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Tracing Islamic Extremist Ideologies: The Historical Journey of Jihad from the Late Antique Period to the 21st Century

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TRACING ISLAMIC EXTREMIST IDEOLOGIES:

THE HISTORICAL JOURNEY OF JIHAD FROM THE LATE ANTIQUE PERIOD TO THE 21ST CENTURY

submitted to

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by

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Abstract

Popular interpretations and academic scholarship tends to emphasize the relationship between jihad, military action, and communal violence. These reinforce a sense that violence is inherent to Islam. Investigations into the contexts where jihad has been deployed highlight how its use is often a call for unity believed to be necessary for political goals. Therefore, in order to deconstruct this belief, this thesis tackles instead the relationship between textual interpretations and historical actions, and how these varied across specific moments in time. The case studies examined range from the initial evolution of a theory of jihad in the late antique world, to the Crusades in the 11th and 12th centuries, to early modern dynamics of the Ottomans and Safavids, and finally to modern state-making projects in the Arabian Peninsula These examples seek to create a comprehensive picture of the intricacies rooted in jihad and the narrative that can be associated with a religion that is most often misunderstood. The effort to shed some light on the multiple facets of jihad is hinged upon how these case studies differ from one another, thus forcing the reader to question how they previously understood the modern day phenomenon of jihad. While the conversation will reiterate various themes and concepts as discussed in previous scholarship, it should push the boundaries on how jihad has been framed as a modern day extremist ideology.

Acknowledgements

The Chinese Confucian philosopher, Liu Xiang said "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn." Such words could not be more appropriate when describing the mentorship and advising I have received throughout this project. The central inspiration and motivation behind this piece of work is Professor Heather Ferguson, who helped nurture an idea that was discussed in class almost two years ago. The many hours of conversation, and reviews of an unseemly amount of drafts, has resulted in a piece of work that I am especially proud of. The consequent result of her dedication to not only teaching but also mentoring me throughout my CMC journey has left me a much more aware individual in all aspects of my life. Therefore, Professor Ferguson, thank you for being an incredible inspiration, it has been a pleasure to work with you.

Professor Ferguson's dedication to students is emblematic of the Claremont McKenna College History Department. I can confidently say that every history class I have taken, and all of the professors who have taught me, have shaped my way of thinking and ultimately my approach to this topic.

I would also like to extend my gratitude Professor Wendy Lower, Kirsti Zitar and the Mgrublian Center for Human Rights. As a Fellow, the availability of both resources and advice allowed me to conduct my research in an extremely thorough manner and

produce a thesis that will hopefully bring greater attention to Islamophobia in line with the Center's mission.

The catalyst that sparked my interest in history dates back to my time at Dubai College. Therefore, I have to thank Mr. Rodgers, the individual responsible for this. Between chats about the Kaiser Reich and Burnley FC I am sure I would have not chosen this academic path were it not for your influence. Furthermore, my experiences in your classroom also pushed my abilities and helped me recognize the caliber of work I can produce. This was without a doubt the first moment in my academic career where I realized the value in studying history.

This list of thank yous would not be complete by acknowledging my family, Kaustubh, Marilyn and Rahul Kanade. To my mother and brother, your never-ending encouragement to pursue my passion cultivated a quiet sense of confidence and trust in my future academic and professional decisions. To my father, your relentless stubbornness on issues we disagree on was the underlying inspiration that determined the nature of my history focus.

Lastly, the sense of tolerance and opportunities that was presented to me in my youth by my adopted homelands of Bahrain and Dubai fuelled my desire to highlight the openness of the Muslim community to the world. To all the individuals that welcomed me with unrivalled hospitality; this piece of work is my way of saying thank you.

Introduction

September 11th, 2001 will forever be known as an iconic day in history for more than just the tragic events that took place in the United States of America. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, US foreign policy was deconstructed and revamped into an entirely new beast, focused upon an aggressive counter-attack that would set a precedent against future threats. While this process was directed towards the Middle East, Pakistan and Afghanistan, the entirety of the Muslim world was branded in association with the attacks. The sense of fear that permeated societies accommodating Muslims has been a common generalization in the post 9/11 world and resulted in unjustified assumptions about what Islam teaches and its role in shaping Muslim societies. At the core of these generalizations has been the use of the word jihad, which arguably catapulted to prominence when Osama Bin Laden declared it as a framework of action against the West. The context in which this word emerged in the 21st century and dominated religious and political dialogue has led to accompanying connotations of aggressiveness on the entire Muslim community. In light of these events, this thesis investigates the history and evolution of jihad from the late antique world to the present in order to better contextualize contemporary processes. There have been many efforts to understand the history of the term, but this portrait of jihad remains as most do not investigate the relationship between the Qur'an and distinct historical contexts and

interpretations. While the essence of jihad is derived from the Qur'an, its consequent

manifestations represent the wildly different circumstances of where it has been evoked.

The journey of jihad has manifested itself in multiple forms, with the majority of

modern scholarship attempting to place recent events in a historical context in order to

reveal the various complexities inherent in the term. In *Jihad in Islamic History:*

Doctrines and Practices, Bonner looks at the Qur'an's messages about how fighting and

jihad are inseparable from its requirements of generosity and care for the poor. Bonner

examines how "jihād is a complex set of doctrines and practices that have changed over

time and continue to evolve today."[1] Thus, within his text, Bonner tries to dispel the

binary notion that jihad means only violence or only peace. Reuvan Firestone also

conducted his research within this sphere of academic scholarship, basing his hypothesis

on evidence from the Qur'an and early Islamic literary sources. Firestone locates the

origin of Islamic holy war "as a response to the changes affecting the new community of

Muslims in its transition from ancient Arabian culture to the religious civilization of

Islam."[2] By approaching any understanding of jihad through the Qur'an, the reader is

exposed to the series of events that led to the formation of Islam. Therefore, jihad

automatically becomes situated in the broader context of the late antique period,

inextricably linked to the rise of monotheistic religions. Therefore, the opening chapter of

this thesis shall also dive into the events that gave birth to Islam in order to acknowledge

how notions of just and holy war were part of the inheritance of Islam. Furthermore, this

chapter will build upon examinations into this period of time to demonstrate the issues of

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[1] Bonner, Michael David. *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.
[2] Firestone, Reuven. *Jihād: The Origin of Holy War in Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

interpretation that result from the events of the Prophet Muhammad's life and the creation of the Qur'an. As a result, this process leads to the intersection between divine word and historical contingency within the context of the Arabian Peninsula. This contingency becomes the framework for investigating particular historical moments in the rest of the thesis.

The need for a framework is crucial in determining the role of jihad as applied to different contexts. This framework becomes extremely relevant especially as scholarship tends to promote the link between holy war and jihad, particularly highlighted in the Crusades. In *Crusading and the Crusader States*, Andrew Jotischky explains how the idea of holy wars came into being and why they took the form that they did - a clash between western and Islamic societies that dominated the Middle Ages.[3] John Kelsay and James Johnson highlight the particular questions that connect with the phenomenon of holy war through the lens of jihad via both literary and historical sources on war and peace, and explore the relationship between western and Islamic societies.[4]

Furthermore, the influence of the Crusades on contemporary interpretations of jihad often derive from the success of Salah al-Din, and how he was portrayed as using jihad as a uniting factor for Sunni Islam, as well as how he embodied and advocated for it in all aspects of his life.[5][6] Salah al-Din's life was further illuminated through the translation of previously unpublished material supporting the inextricable link between

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[3] Jotischky, Andrew. *Crusading and the Crusader States*. Harlow, England: Pearson/Longman, 2004.
[4] Kelsay, John, and James Johnson. *Just War and Jihad: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on War and Peace in Western and Islamic Traditions.* New York: Greenwood Press, 1991.
[5] Bartlett, W. B. *Islam's War Against the Crusaders*. Stroud: History Press, 2008.
[6] Hring, Hannes. *Saladin, the Sultan and His Times, 1138-1193*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.

jihad and his philosophies.[7] This concept has become especially important in widely circulated popular histories. In the *The Shade of Swords*, MJ Akbar further explains how jihad thrives on "complex and shifting notions of persecution, victory and sacrifice, and illustrating how Muslims themselves have historically tried to direct and control the phenomenon of Jihad."[8] This concept was also incorporated in Peter Partner's book *God of Battles: Holy Wars of Christianity and Islam* who works towards informing his readers about allowing crusading war propaganda fuelling our judgments today. The influential nature of the Crusades in shaping modern interpretations of jihad prompted the basis of the second chapter in this thesis. In acknowledging the importance of the Crusades and of Salah al-Din's leadership, the foundations of the chapter will demonstrate how the fragmentation of the Sunni Muslim identity provided an opportunity for the resurgence of jihad. Yet, this chapter will demonstrate that the role of Salah al-Din and his predecessors is only significant insomuch that the chroniclers of the time presented him as the vehicle that embraced jihad in order to unite Sunni Islam. Therefore, the importance of the relationship between Salah al-Din and religious entities is necessary as it defined an era where aggressively asserting religious principles through justified military actions was necessary for the survival of Islam.

The connection between religious and political entities in applying jihad to a particular context relates to the greater dynamic of legitimizing war and conquest, in the name of religion, in order to attain a specific goal. As a result, a large amount of scholarship has been devoted to the notion of jihad and its use in legitimizing war. Nazih

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[7] Lyons, M. C., and D. E. P. Jackson. *Saladin: The Politics of the Holy War.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

[8] Akbar, M. J. *The Shade of Swords Jihad and the Conflict between Islam and Christianity*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Ayubi examines the claim of those Islamists who contend that, as a belief system and a way of life, Islam carries with it a theory of politics and the state which should be applied unquestioningly.[9] Thus, the historical connection between Islam and politics can be explained as an attempt by rulers to legitimize their actions. Through such scholarship, jihad has often been understood as a category of its own when analyzing different types of wars. Yet, the role that jihad has played in developing the relationship between religion and politics provides a new theoretical understanding of Islam with an emphasis on the authority of those who could demand it.[10] Consequently, the third chapter of this thesis will look at the restructuring of religious authority in the Ottoman Empire, in order to unite religious and political goals, which could be achieved through jihad. Subsequently, this chapter will also recognize that these actions were employed in an attempt to control and regulate such vast areas of land. Furthermore, this chapter will highlight how the Ottomans through this new order, justified holy war sentiment particularly towards their Shi'i Muslim neighbors, the Safavids. The shift in Ottoman mentality that allowed aggressive actions towards other Muslim entities highlights a departure from many implementations of jihad due to the overarching goals of the Empire.

The varying degrees of scholarship surrounding jihad tend to lean towards religious and political relationships, especially as Islam moves past the Ottoman era. Research surrounding the politicization of jihad and how it impacted political and military structures of different empires takes precedence in the eras of imperialist and the

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[9] Ayubi, Nazih N. M. Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World. London: Routledge, 1991
[10] Baer, Marc David. Honored by the Glory of Islam Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Empire. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

rise of the nation-state.[11] David Cook focusses on the practical and theoretical meanings of jihad, citing from scriptural, legal and newly translated texts to give readers a taste of the often ambiguous information that is used to construct Islamic political doctrine in the modern period.[12] Thus, the final chapter of this thesis will draw upon the impact of the relationship between Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad ibn Saud in demonstrating how orthodox interpretations of jihad also impact religious and political dynamics in state formation. The context that gave birth to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which was later emphasized in the early 20th century by Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad al Saud, the nation's founder, reflects upon the significance political patronage carried in accessing power. As a result, looking at the relationship between ibn Saud and the Ikhwan, a Wahhabi religious militia, reveal how both political and religious entities benefitted through such an alliance. Yet, this chapter also examines how unrestrained religious zeal was not to be tolerated, and consequently, institutionalizing Wahhabism and reigning in the excess of aggressive actions that were delivered under the umbrella of jihad, by the Ikhwan, served ibn Saud's goals of achieving political stability and consolidating his power. At this juncture, the final chapter displays how powerful religious groups were only tolerated insofar as they did not pose a greater threat to those establishing political and territorial power.

Popular interpretations and academic scholarship tends to emphasize the relationship between jihad, military action, and communal violence. These reinforce a sense that violence is inherent to Islam. Investigations into the contexts where jihad has

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[11] Dale, Stephen Frederic. *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
[12] Cook, David. *Understanding Jihad*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

been deployed highlight how its use is often a call for unity believed to be necessary for political goals. This thesis tackles instead the relationship between textural interpretations and historical actions, and how these varied across specific moments in time. The case studies examined range from the initial evolution of a theory of jihad in the late antique world, to the Crusades in the 11th and 12th centuries, to early modern dynamics of the Ottomans and Safavids, and finally to modern state-making projects in the Arabian Peninsula These examples seek to create a comprehensive picture of the intricacies rooted in jihad and the narrative that can be associated with a religion that is most often misunderstood. The effort to shed some light on the multiple facets of jihad is hinged upon how these case studies differ from one another, thus forcing the reader to question how they previously understood the modern day phenomenon of jihad. While the conversation will reiterate various themes and concepts as discussed in previous scholarship, it should push the boundaries on how jihad has been framed as a modern day extremist ideology.

