro, *Containment: Rebuilding a Strategy Against Global Terror* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), xii.
Krauthammer and Joshua Muravchik. As to the sources of the neo-conservative movement there has been a tendency to pick out the controversial figure of Leo Strauss if only because many of the intellectuals who were believed to be part of this neo-conservative movement were either students of, or else claimed to be influenced by Strauss. This connection has led some commentators to understand him as chiefly responsible for inspiring and shaping the modern neo-conservative movement though this is also hotly contested.⁴

While its roots are often traced back to the works of intellectuals in the 1960s, it appears that the term ‘neo-conservative’ itself was popularised early in the 1970s when Michael Harrington used it to describe a group of American intellectuals who had moved away from the anti-Stalinist Socialist left and embraced American conservatism. Harrington who was himself part of the Socialist left used the term to refer to intellectuals like Bell, Moynihan and Kristol.⁵ The term then came to be used as a self-identifying label by Irving Kristol in 1979. He describes neo-conservatism as a ‘persuasion’ and a particular way of thinking about the world and politics.⁶ Expressing his distaste for the American liberal tradition which he and many neo-conservatives held responsible for what they perceived to be a cultural and moral breakdown in US society, it was Kristol who famously declared a neo-conservative to be a “liberal mugged by reality.”⁷

The term ‘neo-conservatism’ again became extremely popular during the Presidency of George W. Bush with commentators often using it when referring to a group of intellectuals who were very influential in the Bush administration especially with regards to their US foreign policy.⁸ Commentators also often point to the Bush

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⁴ Shadia Drury is a key proponent of this interpretation. See Shadia Drury, Leo Strauss and the American Right (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999) and Shadia Drury, The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). This point was also made in BBC Documentary ‘The Power of Nightmares’ which equated Strauss with Islamic political theologian Sayyid Qutb, claiming Strauss was to neo-conservatives what Qutb was to al-Qaeda. See British Broadcasting Commission, ‘The power of nightmares”, written and produced by Adam Curtis, first broadcast October-November 2004.
Doctrine, a term coined by prominent neo-conservative intellectual Charles Krauthammer, as the quintessential expression of a neo-conservative foreign policy.9

Like so many ‘fuzzy categories’ getting some clarity about the core beliefs that define neo-conservatism, understanding its key influences and writers and its reach and application have been the occasion of much scholarly debate. Both its critics and proponents emphasise different aspects they believe to be its defining characteristics. There are authors like Mearsheimer who understand it primarily as a modern form of Wilson Idealism, while others like George emphasise its inherently conflictual nature, just as other writers like Benin highlight unwavering support for Israel as a key defining feature of American neo-conservatism.10

Despite the fuzzy nature of neo-conservatism I require an understanding of the core beliefs of neo-conservatism for the purposes of this study. As was the case with my treatment of the liberal tradition I start with a Weberian ‘ideal type’ to help with my deconstructing of neo-conservative intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’. There are some disagreements within the neo-conservative tradition. However these disagreements appear to be not so formidable or complex as traditions like Marxism and liberalism, which are older and so have had more time to develop different internal traditions and controversies. In light of this it is likely to be a slightly easier task to develop an ‘ideal type’ characterising the neo-conservative approach especially as it relates to US foreign policy.

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Towards an Ideal Type

My ideal type is made up of three key elements. One element is a belief in the global promotion of democracy. Prominent neo-conservative intellectuals who have advocated that the US take forceful steps to spread democracy around the world and especially in the Middle East, include Muravchik, Bennett and Wolfowitz. This foreign policy initiative is motivated and inspired by the idea that a safe world is one made up of democratic states. For many neo-conservatives a less autocratic world means less anti-Americanism which in turn means a reduced threat to US national security and its interests abroad. According to Goldsmith neo-conservatives see “democracy promotion” as both “a normative prerogative and a pragmatic means to bolster the United States’ security and further its geopolitical preeminence.”

Neo-conservatives tend to equate democracy with freedom, believing a democratic state to be the most ‘free’ kind of state. To quote George W. Bush “every step toward freedom in the world makes our country safer.” In his 2006 State of the Union address, Bush argued that ending tyranny around the world by replacing it with democracy was one of the nation’s “defining moral commitments.” Bush claimed that this was not only “the right thing to do” but that it was also in the best interests of...


13 Mearsheimer, “Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq War.”


15 Ibid.,1.


17 Ibid.
America: “Democracies replace resentment with hope, respect the rights of their citizens and their neighbors, and join the fight against terror.”

Closely related to this is the idea that nation-states are either friends or enemies, invoking what Mearsheimer describes as a ‘black hats’-‘white hats’ view of the world. This ‘black and white’ view of the world and of foreign policy forms the second key element of my ideal type. This idea was famously expressed by President Bush when he declared “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.”

Neo-conservatives typically consider democratic nations as holders of benign motives and as having a natural inclination to act peacefully towards other states especially the US. They generally believe that these states “only act in a bellicose fashion when the black hats, invariably non-democratic states, leave them no choice.” This can be understood as an expression of ‘Democratic Peace Theory’ which maintains that democratic states rarely engage in conflict with other democratic states. This is why neo-conservatives tend to promote the global spread of democracy because they believe it helps transform ‘enemies’ into ‘friends’. One time prominent neo-conservative intellectual Fukuyama describes this global democratising project of turning ‘black hats’ into ‘white hats’ as ‘the end of history’. A motivating idea here which I will describe in greater detail later is the idea that ‘good’ will eventually emerge triumphant over ‘evil’.

Unwavering support for the state of Israel is the third key element of my ideal type. Heilbrunn is among many authors who have pointed to the influence this commitment has had on the neo-conservative movement. Heilbrunn goes so far as to describe it as a uniquely Jewish phenomenon insisting that “Indeed, as much as they may deny it, neo-conservatism is in a decisive respect a Jewish phenomenon, reflecting a subset of Jewish concerns.”

He says that this commitment involves promoting a US foreign policy that prioritises the aims and goals of Israel ahead of the US and/or which aligns

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18 Ibid.
19 Mearsheimer, “Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq War.”
20 Bush, “President Bush Delivers State of the Union Address.”
21 Mearsheimer, “Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq War.”
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
25 Heilbrunn, They Knew They Were Right, 11.
with policies promoted by ‘right-wing’ and ‘Zionist’ Israeli political parties whose ideas claim Biblical authority.\textsuperscript{26} Neo-conservatives appear to support Israel’s ongoing occupation of the Palestinian Territories and will often support Israel’s acquiring more Palestinian land in pursuit of promoting Israeli security. They also tend to defend what many others would understand as indefensible acts by the state of Israel. A good example of this approach is provided by prominent neo-conservative Frank Gaffney who justifies Israel’s Occupation on the grounds that any withdrawal would result in the creating of a ‘terrorist state’ which he calls “Palestan.”\textsuperscript{27}

It is generally acknowledged that the movement’s unwavering support for Israel is related to the influence wielded by prominent American Jewish intellectuals whose ideas have been shaped by their experiences of persistent anti-Jewish discrimination and shattering events like the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{28} It should however be noted that not all neo-conservatives are Jewish nor does identifying as Jewish necessarily entail unconditional and unwavering support for policies adopted by the state of Israel, as the role played by prominent left and liberal Jewish intellectuals in criticising Israeli policy suggests.

While there are other beliefs and commitments that could be used to ‘define’ the neo-conservative movement, I have chosen to abstract these three elements, a belief in the

\textsuperscript{26} Joel Benin, Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer are among those to point out the similarities in foreign policy between ‘right-wing’ political and religious elements in Israel i.e. the Likud Party and US foreign policy promoted by neo-conservatives. These authors have also highlighted numerous instances when neo-conservatives have promoted foreign policies that prioritise the interests of the state of Israel to the detriment of US interests. Benin, Walt and Mearsheimer identify the US’ involvement in Iraq as an example. Walt and Mearsheimer write that “Within the United States, the main driving force behind the Iraq war was a small band of neoconservatives, many with close ties to Israel’s Likud Party.” See John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, “The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy,” (2006): 54, \url{http://mearsheimer.uchicago.edu/pdfs/IsraelLobby.pdf}; Benin, “The Israelization of American Middle East Policy Discourse.”

\textsuperscript{27} Gaffney, “Seeing the threat for what it is.”

\textsuperscript{28} Ted Boettner traces the movement’s modern pro-Israeli stance back to the formative role played by intellectuals like Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith, Abram Shulsky and Elliot Abrams. According to Boettner many of these neo-conservative intellectuals were strongly influenced by their Jewish religious beliefs and had been personally affected by events like the Holocaust and anti-Jewish discriminatory practices in the US. See Ted Boettner, “Neo-Conservatism and Foreign Policy,” (MA Thesis, University of New Hampshire, 2002).

Brandon High emphasises the influential roles played by Jewish Marxist intellectuals in the formation of the neo-conservative movement in the 1960s and 1970s. See Brandon High, “The Recent Historiography Of American Neoconservatism,” \textit{The Historical Journal} 52, no.5 (2009): 475-491, \url{http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X09007560}

Jacob Heilbrunn claims that this modern ‘pro-Israeli’ political posture is related to Jewish neo-conservative intellectuals’ experiences with anti-Semitism in the US, the Holocaust and the treatment of Jews by totalitarian regimes like Stalinist Russia. See Heilbrunn, \textit{They Knew They Were Right}...
global promotion of democracy, the categorising of nations and groups as either friends or enemies of the US and an unwavering support for Israel, to make up my ‘ideal type’ and guide my analysis. With this ideal type in mind, I now turn my attention to newspaper and magazine articles written by neo-conservative intellectuals which often appear in prominent neo-conservative publications and most widely circulated American newspapers, with the intention of describing how some of them represent ‘Wahhabism’.

The ‘Wahhabi’ is a Savage

Gerecht joins other neo-conservatives like Stephens and Pryce-Jones who represent followers of ‘Wahhabism’ as inferior human beings when compared with those living in the ‘West’. Like Gerecht, Gaffney and Stephens, Pryce-Jones combines these representations when representing those groups of people and states that adhere to ‘Wahhabism’ as enemies of the US and the wider ‘democratic’ world. Stephens attempts to make sense of the recent political situation in Indonesia and like many neo-conservatives wants to distinguish the friends of the US from its enemies.²⁹ Stephens identifies two ‘black hats’ he believes pose substantial threats to US international security, its stated aim of promoting democracy in the region and to Indonesian society. These are the ‘Wahhabi’-influenced groups operating in Indonesia (like the Front for the Defense of Islam), and the Saudi state which sponsors and promotes ‘Wahhabist radicals’. Like Gaffney and Gerecht, Stephens identifies Saudi Arabia as the source of modern ‘Islamic radicalism’.

A key part of Stephens’ representation of ‘Wahhabism’ and of the states and groups that promote it like Saudi Arabia as enemies of the US, involves using analogies aimed at representing them as ‘less-evolved’ humans and ‘savages’. For example Stephens writes that

The headquarters of the Front for the Defense of Islam is reached by a narrow alley just off a one-lane street in a residential neighbourhood near downtown Jakarta. But step inside the carpeted reception area, decorated by a mural of a

²⁹ Ibid.
**desert mosque** and partially open to the sky, and it's as if you've arrived in a **Bedouin kingdom**.

Your host is Habib Mohammad Rizieq Shihab, 41. He is dressed entirely in white, a religious conceit far from typical of most Indonesian ulama, or experts in Islamic theology. To the question, “Where are you from?” Mr. Rizieq is quick to explain that he is descended from the Quraishi **tribe**, from what is now Yemen. Just how he knows this isn't clear, but it's the symbolism that counts: The Prophet Mohammad was a Quraishi, and the **tribe** is entrusted with the responsibility for protecting God's House, the Qe'eba, in Mecca. Mr. Rizieq, in fact, is a native of Jakarta [Emphasis added].

Pertinent are the phrases “Bedouin kingdom” and “tribe” both of which evoke the idea of ‘noble savage’. Stephens repeatedly uses the word “tribe” when describing the leader of the ‘Wahhabi’-influenced **Front for the Defense of Islam**. When viewed historically or developmentally a ‘tribe’ is typically understood as a social group existing prior to the development of or existing outside of the modern nation state. The nation-state is a nineteenth century European creation that accompanied a change in views with regards to our understanding of Indigenous people.30 ‘Tribes’ are therefore generally understood as reflecting a particular way of predating the modern era.

In addition to having links with colonialism the term also has racial implications. It is often used to favour one ethnic group based on racial superiority. The implications are that the ‘Wahhabi’ influenced ‘tribe’ to which Stephens refers exists ‘outside’ the ‘modern’ world inhabited by us in the ‘democratic West’ and to which many including those in Indonesia aspire to live in. The suggestion is that ‘Wahhabism’ is a religion for the ‘backward’ and the ‘regressive’ and that these areas where ‘Wahhabism’ is present need democratic advancements in order to help them to ‘progress’ and become more ‘enlightened’ human beings.

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These ideas align with Stephen’s reference to a “Bedouin kingdom” when describing the residence of the *Front for the Defense of Islam*: “But step inside the carpeted reception area, decorated by a mural of a desert mosque and partially open to the sky, and it's as if you've arrived in a Bedouin kingdom.” The term ‘Bedouin’ comes from the Arabic term *badw* or *badawiyīn/badawiyūn* and is typically used when referring to a desert-dwelling Arabian ethnic group divided into ‘tribes’. The ‘Bedouin’ are originally from a region in the Arabian Peninsula which incorporates modern Saudi Arabia. It is here we begin to see Stephens’ link between the ‘Wahhabism’ of Saudi Arabia and the ‘radical Islam’ he believes has corrupted Indonesia ‘radical Islamist’ groups. Stephen identifies Saudi Arabia as an enemy of the US, blaming it for its global propagation of ‘Wahhabism’ which has now spread to another ‘tribe’ on the other side of the world. The implication is this security threat is emanating from Saudi Arabia and that anti-terror and pro-democratic efforts and policies must therefore focus on Saudi Arabia because it is the source of modern ‘Islamic radicalism’ around the world including Indonesia.

Pryce-Jones adopts a similar approach when representing the “terrorist-sponsoring” and ‘radical Islamist’ ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabian regime as an enemy of the US and as a key obstacle to its stated goal of promoting democracy in the Middle East. Pryce-Jones writes “the Arab world is having to come to terms with the U.S. campaign in Iraq, and President Bush’s insistence on democracy and freedom for everyone. Everyone, Mr. Bush made clear, includes Saudi Arabia.”

Pryce-Jones blames Saudi Arabia’s adherence to ‘Wahhabi’ religious doctrine for its failure to accept democratic changes and for making the Saudi regime not only “a danger to itself” but also to “the rest of the world.” Part of Pryce-Jones’ representation of ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia as an enemy of the US and its goals of promoting democracy in the region involve representing them as ‘savages’ and ‘Wahhabism’ as a religion of ‘backward people’. For example Pryce-Jones writes

> Everyone, Mr. Bush made clear, includes Saudi Arabia. There, 5,000 or more princes control all power and resources, sharing out ministries and governorships and oil revenues as they see fit. Their idea of democracy is to

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appoint an advisory council and religious leaders carefully vetted to provide a facade of legitimacy.

**Immemorial tribal custom** and the local Wahhabi brand of Islam are defended and perpetuated to create the impression that this is the natural order of things. The Shiite minority forms about 20% of the population, but on the grounds that they are not Wahhabis they are arrested without trial, tortured and often disappear. Rights and the rule of law are only what the ruling family says they are. The Saudi family of course has a large and privileged security and police apparatus at its service. No blueprint exists in any of the textbooks for successfully modernizing a society like this one [Emphasis added].

