

Wahhabism and Violent Terrorism

The History, Tenets, and Corollaries of the Desert-Born Doctrine of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab

Author: Mohamed Al-Yousefy

ABSTRACT

This research undertakes an intensive examination of Wahhabism, a movement that sprung out of eighteenth-century Arabia and is the official state theology of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This examination intends to address the notion of violence in the modern Islamic world and rationalize between the contradicting narratives surrounding Wahhabism's role in sustaining and/or encouraging such violence. Discord caused by armed non-state actors has increased drastically over the past few decades and has demonstrated its ability to spread and potentially reproduce itself, afflicting communities transnationally. This has raised about fervent debate among policy makers regarding the proper approach to mitigating this threat. Through a comprehensive analysis of the history, the works of academic scholars on the subject, the primary sources of the doctrine, and the evolution of Wahhabism and the Saudi state, this paper uncovers the extent of causal links between the Wahhabi movement, its principles, and what the author describes as "radical Islamic terrorism." While Wahhabism is determined to be a contributing factor to the capacity of specific violent organizations to operate, this resolution falls within precise conceptual imperatives. The results of this investigation expose the double entendre of Western foreign policy striving to confront terrorism while actively enabling its ideological source.

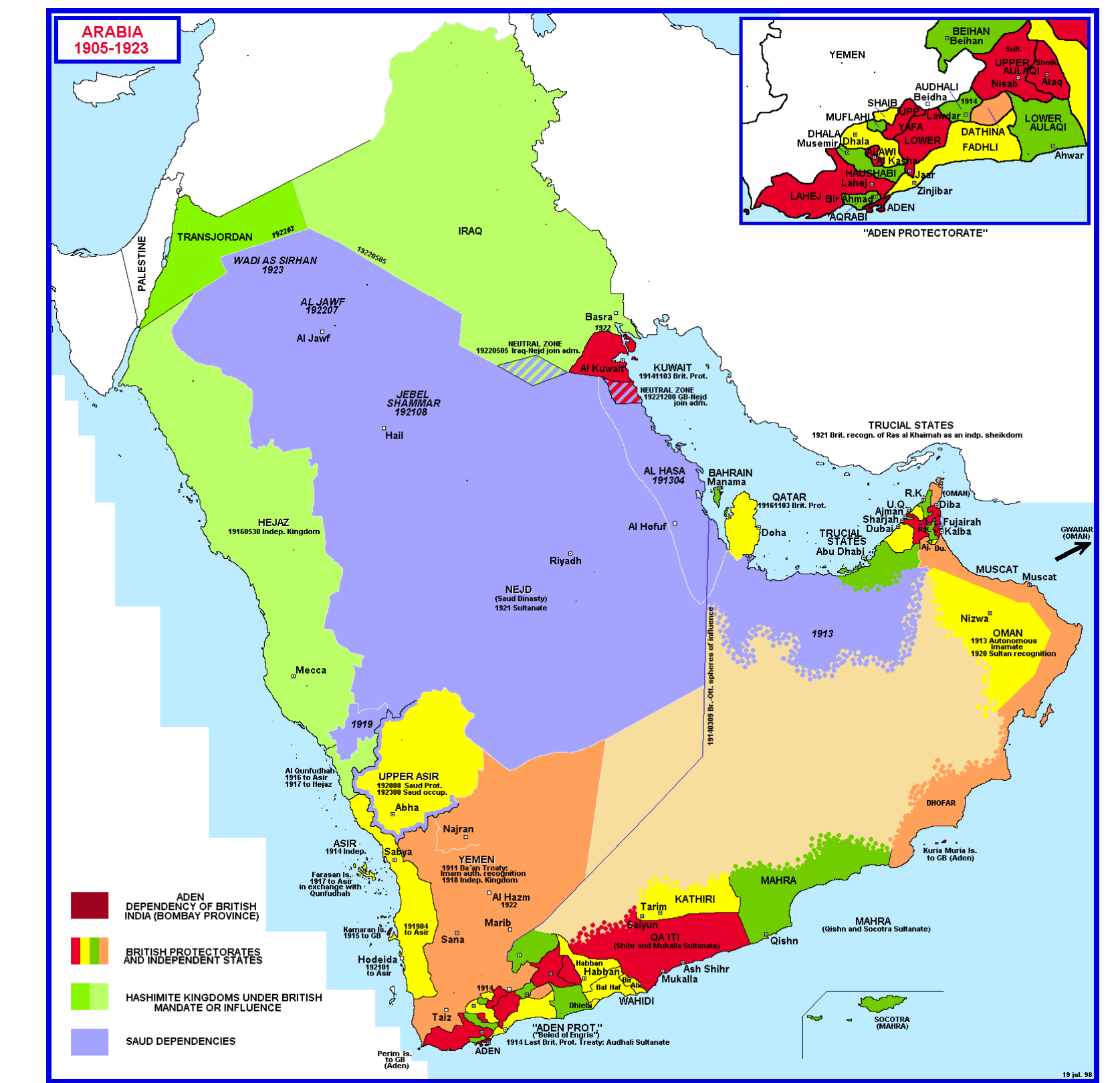
METHODOLOGY

Three-Pronged Literature Review:

- ❖ Western Academic Scholars on Wahhabism (Muslim & Non-Muslim)
- ❖ Texts of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab
- ❖ Historians of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia & its institutions

Supplemental Sources:

- ❖ Archived news articles from certain historical events
- ❖ Video testimonies of Wahhabi & non-Wahhabi Muslim Scholars
- ❖ Personal Interview of a Boston *Imam* on the subject



Source: <http://desalas.org/>

1700 1800 1900 2000



1744
An alliance is forged between Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad bin Saud in Dir'iyah, Central Arabia (Najd)