I

Demystifying the Origins of Jihad: The Emergence of Religiously Justified Warfare in the Late Antique World & Islam's Inheritance

In the post 9/11 world, Islam is often associated with, or directly accused of being, an inherently violent religion. Proponents of such an argument assert this point through a singular definition of jihad that brings Muslim groups into conflict with anyone unlike themselves. As terrorist groups, rooted in certain ideological interpretations of Islam, continue to wage war on innocent civilians, jihad continues to be used as a loaded weapon to perpetuate Islamophobic molds. Therefore, this thesis aims to undermine and dispel such molds by analyzing the way in which jihad, as an orientation and an action, evolved across distinct historical periods.

Developing a framework for such an historical investigation is paramount to understanding how varying interpretations of the concept have appeared in particular contexts. Yet, designing this framework is inherently problematic, as this interpretative structure must also explore the ways in which Muslim leaders generated arguments for the appropriate political, religious, and moral use of jihad. Thus, acknowledging that these contexts each generated their own interpretation of jihad, influenced by key sources and debates of the time, requires a close analysis of the Qur'an to begin with, as from this text spawned many forms of interpretative dialogue. At the center of Islam, this sacred text informs every aspect of a Muslim's life. It goes beyond just the spiritual and moral concepts that are offered in other religions by setting the tone for legal and administrative

systems that continue to permeate various Muslim countries around the world. The complicated relationship between these systems and various Muslim civilizations has often prompted an aggressive use of jihad to further a particular agenda.

However, this text can also not be separated from its historical creation, and from the evolution of Muslim-based dynasties that relied on it for governance, piety, and social organization. Thus, the history of jihad must also be understood as the historical interaction between the Qur'an and developments internal to various societies. Within the history of Islamic empires, distinct events often inspired widespread change leading to the emergence of a new structure of society. Oftentimes these events were inspired by the development of elements either, outside the formal borders of an empire, or, from within the empire itself. These elements ranged from the arrival of circumstances that allowed a new set of believers and monotheistic principles to flourish and form a cohesive identity that challenged late antique empires, to invasions from across the ocean, to dissatisfaction with the current status quo and the regulation of administrative and legal mechanisms that governed the empire. Yet, consistently these elements were invoked through a new interpretation of Islamic texts and their consequent association with powerful personalities who guided military and social reforms. The role of this key leader should not be understated in the history of jihad as it is from them that the declaration of jihad has often occurred. Therefore, contending with the dilemma of who has the authority to declare jihad after Muhammad and the original caliphs is crucial in how jihad appeared in different contexts. With each new development impacting Islamic empires, the sentiment that encouraged jihad shifted several times from issues such as personal obligations to expansionism or an aggressive agenda. Thus, those that deploy the term in the present

both embody and reflect this array of interpretations, which should be brought to the fore

in order to maintain the complexity of jihad as both a set of actions and a philosophical

construct.

The Late Antique World and the Prophet Muhammad

To fully understand the development of the Qur'an and its role in Islam, the set of

events that predated its concept must be acknowledged. The late antique world was

defined by conflicts between two major empires, Byzantine and Sasanian, which also

shaped the fortunes of the Arabian Peninsula through trade and proxy wars. These

empires were increasingly defined via hegemonic religions, Christianity and

Zoroastrianism, and thus created a model for the relationship between religion and

regional power that Islam would later emulate. These two empires dominated the lands

from the Near East to the Mediterranean and consequently many territories either fell

directly under their control or at least within their sphere of influence. As a result, the

development of their territories was impacted by political allegiances, religious influence

and economic domination.[1] The Byzantine Empire subscribed to a Christianized form of

the vision of a united world order, with all subjects loyal to the emperor and Orthodox

Church headed by the "patriarch of the Constantinople, in close association with the

emperor."[2] The relationship between religion and politics gained greater significance in

the Empire when Emperor Constantine, 313 CE, declared Christianity the official faith of

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[1] Donner, Fred McGraw. *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam.* Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010, 4.
[2] Ibid., 5.

his territories in order to promote religious and political unity.[3] The Sasanian Empire was

less regulated and decentralized, according to most sources, until the reign of Khosro I

Anoshirwan in 531 CE, who asserted royal prerogative against the nobility in his various

lands by reorganizing the state and imposing greater central control.[4] While the

Byzantines often experienced several internal conflicts over the correct practices and

traditions of Christianity, in the Sasanian lands, Zoroastrianism had long been associated

with the monarchy as the quasi-official religion of the state. This is not to say that

contentious matters did not exist between the religious elites and political establishment,

but rather it did not display the divisions that existed in the Byzantine Empire.[5] The close

association of monotheistic religions to political order as well as the distinct challenges of

administering such vast arrays of land demonstrated the similarities between the two

empires. Yet, with both monotheistic religions proclaiming universal dominion over the

contested regions, the clash between the Byzantines and the Sasanians was inevitable and

manifested itself in the Arabian Peninsula.

Such deep rooted ideological antagonisms pitted the two empires against each

other for many centuries in the late antique world, yet this battle perhaps reached its

climax during the sixth and seventh centuries. The recognition of the dearth of resources

in the Arabian Peninsula and the access that it provided to trade routes to India and

beyond escalated the strategic importance of gaining control over the area.[6] Yet, the

difficulty of attaining direct control of these territories was highlighted by fierce

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[3] Ibid., 8.
[4] Ibid., 18.
[5] Ibid., 20.
[6] Ibid., 31-32.

hostilities to prevent such a reality from materializing. Therefore, the need to prevent an

overextension of resources in trying to win these lands outright and administer them

uninterrupted, involved various tribes in the Arabian Peninsula. As a result, wars by

proxy emerged between the Byzantines and the Sasanians that resulted in certain tribes in

the Arabian Peninsula protecting the trade interests of a particular empire and often

attacking the other empire. The constant presence of these empires in the Arabian

Peninsula led to the gradual receding of paganism and the arrival of monotheism.[7] The

numerous wars left them both severely weakened by 630 CE and provided the backdrop

for the Muhammad's career.

The importance of trade routes to the economies of these empires was central in

developing Mecca as a major commercial center. Its central location in the heart of

southern Arabia meant that a majority of trading goods passed through this city on their

way to the ports in Yemen or other southern cities.[8] Consequently, the acknowledgment

of this factor attracted many new individuals to the land and contributed to its burgeoning

environment. As Mecca continued to grow, the Quraysh clan assumed control over it

with their two major focuses orienting around religion and commerce.[9] The clan's

participation in various trading fairs as well as acting as the guardians of many religious

objects, most significantly the Ka'ba, whom many individuals and groups visited Mecca

to practice religious duties, brought the clan into contact with many other communities.[10]

The security that came with being the protectors of such religious objects also bolstered

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[7] Ibid.,
[8] Ibid., 37.
[9] Ibid., 40.
[10] Ibid.

the commercial activity of the city. Thus, the creation of an elaborate political system around the pilgrimage to the Ka'ba, organized through the auspices of the Quraysh clan, highlighted a process that had already begun unification across the Peninsula. Yet, the circulation of wealth led to disadvantaged groups seeking alternatives to the clan, and would eventually prove receptive to Muhammad's message, which replaced the clan.

Muhammad was born in Mecca during this prosperous time, as part of the Qurayshi clan. Orphaned at an early age, Muhammad grew into a respected individual amongst the Qurayshi people, eventually marrying his first wife Khadija.[11] While the narrative of Muhammad's life is primarily told through biographies internal to the faith, the general consensus is around the age of 40, Muhammad began to retreat from public life. Taking refuge at the foot of Mount Hira, Muhammad is believed to have had his first revelation, which became known as the Prayer for Guidance.[12] During these revelations, the angel Gabriel appeared to Muhammad on a night in the month of Ramadan and forced him to recite the first four verses of what would eventually be the Qur'an.[13] Muhammad's early preaching brought him few followers and it was predominantly his wife and uncle, Abu Talib, who truly listened to his words. Abu Talib, a well-respected member of the Qurayshi clan was able to provide a degree of security for Muhammad that allowed him to spread his revelations in Mecca. However, the death of both Abu Talib and Khadija left Muhammad with little support and at the mercy of the Qurayshi elite. Regardless of the fact that Muhammad had not gained much notoriety at the time,

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Muir, William, and T. H. Weir. *The Life of Mohammad from Original Sources*. Edinburgh: J. Grant, 1923, 4-8., 38.

[13] Lewis, Bernard. *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years*. New York, NY: Scribner, 1995, 51.

his words were considered troublesome by the Qurayshi religious elites and their

influence forced Muhammad to move his preaching to the towns on the outskirts of

Mecca.[14] It was at this moment Muhammad's movement began to gain momentum

through its attractiveness to the people from the neighboring city of Yathrib. A place that

had been plagued by internal conflict and divisions between the varying political factions,

Yathrib longed for healing.[15] Thus, between the Yathribis continuous invitations to bring

his teachings to their city and the increased opposition to Muhammad's prayers by the

Qurayshi, he agreed to make the journey. This moment came to be known as *hijra* or the

emigration from Mecca to what would later become Medina, by Muhammad and his

followers in 622 CE.[16] Perhaps even more significant was the consolidation of political

power that Muhammad was able to achieve in Yathrib by concluding an agreement

between the various clans. The idea of belonging to a single community that Muhammad

communicated to his new found followers was the birthplace of the Muslim *umma*, which

also incorporated non-believers through treaty negotiations.[17] The alignments that

Muhammad made would become of great significance because they eventually became

powerful enough to ultimately re-conquer Mecca, and then unify the Peninsula under the

authority of Muhammad and his military commanders.

As the revelations could come to Muhammad at any point in his life, the

compilation of the Qur'an is of significant importance to the history of Islam. The birth of

the oral tradition of Islam has its roots in the fact that with every new revelation

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[14] Donner., 42.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 44.

Muhammad received, he would recite it to those around them, who in turn would learn it and recite it to others.[18] As these revelations continued, a close group of followers, who travelled with him, began to write down and memorize the recitations so as to preserve them for the future. This method proved successful until a year after the death of Muhammad at the Battle of Yamama (633 CE) where "a number of those who knew the Qur'an by heart died."[19] The consequent realization that along with the deaths of these followers, there was the possibility that the revelations of the Qur'an would be lost as well, Abu Bakr, the first caliph and successor to the Prophet, ordered that a written copy of the whole body of Qur'anic material should be made and stored with him.[20] Yet, as the Islamic expansion continued, the third caliph, Uthman, called for a number of copies to be made and dispersed to different parts of the Muslim world as the official copy of the Qur'an.[21] This traditional narrative of the ordering and compilation of the Qur'an symbolizes the moment that Islam began to extend beyond the regions of Mecca and Medina and permeate the lives of people that now acknowledged the religion as a central part of their identity.[22]

The role of the late antique world and the birth of Islam within it highlights how many of the concepts attributed exclusively to Islam, had their roots in the broader dynamics of the region. The need for territorial expansion by the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires, closely associated with religious precedents, predate the birth of Islam and provided the foundations of a framework that justified war long before the emergence of

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[18] A., Abdel Haleem M. *The Qur'an*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, xv.
[19] Ibid., xvi.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] There have been some recent contestations about the exact date that the Qur'an was formally canonized, yet, the general sequence of events is accepted by scholars of the topic.

jihad and Islam. Moreover, the events that took place between the major empires helped

foster the environment that would allow for another monotheistic religion to emerge. As a

result, the exhaustion of the Byzantine and Sasanian empires through long warfare and

the emergence of a vibrant new ideology that began to unify the Arabian Peninsula gave

birth to Islam. While Muhammad was alive, he did successfully venture into conflicts

with these declining empires, yet, his successors would quickly conquer territory from

both, and ultimately incorporate the Sasanian Empire into its own new political

heartlands, first in Damascus and then Baghdad.

Issues with Qur'anic Interpretation

The Qur'an is itself a text produced by distinct events and circumstances that

together yield its dynamism as a scripture. Therefore, scholarship that uses the Qur'an as

an ahistorical creation overlooks the conditions that led to the formalization of the ideas

and themes that are contentious today. The oral tradition that predated the written

compilation of the original manuscript inherently recognizes a certain truth that was

vocalized to the Prophet Muhammad, by the angel Gabriel, which may have been lost in

the book's manifestation. While writing was not common during Muhammad's time,

there were certain scribes who noted down oral recitations at the time before they were

compiled into a single text.[23] However, the fact that many of those followers died before

they could also write down these revelations allows for varying interpretations of what

the Qur'an states since the "decided lack of agreement destroys the classic argument of

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[23] Esack, Farid. The Qur'an: User's Guide: A Guide to Its Key Themes, History and Interpretation. Oxford: Oneworld, 2005, 3.

divinely guided evolution and reveals its origin as a theoretical solution to the problem of Quranic contract."[24] As a result, this piece work acknowledges how there may be gaps in what the text was intended to communicate and the interpretation of the results, which have been jaded through the loss of original oral insights as well as the subsequent loss that comes through translations. However, despite these obstacles there is much to take from using the Qur'an as the backbone of a framework that connected religious and political institutes during war, as all the proceeding events directly refer to the text as their inspiration in one form or another.