Pertinent here is Pryce-Jones’ use of the phrase “immemorial tribal custom” when describing the Saudi people who embrace ‘Wahhabism’ and oppose democracy and other “modernizing” trends. The word ‘immemorial’ means ‘originating in the distant past or very old’ and it originates from the French term *immémoral* meaning ‘old beyond memory’. Like Stephens, Jones represents ‘Wahhabism’ as a religion for the ‘backward,’ ‘regressive’ and ‘anti-modern’ and does not exist in a modern democratic world.

Jones reinforces this idea by likening the current ‘internal instability’ in ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia to the situation in eighteenth century France. Jones writes

“Is it a revolt?” Louis XVI asked in 1789. “No, sire, it is a revolution,” answered one of his courtiers. In Saudi Arabia the ruling family has long been presiding over a denial of reality to match that of the Bourbon monarchy. The bombing this weekend in Riyadh, which killed 17 people and wounded over 100, suggests that the thousands of princes who control the wealth of that country have trouble in store.

Pryce-Jones is drawing parallels between the current political situation in Saudi Arabia and the Bourbon Monarchy in eighteenth century France. The abolition of the French monarchy during the French revolution ushered in the modern Western era defined by ‘reason’ and ‘science’. The implication is that ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia is
centuries behind the ‘West’ in terms of progress and it is assumed that it like nations in Europe will eventually succumb to ‘progress,’ experience its Enlightenment and therefore shun ‘Wahhabism’ in favour of valuing ‘science’ and ‘reason’. Pryce-Jones is a well-known neo-conservative and his likening of the situation in ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi to that of pre-Enlightenment France is a technique we have also seen used by liberal intellectuals. This helps illustrate the porous nature of categories and highlights some of the challenges associated with drawing boundaries around the neo-conservative and liberal traditions.

Detailing brutal acts of violence is another rhetorical technique used by neo-conservative intellectuals when representing ‘Wahhabism’ as a religion for savages who are enemies of the US. Cerulo’s cognitive approach to deconstructing reports of violence suggests that there are certain ways of structuring reports of physical, violence that encourages readers to condemn the perpetrators and to interpret their acts of violence as illegitimate, unjustified and deviant. The implication associated with this technique is that ‘savages’ living in a ‘pre-modern’ age commit brutal violent acts while ‘normal’ human beings living in the ‘modern’ world do not. Gerecht uses this technique when representing the violent acts committed by ‘Wahhabi’-inspired terrorists. Gerecht writes

There’s not a soul in Washington or New York or London who would defend the sybaritic Saudi royals and their head-and-hand-chopping Wahhabi clergy were it not for the cash. Without oil, Saudis would have the same appeal as the Afghan Taliban [Emphasis added].

Gerecht’s use of phrase “head-and-hand-chopping” when describing the actions of the “Wahhabi clergy” highlights the physical, even brutal nature of Saudi law. Such brutal acts of violence are conventionally associated with earlier periods in Western civilization and the implication is that ‘we’ in the ‘West’ unlike the ‘Wahhabis’ in Saudi Arabia have progressed beyond this ‘uncivilised’ behaviour. ‘Wahhabism’ according to Gerecht is responsible for inspiring and motivating these unjustified and deviant violent acts. Gerecht’s representation also invites his readers to ask the

32 Cerulo, Deciphering Violence, 16.
question “If the ‘Wahhabi’ Clergy is able to act in this way against its own people, what are they willing to do to non-believers?”

It is true that many human rights organisations have reported on the various forms of physical punishments the Saudi state uses when dealing with those found guilty of particular crimes. What is more contentious is the way neo-conservatives stress the motivating role ‘Wahhabism’ plays in Saudi law. Gerecht claims ‘Wahhabism’ is responsible for inspiring this “head-and-hand chopping”. An argument could equally be made that this is more of a cultural rather than a religious practice, and that the history of these practices does not follow some simple, synchronised timetable. Public hangings and beheadings were still common in parts of Europe into the early to middle-twentieth century.

‘Wahhabism’ as an Enemy of Israel

Neo-conservatives are typically unwavering and unconditional in their support for the state of Israel. This often motivates and inspires neo-conservatives to concentrate on any group, movement or state that they believe pose some kind of threat to Israel. At times this sensitivity can lead neo-conservative intellectuals to embellish or even create outlandish even phantasmagoric threats with the aim of furthering the aims and interests of the state of Israel. This happens when neo-conservatives associate ‘Wahhabism’ with pro-Palestinian groups and organisations with the aim of supporting and legitimating Israeli actions in the Occupied Territories. There are some neo-conservatives that also use representations of ‘Wahhabism’ to help discredit the Palestinian-Israeli two-state peace initiatives proposed by the Saudi Kingdom.

Gaffney is among those who use representations of ‘Wahhabism’ to discredit the Saudi-initiated peace plans aimed at establishing a two-state solution. Gaffney

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opposes the creating of a Palestinian state believing it would pose a security threat to the Jewish Israeli state. Gaffney claims Saudi Arabia’s peace plan is unacceptable on the grounds of Saudi Arabia’s promoting of ‘Wahhabism’ which he understands as responsible for inspiring and motivating ‘Islamic terrorism’. According to Gaffney Saudi Arabia is a ‘black hat’ that cannot be trusted especially when it comes to dealing with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Gaffney writes

…the Saudi’s episodic help with countering terrorism is lauded, while their vast material and ideological contribution to its spread is largely overlooked. Their contribution to instability in the Middle East is discounted, and their “peace plan” for ending the Israel-Palestinian conflict on terms that assuredly would endanger the Jewish state is enthusiastically embraced.

Gaffney also uses representations of ‘Wahhabism’ to discredit the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian peace process in another of his articles. Gaffney claims the US-based “‘Wahhabi’ lobby’ has had an “undesirable influence” on the Bush administration’s peace plan for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Gaffney suggests the creation of a Palestinian state is in the best interests of the ‘radical’ ‘Wahhabi’ lobby’ and not the US or Israel. He writes

The question occurs: Could the President's recent decision to pursue a “road map” for Mideast peace that is, in important respects (notably with respect to the need for a new Palestinian leadership “untainted by terror,” the dismantling of Palestinian terrorist infrastructure and an end to Palestinian incitement as preconditions to U.S. recognition of a state of Palestine) at odds with the “vision” he enunciated last June also be a product of the undesirable influence of the Wahhabi Lobby? The far-reaching changes were reportedly the subject of major internal fights between top administration officials [Emphasis added].

Gaffney wants to discredit the peace process by linking the “‘Wahhabi’ lobby” to pro-Palestinian enemy ‘terrorist organisations’ like Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad. Gaffney writes

Even as President Bush stresses his opposition to such terrorist organizations as Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad, their advocates and/or apologists in this country with ties to Saudi Arabia's radical Wahhabi sect (dubbed the “Wahhabi Lobby”) are routinely turned to when the administration seeks to reach out to Muslims. Worse yet, such “outreach” usually excludes those representing the majority of Muslims who are not Islamist sympathizers. That is undesirable influence [Emphasis added].

Pertinent is Gaffney’s repeated use of the neologism “Wahhabi lobby.” In using this term Gaffney wants to convince his audience that the ‘Wahhabi’ movement in the US is coordinated, influential and taking its cues from the enemy radical ‘Wahhabi’ Islamists in Saudi Arabia. Influenced by his unwavering support for Israel, Gaffney’s using of this neologism can be understood as a technique aimed at deflecting attention from the dominant and well-known ‘Pro-Israeli’ lobby that exerts huge influence in the US and which is the focus of widespread criticism.37 By linking pro-Palestinian ‘terrorist groups’ like Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad to the “‘Wahhabi’ lobby” neo-conservatives like Gaffney are representing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a part of the wider Global War on Terror. This challenges a competing narrative which says that the Palestinians are primarily engaged in a struggle for self-determination against an Israeli colonising force.

This unwavering support for Israel is also evident in another of Gaffney’s articles in which he uses representations of ‘Wahhabism’ to help justify and legitimate Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory.38 Working from the same assumption that ‘Wahhabism’ is the state-sanctioned religion promoted by Saudi Arabia and responsible for motivating and inspiring modern ‘Islamic terrorism,’ Gaffney claims Israel’s withdrawal from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip would result in it becoming a haven for “Islamofascist entities.” These “Islamofascist entities” include Saudi sponsored ‘Wahhabi’ terrorist groups. Gaffney writes

In a superb analysis and withering critique of the convergence plan (http://www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/Olmerts_Convergence_Plan.pdf), my

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37 For an understanding of the influence the Israeli Lobby has had on US foreign policy see John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, “The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy.”

38 Gaffney, “Seeing the threat for what it is.”
colleague, Caroline Glick, makes clear that Israel's earlier abandonment of the Gaza Strip has turned it into an area not only governed by the terrorist organization, Hamas, but a training and operational base for allied Islamofascist entities like al Qaeda, Hezbollah and Iranian intelligence. The threat posed by such activities is already real, not only for Israel but the United States and the rest of the Free World. It will become infinitely greater if the West Bank also is allowed to become a safe haven for such forces. Call it Palestan.

Gaffney clearly distinguishes the ‘black hats,’ i.e., the Palestinian organisation Hamas, the pro-Palestinian group Hezbollah and Iran as belonging to a group of enemies that includes ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia and the ‘Wahhabi’-inspired al-Qaeda. According to Gaffney these ‘blacks’ are enemies of both the US and Israel as well as the rest of the “Free World.” Gaffney also asks

So why do ostensibly friendly governments not recognize the threat posed by Islamofascism for what it is: a viral ideology that threatens non-Islamist Muslims as much as the rest of us, one that cannot be appeased and must be rooted out and destroyed? [Emphasis added]

Pertinent is Gaffney’s use of the neologisms “Islamofascism” and “Islamofascist.” These terms analogise the ‘ideological’ characteristics of ‘radical Islamist’ groups like ‘Wahhabi’ inspired Palestinian terrorist groups with a range of twentieth century European fascist movements. In using these terms Gaffney wants his audience to think of the ‘radical Islamists’ specifically the ‘Wahhabi’-inspired Palestinian ‘terrorists’ organisations like the fascists i.e. as hostile to modernity (except with regards to weapons), nostalgic for past empires, obsessed with humiliating their enemies and vehemently anti-Jewish. Many nations in the ‘West’ joined forces to defeat the threat posed by Fascist regimes and Gaffney wants the same thing to happen with regards to the threat posed by ‘radical Islamists’.

May is another neo-conservative intellectual whose unwavering support for Israel influences his representing of ‘Wahhabism’. May uses ‘Wahhabism’ to help frame

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39 For an understanding of this analogy see Hitchens, “Defending Islamofascism.”
Palestinians as the aggressors in their conflict with Israel. May claims the US, Israel and the ‘West’ or the ‘white hats’ are fighting a ‘world war’ against the ‘radical Islamists’ which includes the ‘Wahhabi’-inspired terrorists and pro-Palestinian terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah or the ‘black hats’. May frames the Palestinian-Israel conflict as a microcosm of this global war initiated by the ‘black hats’ who are inspired and motivated by ‘radical Islamic’ movements like ‘Wahhabism’. May writes

Israel’s American supporters spend a lot of energy trying to convince people that Israelis want peace, are working for peace and are prepared to sacrifice for peace. All that’s true but it misses this point: Militant jihadists are waging a war against the “infidel” West. They see Israel as a frontline state. There is no way they will permit a separate peace for Israel…

Today, we confront ideologies that are similarly violent and supremacist-e.g. Khomeinism, bin Ladenism, Wahhabism-and no less intent on the conquest and destruction of free nations. Too many Americans do not grasp this and are not prepared for the tough measures necessary to limit, contain and eventually defeat these enemies…

The beliefs and goals of Al Qaeda, the Taliban, Iran's mullahs, Hezbollah, Hamas and a long list of other Islamist groups are not identical, but much more unites them than divides them. All embrace a militant understanding of Islam. All justify their aggression and their terrorism theologically. All believe that a final, decisive and divinely ordained jihad-holy war is now under way [Emphasis added].

May claims the enemies of the ‘free world’ which includes those inspired by the “violent and supremacist” ‘Wahhabism’ believe they are waging a “divinely ordained jihad-holy war” in which “their aggression and their terrorism” has ‘theological’ justifications. May also uses the (religious) term “infidel” when describing the “Militant Jihadi’s” view of the ‘West’. This term is commonly used in Islam when describing those with no religious beliefs or who reject the central tenets of one’s own religion. In using these religious descriptions, May is representing these enemies as motivated and inspired by what Cerulo calls ‘instrumental aims’ and a clear ‘presence
of intention’. As these names suggest, the perpetrators are seen as calculating and motivated by the idea that they will receive spiritual and religious rewards. Cerulo notes that ascribing these kinds of social characteristics to perpetrators of violence encourages the audience to understand their violent acts as illegitimate, unjustified and deviant. For May this is an important rhetorical technique used to help clearly distinguish the enemies of the US, Israel and the ‘Free world’.

May uses the same technique later in the article when providing a more detailed description of the religious beliefs motivating and inspiring the ‘radical Islamist enemy’.

On one side is the dar al-Islam, literally the “realm of submission”, the parts of the world governed by Sharia, Islamic law as they [the Militant Jihadis] interpret it. On the other side is the dar al-Harb, literally “the realm of war,” those countries ruled by Christians, Jews, Hindus and moderate Muslims who oppose them and therefore are “enemies of God”.

Ledeen is another neo-conservative intellectual who represents ‘Wahhabism’ in quite negative ways when describing the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Like all of the neo-conservatives whose works I have analysed here, Ledeen blames Saudi Arabia and its ‘Wahhabi’ beliefs for sponsoring and promoting ‘Islamic terrorism’ around the world. This includes their supporting of “the many Palestinian terrorist organizations that keep their offices in Damascus.” Like many neo-conservatives Ledeen clearly distinguishes the ‘black hats’ and advocates for the promoting of democracy in the Middle East. Ledeen writes

Our primary enemies are states, which provide the jihadis with much of the wherewithal for their operations: intelligence, weapons and other technology… false documents, safe havens and training facilities…

Until the fall of Saddam, there were four pre-eminent supporters of terrorist groups: Iraq, Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia. Now there are three…The Iranians

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41 Cerulo, Deciphering Violence.
42 Ibid.
created Hezbollah, probably the most lethal terrorist organization in the world, as well as Islamic Jihad…

The Saudis provide money for terrorist groups and support a global network of radical Wahhabi mosques and schools that indoctrinate young Muslims in the ways of jihad.

Without the active support of those three countries, it would be a lot easier to defeat the terrorists on the battlefields…

Al Qaeda would be similarly weakened, and the many Palestinian terrorist organizations that keep their offices in Damascus would find it very difficult to relocate and maintain their effectiveness. All would be weakened by the loss of Saudi funding, and moderate Muslims everywhere, including in the U.S, would breathe a sigh of relief if the Wahhabi mosques were closed.

It doesn't require more boots on the ground or bombing raids. It requires a traditional American policy: support for democratic revolution against our tyrannical enemies.

Like May and Gaffney, Ledeen sees the ‘Free World’s’ war against ‘radical Islam’ as including Israel’s fight against ‘Palestinian terrorism’.

