

# Ideology and Geopolitics: Wahhabism Saudi Arabia's Geopolitical Territoriality

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**Abstract:** Ideology is the science of belief, or the belief system, and is one of the dominant concepts in the field of epistemology, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This concept was first used in France by a person called Destutt de Tracy. Wahhabism is the name of an ideology that dates back to the mid-eighteenth century in Saudi Arabia. The founder/theorist of Wahhabism is Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhab. After he challenged his religious beliefs in Medina, he went to Najd, and met with Saudi Arabia's founder Mohammed bin Saud in the city of Al-Daraia, and since then, Wahhabism has become one of the foundations of the legitimacy of the Al-Saud government, which guarantees durability and its sustainability and justifies the transnational policies of the kingdom. Today, many of Al-Saud's actions in the political geography of the Muslim world, especially in the West and Southwest Asia are based on this ideology. This descriptive-analytic study investigates how Wahhabi's ideology has engaged in developing its geopolitical territory in the Islam World. It can be said that Wahhabi ideology is one of the main foundations of the Saudi political system and is an important factor in its geopolitical territoriality. The findings of this study indicate that the British secret support for the Wahhabi sectarianism, the longstanding link between the Wahhabi family and Al-Saud, the role of the Wahhabi scholars in the Saudi political structure, and the Al-Assad's investments in the Islamic world to promote this ideology, which is also supported by Al-Sheikh, all point to the importance of the Wahhabi ideology and its vital role in Saudi Arabia's geopolitical territoriality in the political geography of the Islamic world. Therefore, it can be suggested that Al-Saud, by promoting this ideology, not only seeks his survival at the head of power in Saudi Arabia but also seeks for geopolitical territoriality on the transnational boundaries and leadership of the Islamic world.

**Keywords:** Ideology, Wahhabism, Geopolitics, Saudi Arabia, Territoriality, Al-Saud

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## 1. Introduction

Saudi Arabia with 2.240 million square kilometers is the largest country in Southwest Asia. The country, which includes the major part of the Arabian Peninsula, is bordering Iraq from the north, Jordan, and Kuwait, UAE, Qatar and the Persian Gulf from the east, Oman from the south-east, Yemen from the south, and the Red Sea from the west (Map No. 1). Geographers generally divide Saudi Arabia into four regions and three districts. The western heights start from the Gulf of Aqaba and end at the Hejaz and Asir in the south. The Najd area in the center of the Arabian Peninsula is located on the southwest coast of the Persian Gulf, and finally, a desert region constituting a significant part of the country's area.

But the three districts of Saudi Arabia called "Thamaneh", "Najd" and "Hejaz" extend from the shores of the Red Sea to the land of Najran. The Najd area includes a vast region in the center of Saudi Arabia, the center of the formation of the Wahhabi sects and the Saudi government, and eventually the Hijaz area that begins northwest and extends to the southwest of the country, the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, as well as the strategic port of Jeddah [58].

Saudi Arabia has more than 33 million people, of whom only 16 million are citizens of the country and the rest are foreign nationals. This land has always been the residence of two ethnic groups of Sami, often settled in the interior of Saudi Arabia, and supporters living on the shores of the Oman Sea and the Arabian Sea [51]. Currently, Saudi Arabia has 6 regions and 13 provinces, each governed by a

princess or one of the royal family's affiliates. The emirs and rulers of the regions appoint the king. The political organization of Saudi Arabia divides each region into a number of provinces, each being under the command of the emir of each region [35]. Saudi Arabia is one of the world's largest producers and exporters of crude oil. It holds about one-fifth of the world's proven oil reserves. Oil accounts for 95% of exports and 70% of government revenues. Nonetheless, non-oil exports have increased recently. Saudi Arabia's energy sources have made the kingdom one of the richest countries in the world. Widespread oil revenues

have contributed to the rapid modernization of the country and the creation of a welfare state. Saudi Arabia also has the sixth largest source of natural gas reserves in the world. Islam is the only official religion in Saudi Arabia. The official religion of Saudi Arabia is Islam Salafi. According to government figures, about 85 percent of Saudis follow Sunni and Ahmed ibn Hanbal, and the remaining 15 percent are Shiites, most of whom live in the Shiite area of Saudi Arabia and apparently obey Ahwai bin Hanbal's fatwas. But the sect founded by Mohammed bin Abdul Wahab is more dominant in society [11].



*Figure 1. Saudi Arabia.*

The history of the Saudi political system dates back to 1744 in the al-Daraieh area and to the alliance between Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhab and Muhammad bin Saud. But the new Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, was founded in 1932 by King Abdulaziz ibn Saud. The wars and conflicts that led to the formation of the country began in 1902 with the capture of Riyadh, the house of Abbas and the ancestors of Al-Saud, by King Abdulaziz. Saudi Arabia is a

monarchy. Wahhabism is one of the foundations for the establishment of the ruling system in Saudi Arabia, and Al-Saud has taken responsibility for its durability and development [9]. Al-Saud's exploitation of this ideology in line with the geopolitical territoriality that led to works in the Islamic world such as extremism, terrorism, and land occupation necessitated this research. The purpose of this study is to identify the influence of the Wahhabi ideology on

the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its geopolitical territoriality beyond its geographical boundaries.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

Territoriality is a modern concept and is called human endeavor to apply monopoly supervision over a certain part of the "space". The attention paid to territoriality by the 1920s is inspired by behavioral scientists who studied animal behavior in their studies. Subsequently, sociologists used the practice of human beings to study human behavior. In the second half of the twentieth century, interest in analyzing human behavior in the form of behavioral schools expanded. At this point in time, human beings were considered to be instinctual behavior that man was inevitable to do it. The introduction of human geography to human territoriality dates back to the early 1970s, by thinkers such as Jean-Gottman and Edward Soja. Soja strongly argued in the book of political organization of space in order to investigate human desires for the organization of space "in the form of spheres of influence or designated territories that are well-defined or, at least to a degree, a monopoly by their inhabitants or their inventors" [88].