The gaps that permeate the study of Islam and jihad prompt both historians and readers to be more aware and conduct greater discrimination of the evidence that is available. By overlooking such a significant factor, it may force a "focus on a single narrative of origin [which] can lead us to forget that any act of founding becomes obscure in retrospect, because it necessarily includes an element of myth."[25] Knowledge of the early formation and expansion of both Islam and the Qur'an comes from outsiders to the emergent faith or from Muslim scholars themselves. Moreover, scholars within the faith quite early debated the community's history, the appropriate version of the Qur'an, and the meaning of individual verses. The tension that exists between interpretations and texts that have been derived or advanced from previous concepts is represented by the differing opinions, both between Muslim and non-Muslim scholars as to the origin of Islam and the development of a religious orthodoxy. These factors all complicate any

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[24] Firestone, Reuven. *Jihād: The Origin of Holy War in Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 51.

[25] Bonner, Michael David. *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006, 15.

historical assessment of how specific verses were interpreted or acted upon in different historical contexts. The nature of verse relationship highlights the layers of difficulty that originate in understanding, jihad, the Qur'an and Islam. When taken in isolation the Qur'an can provide an individual with justifications for many actions that may prove controversial. Therefore, acknowledging that the revelations of the Prophet Muhammad were part of a broader narrative for the conduct of Islam is pivotal in determining how to comprehend jihad.

The recognition of these factors prompts a brief insight into where the dilemma occurs and what realizations one can draw from the emergence of the Qur'an itself. According to the standard Muslim view, "Muhammad was confronted with many different and inconstant predicaments during his evolving mission as *prophet extraordinaire,*" meaning that a variety of his actions can be viewed as responsive or reactionary to the situation at the time.[26] Moreover, "since the imam or caliph could not be everywhere at once, it was always necessary for him to delegate his authority in certain matters" highlighting the possibility of an initial departure from the revelations that Muhammad received.[27] The fragmented nature of the creation of the Qur'an further problematizes the issues of interpretation. However, this does not accurately reflect the state in which Muslim societies developed; it would be a broad generalization to think that despite Muhammad's influence one can "reduce so many societies and polities covering such broad extents of time and space, to any single governing principle."[28] Thus, assessing the Qur'an as a historical text highlights the problems of interpretation

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[26] Firestone, 49.
[27] Bonner., 12.
[28] Ibid., 2.

that is at the heart of any historical inquiry. This concept was discovered quickly by scholars, jurists and other religious functionaries associated with Islam as they often debated how the Qur'an was formed, what its canonical shape should be, and then how to connect the context of scripture to the ever-changing realities of time. Therefore, in further exploration of events that invoked jihad, recognizing that controversies exist regarding Qur'anic interpretation is central to shaping any understanding of a particular event.

Furthermore, the term jihad and the various places and various forms it takes in the Qur'an, also complicate issues of interpretative. In its most literal form, jihad is a "verbal noun of the third Arabic form of the root, *jahada*, which is defined classically as exerting one's utmost power, efforts, or ability in contending with an object of disapprobation."[29] There is some consistency with this definition, with the base concept of "exerting oneself as much as one can" in order to achieve a certain end.[30] Such agreements between various scholars takes away from the popular conception that jihad means holy war, instead highlighting how these different entities have slowly been associated with one another. However, what is evident from the consistency of these definitions is that the Arabic root of jihad, j-h-d, requires commitment and explicit intent. The ability to exert oneself to one's full capacity hints at the complete submission to the task at hand. Anything that reflects behavior other than complete dedication can be discounted as emblematic of jihad, as it has been translated and understood in its most literal sense.

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[29] Ibid., 16.
[30] Peters, 9.

Situating Jihad in the Larger Conceptual Framework

While these definitions do originate from literal translations and applications of jihad, such terms are used in broad and multifaceted ways. Therefore, the process of translation from the original context to different historical moments must be addressed. In many respects the definition of jihad "must be based both on what Muslims have written concerning the subject and on the historical record how they have practiced it," thus inherent to this idea, is how jihad has been used in a particular time.[31] Therefore, using the Qur'an as the cornerstone of this analysis means that independent statements that mention jihad are not representative of broader themes in the text but rather how "understanding the meaning lies in verse relationships and the fact that the contexts of many pronouncements remain uncertain."[32] Consequently, the literal and historical translation that takes place when jihad is applied in different contexts requires intense interpretation as "it is usually impossible to reconstruct the context of the utterances from the text of the Scripture itself." [33] As a result, just as the Qur'an is a product of a series of events and oral traditions "the doctrine of jihad had a role of its own events," leading to the popular concepts that exist in society today.[34] This phenomenon highlights how the interpretation of the Qur'an and jihad is itself an object of some debate and concern within the evolving scholarship on jihad. Therefore, contemporary use of jihad implicitly embodies varying interpretations, which must be acknowledged in order to represent jihad accurately as a command and an ideal.

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[31] Ibid.
[32] Firestone., 47.
[33] Ibid., 49.
[34] Bonner., 4.

The conjuncture between particular dynamics of conflict, the tradition of scholarship and interpretation of jihad, and the way it is ultimately deployed in that setting reveals at a fundamental level how criticisms of the religion are particular to a context. The nuances of where jihad is situated in the broader religion does not fully acknowledge the various forms that jihad can take. The fact that from the literal translation of jihad one can see how it can be applied to different aspects of the individual and the collectives lives, hints at the more problematic issue of understanding which form is being applied and whether multiple forms can be applied at the same time. Navigating the dynamic between the various forms of jihad can only be done through "recognizing a broad spectrum of paradigms reflected by varied cultural and religious setting in which they may be found."[35] Thus, the way in which particular actors embrace jihad demonstrates the significant role that context and interpretive variation play in its usage and invocation. This allows one to distinguish between acts of jihad from the religion as a whole. Moreover, the varying types of jihad further highlights how "many kinds of jihad have nothing to do with warfare," revealing that the literal struggle jihad refers to can be reoriented into an aggressive idea if the individual deems his struggle worthy of such a dimension.[36] Building out from the various intricacies that exist within jihad, has seen a formation of several types:

> Jihad of the Heart, i.e. struggling against one's sinful inclinations, the Jihad of the Tongue, i.e. ordering what is food and forbidding what is evil, the Jihad of the Hand, i.e. administering of disciplinary measures such as beating, by rulers and men of authority in order to prevent people from

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[35] Firestone., 16.
[36] Ibid., 17.

committing abominable acts, and, finally, the Jihad of the Sword, i.e.
fighting the unbelievers for religion's sake.[37]

The fact that jihad can be interpreted in a variety of different ways and is the

product of a series of events and actions means that it is only logical that jihad was used

in radically different ways by scholars and administrators depending on historical

circumstances. Yet, all of these interpretations attempt to define both the religious and

geographic integrity of Islam, and to preserve it in the face of internal and external threats

called either the "territory of Islam, the part of the world where this is Moslem rule and

the *shari'ah* is applied and the rest of the world, called the territory of war."[38] The

former, known as the Dar al-Islam, is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an but evolved

from the term Dar al-Salam that appears in sura 10:25, and exists in the world as places

that Muslims can practice their faith in peace and are governed by a Muslim ruler.

Whereas the territory of war, or the Dar al-Harb, refers to the areas that are not governed

by Muslim law. If the world is perceived as a binary by Muslims, then jihad must take on

infinite number of possibilities in order to reconcile and contain all aspects of human

experiences into these categories. If this is the case then "it is important to note one aim

of jihad is not necessarily to bring conquered peoples to convert to Islam, but to enlarge

the domain of Islam, the Dar al-Islam, at the expense of Dar al-Harb."[39] This sentiment

changes the perception of whether or not jihad can be viewed as a solely aggressive or

expansionist agenda. Instead, the motivating factors of how one should pursue jihad

become more intrinsic in reconciling with the religion itself and about consolidating

community. As a result, it makes sense that these spheres are so broadly defined,

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[37] Peters., 9.
[38] Peters., 10.
[39] Bonney, Richard. *Jihād: From Qur'ān to Bin Laden*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, 48.

regarding what constitutes war and who Muslims believe themselves to be at war with, because the "loose and vague definitions of the situation depend only on their perspectives and interpretation."[40] Recognition of how contexts and interpretations differ is a testament to how jihad has been embraced in varying manners all in the name of Islam.

The Divine Word and Historical Contingencies

As jihad was invoked in different contexts based on different premises, and as legal and theological interpretations developed from the ninth century onwards, these issues of Qur'anic interpretation came to the fore. This brief tour of the complexities inherent in the interpretation of jihad, within the evolving religion of Islam, opens up a space to engage with particular passages in the Qur'an. The first mention of jihad in the Qur'an appears to refer not to warfare, but rather to disputation and efforts made for the sake of God and in his cause. As the Qur'an states:

> And strive hard for Allah with due striving (wa-jahidu fi illahi haqqa jihadihi). He has chosen you and has not laid upon you any hardship in religion - the faith of your father Abraham. He named you Muslims before and in this that the Messenger may be a bearer of witness to you, and you may be bearers of witness to people, so keep up prayer and hold fast to Allah. He is your Protector; excellent the Protector and excellent the Helper.[41]

This passage addresses an inherent debt Muslims owe to God, and the struggle they must conduct in order to repay the debt simply for the fortune of being a born a Muslim. The resulting sentiment, therefore, focuses on the effort necessary to live a life that is worthy

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[40] Ibid., 16.

[41] Ali, Muhammad. *The Holy Qur'ān: Arabic Text, English Translation and Commentary. Rev. Ed., 7th ed.* Columbus, Ohio: Ahmadiyyah Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore,, U.S.A., 1991, 22:78, 682.

of God, or of the privilege inherent in leading an enlightened life synonymous with Islam.

The reference to this fortune comes from "the revelation of Abraham, who prayed that

from among his descendants should arise a nation of Muslims," that should strive to lead

a life of peace.[42] Yet, this struggle is heightened because peace needs to be with God and

the lack of direct guidance leads to the direct involvement of the individual in deciding

how to live that peaceful life. The fact that being a Muslim presumes a life of privilege

that is intrinsic to other religions, or so the Qur'an states, perhaps, provides greater

impetus and opportunity for Muslims to work towards their greater jihad. This changes

the sense of struggle that a Muslim faces, because there are less external aspects to

engage with. Instead, it pushes the struggle inwards and out of this comes the concept of

a greater jihad.

The idea of the greater jihad is mentioned more explicitly later in the Qur'an,

where it states that Muslims should "obey not the disbelievers, and strive against them a

mighty striving with it (*wa-jahidhum jihadan khabiran*)."[43] In this context a relationship

is formed between jihad and an external group of people known as the "disbelievers,"

presumably both certain kinds of Muslims and non-Muslims. The struggle between a

particular kind of Muslim, one that is most representative of God's will on earth, and

"disbelievers" may come from the struggle to spread the word of God and convince

others of the righteousness and holiness that exists in this way of life. However, it creates

the possibility that fighting may be necessary for the message of the Qur'an to spread

amongst all groups and peoples. As such "amongst Muslims who acknowledge the

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[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 25:52, 725.

associations of jihad with warfare, most would define the term as warfare authorized by a legitimate representative of the Muslim community for the sake of an issue that is universally acknowledged to be of critical importance for the entire community."[44] As time has progressed the authority that gives permission for warfare associated with jihad, has changed significantly depending on the context and this had led to different perspectives on when an issue is represented as a threat to the entire religion. Yet, what cannot be disputed is how those undertaking jihad, under all circumstances, should serve the purpose of "strengthening Islam" whether that comes from a personal, spiritual level or an aggressive campaign.[45]

Such complexities create a conjunction of multiple definitions of jihad where there is the potential for both the internal war and external adversaries to merge into the same conflict. This presents the problem of "what it means to have such an adversary and to make war against it."[46] Therefore, when striving to live a life in line with Islam, one also battles right and wrong orientations of faith. In achieving the right orientation, Muslims must harmoniously align the right orientation of the self to God, of the specific community, and of the larger framework of the *umma*. The implementation of jihad in all of these domains suggests an effort to keep the many factors in alignment with each other. This effort is both a 'natural' everyday effort, and an extraordinary one during moments of outright warfare. Hence, when there are aspects of this personal struggle that manifests themselves in the external domain "Muslims have then extended this principle

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[44] Cook., 3.
[45] Peters., 9.
[46] Bonner., 12.

to expansionist military campaigns, which are justified to them, since all wars are in the way of Allah."[47]

The framework of jihad, provided by the Qur'an, suggests that Muslims should continually exert a personal struggle in order to align the interests of self and community to those of the divine. This personal struggle and the explicit goal of preserving the sanctity of the community, then leads to the possibility of facing external threats, within the framework of jihad, now projected as an adversary. Moreover, it also highlights how jihad is "an obligation for the community as a whole," creating a perpetual state of tension for Muslims both internally and externally.[48] While this projection may align itself with the principles of jihad and striving in the path of God, the authority that declares jihad in these instances still engages an interpretive act, based on historical contingency. Interpretation, even when derived from Qur'an, faces internal conundrums as to its meaning and directives for how to conduct jihad. Therefore, the possibility emerges that such a jihad may not accurately reflect the path of God and consequently diverges from divine intent inscribed in the Qur'an. The many parts of the Qur'an that an individual can relate to and align with regarding jihad are numerous in number and highlight how the "conflicting Quranic verses cannot prove an evolution of the concept of jihad for religiously authorized warring in Islam from nonaggressive to a militant stance."[49] Verses in the Qur'an, if carefully assessed, reveal the multiple ways in which jihad can be understood and explored as both a moral guide and a declaration of war

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[47] Bonner., 47.
[48] Peters., 12.
[49] Firestone., 64.