The terror war now extends to four continents -- running from Thailand and Indonesia to India and Pakistan, down the Horn of Africa to Somalia and Yemen and back up to Afghanistan, on to Iraq, Palestine/Israel…

Ledeen goes on to say

A free Iran would deliver a devastating global blow to the terrorists, and would no doubt change the calculus -- and perhaps the regime -- of Syria. Under those happy circumstances, we might muster the will to insist that the Saudis shut down the Wahhabi schools and mosques, which constitute an assembly line of fanatics all over the world [Emphasis added].

Pertinent is Ledeen’s use of the metaphorical expression “assembly line of fanatics” when describing the relation between “Wahhabi’ schools and mosques” and modern
‘Islamic terrorism’. Up to this point I have shown how many neo-conservatives rely on certain metaphors to characterise the ‘Wahhabi’ enemy. Ledeen’s metaphorical expression is similar in that it also dehumanises the ‘Wahhabi’ enemy, though he relies on a metaphor that is mechanistic rather than animal in nature.

An ‘assembly line’ is a series of workers and machines in a factory dedicated to making items that are generally identical in nature. In using this metaphorical expression, Ledeen encourages his audience to think of “Wahhabi schools and mosques” as factories dedicated to producing a very specific product, the “‘Wahhabi’ fanatic.” Not only does this help dehumanise the ‘Wahhabi’ enemy but it also persuades the reader to ignore the possibility there may be other factors i.e. Israel’s ongoing occupation of Palestine, that may be responsible for ‘radicalising’ the Islamist enemy.

Coupled with the animalistic metaphors used by other neo-conservative intellectuals, we can understand Ledeen’s representation as a part of the wider effort by neo-conservatives to dehumanise the ‘Wahhabi’ enemy. This has the potential effect of making any deaths that take place in the context of military or security operations more palatable as it is less confronting to kill animals or destroy machines than it is people. I now want to extend the analysis by turning to the role played by certain themata and generative metaphors

**Key Themata: The Holy Land, welcoming the Saviour and the Palestinian ‘terrorists’**

Neo-conservative intellectuals have offered unwavering support for Israel. What has perhaps not been as well appreciated as it might be is the way certain religious themata have underpinned, inspired and motivated these representations. We get a glimpse of this for example when abstracting and deconstructing Gerecht’s metaphorical expression “There is scant evidence to suggest that the Wahhabi establishment has changed its spots.” This phrase comes the Book of Jeremiah (in the
Hebrew and Christian ‘Bible’).\textsuperscript{44} However other religious themata which are acting as ‘motivating aids’ for these neo-conservatives have tended “to be suppressed or disappear from view.”\textsuperscript{45} This is unfortunate as the themata are there for those with eyes to see them.

There are two key ‘themata’ sustaining the ways in which neo-conservatives make sense of Israel and the part played by ‘Wahhabism’. One is Israel’s ‘theological right’, understood as a God-given Covenant which God entered in with His people when he conferred on the Jewish people certain land conventionally referred to as the Holy Land. The other is Israel’s having to control this land so as to welcome the Saviour.

Currently we have a situation in the Palestinian territories where the State of Israel supported by the US government has been occupying and continually appropriating Palestinian land. This process is not a new phenomenon and has been occurring at least since 1967 when Israel appropriated large swathes of Palestinian land including the West Bank, which incorporates the holy city of East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. Despite many writers who trace the appropriation of Palestinian land back to 1948 when the state of Israel was first created, the first time the United Nations Security Council used the description ‘territories occupied’ was in Resolution 242 following the conclusion of the Six-Day War in 1967.\textsuperscript{46}

As we have seen, neo-conservatives make a range of claims about ‘Wahhabism’ and its alleged support for Palestinian terrorists and the true nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. More specifically we can see here two kinds of religious themata namely the idea of a special Covenant between the Jewish people and the Holy Land authorised by God and the claim that the land in question must be under Israeli control so as to welcome the next coming of the Saviour.

\textsuperscript{44}Reuel Marc Gerecht, “What Hath Ju-Ju Wrought!” \textit{The Weekly Standard}, March 14 (2005), \url{http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/005/325hudmg.asp}

\textsuperscript{45} Holton, “The Role of Themata in Science,” 455.

\textsuperscript{46} Many commentators argue the occupation began in 1947 when a ‘land without people’ was created for ‘a people without land’. Many Zionists used this slogan at end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century in an attempt to justify Israeli claim to Palestinian land. Edward Said writes this slogan exemplifies the kind of thinking that aims to “cancel and transcend an actual reality—a group of resident Arabs—by means of a future wish – that the land be empty for development by a more deserving power.” See Edward Said, \textit{The Question of Palestine} (New York: Vintage, 1979), 9.
The themata of the Covenant has its roots in the Bible particularly the Book of Genesis. There we find texts supporting the idea that God entered into a Covenant to give certain lands to the people of Abraham. The relevant text says:

And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojourning, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God (Genesis 17:7)

The text also records a specific agreement between Abraham and God:

Then God said, “Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him”. (Genesis 17:9)

These two passages are taken from the book of Genesis which is the first Book of the Pentateuch and of the Christian Old Testament. A basic and typical understanding of the narrative in Genesis is that God first created the world and made the first man (Adam) his regent. That man disobeyed God and was ejected from the Garden of Eden. Later God expressed his displeasure at the way his people were behaving and punished them by flooding the world, saving only Noah and his family. The new human order created in the wake of the Flood proved equally corrupt. This time God decided not to destroy the world but instead gave one man the responsibility of securing a righteous order. That man was Abraham and it is his story and relationship with God especially centering on the Covenant that has had major implications for many ‘believers’ in the world including those intellectuals who are part of the neo-conservative movement.

The conventional interpretation of this religious text that is taken as expressing a literal truth by many Jews and Christians, is that God promised the land which is now modern Israel, including what is now the Palestinian territories, to the offspring of Abraham’s son, Isaac. Isaac was born to Abraham’s (Jews typically refer to Abraham as Avraham Avinu which roughly translates to ‘our father Abraham’) first wife Sarah and it is through them that Jews claim to trace their lineage.
Understanding history and the future of mankind in this way has major implications for the modern political situation and conflict between Israel and Palestine. For example according to this biblical interpretation the land acquired by Israel in the 1967 war, which biblically is referred to as ‘Judea’ and ‘Samaria,’ is not seen as Palestinian land but rather Israel’s birthright as authorised by God. Many neo-conservatives use these biblical terms when referring to this land. This ‘master-theme’ helps us to understand why neo-conservatives like Gaffney, Gerecht, May and Ledeen oppose Israel’s withdrawal from these areas because this is land God gave to his people.

A closely related religious theme involves a standard Judaic interpretation of the ‘End Times’ also holds that Israel must be in possession of this Promised Land especially Jerusalem which contains the Temple Mount (which is Judaism’s holiest site) so as to successfully welcome the Saviour/Messiah and thereby fulfill Biblical prophecy. Jeremiah 46: 27-28 in the Hebrew Bible is often understood by believers as an example of God’s promising of Israel to the Jews and his protecting and ensuring their safe return to the land.

27 “But fear not, O Jacob my servant,
    nor be dismayed, O Israel,
for behold, I will save you from far away,
    and your offspring from the land of their captivity.
Jacob shall return and have quiet and ease,
    and none shall make him afraid.
28 Fear not, O Jacob my servant,
declares the LORD,
    for I am with you.
I will make a full end of all the nations
    to which I have driven you,
but of you I will not make a full end.
I will discipline you in just measure,

and I will by no means leave you unpunished.”

Isaiah 11:1-12.6 is typically understood as prophesising the restoring of Jewish Israel in future Messianic times.

12 He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

These are just a few examples of some of the core tenets of Jewish eschatology that are elaborated in the Books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Zekeiel and amongst other things detail the ending of the world, God’s redeeming of Israel, God’s returning the Jewish people to Israel, God’s restoring of the Temple in Jerusalem and the House of David, and all people’s recognition of God of Israel as the only God. Appreciating the influence these themata have had on the way neo-conservative intellectuals make sense of the world also helps us to understand their use of generative metaphors that sustain the idea that Israel and the US are engaged in a religious war with the ‘radical (‘Wahhabi’) Islamists’.

It is worth recalling Schön’s illuminating description of the different ways of understanding ‘slum housing’.48 Schön claims that if the underlying metaphor frames the ‘slum housing’ as a ‘blight’ or ‘disease’ then we are encouraged to think about medical remedies to help cure or remove the blight. Alternatively if the underlying metaphor describes the slum as a ‘natural community’ then we are encouraged to adopt measures that help enhance the life of that community. These two generative metaphors promote very different perceptions and approaches and have very different implications when it comes to dealing with issues associated with slum housing.

The point of this is that the problem does not exist in any simple or real way but is ‘generated’ or ‘constituted’ in the way the metaphor works. This is relevant when we consider the typical approach adopted by neo-conservatives when representing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These intellectuals ‘generating’ or ‘constitute’ the conflict

48 Donald Schön, “Generative metaphor: A perspective on problem-setting in social policy.”
as a religious war fought between the ‘Wahhabi’ inspired pro-Palestinian ‘radical
Islamists’ and Israel, supported by the US and the ‘West’. As we have seen this
conflict is represented as theological in nature.\footnote{May, “No Peace While World War Rages.”; Gaffney, “Seeing the threat for what it is.”} In representing this conflict as
essentially theological in nature, these neo-conservative intellectuals can also de-
emphasise or ignore the possibility that there are alternative interpretations of what is
going on, like the idea that Palestinians simply want self-determination and a
Palestinian state.

Danziger writes that the ‘generating’ or ‘constituting’ of the world in particular ways
not only invites readers to think about it in a certain way but also to act in terms of
certain implied assumptions.\footnote{Danziger, \textit{Metaphors in the History of Psychology}, 351.} Not only are these neo-conservatives wanting their
audience to think of the Palestinian struggle against Israel as primarily religious in
nature, but they also want their audience to support ‘counter-terror’ measures aimed at
securing the safety of the state of Israel. According to intellectuals like Gaffney this
includes Israel having an ongoing presence in the Palestinian territories so as to
prevent the establishing of a ‘terrorist state’.\footnote{Gaffney, “Seeing the threat for what it is.”}

\textbf{‘Good’ versus ‘Evil’}

A closely related religious themata that neo-conservatives have used to great effect is
the presumption that the world God created is fated to an endless conflict between
‘Good’ and ‘Evil’. According to this ‘master-theme’ conflict between ‘Good’ and
‘Evil’ is a condition of the natural order created by God. Wink is among the scholars
to identify the pervasiveness of this ‘motivating aid’ in Western thinking which he
calls the myth of ‘redemptive violence’.\footnote{Walter Wink, “Facing the Myth of Redemptive Violence,” November 16, 2007,\url{http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/content/cpt/article_060823wink.shtml}}

According to Wink the modern (often religious) man typically works from the
assumption that both ‘good’ and ‘evil’ exist in a world created by God and it is
assumed that God will favour the ‘good’ and defeat ‘the Other’ who is ‘evil’.\footnote{Ibid.} Wink
claims that this kind of thinking can be traced back at least to the creation myth of
Babylon around 1250 BC and, more importantly, to the Book of Genesis.\(^5^4\) This is telling when we consider that this part of the Hebrew Bible provides the narrative about God’s creating of the world, his Covenant with Abraham and crucially his promise regarding the land of Israel, all of which inform Jewish religious thought in general and neo-conservative thinking in particular especially with regards to the Jewish people’s claim to what many others understand as Palestinian land.

This ‘often-hidden mechanism’ has continued to play a powerful and motivating role in modern thought in general and in neo-conservative thinking in particular.\(^5^5\) This ‘evil versus good’ themata has been prevalent since the beginning of the neo-conservative movement in the twentieth century, when the movement was founded by a group of intellectuals united by their fierce anti-Communism and angered by what they saw as the failure of liberal intellectuals to fully appreciate the ‘evil’ nature of global communism. The neo-conservative movement was in fact founded by former socialists/‘Trotskystis’ like Kristol, Lipset, Lasky, Burnham, and Himmelfarb, whose fierce ‘anti-Communism’ encouraged them to “blaze a wide political trail leading from left to right.”\(^5^6\)

This ‘evil versus good’ themata continues to inform modern neo-conservative thinking with many intellectuals seeing ‘radical Islam’ as the modern manifestation of this ‘evil’ once posed by Communism. ‘Good’ triumphed over ‘evil’ during the Cold War and now many neo-conservatives are motivated by the idea that the forces of ‘Good’ must and will now confront and defeat the most reincarnation of this evil,

\(^5^4\) Wink writes

The Bible portrays a good God who creates a good creation. Chaos does not resist order. Good is prior to evil. Neither evil nor violence is part of the creation, but enter later, as a result of the first couple’s sin and the connivance of the serpent (Genesis 3). A basically good reality is thus corrupted by free decisions reached by creatures. In this far more complex and subtle explanation of the origins of things, violence emerges for the first time as a problem requiring solution.
Ibid.

\(^5^5\) Commenting on the pervasive and motivating role this ‘good versus evil’ worldview plays in modern society, Wink writes: “We have already seen how the myth of redemptive violence is played out in the structure of children’s cartoon shows (and is found as well in comics, video and computer games, and movies). But we also encounter it in the media, in sports, in nationalism, in militarism, in foreign policy, in televangelism, in the religious right, and in self-styled militia groups. What appears so innocuous in cartoons is, in fact, the mythic underpinnings of our violent society.”
Ibid.

‘radical Islam’ which according to many neo-conservative intellectuals includes ‘Wahhabism’. This idea is what motivates prominent neo-conservative intellectuals like Frum and Perle when they write

Like communism, this [militant Islamic] ideology perverts the language of justice and equality to justify oppression and murder. Like Nazism, it exploits the injured pride of once-mighty nations. Like both communism and Nazism, militant Islam is opportunistic -- it works willingly with all manner of unlikely allies, as the communists and Nazis worked with each other against the democratic West.  

This analogy is basic to neo-conservative thinking and highlights the movement’s two key threats since its inception, Communism and ‘radical Islam’. Frum and Perle are proposing a war of broad similarity given what they see as the commonality of the enemy in both eras. They also go on to say “The war against extremist Islam is as much an ideological war as the cold war ever was.”

Neo-conservatives typically consider ‘Radical Islam’ to be the new evil threat that must be defeated. For many ‘Wahhabism,’ which is often promoted by the ‘enemy’ Saudi state and by pro-Palestinian ‘terrorist’ organisations, is a key part of this ‘evil’. We can therefore understand their representations as motivated and inspired by the religious ideas that they are engaged in a religious or ‘cosmic struggle’ in which they represent ‘good’ and have ‘God’ on their side and ‘Wahhabism’ is the ‘evil’ enemy that like Communism must and will be defeated. Let me turn now to certain generative metaphors.

Animal Metaphors and The Noble Savage

The human as animal metaphor is one of the key generative metaphors motivating many neo-conservative intellectuals. It serves to both dehumanise and encourage us to think of the ‘Wahhabi’ Other as an inferior being compared to those of ‘us’ who live

59 Frum and Perle, An End to Evil, 147.
This ‘carrying over of frames or perspectives from one domain to another’ as Schön argues and which is characteristic of generative metaphors, arguably has its roots in ‘Western’ Imperialist thinking and is also commonly seen in representations of genocidal conflicts. For example drawing an analogy between humans and animals dominates colonial representations of Africans. Intellectuals rendering Africans as similar to dogs, pigs, rats, parasites and insects has been a key part of the colonial project as it helps to justify and legitimise the oppression and subjugation of the indigenous people. These kinds of representations also frequently occur in connection with genocidal conflicts which talk about the ‘superior race’ and the ‘inferior’ or ‘subhuman’ people devices used to represent Jews in the Holocaust, Bosnians in the Balkan wars and Tutsis in Rwanda. In these instances the Other was dehumanised in order to help justify and legitimise violence against them.