Jean-Gottman in the book of the importance of the realm in the modern sense of the realm introduced the concepts of national sovereignty and national qualifications. Gottman believes that the realm is evolving alongside the sovereignty and enable the community to differentiate from others [82]. Gottman's contributions to thinking about the realization of nature are relatively different. Instead of thinking about the nature of the territoriality, Gottman's focus was the concept of the realm. Gottman relies on the book of the importance of the realm that political units are the domains of representations and currents. Gottman insists on challenging the realms that surround the environment as the main force, their insights, their thoughts, and their relationships with others that advance the realm of processes. In the same years, Soja and Gutmann's notion of influence has greatly influenced geographic political research.

Robert David Sack, a scholar who pursued a study on territoriality more seriously and published a book on this topic. According to Sack, territoriality was the same spatial or spatial strategy for influencing or controlling resources and individuals by controlling the area. Sack says territoriality is a powerful element in human life, but researchers have easily crossed it. The territoriality was the basis of power, and it was not an instinctive factor. What made territoriality in the English-speaking world a subject of geographic political studies was Robert Sack's work in the 1980s. The purpose of the human territoriality is to attempt to influence or control actions and interactions (objects of persons), or claims, and attempts to enforce control in a geographical area; whether these efforts are carried out by individuals or by groups and on any scale from the room to the international arena, this definition holds true [86].

Raftstein defines human territoriality as a complex system of communicative relationships between individuals or social

groups with the realm or others using facilitators in order to guarantee maximum independence within the system's scope. In the mid-1990s, other ideas were presented, all intending to consolidate Sack's theory. Among the theorists of this decade is David Smith. David Smith was more focused on the field of human resources than the field of psychology. He believes that territoriality is not an instinctive feature of man; it is based on social creation. From Smith's point of view, this concept and its various forms of expression must be seen as a means to achieve a certain goal, such as survival, political domination or alienation. Therefore, this concept is more complicated than the expression of a territorial necessity to be compared with animal behavior. After World War II, the focus of political geography for several years was limited to border research in the form of classification, limitation, and marking of the boundary, but later, the interest in cross-border studies was drawn to the fact that the political boundaries were the result of the human perception of human beings and the determination of a realm to preserve its cultural identity and shape its political future. On the basis of such features, the concept of human territoriality arose. Territoriality is a behavioral phenomenon that has a close relationship with the organization of space in the form of influence zones or specific territorial boundaries, the obvious geographical implications of which are the emergence of a recognizable pattern of spatial interaction. In this sense, some activities in a particular area are performed exclusively so that others are prevented from entering that area. Territoriality is at first a strategy for creating constraints and controls. The result is that the geographic space is built up, a space that is dependent on the earth and is managed by humans. In other words, territoriality is a strategy through which individuals, groups, and societies apply monopoly supervision over a specific and limited part of space [77].

Contrary to a geographic territory that is constant and limited to the internal borders of a country, the geopolitical realm is fluid and dynamic and has no fixed boundaries. The geopolitical realm is the geographic space, the human beings and the relevant societies that are in the sphere of influence of one or more political, cultural, economic, social, military, security, commercial, technological, and media variables of a country or a powerful actor. In other words, the countries, territories, and geographical areas of the perimeter that are in the sphere of influence of a country (the hub) are called its "geopolitical territory". Accordingly, the geopolitical boundary is the boundaries and limits of the geopolitical territory and the domains of influence of the Metropolitan state. Regarding the geopolitical territory and boundary, it is important to pay attention to the following points:

- A. Each geopolitical territory has a central point or a peripheral space. The central point is the powerful country of the region that manages and controls the realm and imposes its will on that space or territory [68]. The territory and the sphere of influence also include a number of dependent countries or societies that are affected by the will of the center or the actor and its values [21].

- B. Geopolitical contexts or geographic spheres of a country can include various variables. For example, the geographical scope of a country can be multivariate or alternate. If the geographic space of a country is influenced by a value of the central state, for example, ideology, one can say that the sphere of influence is one and the same. But if space is influenced by several variables from the main country, its territory is multifaceted.
- C. Geopolitical territories are the borders of the political geography of countries and are transboundary. The values and advantages of countries are spreading in geographical spaces beyond their borders. This spread is both official and informal. With the development of all-round interactions, international relations, as well as the development of information technology and new media tools, geopolitical realms and scopes of influence are rapidly emerging. In other words, they have a lot of dynamics. Therefore, mapping the geopolitical map of the world, unlike the geopolitical map of the world, is very difficult because the geopolitical boundaries are dynamic and changing [67].
- D. Geopolitical domains and borders that are progressing or receding in space. Their advancement and recession is a function of the pattern of competition between actors and centers of production and the dissemination of values in geographical space. Competitions are also a function of power relations between actors. Power and competition determine the extent of the contraction and expansion of space geopolitical territories, as well as the progression and recession of geopolitical boundaries. Given that the patterns of competition and power relations are dynamic, actors are constantly struggling to produce, concentrate, and increase power, and they have a permanent position and their competitive ability varies. So the range of their values is also variable. Therefore, geopolitical domains and borders are unstable. In other words, unlike the geopolitics of countries and their boundaries, which are stable, geopolitical domains and borders are unstable and floating" [21].
- E. The values and benefits of the actors who are spreading in geographic spaces and creating their geopolitical territories and boundaries are of enormous variety and scope and encompass all political, social and political, ideological, ideological, cultural, economic, military, media, technical and technological, scientific, educational, service, and commercial spaces. Therefore, in this situation, every geographical actor strives to expand the geographic scope and the number of more human communities influenced by his values and forces his rivals to withdraw from the scene [69]. In other words, each of the geographic actors is trying to increase its geopolitical and geopolitical boundaries and, in contrast, to reduce the geopolitical scope and boundaries of its rivals on a regional and global scale.

### 3. Research Methodology

A descriptive-analytical research design was employed in this study. In this method, the reconstruction of the aspects related to a phenomenon that has already happened is taken into consideration. This method is most often used in historical research and often relies on primary and secondary sources. Because geopolitical research requires a historical study, therefore, with respect to the chosen topic, the researcher may use descriptive methods to analyze his data [18]. Therefore, as this study addresses Wahhabism and its position in the geopolitical territoriality of Saudi Arabia, the discussion of them is related to the historical issues and the opinions of radical Islamic scholars, therefore, an analytical descriptive method is used. In this way, the researcher, in addition to illustrating what is described, explains the state of the problem and its dimensions. The library method has been used to collect the data. In this method, foreign and domestic books, documents, publications, articles Internet websites are used.