In the verses that pertain directly to "jihad of the sword" in the Qur'an there are statements such as "fight them until there is no persecution, and religion is only for Allah. But if they desist, then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors."[50] Two likely conclusions that could be drawn from this phrase reflect both a more aggressive jihad as well as a more internal jihad. In the former, there seems to be a more obvious idea that the only surviving religion should be that of God's, or what is assumed to be the community of Islam. Therefore, the idea of desisting, in line with this thought, implicitly implies that those resistors should convert to Islam because that may be viewed as the ultimate surrender to God's will. However, looking at the relationship between those who desist and those who are still oppressing, then it appears that when the persecution ceases, people are at liberty to practice any religion that best reflects their sense of faith, and the fighting should stop. In this context, those who continue to oppress can be seen as more non-religious entities as opposed to anti-Muslim entities. This revelation is further highlighted when connected to another sura from the Qur'an that states:

> Those who are driven from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allah. And if Allah did not repel some people by others, cloisters, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered, would have been pulled down. And surely Allah will help him who helps Him. Surely Allah is Strong, Mighty.[51]

This connection highlights how Muslims did not only fight for the protection of their sacred spaces but also for those of other religions of the book, laying down broad principles of religious tolerance. This idea reflects how the spiritual jihad ideology reveals even greater sacrifice as it contains a suggestion that Muslim lives should not

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[50] Ali., 2:193, 86.
[51] Ibid., 22:40, 676.

only be laid down for the protection of Islam but also for their monotheistic counterparts,

in what has been deemed as an attempt to establish "perfect religious freedom."[52] If this

is the motivating factor for what drives those trying to fulfill their greater jihad, then the

incentive to act accordingly and deliver such results becomes the protection of others as

well, because it is explicitly stated that "religion is only for Allah." Therefore, this

sentiment reflects an effort to ensure that there is no persecution in the name of religion,

and everyone is at liberty to hold any beliefs that suits their needs.

The relevance of reading beyond a single verse to gain an accurate image of

intention in the Qur'an is further highlighted in a selection on fighting in defense. The

Qur'an states "fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you but be not

aggressive. Surely Allah loves not the aggressors," which is one of the first references in

the text that permits Muslims to fight.[53] Yet, fighting "in the way of Allah" is later

clarified in the verse to mean only fight against those who wage war upon you. Yet, it

would appear that the next verse provides a more hostile dynamic when the Qur'an states:

> Kill them wherever you find them, and drive them out from where they
> drove you out, and persecution is worse than slaughter. And fight not with
> them at the Sacred Mosque until they fight with you in it; so if they fight
> you in it, slay them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers.[54]

At a first glance, the reference of "them" reinforces the binary between those who

practice Islam and those who do not or at least those who do not practice according to

God's interpreted intentions. Therefore, this text is often referenced as proof of a violent

interpretation of Islam, a religion that condones violence against those who do not

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[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid., 2:190, 84.
[54] Ibid., 2:191, 85-86.

possess the same beliefs. However, this perception overlooks the contextual factors that inform these verses. In these circumstances, the Muslim population was few in number and was by no means searching for an active and aggressive military campaign, instead the enemies of Islam, for example the Qurayshi peoples, could see this as an opportunity to remove Islam from the Arabian lands.[55] In this instance it is actually the Muslim demographic that was being persecuted, clarified when the Qur'an states later "they will not cease fighting you until they turn you back from your religion, if they can."[56] The fact that these verses are a continuation of the same set of circumstances that were meant to represent the emerging polity of Islam at the time, highlights how there was no other option for the Muslim community to take up jihad of the sword against their enemies or else risk being wiped from the face of the earth. Moreover, the aggressive tone is tempered when focusing on the importance of location in the aforementioned verses. The sense that Muslims should not seek wholesale extermination when reclaiming the lands that they lost, especially ones of sacred importance, such as Mecca, reveals that Islamic motivations should not come from vengeance but from the closest spiritual alignment with God, hence the need to recapture these places. As a result, recognizing how particular verses in the Qur'an that fuel popular notions of aggressiveness and war-mongering are in fact a product of a particular situation becomes an important component in assessing the relationship between history and interpretation. Thus, reconciling how to interpret these verses in modern contexts presents the problem of acknowledging what aspects of the context have changed, and what aspects are similar.

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[55] Malik, S. K. *The Quranic Concept of War.* Lahore: Wajidalis, 1979, 5.
[56] Ali., 2:217, 96.

Further exploration of verses that appear to work towards consolidating the concept of Islam as an aggressive religion and jihad being the vehicle through which it is expressed can also illuminate how these verses need a significant amount of in depth analysis before reaching a conclusion. In what is seen as the *Sword Verses* the Qur'an states:

> Slay the idolaters, wherever you find them, and take them captive and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush. But if they repent and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, leave their way free. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.[57]

Echoing the previous aggressive tone of the verses that also suggest the need to seek out those who wish to vanquish Islam from the world, this verse also requires a closer look at context and the audience in order to understand the application of the label "idolaters." The circumstances of these events define idolaters as those tribes of Arabia that made agreements with Muslims allowing the safe passage for the Holy Pilgrimage, only to violate them.[58] This realization clarifies the second part of the verse, which would initially suggest that the only options Muslims have in pursuing jihad is either killing the enemy or converting them to Islam, when in fact, because the verse actually refers to a specific group of people, these conclusions cannot accurately represent the message at hand. Thus, the opportunity for such traitorous people to join Islam is the only opportunity that the early Muslim movement could adopt in the face of an abandoned treaty agreement. The idea that Muslims were permitted to kill others simply because they did not practice Islam is further nullified in the next verse where the Qur'an states "if anyone of the idolaters seek thy protection, protect him till he hears the word of Allah,

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[57] Ibid., 9:5, 398.
[58] Ibid.

then convey him to his place of safety. This is because they are a people who know not."[59] Consequently, it was not the importance of a person's religious preference that led them into conflict with Muslims but rather, a more contingent factor was the emphasis on who was responsible for initiating war. This aspect of religious conflict is exemplified by the fact that the Qur'an allows an opportunity for a captive to hear the words of God and then make a choice as to whether to convert or not. The role of the Muslim is to guarantee his captives safety until they are at a place deemed to be free from harm, which could be broadened to include sacred religious spaces from other religions. From what is initially perceived to be aggressive dialogue that reflects the popularization of jihad as a tool of mass violence and a sweeping need of conversion or extermination, reveals instead a set of historical contingencies and a spiritual quest for perfection and alignment with God's principles.

The Battle of Badr

This emphasis on context and verse relationship as a methodology to explore how jihad was perceived or enacted enables a more nuanced understanding of its role within the larger orientation of Islam. In order to further exemplify this methodology, an examination of a particular instance where the Prophet Muhammad was involved in battle and reconcile it with the framework created, reveals how this contingency becomes the structure for future events that invoke jihad. The Battle of Badr was a key battle in the early days of Islam and a turning point in Muhammad's struggle with his opponents among the Quraysh in Mecca. It is one of the few battles that were specifically recorded

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[59] Ibid., 9:6.

in the Qur'an, suggesting its importance in deriving circumstances for Muslims to engage in war in the following years.[60] Muhammad who was born into the large conglomeration of Qurayshi tribes, but fled to Yathrib (later renamed as the city of the Prophet, Medina) when the Meccans began persecuting Muslims, looked at how to recoup all the possessions that were forcibly taken from the Muslims that fled Mecca.[61] This development aligns with previous notions that explain how Muslims should only engage in acts of aggression when oppressed in the first place. While there are varying interpretations as to how precisely the Battle of Badr began, tensions certainly escalated when blood was spilled on a Muslim raid of a Meccans caravan.[62] The Qur'an reflects on these instances when it states:

> So you slew them not but Allah slew them, and thou smotest not when thou didst smite the enemy, but Allah smote him, and that He might confer upon the believers a benefit from Himself. Surely Allah is Hearing, Knowing.[63]

The sense of divine intervention that permeates this verse and highlights how it was not really the Muslims that killed the Qurayshi people but rather that it was God who slew Qurayshi people, creates the impression that God was directly involved in the affairs of his followers. This interpretation is of utmost importance because it reflects the sense of desperation the Muslim people were facing from an enemy that significantly outnumbered them, hence the need for God's intervention in order to prevent the followers from extinction. This belief is reinforced later in this section when the Qur'an states:

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[60] Nigosian, S. A. Islam Its History, Teaching, and Practices. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004, 4.
[61] Firestone., 50.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ali., 8:17, 380.

> If you sought a judgment, the judgment has indeed come to you; and if you desist, it is better for you. And if you return to fight, we too shall return and your forces will avail you nothing, though they may be many; and know that Allah is with the believers.[64]

The suggestion, in the midst of battle, that virtue may lie in desisting, returns to the tension between internal striving and external action that opened the discussion of the multiple meanings of jihad. This verse creates and emphasizes the need for jihad to be a collective duty as any decision ultimately made, requires a consensus amongst the group. The tone of this verse suggests that regardless of how the battle developed there was always a sentiment that the Muslim population should consider an alternative to bloodshed. Therefore, portraying Muhammad as the aggressor in the Battle of Badr downplays or denies the persecution of early Muslims in Medina, which in many ways was the catalyst for the ensuing events.

The Battle of Badr accentuates how attaining the moral high ground is a significant component when invoking jihad and may signify how an individual embraces jihad. The Qur'an highlights this idea when it states:

> Those with whom thou makest an agreement, then they break their agreement every time, and they keep not their duty,

And further:

> And if thou fear treachery on the part of a people, throw back to them (their treats) on terms of equality. Surely Allah loves not the treacherous. And if they intend to deceive thee, then surely Allah is sufficient for thee. He is Who strengthened thee with His help and with the believers.[65]

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[64] Ibid., 8:19, 381.
[65] Ibid., 8:56-62, 389-390.

These verses reveal the type of war imagined within the Qur'an, later interpreted in various ways by Muslim polities. The nature of maintaining respect and honor with the opposing party seems to guide the moral jihad that the Qur'an preaches. Reflecting on the first verse, it shows how the opponents of Islam disregarded their responsibility and violated their agreements during the Battle of Badr.[66] The use of the words "every time" with regard to these violations also highlights how Muslims were willing to make new agreements despite the lack of trust and respect displayed by the Quraysh. It is only when the enemy violates the agreement, that the Qur'an permits Muslims also to repeal the treaty, yet, the Qur'an tries to bind its people to the agreement for as long as possible. This concept is suggested in the second verse mentioned above, where mere apprehension of the opponent's behavior is not enough to justify the termination of an agreement. This should be adhered to even if there is some intention to deceive the opponent under a guise of peace, for still, Muslims should accept the peace and deal with the resulting consequences when they eventually rise.

The development of jihad and its early form of implementation, seen through the Battle of Badr, create an early precedent for the need for forgiveness, religious liberty and mindfulness when pursuing some aspects of aggressive military behavior. One can see how "the doctrine of jihad was actually a re-orientation of the war-like raiding of the pre-Islamic Qurayshi Arabs," thus shaping the nature in which jihad was undertaken.[67] The nature of verse relationship and context that defined how jihad was implemented at the onset of Islam is crucial in making comparisons to other moments where jihad was

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[66] Ibid.
[67] Bonney., 48.

reinterpreted. This approach is crucial for assessing how jihad and the Qur'an was a

product of a series of events. The importance of the developmental process is also central

in breaking the 'us' vs 'them' binary that is currently perpetuated by supposed Muslim

elements that have imposed their own interpretive rubrics on the intentions of the Qur'an.

II

Salah al-Din and Jihad: The Resurgence of a Sunni Islamic Identity through the Chroniclers of the Crusades

Merely a few centuries after Islam constructed an ideological framework for conducting warfare, the Arabian world was plummeted into what is remembered as one of the greatest religious ideological battles to take place, the Crusades. Spanning almost 200 years, the Crusades acted as a catalyst for the Muslim world to acknowledge and address the idea of territorial sovereignty, a united Muslim identity and the threat of external adversaries. The failure of the Muslim states to protect their own territories in the aftermath of the First Crusade prompted a reevaluation of how to connect the various political motivations and mentalities that had led to the divisions exploited by the Crusaders. Such strategies were first approached by Nur al-Din, who began to lay the pieces of a coordinated Muslim effort to reclaim the lost territory. Yet, his successor, Salah al-Din, saw even greater promise in how this effort could be tied to the pillars of Islam and provide the moral and motivational backbone needed to fully succeed in a war with the Christians. Therefore, this chapter will examine the primary sources of Salah al-Din's time who constructed a particular image of the ruler and his relationship to Islam in order to leverage religious principles toward a specific end. By reconciling the tentative framework for jihad and its applicability, with the chronicler's portrayal of individuals during the Crusades, a timeline can be constructed which recognizes the pivotal role notions of jihad played in shaping the narrative of particular historical context.