Neo-conservatives tend to unequivocally represent ‘Wahhabism’ as responsible for inspiring and promoting modern ‘Islamic terrorism’. They also tend to see it and those groups and states who adhere and promote it i.e. Saudi Arabia and various pro-Palestinian ‘terrorist groups’ as ‘black hats’ and enemies of the US, Israel and sometimes the wider ‘Western’ world. The neo-conservative intellectuals’ desire to represent this religion and its followers as ‘enemies’ often involves them using rhetorical techniques aimed at representing followers of ‘Wahhabism’ as ‘animals’. This dehumanising of the ‘Wahhabi’ Other encourages readers both to think of ‘Wahhabism’ as a religion fit for animals and to also treat these people as animals.

Gaffney’s representation of ‘Wahhabism’ provides a perfect example of this approach. Gaffney is extremely critical of reports by some American officials that suggest Saudi Arabia, which is understood as the home and chief promoter of ‘Wahhabism,’ is a friend or ally of the US. Gaffney describes Saudi Arabia as “the wellspring of Shariah, the supremacist totalitarian doctrine [‘Wahhabism’] that is the
law of the land in Saudi Arabia and that animates and enables Jihadists worldwide.” According to him this “puritanical strain of Islam fostered by the state, sometimes called Wahhabism, was breeding extremists who were willing to kill even Muslims for their cause [emphasis added].” Gaffney’s message is clear, ‘Wahhabism’ is responsible for inspiring and motivating ‘Islamic terrorism’ and therefore must be thought of and treated as an enemy.

Pertinent here is Gaffney’s use of the metaphorical expression “breeding” which we can abstract for closer analysis. ‘Breeding’ is a term ordinarily used when describing the reproductive process of animals. This contrasts with ‘giving birth to’ which is the phrase we typically use when describing the same process in humans. As we can see, Gaffney chooses to use the term “breeding” in attempt to dehumanise followers of ‘Wahhabism’ and to encourage his audience to think of them as animals and not humans.

There are also other important implications associated with this term that we must consider. For example when ‘breeding’ gets out of control i.e. in the case of wild animals like rabbits, they can create problems for humans who then typically respond by trapping, killing and/or culling these pests. In this sense Gaffney’s description of adherents of ‘Wahhabism’ in this way encourages the adopting of foreign policies aimed at limiting or preventing the “breeding” of these wild animals/pests. Gerecht uses a similar technique when describing “the Wahhabi establishment” in Saudi Arabia.65 Gerecht asks

HAVE THE IRAQI ELECTIONS PRODUCED a democratic earthquake that has changed forever the fundamental political dynamics in the Muslim Middle East? Only the culturally deaf, dumb, and blind--for example, Michigan’s Democratic senator Carl Levin--can't see what George W. Bush’s war against Saddam Hussein has wrought. The issue is not whether the basic understanding of contemporary Muslim political legitimacy has been overturned--it has--but how forcefully the regimes in place will resist the growing Muslim democratic ethic.

And the crucial question for the United States is whether the Bush administration will realize that the most consequential regimes in place--Hosni Mubarak’s in Egypt, the Saudi dynasty in Arabia, the military junta in Algeria, and the theocracy in Iran--probably won't evolve without some internal violence. The Bush administration ought to be prepared to encourage or coerce these regimes into changing sooner, not later [Emphasis added].

This excerpt highlights Gerecht’s belief in the global promotion of democracy especially in the Middle East which is typical of neo-conservatives. We are invited to support President Bush’s attempts to democratise Iraq as well other nations in the region including Saudi Arabia. Gerecht is especially critical of Saudi Arabia, blaming adherence to ‘Wahhabism’ for its apparent ‘anti-modern’ views including its resistance to democracy. According to Gerecht ‘Wahhabism’ and nations like Saudi Arabia that adhere to and promote it are enemies of the global democratic project advanced by the Bush Administration. They are also ‘animals’. Gerecht writes

 Saudi Arabia--Continue to push the democratic agenda publicly in the Arabian peninsula. The rather pathetic Saudi attempt to defuse democratic ferment at home and the Bush administration's growing anti-Saudi attitude by holding highly restricted municipal elections is likely to do the opposite of what the royal family intended. The Shiites of the Eastern Province--where most of Saudi Arabia's oil is located--may, as the Arab Shiites of Iraq continue to advance democratically, become more inclined to protest. The turnout for the municipal elections clearly showed that the Shiites in the Eastern Province didn't consider the exercise a joke (as was the case among many Sunnis). The Wahhabi clerical establishment, the religious backbone of Saudi power, may become more inclined to use older, violent means to oppress the Shiites. Washington should rhetorically pre-empt the issue, by declaring loudly and often that it favors modern democracy in Saudi Arabia, where minority rights are protected. We would be wise not to assume that the Saudi royal family is more “modern” than the people of the country. It may well be more “modern” than the average Wahhabi in the Najd region, the heartland of Wahhabi power. But Saudi Arabia is much larger than the Najd.

…we know for certain that Saudi Arabia was the cradle of bin Ladenism. There is scant evidence to suggest that the Wahhabi establishment has
changed its spots (philosophically it can’t). The Wahhabis should have to compete for their flock. Inside the country and out, the United States should be relentlessly pushing for democracy. As in Egypt, we should increasingly tie government-to-government relations and joint programs directly to Saudi progress with real national elections [Emphasis added].

I have highlighted a few phrases and terms that we can abstract for closer analysis. Gerecht’s claim that ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia will not “evolve,” his description of those ‘Wahhabis’ from the Najd region as less “modern” than the Saudi royal family, his claims that the “Wahhabi establishment has [not] changed it spots” and that they “should have to compete for their flock,” suggests that Gerecht wants his audience to understand adherents of ‘Wahhabism’ as ‘lesser humans’ and as ‘animals’.

As was the case with some of the liberal representations of ‘Wahhabism,’ the metaphorical term ‘evolve’ carries certain connotations. For example it signifies ‘evolution’ which is a study of the ‘progressing’ of animals typically undertaken in the biological sciences. Describing the more hardcore adherents of ‘Wahhabism’ as less ‘modern’ relative to the less strict followers of ‘Wahhabism’ also suggests that we can have a ranking system for mankind and societies and that societies in which ‘Wahhabism’ is present are situated somewhere at the beginning of this spectrum. These societies are far behind the more ‘evolved’ ‘Western’ societies that embrace and practice democracy. As we can see, Gerecht like many neo-conservatives values the promoting democracy for other nations and he relies on this as a key performance indicator of ‘progress’.

Also pertinent and worthy of closer analysis is Gerecht’s use of the metaphorical expressions “changed it spots” and “flock.” This metaphorical expression has its roots in the well-known phrase ‘a leopard cannot change its spots’ which implies that things have an innate nature than cannot be altered. The phrase has Biblical origins which is telling when we consider the prominent role Judaism and evangelical Christianity plays in the neo-conservative movement. The phrase appears in the Book of Jeremiah which is the second of the Later Prophets in the Hebrew Bible. Jeremiah 13:23 reads “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” In addition to highlighting the potential role
Judaism plays in Gerecht’s thinking, this metaphorical expression also helps
dehumanise the ‘Wahhabi’ Other. The suggestion is the “Wahhabi establishment” are
animals who are inherently evil. Because they cannot become ‘good’ we must treat
them as enemies.

Sticking with this dehumanising the ‘Wahhabi’ Other, Gerecht also writes “the
Wahhabis should have to compete for their flock.” When used as a noun the term
‘flock’ describes a group of animals typically birds or sheep that often group or are
hearded together. Gerecht is suggesting that ‘Wahhabi’ adherents are unthinking
animals following the directions of their herders/leaders. The term ‘flock’ can also
refer to sheep and to ‘follow like a sheep’ is to uncritically accept or follow the
instructions of a leader. Gerecht’s use of the term ‘compete’ also resonates with the
typical neo-conservative ontological view of the world as an anarchic place where
states and groups must ‘compete’ against each other to satisfy their aims and goals.

Stephens also dehumanises the ‘Wahhabi’ Other when describing Saudi Arabia as the
source of modern ‘Islamic radicalism’ and claiming “the radicals are all drinking
from the same breast… the ideological inspiration and financial support provided by
Saudi Arabia [Emphasis added].”66 There are many different kinds of animals for
example dogs, pigs, cats and cows where the mothers breastfeed their young. While
humans also breastfeed Stephens’ description of many people “drinking from the
same breast” suggests he is referring to animals and not humans because of the
former’s propensity to have numerous babies at the same time. In using this
metaphorical expression, Stephens is suggesting that ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia is like
the mother or ‘bitch’ providing the ‘Islamic radicals’ / baby animals with the nutrients
or sustenance they require in order to survive. Thinking of the Other not as humans
but as animals who for example need ‘breeding out’ or ‘herding’ helps as Danziger
would say “give a certain cast to [this neo-conservative] surface discourse.”67

Closely associated with this idea is the likening of the ‘Wahhabi’ Other to ‘Savages’.
We saw how Stephens use the terms “Bedouin kingdom” and “tribes,” and how

http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB117677971027672274
67 Danziger, Metaphors in the History of Psychology, 333.
Pryce-Jones uses the term “immemorial tribal custom” when describing ‘Wahhabism’ and ‘Wahhabi-influenced’ groups.68 Gerecht also suggests that the ‘Wahhabi’ from Najd are ‘anti-modern, that ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia needs violence to ‘evolve’ and he uses the metaphorical expression “head-and-hand-chopping” when describing ‘Wahhabism’ and ‘Wahhabi-influenced’ groups.69 These techniques encourage the audience to think of the ‘Wahhabi’ Other as a ‘less-evolved’ and ‘inferior’ human, as a ‘Noble Savage’.

These neo-conservative representations of the ‘Wahhabi’ Other resonate with how ethnic, racial and religious Others have been represented in ‘Western’ popular culture and scholarship. Gustav Jahoda’s ‘historical catalogue’ highlights the tendency in ‘Western’ thought to think of these racial, ethnic and religious Others as barbarians lacking in culture, self-restraint, moral sensibility and cognitive capacity.70 Excesses have tended to accompany these deficiencies i.e. the Savage has a brutish appetite for violence, is prone to criminality and can tolerate unusual amounts of pain.71 This brutish appetite for violence for example resonates with Gerecht’s describing the “head-and-hand-chopping” practices adopted by the “Wahhabi-clergy.”72

Understanding the origins of the popular ‘Noble Savage’ myth also provides us with valuable insight into neo-conservative thinking, as it helps us to understand the generative metaphors underpinning and shaping the neo-conservative discourse. British anthropologists created the ‘Noble Savage’ myth for propaganda purposes specifically to use it as a device to encourage slavery and genocide.73 The myth was a vital tool that enabled them to promote the centrality of race as a scientific ‘ideology’ while advocating violently racist modes of ordering society.74

Order is an important idea to many neo-conservatives. Neo-conservatives work from the ontological assumption that people are naturally evil, violent and conflictual and

72 Gerecht, “Radioactive Regime.”
74 Ibid., 239.
therefore need ‘order’ to prevent themselves from giving in to their natural inclinations. This sense of order is often seen as lacking in Indigenous or ‘Savage’ societies which is why according to neo-conservative logic they often give in to their ‘violent tendencies’. We also know that the global promotion of democracy is a key part of neo-conservative foreign policy. Thinking and representing the ‘Wahhabi’ Other as a ‘Savage’ can therefore encourage and justify policies and actions aimed at recreating or ‘ordering’ these societies in ways that align with neo-conservative beliefs about the world.

Inspired by Democratic Peace Theory, most neo-conservatives want all the world’s nations outside of the US particularly Middle Eastern regimes to be democracies. Using ‘Wahhabism’ to represent these societies and the people belonging to them as ‘Savages’ encourages and justifies the adopting of policies and actions that aim to ‘democratising’ and ‘civilising’ these people. We have seen this in Iraq and Afghanistan and according to these representations there are many neo-conservatives who would also like the US to ‘promote’ the spreading of democracy in ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia.

Conclusion

Modern neo-conservative intellectuals are very clear in the messages they are communicating to their readers. According to them ‘Wahhabism’ is responsible for inspiring and motivating modern ‘Islamic terrorism,’ Saudi Arabia is responsible for promoting ‘Wahhabism,’ and anything associated with Saudi Arabia or ‘Wahhabism’ must be thought of and treated as an enemy of the US, Israel and the rest of the ‘free’ and ‘democratic’ world. Not only does ‘Wahhabism’ provide a theological justification for the destruction of the US and Israel but it is also understood to be a major obstacle to the US stated aim of promoting democracy in the Middle East.

Many neo-conservatives been influenced by specific themata and generative metaphors when understanding and representing ‘Wahhabism’. These include religious themata like God’s promising of land (what is modern Israel and Palestine)

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75 These ideas are commonly traced back to the works of Thomas Hobbes. For an understanding of this approach see Sharon A. Lloyd and Susanne Sreedhar, “Hobbes’s Moral and Political Philosophy,” The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2014).
to the Jewish state of Israel, that this land must be controlled by Israel so as to welcome the Saviour and the ‘good versus evil’ themata which also has theological roots. Motivated and inspired by these ‘master-themes’, neo-conservative intellectuals understand ‘Wahhabism’ as an ‘evil’ force that must be defeated. We can also understand the neo-conservative intellectuals’ decision to associate these ‘evil’ and ‘enemy’ ‘Wahhabi’ forces with Palestine and pro-Palestinian groups as a deliberate attempt to encourage their audience to see the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a conflict between ‘good and evil,’ between the ‘free world’ and the ‘radical Islamists’.

Thinking and writing about the ‘Wahhabi’ Other in these ways not only encourages their audience to think of them as inferior beings but it also encourages actions that are normally befitting of animals and savages i.e. neutering, herding, acquiring land, helping them ‘evolve’ or ‘progress’. Problematising the ‘Wahhabi’ Other in these ways helps support both the neo-conservative worldview that they are enemies and their foreign policy aims like the promoting democracy in the Middle East.
Chapter Seven
An ‘Unnatural’ and ‘Nonsensical’ Belief System for an Alienated People: Marxist imaginings of ‘Wahhabism’

Be thine own palace, or the world's thy jail.

John Donne, *To Sir Henry Wotton*

Karl Marx was a brilliant young doctoral graduate in 1843 struggling like other young German intellectuals of his time with weighty philosophical and political issues. He was particularly exercised to push back against Hegel’s large and powerful system while retaining the dialectical method. Like other Young Hegelians he was thinking hard about the role played by religion. He came to certain conclusions that have powerfully affected what became an astonishingly large and politically influential system of political theory and practice called Marxism. As Marx saw it

…Man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is, indeed, the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet won through to himself, or has already lost himself again. But man is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the world of man – state, society. This state and this society produce religion…¹

Marx understands religion to be a man-made phenomenon, devoid of any element of the supernatural and designed for those who fail to realise and appreciate their authentic selves and capabilities.² He insisted that there was an authentic basis for what he called ‘religious distress’: it just needed to be decoded properly.

Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and also the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the

oppressed creature, the hearts of a heartless world just as it is the
spirit of spiritless conditions…
The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the
demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their
illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a
condition that requires illusions. The criticism of religion is,
therefore, in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears of which
religion is the halo….³

For Marx the struggle against religion was an important one yet it could not
be separated from the struggle against political and social oppression.
“Religion is the general theory of that world, its encyclopedic compendium,
its logic in a popular form, its spiritualistic point d'honneur, its enthusiasm,
its moral sanction, its solemn complement, its universal source of
consolation and justification.”⁴ Later after he had turned his attention to the
workings of modern industrial societies Marx began to argue that religion
and man’s need for religious belief would fade away when bourgeois
society was replaced by a Communist society in which man experienced
the closest thing possible to unalienation.⁵

Marx’s views including those about religion inspired and motivated a large
body of work that we now call Marxism. Frustrated by philosophers who
chose to separate themselves from society rather than turn their philosophy
into action, Marx stresses the importance of turning philosophical critique
into practical change: “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in
various ways. The point, however, is to change it.”⁶ Marx emphasises the
potential we humans possess, describing us as our own Gods who have the
ability to create the kind of world we want to live in. While his theories are
a subjective interpretation of relations he saw in the European world during
the period 1844-67, his ideas continue to inspire and motivate a large body

³ Karl Marx, “The Introduction to Contribution To The Critique of Hegel’s Philsophy of Right,” 1843-
⁵ Ollman, Alienation, 221-226.
of Marxist scholars who adapt and apply his ideas when making sense of modern political situations. As we are about to see this includes ‘Western’ (as in residing in the ‘West’) Marxist intellectuals making sense of the current situation in the Middle East particularly in Saudi Arabia.

As in the previous three chapters, I start by outlining what I think is a workable ideal type of Marxism. I then use that to outline some of the ways Marxists represent Wahhabism.

Towards an ‘Ideal Type’.

The term ‘Marxism’ itself has been devised to refer to those inspired and motivated by Karl Marx’s writings and it is often used as a self-identifying label by those believing they have adopted Marx’s ideas. Even after so many decades it is surprising that there continues to be so many different interpretations of Marx and Marxism.\(^7\) New interpretations are also continuing to emerge. This array of diverse interpretations not only between Marxist schools of thought but also within them, is indicative of the continued interest and passion people have for Marx’s ideas.

As is the case with all fuzzy categories getting clarity about Marxism, one of the most influential, yet most criticised and misunderstood social theories continues to vex many scholars. The scope of Marxism is responsible for a lot of this trouble as it stretches across different fields of study including philosophy, economics, sociology, history, politics and cultural studies. Yet Marx and many of those inspired by his ideas refuse to limit themselves to such categorisations claiming that Marxism is not just a theory to be applied in these different areas but is also a way of understanding the world and acting in it. Marxism aims to gain an understanding of the totality of social life and aims to link this understanding to practical action to help remedy any problems. The

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\(^7\) Among the most notable schools of thought are British Marxism, Analytical Marxism, Structuralism and Western Marxism.
continuing evolution of the Marxist tradition so long after Marx first posited his ideas truly is a testament to the power of Marxist thinking.

Given that, I need to develop a Weberian ‘ideal type’ in order to help show some of the rhetorical techniques Marxist intellectuals use when representing ‘Wahhabism’. As was the case with my analysis of the neo-conservative and liberal representations of ‘Wahhabism,’ this provides us with valuable insight into how some Marxists make sense of this ‘observer-dependent’ phenomenon. While there is a plethora of interpretations in addition to many volumes of Marx’s own work, I have decided to rely in part on Ollman’s interpretation of Marx’s writings when developing my ideal type. There are a number of reasons for this.

First and foremost Ollman gives lot of attention to Marx’s writings about religion. This makes sense given my focus is on how Marxist intellectuals represent and make sense of ‘Wahhabism’. Second it is beyond my ability to provide a thorough critique of Marx’s entire works. That task would require a thesis in itself. I sometimes refer to Marx’s more popular and prominent works however in these instances my understanding is buttressed by Ollman’s interpretation. Thirdly I used Ollman’s interpretation because he considers Marx’s approach to religion in the context of Marx’s philosophy of internal relations, abstraction and dialectics. These philosophical approaches are key to understanding Marx’s works as well as aligning with my own philosophical approach.

The first element of my ideal type deals with the typical Marxist approach to and understanding the existence of religion. Marxists tend to see religion as an ‘unnatural’ phenomenon that exists to help fill a personal void created by Capitalism. In more formal terms Bertell Ollman describes religion as a value-Relation of man’s alienation in a capitalist system.8 This understanding of religion can be traced back to Marx who writes “The religious world is but the reflex of the real world,” meaning the former has

8 Ollman, Alienation, 221-226.
been created by man to deal with the subjugation and oppression he experiences in the latter.⁹ Ollman writes that the alienated individual creates and turns to religion in an attempt to make cosmic sense of his hostile and overpowering surroundings.¹⁰

Making sense of the nineteenth century Christian Europe, Marx writes that Christianity with its belief in man’s abstract equality before God is the most suitable religion for a commodity-based society where men ‘reduce their individual private labour to the stand of homogenous human labour’.¹¹ Commodity-based societies appear all around the modern world and modern Marxist intellectuals have expanded on this view when making sense of the current political situation. Now many Marxists also see religions like Islam which includes ‘Wahhabism’ as it appears in the Middle East especially Saudi Arabia with its belief in man’s abstract equality before God, as a suitable technique for man dealing with the issues associated with a modern capitalist society.

For Marx and many modern Marxists religion does not in any meaningful way help human beings make sense of their lives, rather it is understood as the destruction of all sense except the nonsense it itself creates.¹² Marx writes that it is only people who are estranged from their nature and their fellow man (meaning it is only those who experience alienation as a result of Capitalism) that could construct “fixed mental shapes or ghosts dwelling outside nature and man.”¹³ Once in existence these “productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and enter into relations both with one another and the human race.”¹⁴

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⁹ Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (1884).  
¹⁰ Ollman, *Alienation*, 221.  
¹¹ Ibid.  
¹² Ibid.  
The implication for my deconstructing of Marxist intellectuals of representations of ‘Wahhabism’ is that these intellectuals will tend not to attach any kind of importance to religion nor treat ‘Wahhabism’ with the level of respect one would reasonably expect from a religious or religiously tolerant intellectual. Marxists instead tend to see ‘Wahhabism’ as an ‘unnatural’ phenomenon created by man to help him deal with his suffering created and perpetuated by the Capitalist system. Marxists do not see ‘Wahhabism’ as providing the answers to their hostile and overpowering surroundings, rather they see Capitalism as the chief problem. They will therefore tend to advocate for the adopting of measures and policies that would see the collapsing of the Capitalist system and the creating of a Communist state.

Like Marx, many modern Marxist intellectuals believe that man can only experience unalienation or rather the closest thing to a state of unalienation in a Communist society. In this kind of society man exists in near-perfect harmony with his fellow man, work, products and his species-being and therefore has no need for religion. Marx writes that religion or atheism do not exist in a Communist society because there is nothing to deny.\footnote{Ollman, *Alienation*, 221.} In a communist society people will strive for happiness now and not delay this for some imaginary afterlife. It follows that many of the Marxist intellectuals representing ‘Wahhabism’ want its adherents to experience happiness now and the path to this happiness involves getting rid of the commodity-based system which currently acts as its lynchpin and establishing a Communist society.

The second key element of my ideal type deals with the typical Marxist understanding of man’s relation to ‘God’, ‘God-objects’ and ‘Agents of God’. Marxists understand that religious activity lends itself to creating of a ‘God’ or ‘Gods’ and ‘God-objects’. God or Gods here are understood as external and eternal beings or as Marx says “fixed mental forms dwelling outside nature and man,” ‘God-objects’ refer to things like religious
figures, relics, symbols and holy places and ‘Agents of God’ are those people who have been empowered with some kind of religious authority. Pertinent to this study are religious sites like Mecca, Medina and *Haram al-Sharif*, religious texts like the Koran and Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s interpretations, the ‘Wahhabi’ *Ullama* in Saudi Arabia, mosques and madrassas.

Marxists typically understand these things as existing independent of as well as hostile and alien to man. According to Marxists the power man places in these things turns against him and the ‘Agents of God’ are able to use that power to decide what man can and cannot do. As with other products of man’s alienated activity, man’s subservience to God and ‘God-objects’ is reflected in his relations to those who control both of these. Marx writes

> Every self-estrangement of man from himself and from nature appears in the relation in which he places himself and nature to men other than and differentiated from himself. For this reason religious self-estrangement necessarily appears in the relations of the layman to the priest, or again, to a mediator, since we are here dealing with the intellectual world.

Man willingly gives his power over to the ‘Agents of God’ who, claiming to speak in God’s name, control God like the capitalist controls commodities and rulers control the organs of government. “In this instance, the priest uses the qualities transferred to god by the believers themselves to overawe and threaten them.” These ‘Agents of God’ will do whatever they can i.e. use sin, prayer, heaven, hell and guilt, to ensure to maintain the status quo and ensure he remains in a position of influence and the believers in positions of subservience.

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18 Ibid.
19 Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 79.
21 Ibid.
It follows that Marxist intellectuals representing ‘Wahhabism’ will tend to see God, ‘God-objects’ and especially ‘Agents of God’ not as spiritually significant things but rather as creations of man helping maintain the status quo and keeping the people mired in religious delusion. All of these things i.e. praying to God, revering ‘God-objects’ and following the instructions of the ‘Agents of God’ help distract the people from identifying the real source of their oppression and subjugation, which is the capitalist system and those who are a part of the ruling class / Bourgeois who have a stake in maintaining it.

This leads me to the third key element of my ‘Weberian’ ‘ideal type’ which is the way Marxists talk about class. As Ollman points out, ‘class’ refers to the social units based on a people’s relationship to the mode of production, similar economic conditions and interests, a consciousness of these interests, the existence of a group-wide political organisation, cultural affinity and a common antagonism for opposing groups.22 This the way some Marxists have distinguished two classes in any society namely a ruling class and a labouring class. (The names of these classes will alter according to the particular mode of production: under the capitalist mode of production this gives us a bourgeoisie and a proletariat). According to a conventional Marxist approach, the Capitalist system is broadly understood as creating these two classes and these two groups are understood as engaging in a constant battle for the ‘surplus-value’ created by the working class. Ollman writes

The class battle between workers and capitalists for the surplus-value of the former is one to the death, the slow, timeless death of the workers. Given the capitalists’ superior position in society and their control over the most powerful weapon in this struggle, money, their indifference to the needs of workers issues in far more painful results than the parallel indifferences of workers to the needs of their employers.23

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22 Ibid., 205.
23 Ibid., 206.
This idea is pertinent to this study as there are many Marxists who understand religion as a tool used not only by ‘Agents of God’ but also by a ruling class to support the status quo/maintain their positions of influence in the capitalist system.

As is the case with religion, many Marxists understand the creation and existence of Class as a value-Relation of man’s fourfold-alienation which he experiences in the Capitalist system. Again the standard Marxist solution to this problem is the replacing of Capitalism with a Communist society in which man exists in near perfect harmony with his work, product, fellow man and species-being. This however is not in the interests of those who are currently winning the battle for worker’s surplus-value and therefore have a stake in maintaining the status-quo. According to many Marxist intellectuals religions like ‘Wahhabism’ play an important role in this process as they help distract and suppress the working-class thereby limiting their developing of a class-consciousness. The idea of class-consciousness which is typically understood by Marxists as an awareness of one’s place in a system of social class, is considered vital to the overthrowing of the Capitalist system and the establishing of a Communist state.24

These three key elements, how Marxists understand the existence of religion, their understanding of the roles played by ‘God,’ ‘God-Objects’ and ‘Agents of God,’ and the role religion plays in maintaining class-system, form my ‘Weberian’ ideal type. It is with these ideas with mind, in addition to my awareness of the different rhetorical techniques used by (Marxist) intellectuals, that I approach the deconstruction process.

Seeking solace, ‘Wahhabism’ as a Natural part of Capitalism

Many Marxists see ‘Wahhabism’ as a natural part of capitalism. They understand the capitalist system to be so harsh and exploitative that people particularly those living in Saudi Arabia have had to turn to ‘Wahhabism’ or embrace a more ‘radical’ understanding of ‘Wahhabism’ in order to deal with these overpowering conditions. Often ‘Wahhabism’ is seen as providing an outlet for the frustration that these people feel. Some Marxist intellectuals see ‘Wahhabism’ as a ‘radical’ version of Islam responsible for inspiring and motivating ‘Islamic terrorism,’ and so they see it is a problem that so many people are turning to or embracing this faith. So in effect they blame the inequality created by the capitalist system for inspiring ‘Islamic terrorism’. Marxists intellectuals providing these kinds of representations will often use rhetorical techniques particularly metaphorical expressions that encourage their audience to think of ‘Wahhabism’ as a natural part of Capitalism.

Woods is among those who blame capitalism for people embracing ‘Wahhabism’ which he considers to be a ‘radical’ version of Islam responsible for modern Islamic terrorism. More specifically Woods blames the inequality created in Saudi Arabia, which he understands as ruled according to ‘Wahhabi’ doctrine, specifically the difference in living standards between the ruling and working classes, for encouraging many Saudi’s embracing of more a ‘radical’ understanding of ‘Wahhabism’.

…Saudi Arabia, is now very unstable. Despite its vast oil wealth, the living standards of the masses have fallen and discontent with the corrupt and degenerate ruling clique is growing. This is reflected in the increasing disaffection of the youth, which is attracted by religious extremism. It is no accident that most of the 9/11 suicide squad was made up of Saudis.

Woods also blames these ‘Wahhabi’ terrorists for “waging war against the pro-Soviet government in Kabul.”

Kumar offers a similar representation of ‘Wahhabism’. She blames the economic crises brought about by capitalism for inspiring and motivating many people in the Middle East for embracing Islam and many people in Saudi Arabia for embracing ‘Wahhabism’. Like many Marxist intellectuals, Kumar understands society as divided into classes and she claims that most people living in the working class who have sought ‘Islamic solutions’ to their problems have failed to recognise it is Capitalism that is primarily responsible for their poor living conditions. She also understands religion in general and Islam in particular as a tool used by the ruling classes (she calls them the “exploiting classes”) to help justify and support their positions of authority over the working classes. Building on the ideas of another Marxist intellectual Kumar writes

Like all religions, Islam has adapted. Religious texts may be more or less fixed, but the ideas and practices they are made to justify are ever-changing, based on historical transformations that are independent of religious ideology…As Chris Harman notes,

Islam is no different to any other religion in these respects. It arose in one context, among a trading community in the towns of 7th century Arabia, in the midst of a society still mainly organized on a tribal basis. It flourished within the succession of great empires carved out by some those who accepted its doctrines. It persists today as the official ideology of numerous capitalist states (Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Pakistan, Iran etc), as the inspiration of many oppositional movements.

It has been able to survive in such different societies because it has been able to adapt to differing class interests…But at the same time it has gained the allegiance of the mass of people by putting across a message offering consolation to

the poor and oppressed. At every point its message has balanced between promising a degree of protection to the oppressed and providing the exploiting classes with protection against any revolutionary overthrow [Emphasis added].

While the term ‘Wahhabism’ has not explicitly been used in this extract, Harman instead refers to Islam as the “official ideology of numerous capitalist” including “Saudi Arabia.” However elsewhere Kumar writes Saudi Arabia’s “…royal family adheres to the ultra-conservative Wahhabi/Salafi strand of Islam.”

Pertinent here is Harman’s use of the term “flourished” when describing the existence of Islam in Saudi Arabia both historically and in more recent times. While this term can be understood in a number of different ways, it is commonly used when referring to the healthy or vigorous growth or development of a living organism especially as the result of a particularly congenial environment. Using nature as a source domain when describing the existence of religion encourages the audience to think of the existence of Islam in general and ‘Wahhabism’ in particular as natural parts of both empires and “capitalist states.”