1805
The Emirate of Dir'iyah captures Mecca, Islam's holiest site, prompting an Ottoman-Egyptian intervention

1818
Dir'iyah is razed by the Ottomans, *Emir* Abdullah bin Saud sent to Istanbul for execution

1865
Civil war breaks out amongst the Saudi Dynasty, the Second Saudi State begins to disintegrate

1891
Battle of Mulaidda – Rashidi Dynasty usurp the Second Saudi State for control of Najd

1902
Abdulaziz ibn Saud departs British Kuwait to recapture Riyadh from the Rashidis

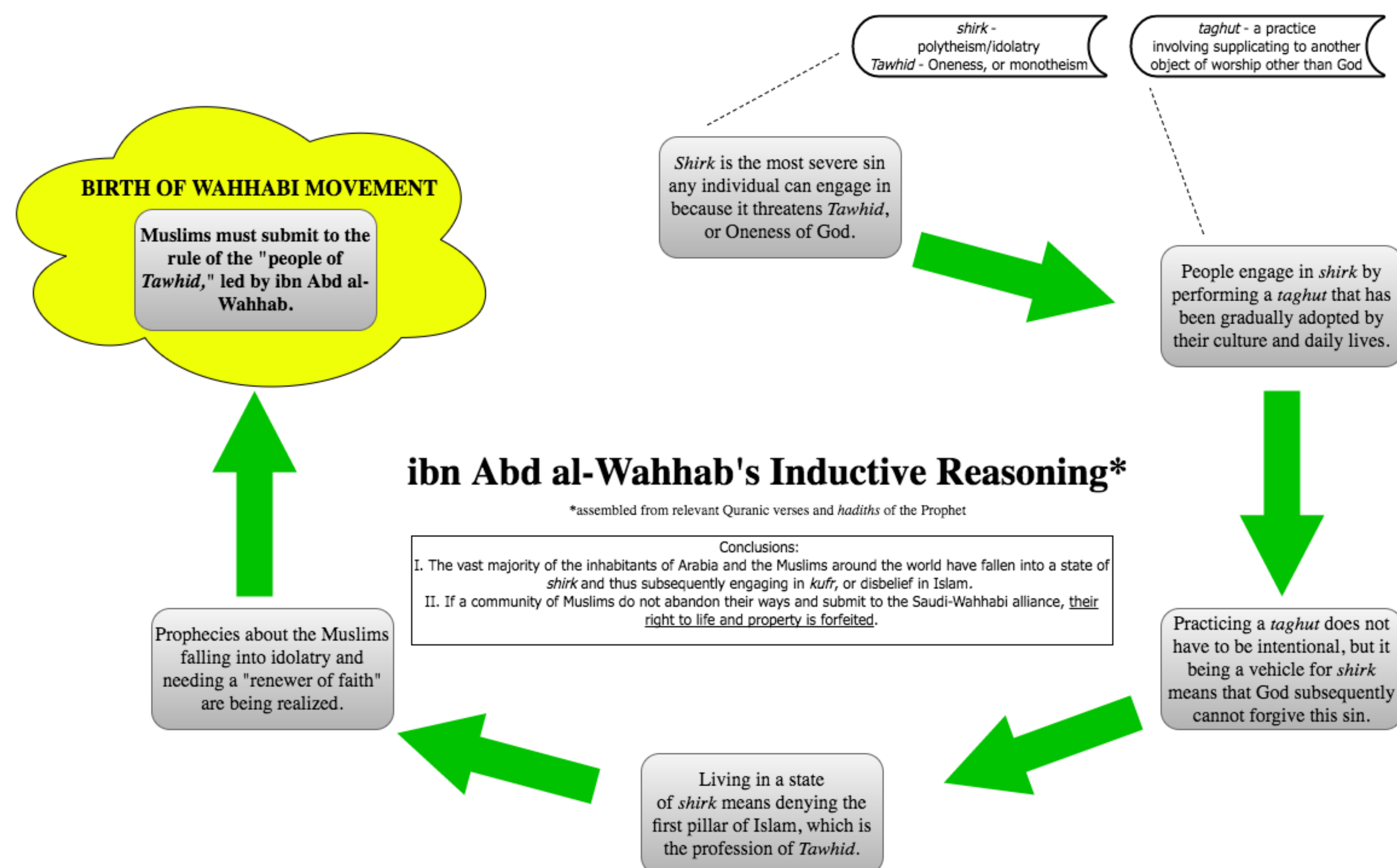
1924
Ibn Saud seizes Mecca and the Hejaz from the Hashemites