Creating the Religious and Political Connection after the First Crusade

The events that allowed Salah al-Din to capitalize on jihadi propaganda and campaigns against the Crusaders were the foundations of the reorientation and intensification of Sunni Islam.[1] At the eve of the First Crusades in 1096, the Muslim world was in a state of complete disarray and disunity, with several centers of powers such as the Shi'i Fatimid Caliphate, the Seljuq dynasty and local Sunni leaders in Syria. Thus, there was no attentive focus on the lands across the sea until after the invasion.[2] This disunity existed in a large extent as prior to the First Crusade, a succession of deaths in both the key power centers of the Islamic world, namely the Seljuq and Fatimid empires, gave way to disorientation and anarchy.[3] Whether or not the Crusaders were aware of this fact is ambiguous, but the subsequent timing of their invasion was extremely fortuitous. The fact that the Muslim world lacked any significant leadership at the time, especially in areas that received the brunt of the Frankish invasion, meant coordinating any substantial defense was unlikely to yield great results.[4] Thus, by the time the Crusaders reached Jerusalem in 1099, any idea of jihad was buried deep under the political fragmentation of Muslim empires.

The result of the First Crusade prompted a limited spiritual reaction from the political elites in Arabia that had not been directly impacted by these early campaigns. In Damascus, the Crusader's success "generated loud but ineffectual calls for jihad from members of the Syrian Sunni religious establishment who believed the Frankish invasion

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[1] Mourad, Suleiman Ali, and James E. Lindsay. The Intensification and Reorientation of Sunni Jihad Ideology in the Crusader Period: Ibn 'Asakir of Damascus (1105-1176) and His Age, with an Edition and Translation of Ibn 'Asakir's The Forty Hadiths for Inciting Jihad. Leiden: Brill, 2013, 32.

[2] Hillenbrand, Carole. The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives. New York: Routledge, 2000, 33.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., 47.

would not have been possible had Muslim political leaders attended to their religious

duty of waging jihad against the Christian infidels."[5] The earliest example of preaching

on the topic of jihad came from al-Sulami in 1105, whose *Book of Jihad* blamed Muslims

for their weak spiritual condition and advocated for the greater jihad of internal struggle

and spiritual renewal.[6] However, his calls to jihad were poorly received, suggesting a

level of indifference between Damascene elites, possibly because of the alliance of

convenience with the Crusaders that preserved Damascene independence.[7] The

connection between Damascus and the Crusaders highlights how the aftermath of the

First Crusade did not prompt a universal Muslim reaction or spark an immediate Islamic

revival, but rather cemented the decentralization of power that had emerged in the

preceding centuries.

The possibility that any notion of jihad may have been extinguished altogether

was real until the fall of Edessa in 1144 to Imad ad-Din Zengi. Zengi, the governor of

Mosul and Aleppo, besieged Edessa, the weakest crusader state because of its placement

across the Euphrates and its separation from the Crusader strongholds, such as Jerusalem.

Ironically, Zengi had also tried to capture Damascus in 1137, which was then allied with

the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, but came to an agreement with the city in 1138.[8]

The retaliation of the Crusaders to the fall of Edessa was the catalyst that prompted the

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[5] Mourad and Lindsay, The Intensification and Reorientation of Sunni Jihad Ideology in the Crusader Period, 32.

[6] Ibid., 37.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Zengi's capture of Edessa is the beginning of chronicle representations that champion the actions of political leaders. The glorification of Zengi's actions by chroniclers, including Ibn al-Athir, serves the agenda of the revival of Sunni Islam. Yet, such representations overlook the fact that Zengi was a warrior that had sprawling ambitions that transverse the area controlled by the Crusaders as well as those controlled by the Seljuqs further east in Baghdad. Moreover, Zengi's death just a few years after the triumph at Edessa meant it is hard to discern whether or not he accepted his role as the champion of Islam, although, it did not prevent his chroniclers from portraying him in this fashion.

Second Crusade. Zengi's attack on Edessa provided a spark for some religious entities to revive the relationship between jihad and military duties, which up to that point could not be infused into the rulers. This moment in the Crusades reflects upon Zengi as the first major Muslim leader to recapture territory from the Franks.[9]

Instead of trying to recapture Edessa, the Crusaders recognized that the conquest of Damascus, a major Muslim city, would serve to bolster their power to new heights in the region.[10] However, this decision proved catastrophic for the Crusaders, as it allowed a renewed mobilization of Muslim forces in response. The decision to attack Damascus exposed many in the city to the first hand presence of killing and pillaging by the Crusaders, which they had not seen because of their previous alliances.[11] Moreover, when two members of the religious class, al-Findalawi and al-Halhuli who were zealous protectors of the Sunni Islam, died protecting the city, their martyrdom prompted a renewed spirit later shaped into the sentiments of jihad.[12] The emotional impact of this invasion prompted the religious elites to renew their arguments of military duties in the face of external adversaries.

Al-Sulami's focus on resurrecting militant piety in Muslim rulers may have had a limited impact at the time, but his efforts were not completely in vain. A trace of his arguments manifested themselves in the works of Ibn Asakir who was present in Damascus during the siege of the Crusaders. With the decline of the Fatimid Shi'i caliphate, the attack on Damascus allowed Sunni scholars, such as Ibn Asakir, to use this

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[9] Hillenbrand., 110
[10] Ibid., 116.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.

moment as an opportunity to draw a concrete connection between military duties and their religious inclinations through the lens of jihad.[13] Zengi's death in 1146 was met with the succession of his son, Nur al-Din, who furthered his father's aggressive campaigns in the region. A series of victories against the Crusaders that brought Nur al-Din control over Asia Minor and made any potential capture of Edessa by the Crusaders nearly impossible caused the Muslim religious elites in Damascus to recognize his potential to unify Sunni Islam.[14] Sunni Islam's unity in Damascus was the long-standing dream of many religious elites, especially since it was the capital of the first truly Islamic Empire, the Umayyads.[15] The aftermath of the failed invasion of Damascus by the Crusaders led to the renewed treaties between the two sides, an action that prompted outrage amongst the religious elites. Thus, the success of Nur al-Din's campaigns outside of Damascus was noted by the elites and he was recognized as an individual who could carry their banner against the Crusaders. With the leaders of the Damascus continuingly growing weaker and losing influence over their people, Nur al-Din was finally able to capture the city in 1154, with the help of the local population and unify both Syria and Sunni Islam.[16] Upon his arrival in Damascus, Nur al-Din was welcomed by the religious elites and a connection was born between the two: elites received excessive patronage from the ruler and in return his ventures were religious endowed. This connection was reinforced by the parallel emergence of Muslim chroniclers who began to romanticize

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[13] Mourad and Lindsay, *The Intensification and Reorientation of Sunni Jihad Ideology in the Crusader Period*, 43.
[14] Ibid., 48.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid., 49.

those Muslim rulers who displayed great piety in embracing jihad as the framework for their conquests against the Crusaders.

Salah al-Din emerges as the most prominent figure of these pious narratives. Thus, any understanding of Salah al-Din derives from the sources that consciously crafted his persona in history. This is an important observation to make because ultimately, Salah al-Din's relevance to jihad and Islam can only really be seen by how his contemporaries, military commanders, personal advisers and varying demographics of the population, saw him and reacted to him. From a broader perspective, understanding how the Crusades were primarily understood as a Western concept and therefore were "not treated in any extant Islamic work as an isolated topic, recognizes how it has no particular resonance for Islamic ears and the Muslim historians are not concerned with it."[17] This does not mean that Muslim historians claim the Crusades did not take place, but rather that the eras significance was interwoven with the development of a Muslim identity and what it meant for religious and political entities to merge into a common theme with a common purpose. Moreover, the fact that there is still a wealth of work that remains inaccessible because of a lack of translation reveals how "the whole historiographical picture of an event or a reign from the Islamic side cannot be grasped" inevitably narrowing the lens that we are able to use to understand Salah al-Din and amplifying a reliance on the memories that do exist.[18] Thus, analyzing these recollections requires both caution and due diligence when handling the primary sources of the time, being careful not to overemphasize their importance or "distort them, simply because it

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[17] Hillenbrand., 9.
[18] Ibid., 13.

exists in the first place."[19] This does not mean that any conclusions drawn are invalid, but rather that they represent a certain angle and aspect of Salah al-Din's personality as seen by specific observers. With this framework in mind, the relationship between a ruler's success in his military campaigns and how he is remembered is a "direct link in the chroniclers' minds between such literature and military action," creating the society through narrative that revered those leaders who waged in war in the name of religion.[20]

Salah al-Din's chroniclers build a particular vision of Salah al-Din's character during his rise to the forefront of the Muslim *umma*. The development of this character is driven by how these events were variously constructed by chroniclers depending on their position and own narrative strategies. As a result, whether or not Salah al-Din acted for personal interest or for the sake of his community and the role that religious conviction played in his campaigns is colored by how chroniclers represented his actions. The period of Salah al-Din's reign generated an unusual amount of evidence for the time, which in part may be linked to the growing associations between political and religious elites that began with the successes of Zengi and Nur al-Din.[21][22]

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[19] Ibid., 10
[20] Ibid., 166.
[21] Ibid., 171.
[22] The works of Imad al-Din al-Isfahani and Baha al-Din ibn Shaddad are most closely associated with depiction of Salah al-Din because of their roles as his personal biographers. Ibn al-Athir also detailed aspects of Salah al-Din's life and the emergence of letters between close advisor, al-Qadi al-Fadil, depict Salah al-Din's rule. The large number of chroniclers employed by Salah al-Din had in was unparalleled for that period of time. It is crucial to recognize that all of these individuals served in some important capacity in Salah al-Din's court. Apart from Ibn Shaddad, Imad al-Din and al-Qadi al-Fadil enjoyed the most patronage from Salah al-Din with the latter being appointed as Salah al-Din's vizier after he took control of Damascus. Al-Fadil then appointed Imad al-Din as his deputy and Chancellor of the court and both of them accompanied Salah al-Din on later expeditions in the Crusades. The fact that Imad al-Din had been banished after the death of Nur al-Din highlights how important Salah al-Din's patronage was to him and the extent of which gratitude was shown in chronicles.

This connection is worth keeping in mind when taking a closer look at the works of Ibn Shaddad and his representations of Salah al-Din because it places more emphasis on the role of the writer in creating a relationship between Salah al-Din and jihad as opposed to being reflective of the religion instead. An emphasis on how Salah al-Din embraced jihad reflects the works of Ibn Shaddad in a more influential light and accentuates the role the historian played in catapulting Salah al-Din to prominence, meaning there is additional caution we have to acknowledge when creating a relationship between Salah al-Din and jihad. Baha ad-Din ibn Shaddad's[23] recollections of his time as Salah al-Din's personal biographer reveal a close insight into the leader's reign, yet, "there is also an underlying political message in the work which is implicit in certain words that are put in the mouth of Salah al-Din himself. Whether the words were really spoken by the sultan, whether they represent thoughts that the author genuinely remembered to have been expressed or whether they are purposely inventions it is impossible to decide."[24] During Ibn Shaddad's visit to Jerusalem in 1188, he had compiled a treatise, which he called *The Virtues of Jihad* and presented to Salah al-Din. The treatise earned him the patronage of Salah al-Din, and his permanent enrollment by June 1188 in the service of Salah al-Din.[25] While his treatise influenced Salah al-Din, the extent to which it did or how reflective this treatise was of the Qur'an is certainly

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[23] Baha al-Din ibn Shaddad is remembered as the Muslim jurist and scholar that spent the most amount of time with Salah al-Din due to his role as the leader's personal biographer. Ibn Shaddad was summoned to Salah al-Din's court after the ruler was impressed by his writings. Ibn Shaddad was later appointed judge of the army, which meant he was an eye-witness account to many of the siege's Salah al-Din embarked upon. The patronage that ibn Shaddad received from Salah al-Din epitomizes the connection between religious elites and political entities during the Zengid dynasty, and is demonstrates the role of the chronicler in remembering an individual who provided them with great opportunities.

[24] Din, Baha, and D. S. Richards. *The Rare and Excellent History of Salah al-Din, Or, Al-Nawādir Al-Sultaniyya Wa'l-Mahasin Al-Yusufiyya.* Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2001, 4.

[25] Ibid., 2

questionable. The treatise itself highlights how Salah al-Din was not independent in his own understanding of the Qur'an and jihad, and emphasizes the role that Ibn Shaddad played in shaping the ruler's connection to Islam. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Salah al-Din has often been accused of initiating a policy of expansionism with religious pretenses when his campaigns were "directed at creating a personal power base strong enough to take on the Franks" meaning he often fought fellow Muslims and refrained from attacking the Franks for long periods of time.[26][27] However, the need to communicate an individual that could view the long-term importance of such actions in order to unify Islam was of greater significance to the narrative that Ibn Shaddad and other chroniclers wanted to represent for all future generations of Muslims.