Bowie provides a similar representation in his treatment of the increasing popularity of ‘Wahhabism’ in Bangladesh.27 Bowie claims Saudi-propagated ‘Wahhabism,’ which he understands as a ‘radical version’ of Islam responsible for inspiring and motivating terrorism, is becoming increasingly popular in this relatively poor nation. Bowie claims that many working class Bangladeshis embrace ‘Wahhabism’ as a way of dealing with their feelings of alienation or disconnection. These ‘Wahhabis’ (which Bowie also refers to as “Islamists”) have become so incensed with their living and working conditions and have become so ‘radicalised’ by the ‘Wahhabi’ faith that they are now “demanding an end to the nation’s

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secular identity.” Bowie writes

The streets of Dhaka have been awash with protests, violence, and killing in recent times as the Bangladeshi public expresses its resentment to the exploitation of garment workers in the aftermath of the country’s worst industrial disaster in its history, and the rising tide of Islamists demanding an end to the nation’s secular identity [Emphasis added].

Pertinent here are the metaphorical expressions that help represent the increasing popularity of ‘Islamism’ including ‘Wahhabism’ in Bangladesh as ‘natural’ parts of capitalism. First Bowie has chosen to use the term ‘awash’ which literally means ‘flooded with or covered by water or another liquid,’ when describing the current situation in Bangladesh. Second in choosing to use the metaphorical expression “rising tide” Bowie is likening the increasing popularity of ‘radical Islam’ including ‘Wahhabism’ to an uncontrollable force of nature acting from the ‘bottom up’ and lifting everything around it. As a tide rises its volume and strength increases making it extremely hard or impossible to resist. In drawing on these nature metaphors, which liken the current political situation to events in nature, Bowie understands and wants his readers to understand the rise of Islamism and ‘Wahhabism’ in Bangladesh as a natural part of man’s alienation in Capitalism. The implication is that ‘radical Islamism’ like ‘Wahhabism’ would be an absent or rather ‘unnatural’ in a Communist society where man lives in a state of ‘unalienation’.

Mulholland uses a similar technique when representing ‘political Islam’ and “Wahhabi interpretations of Islam” as natural parts of the capitalist order. He represents ‘Wahhabism’ as a religion that helps people express their anger and humiliation about their oppressive living conditions. Like many Marxists Mulholland also believes that for working class people to embrace religions like ‘Wahhabism’ is the wrong way to deal with their oppression and subjugation. According to Mulholland, replacing capitalism

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(which he calls “the profit system”) with a socialist order is the solution to fundamental social problems. Mulholland writes

The growth of political Islam is, at root, due to the terrible social and economic conditions faced by millions of Muslims…Political Islam, which in many cases was encouraged and fostered by western powers during the cold war, and by the Saudi petrodollars promoting Wahhabi interpretations of Islam, partially fills the space created by the failure of the left and Arab nationalism. It is an oppositionist channel for Muslims angered and humiliated by the poverty and oppression they face…

But all forms of political or ‘radical’ Islam will prove to be a severe disappointment for the masses, as they do not represent a break with the profit system and class exploitation [Emphasis added].

Also commenting on the growth and popularity of religion in the ‘West’ in general of which ‘Wahhabism’ is a part, Mulholland writes

New religions and mystical ideas…sprout up in the west, indicating the deep sense of alienation from modern capitalism among sections of the middle class and working class, and a search for an alternative to the profit system [Emphasis added].

Again we see a Marxist intellectual using a nature metaphor as a source domain when describing religion. Pertinent are the metaphorical expressions “growth” and “sprout up.” ‘Growth’ of course means the process of increasing in size and one of the ways in which it is commonly used is when describing the ‘the upward growth of plants’. The phrase ‘sprout up’ is relatively more ‘nature-specific’ and is used when referring to things like plants that sprout from seeds in the earth producing flowers, fruits and vegetables. In using these nature metaphors Mulholland is expressing the typical Marxist belief that alienation provides the necessary conditions for the existence of religions like ‘Wahhabism’. Again the implication is that religion in general and ‘radical’ and ‘political’ Islam like ‘Wahhabism’ in particular would not ‘grow’ or ‘sprout-up’ in a society free from Capitalist exploitation.
The authors of an article appearing on the Socialist World website (which is said to have been co-authored and approved by the Committee for a Workers International) also rely on nature metaphors when representing ‘Wahhabism’ as a ‘natural’ part of the Capitalist system.29 Their article is primarily dedicated to understanding the current political and religious situation in Egypt following the end of the Mubarak regime. The authors claim the ‘radical’ and ‘Wahhabi’-linked ‘Islamist’ groups have become increasingly popular for Egyptians now living in a state in which they feel disconnected from and which has become even more hostile. The authors write

In the vacuum that existed, as with other cases in history – Poland under Stalinism, in Iran under the Shah – religious forces, with roots amongst the masses, can initially provide a force, a pole of attraction, around which the opposition to dictatorial regimes can mobilise…

…the more fundamentalist expression of right-wing political Islam, the Salafists around al-Nour, linked to the more fundamentalist Wahhabi brand of Islam emanating from Saudi Arabia and the doctrine of Al Qaeda, did well winning almost a quarter of the votes in both the cities and in the countryside [Emphasis added].

Pertinent here is the authors’ use of the metaphorical expression “with roots amongst the masses.” The term ‘roots’ is generally associated with the organ of a plant lying below the surface of the soil. Using the metaphorical expression “with roots amongst the masses” helps describe the strength and pervasiveness of these “religious forces”. Again the using of a nature metaphor helps the Marxists intellectuals represent religion as a ‘natural’ value-Relation in capitalist societies and again the key point made by the authors is that the existence and increasing popularity of ‘radical Islamism’ like ‘Wahhabism’ is a natural product of the exploitation and inequality of the modern Capitalist system.

Using ‘Wahhabism’ to Maintain Positions of Influence

Another popular representation involves Marxist intellectuals representing ‘Wahhabism’ as a tool used by a ruling class to help legitimate their power and authority. More specifically these intellectuals tend to believe that ruling regimes use ‘Wahhabism’ to help justify and legitimate their claims to power, to oppress the working and poor classes, to keep these classes mired in a state of delusion thereby preventing class-consciousness and to encourage violence between the middle and lower classes both nationally and internationally. All of this helps to deflect attention away from the ruling regimes’ ‘illegitimate,’ ‘unjust’ and ‘tenuous’ claim to power. While this is a popular representation amongst Marxist intellectuals, unlike the previous sections Marxists rely on the proverbial mixed bag of rhetorical techniques when representing ‘Wahhabism’ in these ways.

Some Marxist intellectuals have tended to focus their representations on the mutually beneficial relationship between the Saudi royal family governing the Kingdom and the ‘Wahhabi’ Ulama (the ‘Agents of God’) / relying on religion to justify and legitimate their rule, both of whom are seen as a part of the ruling class in Saudi Arabia. The Ulama is seen as providing the Saudi royal family with the religious legitimacy it requires and in return these ‘Agents of God’ are responsible for making laws that apparently align with ‘God’s word’ but in reality ensure they remain in positions of authority. Allan Woods’ representation of ‘Wahhabism’ provides a good example of this kind of approach. Woods writes

For decades the House of Saud maintained itself in power by striking a compromise with the Wahhabi religious establishment. The royal family could enjoy its obscene wealth and lavish life style, its fast cars, whisky, gambling and prostitutes, as long as it allowed the clergy, supporters of the narrow and fanatical Wahhabi brand of Sunni Islam, to govern the religious life of the nation without interference from the state [Emphasis added].

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30 Woods, “Startling revelations about Bush’s foreign policy.”
In a separate article Woods writes

The degenerate Saudi ruling clique, conscious of its weakness and isolation from the population, arrived at a deal with the Moslem clerics of the strict Wahhabi sect, giving the latter a virtually **free hand** to operate in Saudi Arabia, on condition it encouraged Jihhad (holy War) outside Saudi borders only [Emphasis added].

Pertinent here is Wood’s using of the metaphorical expression “free hand” when describing the freedom the ‘Agents of God’/ “Moslem clerics of the strict Wahhabi sect” have in imposing their rule and sense of order on the Saudi people. The phrase “Free hand” can be understood as a ‘game metaphor’ and is literally understood as ‘having the freedom to act as one deems necessary’. There are a number of different contexts in which this phrase is used however one of the most common contexts is in card or board games. In these games all but one of the players is ‘locked out’ or momentarily prevented from playing allowing one player to have his turn often without being subject to the normal rules of the game.

This relying on a ‘game’ metaphor fits perfectly with Woods’ describing of the Saudi ruling regime as enjoying “obscene wealth and lavish life style, its fast cars, whisky, gambling and prostitutes.” The point Woods is making is that ‘life is a game’ for the Saudi ruling class however only the Saudi people must follow the rules of the game which are set out by the ‘Wahhabi’ religious establishment. The ruling class is free to do whatever they please which often includes indulging in activities that most Saudi people do not have the ability to experience. Woods is also offering a wider critique of capitalism which he understands to be unfair, unjust and hypocritical.

There are also Marxist intellectuals whose representations of ‘Wahhabism’ treat it as a tool to maintain positions of authority focus on the relationship

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between the ruling classes in Saudi Arabia and the US. Some Marxist intellectuals claim the US supports Saudi Arabia’s global promotion of ‘Wahhabism’ which is understood as responsible for inspiring and motivating terrorism, when it helps support the imperialistic interests of its ruling class. An article published in Proletarian Revolution and appearing on the Marxist Internet Archive website provides a good example of this kind of approach. These authors write

Successive U.S. governments have remained hostile to Iran, and the imperialist “war on terror” is widely perceived as a war on Muslims. But the U.S. ruling class is happy to work with reactionary Islamists in defense of its own imperialist interests. The U.S.-backed monarchy in Saudi Arabia uses its conservative Wahhabi brand of Islam to justify its rule.

These authors also claim that the US, Saudi Arabia and the rest of the world’s ruling class use religions like ‘Wahhabism’ to distract the world’s working class, preventing them from developing class-consciousness. The authors write

The bourgeoisie was once a progressive class striving for enlightenment. Now that it has secured its rule throughout the world it finds it more profitable to keep the people mired in ancient prejudice. Recent decades have seen a rise in fundamentalism in all regions and religions.

Here we see the typical Marxist belief that the ruling class uses religion to help ‘keep the people in their place’.

There are some Marxist intellectuals like those writing for the International Marxist Tendency who have more optimistic assessments about the modern political situation and see the downfall of capitalism and the establishing of

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Recognising that ‘Wahhabism’ is an important tool used by the Saudi ruling class to maintain its position of authority, these authors claim that capitalism has made the Saudi royal family so “corrupt” and “degenerate” that even the ‘Agents of God’ / the “Wahhabi clergy” will not be able to prevent a socialist revolution. These authors write

The Saudi regime itself, that bastion of reaction in the Middle East, resembles a pressure cooker without a safety valve. In such a regime, when the explosion comes, it will occur without warning and with extreme violence. The Saudi royal family is corrupt, degenerate and rotten to the core. It is split over the succession and there is growing resentment and discontent in the population. When the moment comes, all the oil in the kingdom will not save them. It is significant that now even the Wahhabi clergy is turning against them [Emphasis added].

Pertinent here is the authors’ use of the simile “resembles a pressure cooker without a safety valve” when describing the current political context in Saudi Arabia. A pressure cooker is typically used to boil a liquid like water or broth. The trapped steam increases both the internal pressure and temperature and the safety valve allows for the release of this pressure. Without a safety valve the internal pressure and temperature would continue to build up eventually forcing the cooker to explode. The authors use this simile to suggest that social revolution is inevitable.

Also pertinent is the authors’ use of the metaphorical expression “rotten to the core” when describing the morality of the Saudi royal family. Again we see Marxist intellectuals’ using a ‘nature’ metaphor. We typically use this phrase when describing bad apples that we do not eat because they have rotted because of disease or worms. This is a metaphorical expression that makes judgements about morality. If a person or group is “rotten to the core”

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core” they are understood as behaving in ways that are dishonest and immoral. The authors’ message is clear: the Saudi royal regime is immoral because it governs a system that oppresses the working and poor classes and because it uses ‘Wahhabism’ as tool to help them.

‘Wahhabism’ as ‘backwardness’

Some Marxist intellectuals maintain that the existence of the religion ‘Wahhabism’ is indicative of man and society’s ‘backwardness’. Marxists tend to see religion as an unnatural phenomenon that is indicative of the alienation man feels in capitalism. Marxists typically believe that religions like ‘Wahhabism’ would not need to exist in under communism because humans would exist in near perfect harmony with their work, their fellow man and their species being. In this sense a communist society is seen as the highest, most advanced or ‘best’ expression of man’s capabilities. ‘Wahhabism’ is therefore seen by many Marxists as an obstacle preventing the establishing of the ‘ideal society’.

A good example of this approach is provided by the authors of an article appearing on the Marxist Internet Archive website.34 Echoing the thoughts of Marx, these authors believe that religion has turned against man. They claim the Saudi ruling class is using ‘Wahhabism’ to promote hostility between the Saudi people and between them and people belonging to other religious faiths thereby deflecting attention form themselves. The authors write

**Humanity is at a crossroads.** Capitalism’s continued rule offers humanity nothing but more wars, executions, mass acts of terror and grinding exploitation and poverty. But the international working class, the one class with no essential interest in oppression or exploitation, has the potential to put an end to capitalist barbarism. To prepare our class for its revolutionary role, the most politically conscious worker…must [form]…a revolutionary party. Such a

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party works to expose the role of all leaderships that try to make peace with the capitalist system and thereby condemn us to the continued growth of barbarism. It fights against all types of **backward consciousness** that only foster divisions in the ranks of the oppressed and exploited [Emphasis added].

Here I highlight two pertinent metaphorical expressions that help show the authors’ ideas about progress or rather the lack thereof. First the authors claim “humanity is at a crossroads” which definitely infuses the current political situation with a sense of urgency. Here the authors are offering a critique of the Capitalist system in general of which ‘Wahhabism’ is a part. This metaphorical expression draws on a ‘movement’ metaphor specifically ‘mankind is a vehicle’. A ‘crossroad’ is an intersection of two or more roads and both proceed in different directions therefore demanding the driver of the vehicle to make a decision. By describing humanity’s situation in this way the authors are suggesting that we as a collective must decide which ‘road we want to travel on’. The authors present us with two options which are indicative of how many Marxists make sense of the world. There is the ‘Capitalist’ road where man lives an alienated existence and which is filled with “wars, executions, mass acts of terror and grinding exploitation and poverty” or the “international working class” road that is free from “oppression or exploitation” and where humanity can create an ideal society.

Also pertinent is the authors’ use of the metaphorical expression “backward consciousness” when describing those people ‘suffering’ from religion which includes ‘Wahhabism’. The authors are representing religious adherents including followers of ‘Wahhabism’ as ‘less developed’ than their non-religious/atheistic counterparts who enjoy a more ‘progressive’ or ‘enlightened’ consciousness. States of mind or being specifically kinds of consciousness play a major role in Marxist theory. Marxists typically believe the developing of class-consciousness is integral to social revolution. Achieving this state of mind or being requires moving beyond identifying as belonging to a particular religious group and recognising that
one is a part of a class. According to the standard Marxist interpretation, recognising one is a part of an oppressed class is crucial to understanding that it is the ruling class who is responsible for their oppression and not for example ‘God’ that has been created by man to help fill a void in him created by Capitalism. According to a standard Marxist reading this realisation helps pave the way for social revolution and the establishing of a Communist state.