1938
Oil is discovered at Dammam No. 7 by Standard Oil of California

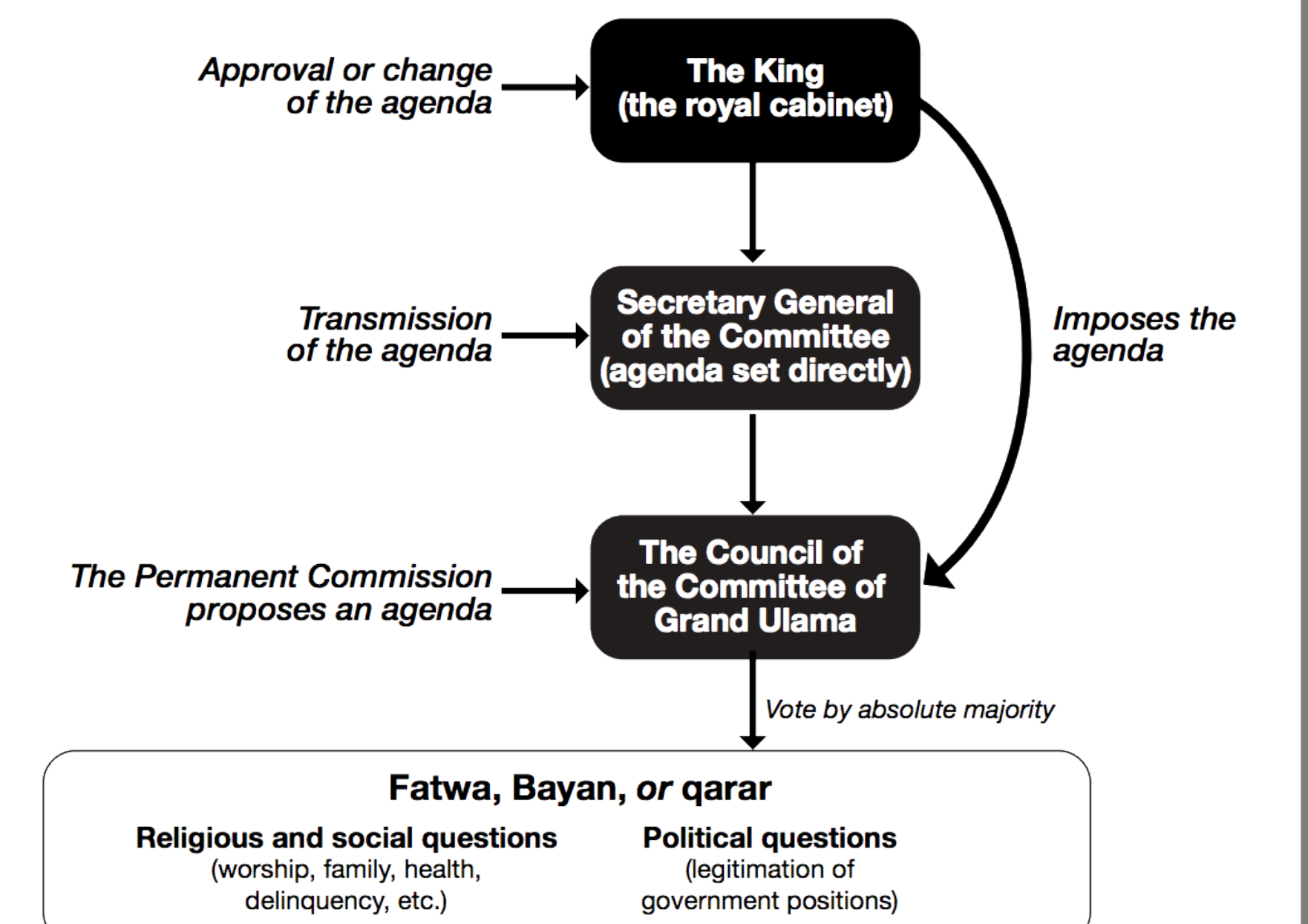