Developing the Image of Salah-al Din

Attempts to recount Salah al-Din's youth and educational exposure are clouded by the fact that many recollections were in response to his later rise to fame. An Islamic model of learning, which emphasized exegesis of the Qur'an and hadith, characterized education during the medieval era. As he was from a respectable family, it is quite likely that Salah al-Din participated in the normative educational patterns of the time, although he probably also "as the son of the commandant, the best teaching within reach."[28] His father's rank as regent to Imad ad-Din Zengi suggests that education and the primacy of Islam surely occupied a more central space in Salah al-Din's early education, no doubt

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[26] Hillenbrand., 184.
[27] Such actions are reminiscent of the Zengid dynasty and were justified by chroniclers in the aftermath of Salah al-Din's future success as he was credited with have the bigger picture in mind when conducting such conquests.
[28] Ibid., 66.

being "drilled for years in the Qur'an, Arabic grammar, and the elements of rhetoric, poetry, and theology...to instill the Qur'an and traditions, formed the chief aim of the learned but limited men who were entrusted with the training of distinguished truth."[29] His education allowed him the avenue to also review the socio-economic context through literature beyond the Qur'an and learn about the elements of rhetoric through poetry perhaps highlighting a more complete disposition as opposed to one solely indoctrinated by Islam. The pivotal role of education in Salah al-Din's childhood suggests that this experience could have "helped to identify with his Islamic background."[30] Combined with the military connection, his father's service to Zengi, it is easy to claim a link between the two as a uniting factor when evaluating his future command. It is crucial to recognize that while Salah al-Din's education was predominantly fuelled by Islamic teachings, this also entailed a more holistic idea of what it meant to form a comprehensive Muslim identity as part of a more unified sense of collective identity. The portrayal of Salah al-Din as having strong Islamic roots advances the connection between religious elites and political patronage. However, the extent to which Salah al-Din truly embodied the religion at such a young age is suspect in light of the lack evidence documenting his youth. Much of the representations of Salah al-Din's early years were constructed in response to his eventual success as a ruler. Therefore, they only serve to advance an agenda of the future leader as the champion of Islam.

Characterizations of Salah al-Din's childhood derive from his father's privileged position in the Zengid dynasty and from the hypotheses concerning general patterns of

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[29] Ibid., 67.

[30] Lyons, M. C., and D. E. P. Jackson. *Salah al-Din: The Politics of the Holy War.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 5.

education and training during the period. If Salah al-Din did have a religious education that preached the tolerant virtues of Islam then it does call into question the criticisms that label him as power hungry or searching for a personal glory. At the very least there is no evidence to suggest that he was destined for the positions he would later achieve. Yet, these assumptions are just that, assumptions about a boy that history has no real footing to comment on and ultimately highlights "the fact that for the first twenty-six years of his life we have had no picture of him at all."[31] Regardless of the role his father had in the Zengid dynasty or afterwards when his uncle Shirkuh, Nur al-Din's right-hand man, brought him into public life, there were no overwhelming reasons to believe that Salah al-Din had the foresight to unite the various territories.[32] However, we can assume that Salah al-Din was at least surrounded by a political atmosphere that would reinforce personal ambition and provide avenues for advancement when future opportunities would arise. Thinking about how able he was to reconcile this environment with his own personal beliefs and emphasizing jihad as the avenue that would bring the success he envisioned is, again, suspect in light of the absence of evidence. Therefore, the narratives that exist tend to restrain from fully glorifying his youth and begin with his role as a public figure. Thus, any ability to address the motivations of Salah al-Din's later actions is merely a conjecture drawn from associations to Islam by his contemporaries.

Salah al-Din's move to Damascus, the center of Sunni Islam, prompted greater exposure to the renewed religiously motivated politics that Nur al-Din championed, and that Salah al-Din would later express. Salah al-Din's predecessor is often credited with

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[31] Ibid., 9.
[32] Poole., 75.

creating a religious framework for expansion that Salah al-Din would later utilize in

uniting all the Muslim people. Throughout Nur al-Din's time as leader there was a real

effort to enable Sunni Islam to flourish with generous sponsorship given to the religious

classes and a patronage of religious monuments to foster places the people could rally

around.[33] The development of this type of rule may have played a part in the formation of

Salah al-Din's own personality, and as historians have remarked "it is difficult to over-

stress the influence of Nur al-Din on Salah al-Din's political education and on his career.

Nur al-Din was an exponent of the politics of growth allied to the ideal of the Holy War,

a manipulator of religious propaganda and a ruler who showed the value of setting men

before money."[34] The religious spirit embodied by Nur al-Din, or at least portrayed in

this light by religious entities, reflects the reorientation of Sunni Islam and the rise of a

jihadi sentiment that could be advanced by the military. Consequently, acknowledging

how the Sunni religious establishment had once again become a central political factor by

revamping their image through the connection drawn between religion and politics

furthers the narrative behind any jihadi ideology. Therefore, Salah al-Din's own display

of trying to lead a spiritually governed way of life also played into the rhetoric that would

allow for a smooth transition after the reign of Nur al-Din. The connection between the

religious and political elites created a mode of government that combatted the Crusaders;

therefore, upsetting this balance at this moment in time would destabilize Islamic

attempts to reconquer the lands they had lost.

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[33] Hillenbrand., 122.
[34] Lyons., 71.

Thus, the first instances where we can see Salah al-Din attain any position of note are upon his appointment as Vizier of Egypt. There are many possible explanations for why Salah al-Din was promoted to this position. Ibn Athir suggests that he was weak and young, which made him an appropriate puppet leader for Nur al-Din.[35] Yet, the reasons for his appointment become less relevant when evaluating how he handled and eventually thrived in this role possibly leading to his eventual rise to fame. His introduction to Egypt prompted a radical change in the operating of the city with the idea that it would be "dressed with religion" showing the first signs of Salah al-Din's bond with his faith and the space it occupied in the way he administered his reign.[36] His need to stamp his authority on Egypt was never so aptly seen as when recorded by Ibn al-Athir who recalled a speech Salah al-Din made to his new subjects:

> If Nur al-Din, had thought any of you capable of taking my place or being trusted as he trusted me, he would have appointed him to the governors of Egypt, the most important of all his possessions. If death had not prevented him, he would have bequeathed to none but me the guardianship and bringing up of his son. I perceive that to my hurt you have arrogated to yourselves the care of my Master, the son of my Master. Assuredly I will come to do him homage and repay the benefits of his father by service, which shall be remembered forever; and I shall deal with each of you according to His work, the abandoning of the defense of the King's dominion.[37]

Such a display that Salah al-Din made to his people was perhaps emblematic of what the future held in store, the need to deliver justice in accordance with "his" law leaves an ambiguous suggestion of whether or not he was referring to the Prophet and Allah or Nur al-Din. To a certain extent, it provided the baseline for rule grounded in the principles of

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[35] Ibid., 28-29.

[36] Ibid., 32.

[37] Athir-al, Ibn, *el-Kamil fi-t-tarikh:* General History, written up to 1231 (ed. Tornberg, 14 vols., Leyden, 1866-76; *Recuiel*, tome i., 1872; tome ii., I, 1887), 607-608.

Islam, because Nur al-Din himself was pivotal in revitalizing the Muslim identity prior to Salah al-Din's emergence. Thus this speech can be viewed as an extension of a strong core of Islamic beliefs.

In line with the education that Salah al-Din probably received in Syria, there is no doubt that the influences of Nur al-Din would have further amplified the religious dimensions of Salah al-Din's own thought process. As Salah al-Din began to emerge as both a man and leader in his own right, there were traces that Nur al-Din's ruling style resonated with his own as "of all the treasures that he found, Salah al-Din kept nothing for himself. Some he distributed among his followers or presented to Nur al-Din...the rest of the treasure was sold for the public purse."[38] Behaviors such as these represent how Salah al-Din was furthering the notion of creating a more spiritually governed way of life for the public, placing their needs at a premium in comparison to his. The reflection of Nur al-Din's ruling style in Salah al-Din's nature, prefaced the actions he would take in his most official role to date, as Vizier of Egypt. It foreshadowed the importance of how governing with religious underpinnings was key to maintaining control and creating a Muslim identity.

There is certainly an opportunity in creating a religious atmosphere in order to secure his new position in Egypt as "to counter the challenge rulers needed the help of scholarship and religious propaganda. If, for instance, the basis of their rule could be linked to one of the fundamentals of Islam, then their position within the Islamic

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[38] Poole., 115.

framework needed no further justification."[39] Ibn al-Athir's recollections also support the narrative of creating the continuous lineage of Sunni rule that worked to the advantage of the religious elite. His account of Salah al-Din's supports the narrative of strong Muslim leaders championing the cause of reuniting Islam and consolidating a Muslim identity in the face of the Crusaders. Hence, this notion is further emphasized by associating Salah al-Din with Nur al-Din and displaying their piety in the administration of Egypt because of virtuous reflection on Sunni Islam.

Although there is evidence to suggest that piety influenced the decisions that Salah al-Din made in Egypt, his actions are more likely to have been a part of the broader religious and political dialogue that existed. His emphasis on providing an environment that appealed to the common man consistently disappointed the various members of his court. Such actions reveal Salah al-Din to be someone refusing to comply with the political game that had disrupted a collective Muslim identity in the region, working through "sound religious instruction according to the Sunnite rules by founding colleges and establishing approved teachers of orthodoxy in the capital and the chief provincial towns."[40] This type of behavior worked towards gaining the confidence of the people because it furthered the reorientation and intensification of Sunni Islam in what previously was a Shi'i dominated region. The connection that Salah al-Din built with the people of Egypt as a result of implementing policies inspired by the Qur'an, such as re-emphasizing Sunni interpretations of faith, allowed people to refresh their view of Islam and demonstrated how by "sheer goodness and firmness of character, he [Salah al-Din]

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[39] Lyons., 41.
[40] Poole., 108.

raised Islam out of the rut of political demoralization.[41] Yet, this representation of Salah al-Din's actions further emphasizes the role of the chronicler in constructing the pious image of their leader. The religious dimension that had shaped the Crusaders' actions, and was now reciprocated by the Muslims, meant that Islam now served as the legitimizing foundation for any leader's actions. Therefore, the mutually beneficial relationship developed between religious and political elites often materialized in the creation of Islamic schools because it further propagated the political rhetoric that leaders, such as Salah al-Din, were acting upon.

The decision to increase the Sunni Muslim presence in Egypt is perhaps representative of Salah al-Din's commitment to the religion during his leadership. However, the chroniclers further bolster Salah al-Din's relationship with Islam by referencing two distinct moments. The first, an attempted assassination of Salah al-Din's life, revealed the earliest signs that he was also willing to rule with the sword when necessary "swooping down upon the plotters, seizing the leaders, and having them all crucified on the 6th of April, 1174."[42] The need to supplement his generous ruling style with that of a hard resolve endowed Salah al-Din with the qualities to become the leader that Islam needed at the time. Following this event, Salah al-Din became deathly ill, and it suggested that during this time he reflected upon the "fragility of human affairs, waking him from the sleep of forgetfulness, consequently undergoing a moment of religious awakening after which he prosecuted jihad with a genuine sense of purpose, personally as

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[41] Gibb, H. A. R. Salah al-Din: Studies in Islamic History. Beirut: Arab Institute for Research and Pub., 1974, 176.
[42] Poole., 126.

well as publicly."[43] There is a tension in committing to this belief that Salah al-Din only began to pursue jihad after these events because it can allow one to cast doubt upon the previous actions he had undertaken as being religiously motivated. Yet, for chroniclers of Salah al-Din, while life of introspection must have impacted his decisions, this is the moment in which that contemplative life became a part of the public record. Such recollections allowed the chroniclers to infuse military actions with religious fervor in their narratives to a much greater degree, as they sought to explain and how Salah al-Din had received a call to action against the Crusaders. Moreover, the chroniclers depicted Salah al-Din as the perfect representative for Islam at this moment in time, because they situate his religious awakening in the context of having a greater goal to work towards. The result of this representation embellishes Salah al-Din's efforts to embrace the greater jihad, and strengthens the narrative of reorienting Sunni Islam in the face of external threats.

Consolidating a Sunni Islamic Identity

If the commitment to his Muslim beliefs was questioned prior to embracing jihad as a rhetorical and ideological force, through the scope of his military activities, the chroniclers later illuminate how Salah al-Din's military actions explicitly referenced jihad as he fought against the Crusaders. His recognition of the historical importance of Syria and its place as the seat of Islam refocused his military ventures towards administering any future campaign from this region. This would also reflect upon how Salah al-Din had truly embraced his renewed Islamic beliefs and further his cause of championing Islam.

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[43] Hillenbrand., 183.

Such a concept was widely acknowledged at the time, with both Nur al-Din and Zengi conducting their business from Aleppo and Damascus, as "from the standpoint of religious propaganda, Egypt was part of the patrimony of Islam, a base for the Holy War but not as convenient a one as Syria."[44] Naturally, this prompted a response from the rulers in Syria, the vacuum left in the aftermath of Nur al-Din's death made an opening that Salah al-Din could capitalize upon. However, his moves threatened elites and their way of life and lead to claims that he was "betraying his master [Nur al-Din]."[45] Whether these claims can truly be substantiated can only be seen via the actions that followed Salah al-Din's capture of such key Syrian cities, thus spending "his first decade in power fighting fellow Muslims in order to achieve a unified base."[46] These actions actually prompted support from many people who saw the decline of Islam after Nur al-Din's death primarily as a result of individuals seeking personal rewards. This was remarked upon by Ibn al-Athir who stated:

> Amongst the rulers of Islam we see not one who desires to wage *jihad* or aid the religion. Each one devotes himself to his pastimes and amusements and wronging his flock. This is more dreadful to me than the enemy.[47]

Taking into account Ibn al-Athir's remarks actually justifies the steps Salah al-Din took in order to unite all Muslim people. His recognition of a lack of coordination between the various cities and why that was more important at the time than directly confronting the Franks promotes his own foresight in the matter. Salah al-Din's conquests at this point indicate a resistance to indiscriminate violence because he "did not want to inflict losses on the Aleppans as they were after all, the soldiers of the Holy War," which was the goal

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[44] Lyons., 52.
[45] Ibid., 85.
[46] Hillenbrand., 172.
[47] Athir., 46.

of his endeavors in Syria, setting up a standard for jihad.[48] The resistance that Salah al-Din encountered was perhaps reflective of the abyss that had been left between Islam and religious piety and military actions. In fact Salah al-Din's actions reinvented the perception of how jihad could strengthen collective Muslim identities. The controlled manner with which Salah al-Din conducted this battle, content with victory as opposed to destroying the forces that stood against him, highlights a commitment to a greater vision and struggle that he could see as more of a threat to Islam. Yet, the views of Salah al-Din's justified campaigns against fellow Muslims is another representation of events by chroniclers to portray Salah al-Din as an individual capable of envisioning the more important goals of Islam. The fact that his actions against Muslims were not explicitly condemned by religious elites highlights how it was important for the reorientation of Sunni Islam to have a leader capable of waging a jihad against the Crusaders. The practical measures he took infused with religious ideals resonated with the "personal inner renewal" he was embracing when conducting his jihad.[49] The careful process of necessary action with tactile restraint highlighted how Salah al-Din had developed into a capable leader, one that used using Islamic principles to inform these decisions in order to create the united Muslim people that could engage more successfully with the Frankish forces. Therefore, his pious religious virtue is a portrayal that resonates amongst his contemporaries because it rationalizes a series of actions that led to the eventual retaking of lands from the Crusaders.