### 4. Results and Discussion

Religion is part of faith and a belief in understanding religious and ideological issues. But religion becomes ideology as soon as it takes political color. In ideology, dos and don'ts can be discussed, and any ideology, while studying the status quo, seeks to operationalize its ideas. One of these ideologies, which was inspired by Sunni Islam in the Muslim world, but is separated from the ideological foundations of Sunni and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, is the "Wahhabi ideology". This ideology is the core of the belief system of Saudi Arabia. The combination of religion and power in the Saudi family has given this government a unique attribute [15]. Al-Saud not only used this ideology in the past to establish an independent political space within the realm of the Ottoman caliphate [40]. but also in recent decades to expand its geopolitical realm in the political geography the Islam world and its leadership. Al-Saud's exploitation of this ideology in line with his geopolitical territoriality leads to a variety of factors that are rooted in the interdependence of Wahhabism and Al-Saud.

#### 4.1. The Prevalence of Sectarianism in the Islamic World

The greatness of the Ottoman caliphate was such that it protected Islamic civilization as a barrier against the West and Christianity. The Western world was looking for a chance to eliminate this geopolitical power. One of the ways in which the West used it successfully was to create religious differences and strengthen sectarianism. With the shattering of the foundations of the Ottoman caliphate and its decline in the Arabian Peninsula, Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhab and the Wahhabi movement erupted in the eighteenth century [31]. The acceptance of Ibn Batuniyeh Harandi's beliefs led to Mohammad bin Abdul Wahab's consensus against his masters, his father, and brother, Solomon. The extremist ideas of Mohammad bin Abdul Wahhab were so forceful that

his brother Solomon forced him to leave the city of Medina by writing a book titled "Sawaeq al-Allahieh" in rejecting the Wahhabi sects. After leaving the city of Medina, he went to Najd, the land of Musaylama (evil false prophet). Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab excommunicated those who did not follow the Wahhabi beliefs. But he also insists on his own beliefs grudgingly. The original genuine Islam and the Wahhabi's rightful manner of prayer are pure Arab Islamic teaching that is not tainted with the Iranian, Greek, Hindi, and other cultures [54]. Their goal was to struggle against polytheism and heresy, mysticism, philosophy, Sufism as well as the fight against the merger of the Arabic spirit with the spirit of Iranian mysticism, Greek philosophy, and so on. Therefore, the return to the tradition of the Prophet and the actions of the predecessor, namely, companions and followers, are factors preventing this innovation. This attitude believed that in such a heretical situation, the best way to return unto untouched texts and to follow the dictates and norms, without the intervention of the human intellect, is to understand, interpret and modify the text. This is the beginning of the spread of Islam as a radical Wahhabi [57]. Given the difference between Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab's opinions and the leaders of the four sects of the Sunni religions, such thoughts were opposed to the Ottoman caliphate and its ideology, since the Ottoman caliphate itself was the main center and guardian of the Sunni religion [24].

#### **4.2. Historical Link Between Wahhabism and Al-Saud**

With the expulsion of Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhab from Medina, he went to Najd. There, Mohammed bin Abdul Wahab met Mohammed bin Saud, the Amir of Al-Dareyah district, and became known to him as his "ally" for propaganda. In Al-Dareyah, Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhab asked Mohammed bin Saud to support his religious and ideological efforts. He also assisted Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhab with two conditions: first, the Sheikh should not leave him alone and not return to his city, and secondly, Sheikh should not prevent people from paying taxes. Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhab accepted the first condition. But in the second condition, he said: "God will give you better treasures to make you needless" Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdul Wahab blessed him the power and of the conquest of the lands of Najd [29]. Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhab promised him that he would not leave him alone in reaching his goal of establishing a "geopolitical autonomous realm" in Najd and its surrounding areas. They agreed that the power would be in the hands of Muhammad bin Saud and followed by his children and remained in the family of Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhab in the wake of the religious affiliation. The first "geographic territory" of their coalition was formed in 1744 in the district of Najd and continued until 1818. The combination of religion and power in the Saudi family has given this government a unique feature. The establishment of this country was the result of the ambition of the head of a tribe, his solidarity with a religious ritual and his conquest policy [3].

Muhammad bin Saud passed away after 30 years of rule in

the year 1179 AH in 1765. With the recommendation of Mohammed bin Sa'ud and Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhab's approval, Abdul Aziz bin Mohammed bin Saud was elected to his successor. Abdul Aziz also took a lot of action to develop the "geographic territory" of the Wahhabis, and with the seizure of the "Ahsa and Qatif areas," in 1208 AH, 1793, the geographical scope of his rule extended to the coasts of Persian Gulf. In 1220 AD, 1805, the Wahhabis captured the city of Mecca in the course of their "geographic redevelopment".

The Wahhabi domination over Mecca caused a famine in the city so that the people of Mecca had to eat dog meat. For this reason, Sharif Ghaleb, the Amir of Mecca, sought to save the lives of the people in peace and surrender the city. For seven years, Wahhabi rule continued on the cities of Mecca and Medina, during which time Syrians and Egyptian were deprived of Hajj rituals [39]. The Ottoman regime, which considered Saudi Arabia to be its own territory, was severely constrained by the actions of the Wahhabis, and Muhammad Ali Pasha Ottoman ousted the Wahhabis on the behalf of the Ottoman government in 1818 and cleaned up the city of Mecca from the presence of Wahhabis. The second phase of the Wahhabi invitation started was Faisal Bin Turki's activities. They were restored under the leadership of Faisal Bin Turki and rebuilt their rule between 1824 and 1824. He created peace with the Shiites in order to gain the loyalty of the people in the Ahsā region and instead imposed heavy taxes on them. On the other hand, Sheikh Abdul Rahman ibn Hassan, the Wahhabi scholar, at that time, inquired into Shiite beliefs, forcing people to join Islam in Wahhabi's readings of Islam. However, once again, this time, they left power in the hands of the Rashidiya family from northern Arabia. In 1884, Riyadh got out of control and returned to Kuwait in 1889 [53].