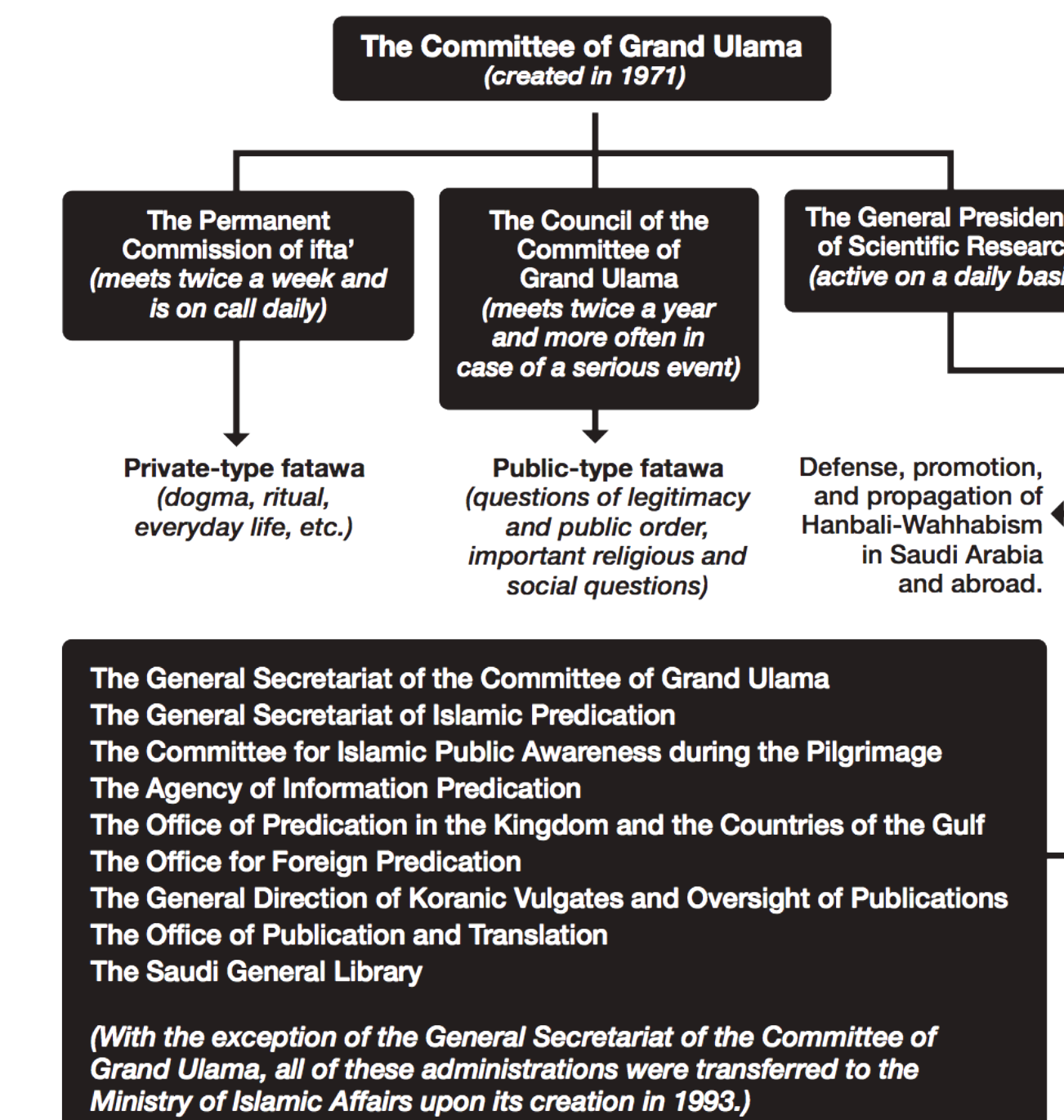
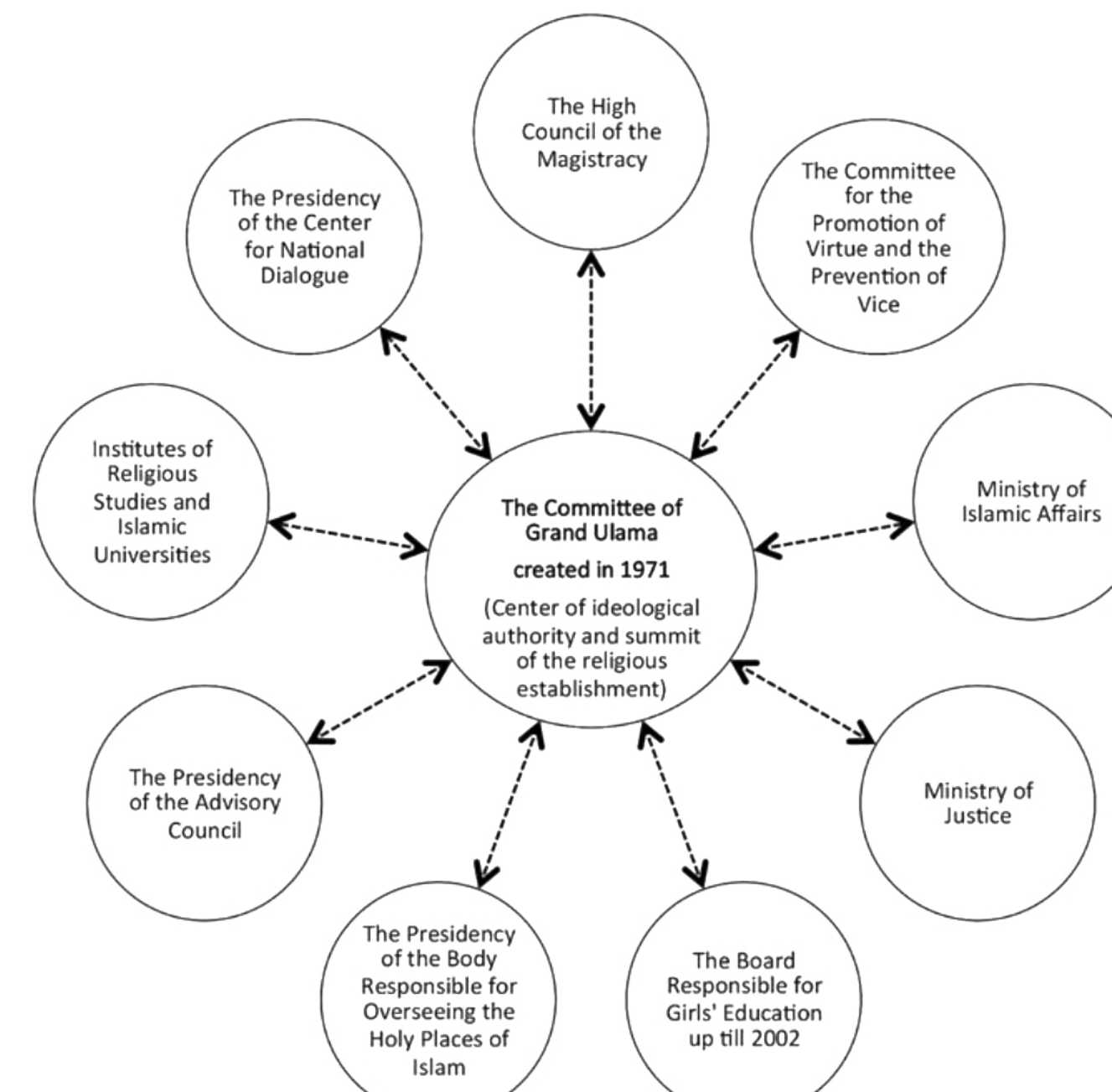
1973
Arab Oil Embargo quadruples price of oil, petrodollar recycling system is born