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[48] Lyons., 196.
[49] Jotischky., 105.

At the height of his power, Salah al-Din's relationship with Ibn Shaddad took on added importance because the scholar began to record Salah al-Din's actions and achievements and thus provided insights into the ruler's personal life. Many of Ibn Shaddad's memories and experiences have been translated to reflect Salah al-Din's embracing of jihad and the central role it played in his conquests. Ibn Shaddad recalled how jihad began to consume every aspect of his life stating:

> The Jihad, his love and passion for it, had taken a mighty hold on his heart and all his being, so much so that he talked of nothing else, thought of nothing but the means to pursue it, was concerned only with its manpower and had a fondness only for those who spoke of it and encourage it. In his love for the Jihad on the path of God he shunned his womenfolk, his children, his homeland, his home and all his pleasures, and for this world he was content in the shade of his tent with the winds blowing through it left and right.[50]

It appeared to Ibn Shaddad that Salah al-Din was no longer only enamored with the concept of jihad but had actually found his own jihad within the crusading context. By referencing Salah al-Din's jihad as the "The Jihad" the chronicler endorses his actions. Such rhetoric used to characterize Salah al-Din's ventures certainly displays the commitment to jihad that is often referred to in the Qur'an. Thus, Ibn Shaddad's characterizations of Salah al-Din emphasize the leader's role as the standard bearer for all Muslims and provide the foundations for future generations to recognize the importance of an individual in uniting Islam. The need to make Salah al-Din's jihad pragmatic and an eventual reality are highlighted through the acknowledgement of "manpower" that would be crucial if Salah al-Din were to evict the Frankish forces from the Holy City. Yet, the mentioning of practical realities almost undermine the spiritual conviction that resonates

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[50] Din., 28.

throughout the passage, with talk of Salah al-Din preferring a life of simplicity,

undeterred and unavailed by the vices that perhaps consume a man not wholly committed

to jihad. For a man of such power to reject all the worldly prizes that can be afforded to

such a position certainly highlights a greater understanding of how jihad can be

undertaken. Ibn Shaddad asserts that it is this commitment and subservience to jihad that

serves as the base of Salah al-Din's power:

> The sultan perceived that his gratitude for God's favor towards was evidenced by his strong grasp on sovereignty, his God-given control over the lands and the people's willing obedience, could only be demonstrated by his endeavoring to exert himself to the utmost and to strive to fulfill the precept of Jihad.[51]

Ibn Shaddad sought to characterize Salah al-Din as the greatest leader of the time, and he

did this by emphasizing how people were willing to subject themselves to Salah al-Din's

plan and become a part of this greater Islamic struggle as a result of Salah al-Din's own

dedication to jihad. The fact that Salah al-Din, at this moment in time, had highlighted

himself as the most capable Muslim ruler as well as the most powerful perhaps left little

alternative for the people even if they wanted to object. However, it has to be

acknowledged that Salah al-Din had impacted the majority of his subjects in a positive

way, deferring to mercy upon his initial overtures in Syria as opposed to killing all of

those who had opposed him. Moreover, the fact that there was little in the way of revolts

and revolutions to Salah al-Din's rule does paint him as a force that managed to unite the

Muslim people to some degree under the banner of jihad.

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[51] Ibid., 72.

Religious Piety at the Height of Salah al-Din's Power

As the Sunni religious establishment continued to dominate the dialogue with their connection to military rulers, the key components of this spiritual venture materialized in both the lesser and the greater jihad. The displacement of Muslim ideals during the period of disunity meant a resurgence of traditional interpretations of the Qur'an and its role during the Second Crusades. Therefore, waging a united Muslim war against the Franks was a central tenet of the lesser jihad, as crafted by the chroniclers. As a result, Salah al-Din's leadership position in this religious dynamic allowed him the opportunity to pursue both types of jihad, and spread this notion to other people. Salah al-Din displayed little in the way of intentionally violent or merciless tendencies, instead emphasizing how his jihad necessitated a balance between being a firm ruler while not forgetting the virtuous principles of Islam that also comprised an important aspect of jihad. In his role as a supreme leader of the Muslim people, Ibn Shaddad discusses Salah al-Din as a man and the relationship he built with his people:

> Salah al-Din's generosity was too public to need to be recorded and too famous to need to be recounted, and yet we will give an indication of it in general terms. He ruled all that he ruled, and, when he died, in his treasure chest were found only 47 Nasiri dirhams of silver and a single Tyrian gold coin.[52]

Ibn Shaddad's recollection of Salah al-Din's pious nature during his time in the sultan's service is significant to our reading of jihad because it demonstrates where the chronicler's convictions lay when he outlines various ideals mentioned in the Qur'an regarding jihad. Salah al-Din's willingness to make such engagements in all of the territories he ruled, as highlighted when Ibn Shaddad stated "he ruled all that he ruled,"

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[52] Ibid., 25.

infers the depth of which Salah al-Din was truly working towards fulfilling his jihad.

Extending from the generosity Salah al-Din showed towards his own people, Ibn

Shaddad also commented on Salah al-Din's relationship with the Crusaders stating "he

received graciously anyone that came to him on a mission, even if he were an infidel,"

revealing how Salah al-Din did not see his jihad as the extermination of all those that

opposed Muslims in the region.[53] The explicit reference by Ibn Shaddad of Salah al-Din's

hospitality towards those on official business is perhaps indicative of a greater code of

honor that was held at those times, a tone that is consistent with many of the battles that

took place and perhaps most commonly associated with the relationship between Salah

al-Din and Richard the Lionheart. Yet, the fact that Salah al-Din did not see this code as a

direct affront to his jihad reveals the origins of the portrayals that highlight Salah al-Din's

sense of tolerance that resonates with themes in the Qur'an and deter the unnecessary

need to constantly shed blood in the name of jihad.

Displays of tolerance by Salah al-Din, as narrated by Ibn Shaddad, have also been

corroborated in recollections by Christian chroniclers. The Christian chronicler Ernoul

who was also present during the crusades as a squire of Balian of Ibelin, an important

crusader noble in Jerusalem, witnessed the mercy of Salah al-Din in the aftermath of the

Battle of Hattin in 1187. Ernoul wrote:

> Never did Salah al-Din show himself greater than during this memorable
> surrender. His guards, commanded by responsible emirs, kept order in
> every street, and prevented violence and insult, insomuch that no ill-usage
> of the Christians was ever heard of. Of the great courtesy which Salah al-
> Din showed to the wives and daughters of knights, who had fled to
> Jerusalem when their lords were killed or made prisoners in battle. When

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[53] Ibid., 35.

these ladies were ransomed and had come forth from Jerusalem, they assembled and went before Salah al-Din crying mercy...When Salah al-Din saw them weeping, he had great compassion for them, and wept himself for pity, And he bade the ladies who husbands were alive to tell him where they were captives, and as soon as he could go to the prisons he would set them free. And he gave them so much that they gave praise to God and published abroad the kindness and honor which Salah al-Din had done to them.[54]

Ernoul's observations corroborate the greater understanding of jihad and Islam that Ibn Shaddad sets out in his position as judge of the army. From Ernoul's account of Salah al-Din's behavior we can insinuate the goal of Salah al-Din's jihad was never seeking the extermination of Christians or the humiliation of them upon his victories. Rather Salah al-Din's jihad is firmly rooted in his ability to empathize in another person's suffering, and Ibn Shaddad portrays this understanding of war through the connection that Salah al-Din made between jihad and religious piety. Moreover, Salah al-Din's empathy went beyond simply acting merciful to those that he conquered. He also provided them with the means to aid in rebuilding their lives, as suggested by Ernoul and emphasized further by secondary sources that acknowledge how "Salah al-Din showed himself worthy of victory, treating his prisoners generously, setting them free and sending many of them away with gifts."[55] In accordance with Qur'anic writings, there is no suggestion that Salah al-Din subjected his prisoners to any heinous treatment[56] and working within the principles of war outlined in the Qur'an for correct acts jihad ensured that these women

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[54] Ernoul, *Chronique* (ed. Mas Latrie, Paris, 1871), 227-233.

[55] Poole., 144.

[56] The exception to this statement is the execution of the Templars and Reynald de Chatillon after the Battle of Hattin. Yet, prior to this battle in 1187, there existed a truce between the Crusaders and the Muslim forces that was consistently violated by Reynald and the Templars. Such raids were a part of the catalyst that this battle took place. Therefore, in the aftermath of the battle, Salah al-Din's pardoned most of the Christian army apart from the Templars and Reynald because of their dishonesty in violating the treaty. Salah al-Din's actions were aligned with many passages of the Qur'an that advocate for the unnecessary shedding of blood except in circumstances such as these.

were acknowledged as non-participants in the war and consequently should be treated

with respect as the Qur'an teaches. Moreover, Ernoul's statements also suggest how those

he commanded adhered to his strategy and orders thus reflecting the faith they had in

their master's ideals and the medium through which he conducted his jihad. The fact that

there was a strict sense of discipline amongst the Muslim soldiers in such a vast army

surely means that there was a common factor or ideology keeping them so tightly bound.

As a result, the role of Salah al-Din is further emphasized in the chronicles as being

responsible for this culture developing in the Muslim forces. The fact that chroniclers

thrived during Salah al-Din's era, further emphasizes how the lack of Muslim unity prior

to his time allowed the chronicles another opportunity to accentuate such tales individual

significance.

The manifestation of jihad, displayed through the military ventures of Salah al-

Din has an interesting relationship between aggressive zeal and a lack of fanaticism.

Based upon the ideas of the Qur'an, Salah al-Din was often believed to be the responder

in his wars with the Crusaders; Ibn Shaddad has recorded his lack of preference for

fighting:

> Later the sultan said, I charge you to fear God Almighty, for He, is the
> source of all-good. I command you to do what God has commanded, for
> that he is the means of salvation. I warn you against shedding blood,
> indulging in it and making a habit of it, for blood never sleeps.[57]

Salah al-Din's motivations for undertaking this jihad are not driven by bloodlust or

personal glory as represented by Ibn Shaddad, but rather suggest his level of subservience

to a higher power. Out of respect and recognition for this higher power there seems to be

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[57] Din., 235.

a clear need to show restraint when fighting the Crusaders, which manifests itself in his refusal to shed blood needlessly. Moreover, Salah al-Din was consistently shown as a leader that rarely, if at all, enacted the violence against the Crusaders. This image has constantly been recognized in comparison to the leaders of the Crusaders such as Reginald of Chatillon who "had won for himself an unenviable reputation as a breaker of treaties, it was his delight to seize peaceful caravans of merchants and pilgrims on their way into Syria from Egypt or Mekka."[58] The infringement on Salah al-Din's ability to safely protect the people he had sworn responsibility to was clearly an antagonism that he could not repeatedly tolerate. The lack of respect for Salah al-Din's tolerance was clearly a mentality that had permeated the Crusader's camps as it was understood that "treaties with soldiers of the Cross were worse than useless, so long as the doctrine prevailed in Christendom that no faith need be kept with the infidel."[59] The sense of religious animosity was one that was capitalized upon by the leaders of the West, invoking a fighting spirit that encouraged aggression against the enemy, yet, was not wholly reciprocated by Salah al-Din. In fact this Christian fanaticism was encouraged to the point that it created an atmosphere of mistrust in the Crusader's camps with the "Christian sects having less to fear from the generous Salah al-Din than from the rapacity and tyranny of their Christian masters, to whom heresy was almost as hateful as Islam itself."[60] The difference in control that each side had imposed upon their armies' marks a clearly delineated line in the culture and aims that these camps were derived from. With Salah al-Din seeing beyond the short term idea of a war against Christianity to a greater

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[58] Poole., 198.
[59] Ibid., 148.
[60] Ibid., 218.

purpose or struggle that his jihad demanded, leading to a more balanced ideology implemented and adhered to by his army. Constantly seeking an alternative to war when one was available, even when it meant the release of key prisoners, his efforts were not returned equally, highlighted by the release of Guy of Lusignan in 1188 who "had promised not to bear arms against Salah al-Din, yet, in August 1189, he resumed the offensive."[61] Ibn Shaddad's representations of Salah al-Din as the champion of Islam lead him to place greater emphasis on the ways in which the leader's actions corroborate the teachings of the Qur'an. Therefore, displays of the Crusaders as the aggressors further the notion of Salah al-Din's pious character.