The third stage of the Wahhabi invitation began with the activities of Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rahman bin Saud in 1919 in collaboration with the United Kingdom. The model of Abdul Aziz bin Saud, the founder of the third government of the Al-Saud in the peninsula, was based on "divide and rule." This pattern and strategy are consistent with the points of differentiation and division of the tribes and religions [43]. He established Saudi Arabia in 1932 after the domination of Najd, Hejaz, and the districts, and, until today, his sons rule in this country, and many of the sons and descendants of Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhab followed his activities. The ideas of Mohammed bin Abdul Wahab with the military support of Mohammed bin Saud first expanded in Najd and then in other Arabian Peninsula cities such as Riyadh, Mecca, and Medina. Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab's activities continued until his death both in the field of religion and politics [24]. He taught at al-Darajeh Mosque and wrote about monotheism and Islamic scholastic theology wrote numerous letters around to reach Najd and he gained many supporters. He was also a political advisor to Mohammed bin Saud. However, after the death of Mohammed bin Saud, his advisory role declined. Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab died in 1793, and his eldest son, Abdullah, succeeded him and

continued his cooperation with Al-Saud upon his father's covenant [58].

Official Wahhabis have no problems with the fact that the princes are united with the "infidels" (i.e. Christians and even Jews). Saudi Arabia has always had a close and continuous relationship, especially with the United States, since its establishment. Some Wahhabis believe that their Imam, the king of Saudi Arabia, follows the great political example of the past political regime, the traditions of the Prophet of Islam. In any case, the Imam knows better what is in the public interest. What matters is the control of the internal social realm that should be away from the polytheism symbols. For example, the worship of trees, the pilgrimage of tombs and learning from deceivers and magicians who are considered sacred. Dressing up Saudi Arabia for these signs of polytheism is more important than the formation of Islamic foreign policy. They are pleased that they have given the foreign policy to the governor, the servant of the holy shrines [14].

**4.3. The Position of Wahhabi Scholars in the Saudi Political Structure**

Like the beginning of Islam, the Wahhabi invitation aimed for the "formation of government". Politically, over time, Saudi Arabia was under the full influence of the two families due to the mutual relationship that occurred between Al-Sheikh (descendants of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab) and Al-Assad. Al-Saud took the legitimacy of many of his activities from Al-Sheikh, and instead, Al-Sheikh used his political beliefs not only in the Arabian Peninsula but also in other Islamic countries and this expanded and added to Al-Assad territory. Family relations and, consequently, the

influence of al-Shih in Saudi Arabia have reached such a level that they are not only influential in religious affairs but also in political affairs [1]. At least one day a week, al-Sheikh meets with the king and other Saudi officials, in a manner that the judiciary, Hajj, and the Islamic factions and the endowment are appointed in consultation with Al-Sheikh. The Saudi Judiciary is also governed by the Wahhabi Shari'a and under Al-Sheikh [58]. Over the past 275 years, the history of political cooperation between Al-Assad and Wahhabism has witnessed a critical and strategic partnership between the tribal political populace and a clan tribal population. During this time, they participated in the political structure of Saudi Arabia. A look at the governance structure in Saudi Arabia has a fourfold dimension. These are the four chambers of the House of sheikhs, the monarchy system, the Council of Ministers, and the Consultative Assembly. At the head of this structural pyramid, there is the House of sheikhs which, in addition to the al-Saud elders, the Wahhabi scholars are also in this category, who view the political, economic and social affairs with the satisfaction of the leaders [23].

if we the government of Saudi Arabia according "Max Weber" three-fold division as a traditional authoritarian government, then we must accept that traditional domination is based on the traditions obeyed by the ruler and the citizens. In this type of domination, the ruler cannot ignore the fundamental traditions of the state, because otherwise, he would put his government in danger. Therefore, a large part of what constitutes religious rigor in Saudi Arabia stems from the pressure and influence of these Wahhabi Salafi groups on the Saudi government, not the individual reversal of the rulers. Table 1 shows the power hierarchy in Saudi Arabia and the position of the Wahhabi scholars:

*Table 1. The Hierarchy of Power in Saudi Arabia.*

House of sheikhs	It is composed of Wahhabi scholars, tribal elders, wealthy and influential-Saudis approved and supported by the Saudi family.
The monarchy system	King of Saudi Arabia is the head of the monarchy and his power is dependent on his wisdom and his personal charisma and his dominance over the House of sheikhs and other organs of the country.
The Council of Ministers	It consists of two sections, one Crown Prince and his colleagues and other professionals and technocrats who are specialized in technical affairs, etc.
Consultative assembly	The number of members of the assembly is 90 people and the chairman of the assembly act as an interlocutor between the Assembly and the King.

Therefore, it seems that the government in Saudi Arabia is a kind of royal system based on common consensus between the ruling family, the religious institution and many other individuals, families and groups, and there is no absolute government based solely on the will of the ruling person [56]. The promotion of the religious position and the achievement of the head of the ulama and the Grand Mufti in Saudi Arabia are under the command of the king of this country. Currently, the General Mufti and the Supreme Commander of Saudi Arabia and the head of the Saudi Arabian custodial unit is Al-Sheikh who has been appointed by the King of Saudi since the death of bin Baz, the former Mufti in 1377 AH. Thanks to Al-Sheikh's services to Al-Saud to earn, expand, and retain his power from his appointment to this position, he has held the status of Ministry in Saudi Arabia. A look at the fatwas issued in Saudi Arabia indicates

that these fatwas have been issued and enforced in line with the demands and advancement of government decrees and preservation of power and the sovereignty of Al-Saud, and should not be in conflict with the political behavior of the state and the kingdom. Some of the fatwas of al-Shaykh, which were issued in line with the consolidation and continuation of the Al-Saud government, show the relation between religion and government [26].