Some Marxist intellectuals combine their representation of ‘Wahhabism’ as ‘backwardness’ with a critique of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Marxist intellectuals like Pushkarevon provide slightly different interpretations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to those offered by neo-conservatives.35 Pushkarevon associates ‘Wahhabism’ with the ‘backwards’ and ‘regressive’ nature of man while his analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict provides an interesting contrast with those representations provided by neo-conservatives. These differences in representations help highlight the important role prejudice plays in how intellectuals belonging to different intellectual traditions understand the ‘observe-dependent’ phenomenon ‘Wahhabism’.

Pushkarevon rejects the claim typically made by neo-conservatives that there is an abundance of ‘Wahhabi’-inspired and Saudi-linked terrorist groups operating in the Palestinian territories. He concedes there are a few of these kinds of groups however he holds the US responsible for their existence. According to him it is the “U.S. intelligence services” that are sponsoring them. Pushkarevon writes

Speaking of the Palestinian Islamists, we must pay attention to the fact that they are not North Caucasian Wahhabis. Wahhabism is a radical form of Islamic extremism and is the official religion of Saudi Arabia and backed by this same country.

In Palestine, there are Wahhabi, al-Qaeda organizations supported by the Saudis and the U.S. intelligence services, but they are scarce, and even the police of the Hamas party in the Gaza Strip have subjected them to harassment.

Pushkarevon rejects the typical neo-conservative claim that there is a link between indigenous Palestinian organisations like ‘Hamas’ and ‘Wahhabism’. Instead he claims that it is the foreign, non-Palestinian organisations like the “al-Qaeda organizations” that are influenced by ‘Wahhabism’. Pushkarevon rejects the claim typically made by neo-conservatives that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be understood primarily in religious terms. Rather than seeing the destruction of the ‘Islamic enemy’ or removal or killing of the entire Palestinian population as a solution to the conflict, Pushkarevon maintains that a peaceful resolution can be achieved with the ending of Capitalism and an introduction of Socialism. Like many Marxists, Pushkarevon believes that religions like ‘Wahhabism’ are value-relations of capitalism, and that they will disappear with the ending of capitalism. Pushkarevon writes

Obviously, the resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict lies on the path of a socialist revolution in the Middle East. When in Israel, Zionism is overthrown, and in Palestine and Israel peace-loving, socialist forces and communists come to power, then past hostility and the hatred between the Palestinian Arabs and Jews will become a thing of the past. Only socialism will bring peace, equality and friendship for the peoples on the ancient lands of Palestine and Israel…

Of course, we cannot ignore that among Leftist Palestinians there are nationalist and even religious views. But if you read, for example, what the Russian Internet “communists” say, there are similar trends. Nationalism and religion is a phenomenon peculiar to the backward masses, where they will tail the Communists and wither out with the development of the revolutionary struggle and socialism [Emphasis added].
Pertinent here is Pushkarevon’s use of the metaphorical expression “backward masses.” This can be understood as drawing on the ‘direction is progress’ metaphor where forwards movement is indicative of progress and backwards movement of regression. The implication is that these religious people and the societies in which they live need to ‘progress’ and that this can only happen with the ending of Capitalism. The ideal society for Pushkarevon like many Marxists is a Communist or Socialist state. Religions like ‘Wahhabism’ are just momentary roadblocks that will be overcome when Capitalism ends.

Let me turn now to the task of making sense of these representations by examining the role played by key themata.

Making sense of Marxist Representations of ‘Wahhabism’

Holton writes that themata “become visible most strikingly during a conflict between individuals or groups that are committed to opposing themata” and it follows that atheism as a themata becomes most apparent when we consider the difference in opinion between intellectuals relying on religious understandings of the world and those who look for answers in the human condition.36

Atheism is not the only key themata influencing how some Marxist intellectuals make sense of the world. Some of these intellectuals are also motivated by ideas about ‘progress’ specifically that states must go through certain stages of history before reaching an ‘ideal society’. Additionally, Marxist intellectuals rely on ‘nature’ metaphors when constituting or generating the world in which they live. These three key ideas are the focus of my attempts to make sense of Marxist representations of ‘Wahhabism’.

The Atheism Themata

‘Atheism’ is commonly used to classify a spectrum of non-religious believers, from those who question the existence of God in theological terms to those who are critical of theistic positions. Richard Dawkins is one of the most public and well-known contemporary atheists who insists that there is something infantile in the presumption that somebody else has a responsibility to give your life meaning and point… The truly adult view, by contrast, is that our life is as meaningful, as full and as wonderful as we choose to make it.

Sagan shares much of the same kind of atheism as Dawkins.

Atheism is more than just the knowledge that gods do not exist, and that religion is either a mistake or a fraud. Atheism is an attitude, a frame of mind that looks at the world objectively, fearlessly, always trying to understand all things as a part of nature.

This ‘master-narrative’ rejects the theistic belief that God is somehow controlling or ultimately responsible for mankind and instead places the responsibility of humanity firmly in the hands of people. Those motivated and inspired by this themata often advocate for the removal of religion from public life which is thought to yield a condition where order and innovation will progress much faster and naturally. We can understand many of the Marxists representing ‘Wahhabism’ in this study as belonging to this group of intellectuals who are motivated by atheism.

We have seen that Marxists representing ‘Wahhabism’ have not engaged in the same kinds of theological discussions about the merits of it and religion.

37 Frank Christopher Silver, “Atheism, agnosticism, and nonbelief: A qualitative and quantitative study of type and narrative,” (Phd. Diss., The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga), 9.
40 Ibid.,15.
41 Ibid., 21.
in general as scholars like Schwartz, Oliver and El Fadl have done. These scholars are all influenced by some kind of underlying religious themata. The Marxist subscription to the Atheist themata is perhaps most telling when we consider the conflict between these two groups of scholars. Following Holton’s describing about the nature of themata “All these [themata] become visible most strikingly during a conflict between individuals or groups that are committed to opposing themata,” recognising the opposing roles atheist and religious themata play in these instances helps us understand why these two groups of scholars (the ‘religious’ and the ‘atheist’) provide strikingly different representations about the same ‘problems’. 

In contrast to those inspired by varying religious ideas, Marxist intellectuals representing ‘Wahhabism’ never consider the possibility that the ‘Agents of God’ i.e. the ‘Wahhabi’ Ullama and the Saudi ruling regime who claim to rule with God’s permission, are making legitimate ‘truth’ claims. Instead Marxists work from the a priori assumption that either God does not exist and/or he does not have the ability to influence what is happening in the world. Influenced by these presuppositions, these Marxists intellectuals are motivated to study the human condition and man’s relationship to other men and the society in which he lives for an understanding of the modern political situation.

Holton and Nisbet point out that themata often exist for long periods of time and can influence intellectuals working in a variety of fields. Atheism is a themata that has influenced many different intellectuals working in a variety of fields including Theology, Religious Studies, Philosophy and Psychology. For example many ‘Western’ intellectuals driven by the idea there is no God have challenged the validity and veracity

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44 Ibid., 461-462; Nisbet, *Sociology as an Art Form*, 29.
of the Christian tradition. This focusing on the Christian tradition rather than for example the Islamic tradition is understandable when we consider the pervasiveness of Christianity in the ‘Western’ world and when we recognise that Islam has up until recent times been largely confined to the ‘Eastern’ world.

Many modern ‘Western’ intellectuals influenced by atheism have been motivated by the ideas of popular atheist authors. The work of Sigmund Freud provides the quintessential example. Rather than considering the possibility that God does exist, Freud treated religious beliefs as symptomatic of mental illness. In his writings published between 1913 and 1927, Freud described religion and a dependence on God as driven by a need to for parental replacement in coping and seeking security in one’s life.

Freud claimed that a psychologically adjusted individual could bring their id and superego into perfect harmony without needing to create an overarching deity to regulate their behaviour and he blamed a psychological development deficiency for a believer’s need for God.

While this is a relatively simple understanding of Freud’s theory of religion, the key point is that Freud saw God as an illusion and then a delusion and therefore saw religious belief as symptomatic of a pathological mind. Implicit to this argument is the idea that religious devotees are weak minded, that they use religion as a coping mechanism and that the atheist viewpoint is superior to the theistic position. As we have seen, these same ideas influence many in the Marxist tradition and many of those representing ‘Wahhabism’.

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49 Silver, “Atheism, agnosticism, and nonbelief,” 42.

50 Ibid.
For example when describing religion in general and Islam and ‘Wahhabism’ in particular, Deepa Kumar writes that they offer “consolation to the poor and oppressed,” while Niall Mulholland says they provide “an oppositionist channel for Muslims angered and humiliated by the poverty and oppression they face” and act as an “alternative to the profit system.”\footnote{Kumar, “Islam and Islamophobia.”; Mulholland, “Religion and Society.”} In addition to these intellectuals who represent ‘Wahhabism’ as a coping mechanism, there are those that suggest that a theistic position is inferior to an atheist position. For example Pushkarevon claims that religious people in general are relatively “backward” in contrast to their non-religious Socialist counterparts.\footnote{Pushkarevon, “Socialism in Palestine and Israel.”} While the authors of the article appearing on the Proletarian Revolution website describe religious people as having a “backward consciousness.”\footnote{“Protest Execution of Iranian Gays! U.S. Imperialism: Hands of Iran!”} The implication is that the non-theistic (or atheistic) individuals enjoy a relatively “forward consciousness” which is conducive to the advancing and progression of society.

More pertinent to this thesis is the role the themata atheism has played in the Marxist tradition. We can trace these ideas back to Marx. While influenced by the same atheistic presuppositions as Freud, Marx was a sociologist and not a psychologist and was therefore motivated to make sense of European society. From an early age Marx was motivated by a pursuit of an ‘observable truth’ rather than any kind of ‘religious truth’. He wrote that

The pursuit of truth not to be impeded is qualified as serious and restrained. Both modifications point to something outside the content of the pursuit rather than to the matter to be investigated. They detract from the pursuit of truth. . . . with inquiry, restraint is the prescribed fear of finding the result, a means of keeping one from the truth.\footnote{Karl Marx, Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 70.}

Most of what Marx wrote about religion he wrote contemporaneously of the previous statement and these writings share its timbre of uninhibited
pursuit of what Marx deemed to be ‘true’. Apart from a brief flirtation with Hegel’s idea of a timeless universal spirit, Marx never really considered the possibility that ‘truth’ existed outside of the human condition and in the supernatural realm. According to Marx understanding the nature and the problems of the human condition could not be explained in terms of man’s relationship with God but rather in his relationship with his fellow man, his work, his product and his species-being.

Marx saw humans as a part of nature, of the material world, and as thus a subject within it. God and any veneration to a thing outside the physical experience of humankind was nonsense and alienating. Marx writes “All the mysteries which lead theory into mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice.” The idea that the answers to mankind’s problems lie in man’s abilities and not in a God or God’s word continues to influence how modern Marxist intellectuals make sense of the world including how they make sense of phenomena like ‘Wahhabism’. Like Marx, the Marxists representing ‘Wahhabism’ never considered religion to be a legitimate or acceptable way of understanding the world. Nor did they ever consider that the ‘Agents of God’ like the ‘Wahhabi’ Ullama had legitimate claims to their authority. They are all critical of these theistic positions and have focused their attention on making sense of the kind of society man has himself created. For many Marxists there is no God or if there is he certainly has no control over mankind’s development.

The ‘Nature’ Metaphor: Responsibility lies with Man and not ‘God’.

The Marxist a priori rejection of God helps us to understand why many Marxist intellectuals have relied on nature metaphors when representing

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56 Ibid.
57 Karl Marx, “Theses On Feuerbach,” (1845).
https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm
‘Wahhabism’. For example we see Kumar use the term “flourished” when describing the popularity of Islam, Bowie claims the “streets of Dhaka have been awash with protests” and he also describes the “rising tide of Islamists.” Mulholland talks about the “growth of political Islam” and the “sprout[ing] up” of religion, the authors of an article appearing on the Socialist World write religion has its “roots amongst the masses,” and authors writing for the International Marxist Tendency claim the ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabian regime is “rotten to the core.”

Danziger writes that scholars use generative metaphors when both conceptualising their theories and methods and when communicating their ideas and directives to their audiences and fellow researchers. In these examples we see Marxists are relying on nature metaphors when describing the existence of Islam in general and ‘Wahhabism’ in particular. In doing so they are also communicating to their fellow researchers and audiences that they should also think of religion in terms of ‘nature’ and not for example in terms of God, the legitimacy of Islam or ‘Wahhabi’ doctrine or man’s relationship with God which is how scholars like Schwartz, El Fadl and Oliver have understood ‘Wahhabism’. The pertinent point is that Marxists think and they also want their audiences to think that man and not God is in control of the situation.

This relying on nature metaphors when thinking and talking about the world tells us a lot about how some Marxists see the world. It has for example often been associated with the adopting of an anthropocentric worldview. Anthropocentrism is the idea that human beings are the central or most significant species on the planet. According to this view nature is an instrument for human ends. The ‘dominator model’ of the

60 Danziger, Metaphors in the History of Psychology, 332.
human-nature relationship is often seen as an essential component of this worldview.\textsuperscript{63} According to Francis Bacon this model holds that man is both a creator and primarily responsible for creating order. He writes

Man, if we look to final causes, may be regarded as the centre of the world...For the whole world works together in the service of man; and there is nothing from which he does not derive use and fruit...insomuch that all things seem to going about man’s business and not their own.\textsuperscript{64}

Commenting on the generative role metaphors play, Schön maintains that “the essential difficulties … have more to do with the problem setting than with problem solving, more to do with ways in which we frame the purposes to be achieved than with the selection of optimal means for achieving them.”\textsuperscript{65} Framing the ‘problem’ of religion in terms of nature as these Marxists have done rather than for example in terms of God encourages their audiences and fellow researchers to look for answers in man’s relationship with nature rather than for example looking for religious answers to the problem of ‘Wahhabism’ and ‘radical Islam’.

Danziger argues that individuals and groups of individuals tend to draw on similar metaphorical descriptions that have been used over long periods of time and which have come to be thought of “as expressing some kind of literal truth.”\textsuperscript{66} Also commenting on the long lives of the generative metaphors, Schön writes that the generative metaphor “derives its normative force from certain purposes and values, certain normative images, which have long been powerful in our culture.”\textsuperscript{67} Understanding man as a dominator of nature rather than for example understanding him as a servant of God or a small part of a divine plan, and understanding the issues we humans have to deal with in terms of our relationship to nature and not in our relationship to or with a God, have been taken as literal

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{65} Donald Schön, “Generative metaphor: A perspective on problem-setting in social policy,” 138.
\textsuperscript{66} Danziger, Metaphors in the History of Psychology, 332.
\textsuperscript{67} Schön, “Generative metaphor,” 147.
truths by many ‘Western’ scholars at least since the scientific revolution in the seventeenth century.

It was during this time that scientists began to seriously question the role a ‘God’ played in the history of mankind. The discoveries of fossils which pointed to the extinction of species prior to the human race led many to ask the question “if God had created every living form, how could gaps be explained in a chain of being that indicated continuity and plenitude?”

The Scientific Revolution encouraged many to abandon the notion of a Divine Origin and scientists instead sought to answer questions about nature without relying on a religious interpretation. This understanding of man and not God as ultimately responsible for the future and ‘direction’ of mankind became central to Marx’s critique of Capitalism centuries later and these ideas continue to influence modern Marxist intellectuals.