1990
U.S. troops pour into Saudi Arabia to defend it from Iraq as part of Operation Desert Shield

2016
President Barack Obama shatters record books, providing Saudi Arabia with more than \$115 billion in arms throughout his terms



Structure of Saudi Religious Industry



Source: Mouline, Nabil. *The Clerics of Islam: Religious Authority And Political Power In Saudi Arabia*. 1st ed. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014. Print.

This research ascribes an ideological source to modern terrorism by:

- Extracting the key tenets of Wahhabism that justify intra-Islamic violence via *takfir*.
- Correlating these principles with the actions the Saudi-Wahhabi alliance undertook to subdue Arabia.
- Examining the oil boom and petrodollar recycling system to detail the global Saudi-based religious industry propagating Wahhabism.
- Extrapolating that the modern violent terrorist organization (that proclaim a "Sunni" or "Salafi" orientation) ascribe to:
 - ❖ Wahhabism if Saudi Arabia can be determined to be subservient to its religious authority.
 - ❖ Neo-Wahhabism if Wahhabism is determined to only be a mechanism of preserving the political authority's power.

How can the neoliberal West expect to win the War on Terror while openly allying with and arming a nation-state complicit in promulgating this cataclysmic thought?

MUSLIMS ACCOUNT FOR 82-97% OF FATALITIES OF RELIGIOUSLY-MOTIVATED TERRORISM

Source: National Counterterrorism Center