A look at some of the fatwas issued by Al-Shihakh indicates the religious justification of Al-Saud's actions at transnational boundaries. Al-Sheikh, in one of his fatwa, called "the attack on the Shiites as a lawful act". In the Friday prayers sermon on April 16, 2014, he called on all the Ummah of Islam to fight Shi'ism in the mosque of Ben Abdullah in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Another "fatwa" like "Islamic awakening and the expulsion of dictators is

forbidden", "It is obligatory to attack the Syrian authorities" and "Iranians are magicians and fire worshippers" aimed to justify the political behavior of the government and the rulers of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia witnessed changes in the political realm with the death of King Abdullah and the rise of Malik Salman. These changes, which were carried out in line with the Comprehensive Development Plan for the modernization of Saudi Arabia and its transformation into a country similar to the developed Western countries, were undertaken by the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. This action, which sought to challenge the traditional wing of the Wahhabi clan, was faced with the reaction of the Al-Shaikh Mufti of Saudi Arabia. Undoubtedly, any corrective measures that Al-Assad will carry out will not be able to remove the Wahhabi scholars from the Saudi political structure or to weaken their position in the hierarchy of power, because the Wahhabi ideology is one of the main pillars of the Al-Saud regime, and is the one of the main tools of this regime are to justify regional policies in the political geography of the Muslim world, especially in the west and south-west of Asia [35].

#### 4.4. Al-Saud Investment to Promote Wahhabism.

After becoming the official-Saudi ideology, Wahhabism was promptly spread in various countries of the Muslim world, especially in the West and Southwest Asia, under the supervision of the Saudi government. The propaganda of Wahhabism is not so much a new phenomenon as is the origin of the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia. In the past, the sect was only able to promote its thoughts and to open Islamic centers and propaganda in other countries, expanding their denomination by abusing poverty and ignorance in poor countries and distributing books and tapes. The other propaganda method of this group is to use the capacity of the Hajj ceremony, the Umrah, as well as the millions of Arab and non-Arab workers who have the power of propaganda to promote their thoughts in other countries. These classical methods could propagate these thoughts in the Muslim world to such an extent that much of the Salafism that exists in Egypt and Syria is related to the same kind of propaganda in the time ahead of satellite and the Internet [32]. Salafists were barred from the manifestations of modern civilization for a while, but after being allowed to use these devices, they quickly recovered their backwardness over the past few years, and Wahhabi satellite networks one after the other was on the stage. By promoting the Wahhabi ideology, the Saudis are pushing for an increase in the number of followers of this sect to develop their sphere of influence and geopolitical territoriality in the Islamic world, so that they can use their geographical position which, on the one hand, is the center of the rise of Islam and, on the other hand, is rich in huge oil reserves, they can lead the entire Islamic world [46].

In the confrontation with the Shiites and other minorities in Saudi Arabia, the Saudi authorities have emphasized the Salafist nature of their government; therefore, the expansion of the Wahhabi Salafist influence in the world is measured in line with the goals of the foreign policy of foreign policy. Saudi princes, while striving to preserve Wahhabism's

supremacy over all other religions, put financial aid alongside the financial assistance of the merchants and other riches in the service of wahabism streams in the country, so that its influence will be facilitated in the Muslim world, especially in the West and Southwest Asia. Wahhabi scholars always pressure the government to allocate more funds for the promotion of Wahhabism. The Saudi government, especially in the last half-century, has considered soft power and cultural diplomacy through the propaganda of Wahhabism and with the backing of oil dollars [93]. Some of the measures that the Saudis have taken to promote Wahhabism in the Muslim world include:

- a) Building schools and centers for teaching Quran and granting them financial aid.
- b) Granting scholarships to students from Muslim countries.
- c) Sending Muslim students to religious schools in Saudi Arabia, which, after graduating from universities in the country, work as sheikhs, Friday and congregation imams in mosques and schools belonging Wahhabi.
- d) Distributing Hajj free tickets, especially between great scholars.
- e) The construction of mosques in villages and cities run by Wahhabi sheikhs as the main centers for promoting Wahhabism.
- f) Paying pensions to some Wahhabi missionaries.
- g) A large distribution of Saudi books and journals in Saudi mosques.

Using Wahhabi networks to promote Wahhabism [33]. Undoubtedly, the promotion of Wahhabi ideology by Saudi Arabia in various ways in the political geography of the Islamic world is in the direction of developing a geopolitical sphere of influence. The issue itself has led to a "geopolitical conflict", as Saudi Arabia has stepped up its ideology in areas where, in addition to the opposition of local people, it has been in conflict with regional rivals such as Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran. To really grasp this, it's enough to take a look at some of the areas that the Saudis stepped in to propagate Wahhabi ideology.

#### A. Southwest Asia

The Islamic world, especially Southwest Asia, has become more ideological in the new millennium. This region has become the focus of competition between the three ideologies: Brotherhood (Turkey), Shi'a (Iran) and Wahhabi (Saudi Arabia). Among these three ideologies, Wahhabism is the most extreme. This ideology seeks geopolitical territoriality in the Western and Southwestern Asia to dominate the Islamic world in this region as the Islamic Heartland, and continue to dominate other parts of the Muslim world. The field facts in the region, and in particular in Syria, indicate that Saudi Arabia, despite the many costs and financial support of Salafist groups, has achieved little success in this region. Saudi Arabia, through its cultural and financial means, may have attracted some followers in the countries in the southwest and western Asia, but failed to achieve success in influencing the nation and political system of these countries [44].