As we can see this way of ‘generating’ or ‘constituting’ the world has had implications for the ways in which some Marxist intellectuals represent ‘Wahhabism’. Many Marxists take it as literal truth that mankind is responsible for creating the kind of the world in which we live. This includes religion in general and ‘Wahhabism’ in particular which are not seen or understood as divine creations or as part of some divine plan but instead are understood as creations of man. Moreover they are seen as unnecessary and unhelpful creations that are preventing man from creating what they understood as an ‘ideal society’. This leads us to another important themata influencing the ways in which Marxists make sense of the world.

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69 Ibid., 5.
70 For an understanding of Karl Marx’s anthropocentric worldview see John Clark, “Marx’s Inorganic Body,” Environmental Ethics 11, no. 8 (1989). Clarke (p.258) writes Marx’s Promethean... “man” is a being who is not at home in nature, who does not see the Earth as the “household” of ecology. He is an indomitable spirit who must subject nature in his quest for self-realization...For such a being, the forces of nature, whether in the form of his own unmastered internal nature or the menacing powers of external nature, must be subdued.
Progress

The themata ‘progress’ is another important idea that has motivated and influenced how Marxist intellectuals make sense of the world and of ‘observer-dependent’ phenomena in it like ‘Wahhabism’. We saw how Marxist intellectuals were keen to represent ‘Wahhabi’ societies and religious ‘believers’ as ‘backward’ and ‘regressive’. For example the authors of an article appearing on the Proletarian Revolution website describe religious believers as like the ‘Wahhabis’ as suffering from a “backward consciousness” and how Ivan Pushkarevon calls “religion… a phenomenon peculiar to the backward masses.”71

Marxists get a lot of their inspiration from the belief that Capitalism will not last forever and that society must and will eventually progress beyond this stage. For many Marxists it is a matter of historical necessity the Capitalism be overcome and Socialist/Communist state be established putting an end to man’s alienation. This themata about progress which influences how some Marxists understand ‘Wahhabism’ has its roots in Marxism’s early writings especially in those of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

Marx and Engels understood history as a journey beginning with man’s unalienated existence, the breaking of this experience and then the returning to this experience. The journey is long and harsh but necessary and will end with the creating of utopic society where man exists (as close as is humanly possible) in harmony with his fellow man, his labour, his product and his species being. Quoting Lewis Henry Morgan’s apocalyptic belief, Engels writes that the integrity and justice of the gentile society will return from its diremption but in a “higher form.”72 This idea about progress continues to influence the modern Marxist tradition with its proponents believing in the value of overcoming alienation and in the

‘goodness’ that can be found in the ‘progress’ of human history. There are a number of pertinent Marxist ideas associated with this themata about progress which can help us to understand why Marxist intellectuals represent ‘Wahhabism’ and the societies in which it appears as relatively ‘backward’ and ‘regressive’ especially when compared with evolutionary stages nations in the Capitalist ‘West’ find themselves in. These ideas are the Primacy Thesis, the Development Thesis and ideas about the stages in history.

Many Marxists understand human history as consisting of a number of consecutive stages. These ideas can be traced back to Marx who is understood as identifying five distinct periods in human history.73 The first stage is typically understood as ‘Primitive Communism’ and its defining elements are shared property, hunting and gathering and ‘proto-democracy’. Second is the Slave Society which is considered to be the beginning of class society. Third is Feudalism which is characterised by its aristocracy, theocracy, hereditary classes and the nation state. Fourth is Capitalism which is marked by a market economics, private property, parliamentary democracy and Imperialism. Fifth is Socialism/Communism which having risen from a self-conscious movement of the vast majority, is characterised by the vast majority governing their own lives. Marx’s Development Thesis and Primacy Thesis help describe how society moves through these different stages.74 The underlying belief is that society is always changing and ‘progressing’ towards the establishing of an ‘ideal’ Communist society.

The Communist state is considered by many Marxists to be the ‘ideal society’ and it is what they are struggling to establish. It is also held as the ‘ideal society’ against which Marxist intellectuals measure the progress of societies including those in which religions like ‘Wahhabism’ are pervasive. In this utopia classes are abolished, the state withers away and

people take care of themselves without the need of government. This marks the end of what Marx calls a ‘prehistory’ of mankind.\textsuperscript{75} Now man is free from the mercy of productive forces and he can plan for the needs of society inclusively and democratically. It is now when the ‘real’ human history begins.\textsuperscript{76}

When Marxist intellectuals describe religious societies including ‘Wahhabi’ societies and the people that make them up as ‘regressive’ and ‘backwards’ they can be understood as comparing and contrasting the nature of these societies with periods in human ‘pre-history’. When Marxists look at the situation in many Islamic countries including ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia they do not see ‘advanced’ Capitalist societies like those in the ‘Western’ world which are closer to reaching the ‘ideal society’. Instead they see societies that are far less advanced in terms of human history i.e. they see societies that often resemble Feudalism.

Marx himself did not show any particular interest in the Islamic world but he did write about non-‘Western’ nations of the world and about the impact that global capitalist forces have had on helping these relatively ‘backward’ societies ‘progress’. For example Marx wrote about the introduction of Capitalist relations in India.

Dissolved these small semi-barbarian, semi-civilized communities, by blowing up their economic basis, and thus produced the greatest, and to speak the truth, the only social revolution ever heard of in Asia.

Now, sickening as it must be to human feeling to witness those myriads of industrious patriarchal and inoffensive social organizations disorganized and dissolved into their units, thrown into a sea of woes, and their individual members losing at the same time their ancient form of civilization, and their hereditary means of subsistence, we must not forget that these idyllic village communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been

\textsuperscript{75} Marx, \textit{Part III: History}.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies.77

What Marx is pointing to here and it is an idea that continues to characterise the modern Marxist tradition, is that ‘backward’ ‘primitive’ communities are bases for despotism and for alienation that will inevitably succumb to progress. The way Marx understands this Colonial India resonates with the ways in which some modern Marxist intellectuals think about other non-Western nations like ‘Wahhabi’ Saudi Arabia.

**Conclusion**

Marxists intellectuals have tended to understand ‘Wahhabism’ in one of three ways. Either they see it as religion that offers solace to those suffering from the effects of Capitalism, as a tool used by the ruling regime and ‘Agents of God’ to maintain the status quo or as indicative of relatively ‘backwards’ state of man and society which will be overcome once Capitalism ends and Communist state is established. As we can see, Marxists have used a variety of rhetorical techniques when representing ‘Wahhabism’ in these ways. However the most popular techniques are the using of ‘nature’ metaphorical expression which aims to represent ‘Wahhabism’ as a natural part of Capitalism and the using of metaphorical expressions that help represent societies and people who follow religions like ‘Wahhabism’ as ‘backward’. Marxist intellectuals’ have been influenced, motivated and inspired by particular themata and generative metaphors when representing ‘Wahhabism’. These themata include ideas associated with atheism and progress, and these generative metaphors include ‘nature’ metaphors. These ideas have motivated many Modern Marxist intellectuals to look at man’s condition and his relation with the world when making sense of ‘Wahhabism’ and they have encouraged many

77 Karl Marx, *The British Rule in India* (1853). [https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/06/25.htm](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/06/25.htm)
of them to understand ‘Wahhabi’ believers and the societies of which they are a part as relatively ‘backward’ and ‘regressive’ when compared to the ‘West’ and in desperate need of ‘progress’.
Conclusion

From the end spring new beginnings

Pliny the Elder

I began this study with clear goals in mind. I wanted to address scholarly representations of ‘Wahhabism’ and deal with some of the problems with them. I wanted to address certain kinds of problems in the sociology of intellectuals and I wanted to address the how and why intellectuals belonging to the liberal, neo-conservative and Marxist traditions represented ‘Wahhabism’ in particular ways. My interest in doing these things was in part provoked by competing representations of ‘Wahhabism’ offered by different intellectuals particularly as they related to the ‘situation’ in Palestine.

I must again acknowledge some of the limitations of my study. I have only focused on five specific elements of discourse namely metaphors, similes, analogies, neologisms, and the structuring of accounts of violence, when deconstructing liberal, neo-conservative and Marxist representations of ‘Wahhabism’. I chose to abstract/focus on these because of the crucial roles these play in the mythmaking process. There are many other elements present and there is the opportunity in the future to shine a light on these. Such an analysis may help reveal other kinds of themata and generative metaphors influencing liberal, Marxist and neo-conservative thought not identified in this study. Opportunities also exist for future research into how intellectuals belonging to other traditions have represented ‘Wahhabism’.

My review of the scholarly literature showed that ‘Wahhabism’ was a hotly contested category. Some scholars like Gold and Schwartz provided deeply negative even hostile representations of ‘Wahhabism’ and were quick to blame it for inspiring Islamic terrorism. Others like DeLong-Bas and Oliver provided detailed historical accounts of ‘Wahhabism’ to dismiss claims that it was linked to contemporary forms of ‘Islamist’ violence. My work has showed that prejudice specifically particular
religious and political aims and goals and the kind of truth claims one relies on influences how one thinks about the observer-dependent phenomenon ‘Wahhabism’.

For example if one fervently holds religious beliefs that are seen as incompatible with the perceived religious beliefs belonging to ‘Wahhabism’ as is the case with scholars like Schwartz then it is unsurprising that he or she will discount ‘Wahhabism’ as a perverted interpretation of Islam. If one is primarily motivated by specific political aims and goals as is the case with scholars like Gold who is motivated and inspired by his support for Israel then we can begin to understand why he might use ‘Wahhabism’ which as had a bad reputation since 9/11 in an attempt to discredit the pro-Palestinian ‘terror groups’ waging a campaign against Israeli forces. And if one is unable to understand some of the problems of using historical texts to make sense of a current phenomenon without considering the evolution of the movement as DeLong-Bas has done then when can begin to understand why he or she might arrive at very different conclusions, for e.g. the founder of ‘Wahhabism’ at time promotes ‘peace’ and ‘harmony’ therefore the modern ‘Wahhabi’ movement must also be peaceful and harmonious.

The key point to be made here and which is applicable for anyone studying different scholars’ representations of phenomenon in the social world is that ones prejudices including their religious and political aims and goals and the different kinds of ‘truth claims’ they rely on influences the sense-making process. This helps to explain why so many scholars provide very different interpretations or representations of the ‘same thing’. However as we know it is not the ‘same thing’ at all because unlike things in the natural world phenomenon in the social world have no objective reality.

The sociology of intellectuals also raised a number of problems. These had to do with whether or not we should treat intellectuals as ‘value-neutral’ mediators who are unconcerned with ‘big ideas’ and ‘grand narratives’ as Osborne proposes. What it is that defines or constitutes an ‘intellectual’, what their roles are and should be and to whom or what they owe their allegiance. The sociology of intellectuals also raised the issue of how we are to deal with different claims to truth.
Some like Mannheim and Parsons saw intellectuals as non-partisan and not attached to any group or class and inspired by ‘utopian ideals’. Benda and Orwell were among those who belonged to a group of scholars who treat intellectuals as a ‘class in themselves’ and saw them as ‘servants of truth’ and whose truth claims are motivated by a desire to ‘speak truth to power’. A third group which included Gramsci saw intellectuals as ‘movement and group-bound’ whose claims to truth often inspired by partisan politics and who were concerned with serving or helping advance the interests of a particular group or class.

Equally I could not ignore the differences in interpretation provided by scholars representing ‘Wahhabism’. These differences point to problems in the sociology of intellectuals warranting an inquiry into the role played by intellectuals representing ‘Wahhabism’. I began with the premise that what intellectuals do matter and their representations have implications for shaping public opinion and influencing the policy and decision making processes. This is especially important when we consider the recent tendency of ‘Western’ governments to ‘intervene’ in the Islamic world. Informed by ideas like dialectics, philosophy of internal relations and abstraction, I adopted a theoretical and analytical method that aimed at abstracting particular elements from the intellectuals’ representations of ‘Wahhabism’.

What I found was that intellectuals belonging to the neo-conservative, liberal and Marxist traditions were in fact concerned with ‘big ideas’ and ‘grand narratives’, that they were motivated by partisan politics and advancing the interests of particular groups and that their representations were not ‘value-neutral’ but instead influenced by specific prejudices.

I argue that intellectuals belonging to the liberal, neo-conservative traditions represented ‘Wahhabism’ in particular ways that aligned with the core beliefs of their respective traditions. Assuming the roles of ‘Movement Intellectuals,’ liberals who for example value liberty and secularism tended to understand ‘Wahhabism’ as among other things as restricting individual freedoms and as a threat to secular society. I found their representations of ‘Wahhabism’ to be shaped by key themata and generative metaphors related to ideas about individualism and progress which at least have their roots in the age of Reformation and Lasmarck and Spencer’s ideas about the ‘development’ of the human race respectively. This helps us to understand
why I found these liberal intellectuals using rhetorical techniques like the ‘Progress is Movement’ metaphor when representing ‘Wahhabism’ as an obstacle to progress, analogies that liken the current situation in ‘Wahabi’ societies to past periods in ‘Western’ history and neologisms like ‘gender apartheid’ and terms like ‘misogyny’ that convey the oppressive and restrictive nature of ‘Wahhabism’ particularly for women.

I found that for neo-conservatives ‘Wahhabism’ was by and large represented as the enemy. These intellectuals see ‘Wahhabism’ as a ‘murderous ideology’ suitable for ‘savages’ and that among other things is inspiring Palestinian ‘terrorist groups’ whose motivation to attack Israel according to them is primarily theological in nature. I determined that these intellectuals were motivated and influenced by themata and generative metaphors like Gods covenant with the Jews as detailed in the Hebrew Bible, that they are a part of a fated endless conflict between ‘Good’ and ‘Evil’ and that there exists kinds of humans who are inferior to them. My deconstruction also found that neo-conservatives tended to draw on rhetorical techniques that helped convey these ideas i.e. using metaphors dehumanising as well as the structuring of violent accounts that brutalises the ‘Wahhabi’ Other.

With regards to the Marxist ‘Movement Intellectuals’ I also found that their decisions to use rhetorical techniques like the nature and movement metaphors when representing ‘Wahhabism’ was related to different themata and generative metaphors that affected how they made sense of the world. More specifically their ideas about ‘progress’ and atheism, and generative metaphors that focus on man’s relationship with nature rather than for example looking to God for answers, saw them represent ‘Wahhabism’ as amongst other things ‘backwards’, a ‘natural part of Capitalist’ and a tool used by the ruling regime to maintain their positions of authority.

‘Wahhabism’ is clearly a contested category and this contest involves a variety of intellectuals belonging to different intellectual traditions and scholars who see the world and understand their roles as intellectuals in very different ways. More often than not these intellectuals are acting as ‘Movement Intellectuals’ whose motivations for representing ‘Wahhabism’ include a desire to impose a sense of order or to create and re-create the social world in ways that align their belief systems. Understanding
some of the why and how these intellectuals are doing this matters given their roles as ‘producers’ or ‘mediators’ of knowledge in the modern world especially when we consider the implications these things have for things like public opinion and the policy and decision making processes particularly when it comes to making foreign policy.

If we are going to rely on these representations of ‘Wahhabism’ in any way when thinking about and treating particular people and societies, or even more ‘intervene’ in foreign nations, and history says that this is likely to be the case, then it matters that we have an understanding of the how and the why intellectuals have represented ‘Wahhabism’ in different ways. This becomes particularly important when these intellectuals do not as is so often the case explicitly describe the ideas and interests motivating and shaping their representations. This study is my humble contribution to this sense-making process.
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