In Iraq, despite the large cost and support of al-Qaeda and ISIS, Saudi Arabia failed, and the country's attempt to engineer the Iraqi election in 2018 would be also suppressed by the ideological influence of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In Syria, Saudi Arabia, supported by ISIL and other Salafist groups such as Jihās-ul-Islām, Al-Nusra, and sought the fall of Bashar al-Assad and the domination of Salafist groups over Syria, but in this country, it also confronted with the ideological power of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Hezbollah of Lebanon. Saudi Arabia, in addition to Iran, faced another rival like Turkey. Turkey, in line with its "strategic depth", seeks excellence in the West and Southwest Asia [4] and to challenge regional rivals, including Saudi Arabia and Iran. Today, much of the north and northwest of Syria are under control of the Turkish government. The issue that caused the disappointment of Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt, and the most important reason for the support of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and sometimes the Egyptian government of the Syrian Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its s Peoples' Protection Units (YPG) militia due to the geopolitical influence of Turkey in northern Syria. Contrary to the imagination of the three Arab countries, the most important reason for Turkey's presence in northern Syria is "geo-security", because the Ankara government calls the YPG group a terrorist group and a branch of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

Saudi Arabia in Yemen, despite it's nearly four years of occupation and spending billions of dollars, not only failed to bring Mansour Hadi back to power, but faced Ansarullah, the Houthi militia, and sought a way out from the southern neighbor for heavy defeats. In Lebanon, Al-Saud's and Wahhab's attempts to capture Hizbullah failed, and its supported group in Lebanon, called March 14th, also failed to secure its interests. Also, the cut off of Saudi military aid to Lebanon could not challenge Lebanon. Egypt is the only region in South West Asia (the Middle East), where Saudi Arabia could almost affect its political system. In addition to its role in the destruction of the Muslim Brotherhood and the rise of General Sisi, Saudi Arabia also played a role in the coup government.

#### B. Central Asia

Central Asia is the key to promoting the political interests of many geopolitical actors, and the Ferghana valley is also the main focus of these games. Although most of the Central Asian populations are Muslim, political Islam is very active only in the two Central Asian countries, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan [7]. Due to its cultural and religious background, Central Asia has been the origin of the Sunni elders in many of the cities of this region, such as Samarkand and Bukhara. Accordingly, this region is very important for the Saudis, but the Soviet rule during the Cold War created a barrier to Saudi Arabia's relations with the people of Central Asia. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan created a good opportunity for the Saudis to influence Central Asia. From the past, there were traditional relations between the Saudis and the Sunni people in the area, but the occupation of Afghanistan by the Red

Army led to Saudi Arabia sending a large number of jihadi forces to the country. These forces subsequently entered the Central Asian region, and this provided a platform for further Saudi relations with the Islamists of the region. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of Central Asian countries, a new gateway was opened to Saudi Arabia to provide an opportunity to realize its long-standing desire to lead the Muslim world through influencing the developments in Central Asia [61].

From 2014 to 2015, with the empowerment of Islam seen by Central Asian leaders as the most important contributor to national sovereignty, the legislatures of Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan, Tajikistan have adopted religious laws that provide a framework for religious activities. Under these rules, religious institutions and preachers of foreign countries were allowed to operate in Central Asian countries. Accordingly, institutions from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan were active in Central Asia, especially in the Fergana Valley [91]. The Saudis entered the phase of cooperation with the newly independent Central Asian countries more readily. Of course, the people and some regional Islamic groups also took the opportunity to regain their Islamic identity. In the era of Soviet rule, the people of the region became alienated with Islamic principles, and in this context, the return of Islamic identities was very difficult. They could not recognize the right path, and they were confused when seeking their identity. In sum, these faults created a great opportunity for Saudi Arabia to bring their readings of Islam or Wahhabism in the region, which are still ongoing and continues to grow. Saudi Arabia has used two methods to promote Wahhabism in Central Asia: one by sending expatriates from Central Asia living in Saudi Arabia as missionaries to their lands, and the other was sending them to Saudi Arabia to study at the International Islamic University of Madinah. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many people from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and other countries in the region studied in Saudi Arabia [87].

Some believe that Saudi Arabia had three major goals in Central Asia after the collapse of the Soviet Union: one was the destabilization of the secular regimes ruling Central Asia. The second was to prevent Iran from penetrating Central Asia, and the third was related to Saudi Arabia's financial initiative because Saudi Arabia was seeking to link the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to Central Asia and disconnect Iran from Central Asia [70]. Another rival of Saudi Arabia in Central Asia is Turkey. Turkey's interest in Central Asia dates back to the early 1990s, during which time, Turkish Prime Minister Suleiman Demirel from Turkey called Turkey as the pupil of the Central Asian and Caucasian eyes. With the advent of the Justice and Development Party and in line with "Theory of Strategic Depth" by Ahmet Davutoglu, Turkey tried to play a role by using its soft power in many geopolitical areas. One of these regions is Central Asia. The ethnic, linguistic and religious similarities of the region with Turkey have led it to challenge the active role of rival powers, including Iran, and in particular Saudi Arabia [50]. Afghanistan was another center of Wahhabism influence.

Saudi Arabia was able to influence Afghanistan through religious schools, the Pakistani intelligence system, and also during the Soviet occupation through the flow of "Afghan Arabs." In fact, these Arab-Afghans paved the way for the formation of al-Qaeda in the land of Afghanistan [60].

#### C. Caucasus

The Salafist background in the Caucasus dates back to the Soviet era, and also after the independence of the South Caucasian republics in the 1990s. The Soviet Union initially suppressed all religious activities in the Caucasus region, which led to the sharp reaction of the Muslims. The emergence of Salafism in the Soviet society dates back to the time of Gorbachev, in which Salafism was influenced by the teachings of Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhab [62]. The formation of the Wahhabi congregation in the Caucasus region was often tied to the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, but this event dates back to the mid-1970s when dozens of Islamic mission groups appeared in the villages of the marginal territories of Turk-Saluk. They were secretly held the Quran class and the Arabic language in the homes of some local scholars. These religious schools were engaged in promotional activities and attracting indigenous youth. In the 1980s, the Soviet government shut down these schools. But in the 1990s, some of the teachers of these schools, such as Bukh al-Din Kebdov, became famous Wahhabi emirs in the Caucasus region [66]. In the 1970s, a wide range of religious texts including books and a collection of Islamic scholarly pamphlets were distributed in the Caucasus region among Muslims [85]. The "belief vacuum" and "economic problems" in these republics provided the basis for the influence of Wahhabism and radicalism in the Caucasus [25]. Under such conditions, a group of Muslims with an extremist interpretation of Islam started their campaign activities. These groups have been supported by foreign powers, especially the radical Islamic groups based in Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iraq, and several Western countries, including the United States, to advance their goals in the North Caucasus, and in particular to destabilize Russia. The Republic of Azerbaijan, as part of the Caucasus region, in the vicinity of extremist Islamists of the Republic of Dagestan and Chechnya, was exposed to the development of sectarian and religious extremism. In addition to foreign interference, the existence of favorable domestic conditions in the Republic of Azerbaijan, including the lack of attention to the Wahhabi threat and restrictions imposed on the Shiites, allowed the penetration of extremist thoughts [17].

Given the defeat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, although the transfer of militants to Russia and Azerbaijan is unlikely, the influence of Wahhabism's ideology on the Caucasian Muslims, especially in the northern region, is still tangible. The Salafi and Wahhabi propagandists have questioned the teachings of Islam in Russia, especially the regions of Dagestan and the neighboring regions of Azerbaijan, to undermine Muslim religious beliefs and to attract them to Wahhabism and prescribe the lifestyle of Salafi to the people. The Wahhabis, in the form of Islamic institutions, are trying to attract people who are prone to it. The activities of the

World Muslim Youth Forum, with its headquarters in Jeddah, the Saudi Al-Haramin Institute and the Ibrahim al-Ebrahim Charity Foundation, are noteworthy in this area. The most important radical Islamic group in the Caucasus is the Islamic Emirate of the Caucasus. This radical Islamic group seeks to establish an Islamic government in the Caucasus region [19].

#### D. The Indian subcontinent

It seems that the root of many of the Shiite and Sunni verbal conflicts in the Middle East, the growth of important Salafist movements in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and even Central Asia, should have the religious and political influence of Saudi Arabia and Iran among Muslims in these regions in the first half of the twentieth century and in the beliefs of Muslims in the subcontinent against a new power in the Hejaz area [20].

#### E. India

Islam first arrived in Sindh and Punjab in the 7th century via Kabul and later in the 8th century via Baluchistan [5]. But in connection with the influence of Wahhabi thought in India, it should be said that Wahhabis were first referred in the first half of the nineteenth century to scholars who started a jihadi movement in India, and some of them also returned from Hejaz. The British seem to have played the role in referring to this group as Wahhabi. Indeed, the British colonialism accused them of Wahhabism to resist against its opponents. Nevertheless, in the second half of the 20th century and in the early 20th century, Wahhabi ideas were found to be popular in India. During the same period, there was a relationship between the Wahhabi scholars and the Indian scholars, which made the Indian more familiar with Wahhabi's invitation [52]. Some English scholars have linked the beginning of the arrival of Wahhabi beliefs in the Indian subcontinent era with the jihadist movement of Sayyid Ahmad Braillewi. Sir William Wilson Hunter of British government agents in the Pentecostal of India in the Muslim Book of India was one of the first to examine this issue [73]. The growing expansion of thoughts that share common interests with Wahhabi's Salafism in the region of Shabegharat as the easternmost point of the Islamic world, on the one hand, and the grip of Salafist views in areas such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Syria, play an important role in the expansion of the Salafism in the Muslim world. Among the influential figures of Salafism in India, we can mention Shah Wali Allah Dehlavi and Seyyed Ahmad Barilvy [55].

In India, various views were expressed about the Wahhabi movement, as some were opposed to the Islamic Nation and the non-recognition of the four Sunni religions. But for Iqbal Lahori, the Wahhabi movement is spreading a new tendency and the spirit of freedom in the Muslim world. He also criticized Wahhabism, but not as Wahhab's opponents say. Finally, Iqbal considers Wahhabis to be the source of further movements. Since the mid-1990s, Saudi Arabia has been increasing its quest for influence in India and has even challenged its regional rivals such as Iran and Turkey. The most important rival of Saudi Arabia in India is Turkey. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who seeks to lead the Islamic world,

seeks to expand its influence on South Asian countries, including India and Pakistan. Turkey's influence over India should first be confronted with the influence of Saudi Arabia in India because in recent years Riyadh has begun a massive campaign to promote radical thinking, especially Wahhabism in India.

The Saudis are sponsoring several Salafist organizations in India, including charities, educational institutions, and political organizations. India Foundation, which has close ties to the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party, last year released an analysis that emphasized the importance of the use of palm trees in their logos by two Saudi-based universities. This is evidence of Saudi Arabia's triumphant efforts to create the "ideological basis of Arabization of Muslims in India." Over time, this will have a devastating impact on the nature and local character of Islam in the Indian subcontinent. But the impact of Saudi Arabia's efforts is exacerbated by about 3 million Indian workers working in the country. Many of these Indian workers come from Kerala, in the southwest of India. Hamed Mulamangalour (Abdul Hamad Aripatamanil), a political analyst and Indian scholar from the Kerala states, has pointed out that the Muslim community in this state is under the "Arabization" process; this is just as Westernization is. The Indians who lived in the United Kingdom returned the British style to India. In a similar fashion, Muslims living in Kerala province have sought to restore Arab lifestyle from Saudi Arabia.

For Saudi Arabia, the only issue is not superiority in religious matters. For Saudi Arabia, the main reason for engagement with Indian Muslims is to confront Iranian influence in this country. An attempt to infiltrate Muslims in India could be another source of pressure for the Saudis to oppose India's investment in the Chabahar port of Iran on Persian Gulf. Saudi Arabia is worried that the Chabahar port will help the Iranian government deal with the sanctions imposed by the United States following the withdrawal of its President Donald Trump from the 2015 International Covenant on Civil Aviation. The Saudis are worried that Chabahar port will enable Iran to gain more market share from India for its oil exports at the expense of Saudi Arabia's share. This would mean increasing the revenues of the Iranian government and allowing the country to exercise power in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean. In such a context, Saudi Arabia sees Indian Shiites, which make up about 152 million Muslims, as Iran's supportive forces. Indian media, according to the Indian Information Bureau, said that the predominantly conservative Islamic scholars of Saudi Arabia are visiting Muslim Sunni communities in India. According to the Indian Information Bureau, the number of visitors in 2011 to 2013 was 25,000. At the time of these visits, it has been said that tens of millions of dollars have been distributed, which is on a scale beyond the allocation of funds from Turkey in the subcontinent [75].

#### F. Pakistan

The abundance of Saudi oil revenues and the lack of legal supervision over its form of consumption have led its rulers to the expansion of geopolitical influence and advancement

to other countries, especially poor countries such as Pakistan, which have a special status among non-Arab countries [11]. Religious diversity and ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity, along with the ineffectiveness of the ruling states, have led Pakistan to be considered unstable and fragile [80]. Pakistan, as a major Islamic country with a Sunni majority, has the necessary premises to influence Salafi Wahhabism. Due to Mecca and Medina and oil richness, Saudi Arabia has provided the ground for Pakistan to become one of the focal points for the promotion of Wahhabism in South Asia due to economic, educational, and cultural poverty. Pakistan has economically insignificant mineral and industrial resources forming the basis of its economy. Most of the country's income comes from taxes on income and most of its currency resources through the export of products such as cotton and textiles. Its economy is heavily dependent on foreign aid or money sent by Pakistanis working in the Gulf States [92].

Saudi Arabia's financial and economic assistance to Pakistan has been conducive to the realization of Saudi political and religious goals in Pakistan during a crisis that has responded positively to the Pakistani people and government [59]. The Wahhabi ideology is in a sharp conflict with the Shi'a to counter the influence of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Pakistan and disrupt its relations with Iran. There are various factors involved with the influence of Wahhabism in Pakistan. One is the existence of Wahhabi religious and voluntary schools in Pakistan. Currently, there are more than 12,000 radical religious schools in Pakistan that are not financially and directly affiliated with the Pakistani government. The main subject in extremist schools is Jihad, based on the ideological combination of the Deobandi School and the Salafi School. In these schools, the content of the curriculum is such that students learn to acquire weapons after completing their education [30]. The flow of armed jihad to Pakistan's religious schools during the Afghan jihad era was supported by the West, the Muslim world, and the Arab world. A large part of Saudi funding, which was held by the Pakistani government in the name of Jihad in Afghanistan, was limited to the establishment of religious schools. Saudi Arabia said the Pakistani army provided \$ 3.5 billion for jihad in Afghanistan [28].

One of the main factors behind the growth of religious schools in Pakistan was of the rise of Gen. Zia-ul-Haq was a Deobind who was interested in Wahhabism. Saudi-backed Wahhabi groups grew up during his rule. Given that Wahhabi's development in the political geopolitics of the Islamic world, with the help of petrodollars, was a major and long-term goal for Saudi Arabia, Zia ul-Haq used this opportunity and placed all religious schools under the cover of the Al-Saud. Besides, the Pakistani government sponsored religious schools during his reign. So Zakat was paid to cover the cost of religious schools for its citizens. Also, at the same time, with the reduction of education budgets, the children of poor families, especially villagers, were sent to the religious schools where their scholarship was paid. Zia-ul-Haq took another measure to equate the educational qualifications of these religious schools with scientific degrees and to provide

graduates with recruiting opportunities in government and military organizations [79].

Another factor is to counteract the influence of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Pakistan. The occurrence of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, based on the Shi'a religion, provided the necessary ground for the expansion of the Wahhabi in Pakistan. General Zia-ul-Haq has accused the Islamic Revolution in Iran of supporting Shi'ites and considered Islamic radicalism as a suitable option to neutralize it in order to reduce its support for Iran. Therefore, Saudi Arabia, which was heavily anxious about the Islamic Revolution and sought to challenge it, regarded Pakistan as an ideal field for achieving its goal. Saudi Arabia used the Wahhabi Salafists under its influence to counter the influence of the Islamic Republic of Iran through pressure on Shiites [7].

## 5. Conclusion

The founder and theorist of the Wahhabi ideology, is Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhab. In the 18th century AD, Mohammed bin Abdul Wahab revitalized the thoughts and opinions of Ibn Batmayyah Harandi. The ideas of Mohammad bin Abdul Wahhab were such that his brother Solomon forced him to leave Madina. He went to Najd after leaving Madinah. Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhab and Mohammed bin Saud in Najd (Al-Daraia) together to form an independent political unit, joined together and agreed upon the government of Mohammed bin Saud followed by his children, and that religious leadership to remain in the family of Mohammed bin Abdul Wahab. This politico-religious coalition, while influencing the Ottoman Empire and especially the Arabian Peninsula, led to the formation of Saudi Arabia:

1. The first government of their coalition was formed in 1744 and continued until 1818. With this historical link, the Al-Saud, in addition to challenging the Ottoman caliphate, used its geographical exploitation and then managed to annex Mecca, Medina and the Gulf to its territory.
2. The second phase of the Wahhabi invitation was Faisal Bin Turki. Under the leadership of Faisal Ban Turki, they revived their rule between 1824 and 1824. They held power until 1884. But they lost power and Riyadh to the Rashidieh's family and took refuge in Kuwait.
3. The third stage of the Wahhabi mission began with the work of Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rahman bin Saud in 1901, in collaboration with the United Kingdom. After he dominated Najd, Hijaz, and neighborhoods, he established his Saudi state in 1932 and, until this day, he ruled his country, and many of his sons and descendants of Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhab followed this mission after him.
4. The new Saudi government has renewed its remit for the second time in order to be able to continue to back the Wahhabis and consolidate its position in Saudi Arabia, defining their position in Saudi political

structure. So that the Wahhabi scholars are ranked first in the hierarchy of power in Saudi Arabia and ranked among the elders of the Al-Saud.

5. Al-Saud, which consolidated its position in Saudi Arabia with the use of the Wahhabi ideology seeks to expand its geopolitical territory by expanding its geopolitical influence beyond national boundaries. To achieve their goal, they are promoting Wahhabism in the political geography of the Islamic world. The traces of Wahhabism and their promotion programs can be found in the West and the Southwest of Asia, the Pseudorea of India, Central Asia, and the Caucasus.
6. Thus, it can be suggested that the relationship of Wahhabism and the Al-Saud, a historical and lasting link, has a very important position in the Saudi political system and is a very important factor for its geopolitical territoriality.

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