The consensus amongst the historians and scholars at the time seems to echo the idea that regardless of how much jihad and Islam motivated Salah al-Din's action, it was, at the very least, a factor that had to be considered as occupying a central space in the sultan's life. The fact that Salah al-Din prided himself on living a virtuous life is often believed to be categorical of his behavior, separate from how he ruled his people as suggested that "in his personal life, which was seen by only a handful of followers, where he is seen to be pious and God-fearing, which was extended by Ibn Shaddad into his role as ruler."[62] Were Ibn Shaddad alone in his claims of the impact of jihad upon Salah al-Din's life, there would certainly be a greater level of skepticism directed towards both the scholar and Salah al-Din, yet, Ibn al-Athir also suggests this was the case when he explicitly stated:

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[61] Hallam, Elizabeth M. *Chronicles of the Crusades: Eye-Witness Accounts of the Wars Between Christianity and Islam*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989, 152.
[62] Hillenbrand., 182.

> The testimony of others and outsiders satisfactorily corroborates the statements of those close to Salah al-Din.[63]

The belief that Salah al-Din would remain a perfect picture of Islamic and jihad practices is an idealistic framework that any person would struggle to live up to. Yet, the fact that Salah al-Din simply sought to incorporate and interpret the Qur'an as frequently as possible into all aspects of his life, both personally and publicly, suggests that it was the most honest representation of his religion and led to his recognition as such an irreproachable leader. The extent that this was seen across the Muslim and Christian divide with the common belief that his "moral superiority over his contemporary peers was acknowledged in his own lifetime by his enemies, the Crusaders; his image, even amidst the anti-Muslim bigotry of the European Middle Ages, remained unsullied, even romanticized, and that at a time when Europe's attitude towards Islam was a sorry mixture of ignorance and hostility."[64] It is with little doubt that this moral code, derived from his understanding of appropriate warfare and jihad, that Salah al-Din strictly adhered to, was a factor that was absent in the opposing camp and perhaps led to the constant discord that plagued the Crusaders. The acknowledgement of this tension by observers in the crusading camps is attributed to a lack of cohesion amongst the leaders and their soldiers as remarked upon by William of Tyre:

> For five days the Christian army lay motionless, whilst their leaders were wrangling amongst themselves united only in one purpose, to defy the authority of Lusignan.[65]

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[63] al-Athir., 183.
[64] Hillenbrand., 195.
[65] William of Tyre, Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum (Recueil: historiens occidentaux, tome i., Paris, 1844), 27.

The relationship between such dissent in the Crusading camps and the harmony in the Muslim camps has been regularly allocated to Salah al-Din's rule. Thus, answering the question of what was so unique or special about his rule that was able to create such unity amongst the Muslims can be accredited with the reorientation of Sunni Islam that Salah al-din played a central role in creating. The impact of this spirit can be fully recognized in the aftermath of Salah al-Din's time when "the charismatic leader had gone and the perfect focus provided for *jihad* in Salah al-Din's time, was no longer a common will amongst the Ayyubid elite."[66] The belief that it was not just jihad that had created a sense of unity amongst all the Muslim people but rather the way that Salah al-Din practiced his jihad, which trickled into every part of society and became a reflection of how Islam should bring such tolerance and respect to those that have such belief.

The narrative of Salah al-Din attempts to portray a connection of an individual and his faith in perhaps its purest form since the time of the Prophet Muhammad. The significance of such a portrayal is emblematic of the larger period of time where Sunni Islam was recovering from a period of flux and disunity. Therefore, the consequent portrayals of Salah al-Din as the champion of Islam and his ability to thwart the external Crusading adversaries takes on added impetus in consolidating a strong identity for Sunni Islam. Thus, the way in which the chroniclers represented Salah al-Din is a unique medium that acted as a way for Muslims to overcome obstacles to their faith. Such a representation perhaps overstates the role of jihad and Islam in Salah al-Din's life as we accept that it can be argued that this was personal ambition that prompted the ensuing

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[66] Hillenbrand., 225.

events.[67] However, for future generations Salah al-Din's monumental actions, as represented by the Muslim chroniclers, highlight a certain moral standard that all Muslims should strive towards. The consequences of this belief manifest themselves today in how many religious and political factions, such as Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, refer to Salah al-Din and the crusading context in order to emphasize the necessity for a leader capable of unifying Islam in the face of mounting external threats.

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[67] Bartlett, W. B. *Islam's War Against the Crusaders*. Stroud: History Press, 2008, 201.

III

The Ottoman Empire & Jihad: Realigning Religious Doctrine & the Rise of Competing Muslim Empires

The legacy of Salah al-Din and the Crusades impacted the historical narrative and usage of jihad ideology in a way that popularized and legitimized the concept to the extent that it became the primary framework for conquest and expansion. In the fragmented medieval world, the sanctuary of religious doctrine led leaders to "reduce obedience to God's will to the precise prescriptions of codified sacred law."[1] In the wake of Mongol invasions in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, new empires emerged that redefined geographical space through a renewed expansionary ethos.[2] In part, new early modern dynasties emerged due to the inability of crusading mentalities, following Salah al-Din's initial success, to secure a consolidated Muslim identity, which led to political fragmentation. Such issues created a splintering in the various factions of the Muslim community and created an opportunity for another empire to be built, with "rival sects and rival states dividing the community of the faithful."[3] New political theologies concerning the relationship between religion and political power shifted conquest from spiritual dictates to conquest for wealth and territory. As these political shifts occurred, they were accompanied by changes in economic forces, social upheaval and the apocalyptic sentiment that coalesced into a period of major upheaval

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[1] McNeill, William Hardy, and Marilyn Robinson. Waldman. *The Islâmic World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, 5.

[2] Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia." Mod. Asian Stud. Modern Asian Studies 31, no. 03 (1997): 737.

[3] McNeill., 5.

across Anatolia into the Arab provinces.[4] As a result, the early modern period can be characterized as a sustained movement from local fragmentation to political consolidation that culminated in the long-standing power of the Ottoman Empire.[5] With the vacuum available and ripe for the ascension of a new empire, the Ottomans hovered "optimistically around the possibility of re-ordering of the known world."[6] Thus, this chapter addresses the dynamism of the Ottoman Empire that pivoted on ultimate loyalty to the Sultans and their ability to create a political force that could confront and conquer Muslim as well as non-Muslim entities.

The reigns of Sultan Selim I and Sultan Süleyman epitomize this behavior as, throughout their tenure, they sought to wage a war against their neighbor while reconciling it with Islamic doctrine. Letter exchanges between Sultan Selim and his Shi'i counterpart, Shah Isma'il, highlight the different styles of each imperial order and give us an insight into how the Sultan tried to claim greater devotion to Islam and privilege his position as caretaker of the Muslim community. The study of Sultan Selim's reign will also bring into focus the role of the Mamluks, another Sunni Muslim regime that the Ottomans overcame on their way to becoming supreme defenders of the religions. The significance of this conquest is unparalleled because it brought the holy cities of Mecca and Medina into the Ottoman fold and added greater purpose and credibility to their cause in later conflicts with the Safavids. During Sultan Süleyman's reign a closer look must also be taken at the relationship between the religious institutes, the palace, and one of the most prominent jurists and Qur'an exegetes, Ebussuud Efendi, who effectively

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[4] Ibid., 750.
[5] Ibid., 744.
[6] Ibid., 751.

reorganized the connection between the sultan and Islam without undermining the former's power in the empire. Lastly, the reforms proposed by a seventeenth-century Ottoman statesman, Aziz Efendi, will explore a suggestion for a public policy through the regulation of the Kurdish regions of the Empire, and their relevance as a buffer zone against the Safavid regime.

Foregrounding Ottoman imperial history highlights a particular set of governing practices that balanced Islamic ideals with practical realities. The intertwining of religious doctrine with territorial expansion as well domestic politics created a unique paradigm that led to the redefinition of Islam and of Muslim unity under the various sultans. While previous Muslim-based empires engaged in an almost binary policy of dealing with non-Muslim elements, the Ottomans recognized that the stability of their empire often depended on various degrees of tolerance crucial to maintaining law and order. Thus, this chapter shall examine various aspects of Ottoman law and explore how an unquestionable bond of loyalty to the sultan became the basis of Ottoman strength. This was achieved by hinging every aspect of public policy on the word of the sultan, which, then fostered a relationship between religious institutes and authorities and the palace that would then work harmoniously towards propagating a loyal demographic while preaching Muslim ideals at the same time.[7] Such a relationship would become central when the Ottomans went to war with their Muslim neighbors, the Safavids and the Mamluks, as it provided a series of novel justifications that had not been seen before in Islamic governing parlance. The legal tradition that emerged during the Ottoman years

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[7] Imber, Colin. *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power.* Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002,3 .

allowed for non-Muslims to inhabit territories in the Ottoman Empire as well as in the

ranks of government. The Ottoman mechanism for dealing with non-Muslim "peoples of

the book" was enshrined in the early efforts of Muhammad to define social relations in

Medina, and then used by every Muslim-based ruling establishment since. The Ottomans

perfected this system, and made it applicable to ruling across a larger expanse**.** The shift

in Muslim mentality that led to a large and diverse empire can be seen as a natural

progression for a government seeking to maintain control. Thus, examining how the

mechanics of the empire functioned through the relationship between religious bodies

and the sultan, governance of the Kurdish people and war with their Muslim neighbors

can cast a light on how the Ottoman Empire reached an unprecedented size and stature.

Seyh Bedreddin and the Emerging Ottoman Empire

Part of the reason the Ottoman Empire had achieved such success in their gradual

ascension to power was due to its "openness to negotiation with social groups that cleared

the way for agreement and compromise, even if it was temporary."[8] However, after the

reconsolidation of the dynasty in the mid-fifteenth century, new strategies for alignment

emerged. These can be fully explored within the context of a key revolt, led by the Seyh

Bedreddin who came to represent large heterogeneous elements that had propelled the

Ottomans to their initial success. The Ottoman Empire emerged from a severely

fragmented Anatolian context. It was one of 16 small principalities that divided the

territory after the collapse of Seljuk rule, and gradually created a following in battles

against rivals and against the might of the Byzantine Empire. From 1299 to 1402,

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[8] Ibid., 165.

Bayezid raised one of the largest armies in the known world until these forces were defeated by a rival imperial coalition, the neo-Mongol patrilineage of Timur Leng.[9] This conquest would be short lived, and by the 1420s the Ottomans would surge back to prominence and Timur's disbanded forces would re-unite in the Deccan Plateau, to found the Mughal Empire.

The tensions between Seyh Bedreddin and the emerging Ottoman regime set a precedent for how notions of territorial sovereignty and mechanisms for allegiances to an imperial hierarchy were changing. Bedreddin was a well-travelled and well-educated theologian whose diverse background, with a Turkish-speaking father who had studied Jewish jurisprudential traditions and a Greek mother, meant that his broad understanding of different cultures and people could be seen as a threat to an order that was trying to capitalize on the empty political vacuum in the region. His constant preaching of "oral, popular and localized culture," was an attempt to reconnect with the "peasant-nomadic" background of people in the area.[10] It may seem ironic that an empire that had Christian and Jewish inhabitants would take such staunch offence to the work of a preacher, but their reasons lie in multiple elements of his preaching. In fact, the Ottomans in their vast empire had usefully deployed a lot of what Bedreddin represented, such as syncretic Sufi and Islamic practices and an emphasis on mystic elements more generally. Yet, his actions in the "rebellious context," following a period of chaos in the wake of Timur's

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[9] The Battle of Ankara in 1402 was, once again, a clash between two Muslim armies, the rising Ottoman tribal confederacy and the neo-Mongol claims of Timur as the foundations of a new dynasty.
[10] Barkey, Karen. *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 170.

victories, demonstrated how these ideals could become a threat to the regime and were ultimately why his actions engaged a state response.[11]

This rebellious context arose from the fact that Bedreddin was not willing to work within a system that shifted from gathering all participants in an imperial quest to one that sought to control the extent of such political and cultural diversity, thus "Bedreddin represents a moment when the Ottomans were maneuvering out of the unrestrained mystical diversity to a more controlled order of state-policed orthodoxy."[12] Bedreddin's refusal to pay the high taxes demanded by the local representatives of the central Ottoman government displays a counter attack on the shift towards a consolidated Ottoman Empire that the government was trying to achieve. The fact that the Ottoman Empire had not yet achieved a sense of formal orthodoxy and established policy represents how a "state on the way to consolidation wanted order and legibility" before it could begin to address heretics more even-handedly.[13] Bedreddin's rebellion can be seen as a transitional moment in the region between acceptance and dissent and the historical shift from syncretism to rigid hegemony that shapes an "understanding of imperial longevity."[14] The openness that Bedreddin fought for was a model of the past, one that thrived in the vacant power vacuum, yet, upon the rise of the Ottoman Empire it was clear that the kind of life he led was becoming marginalized in favor of a more rigid and legible social order.[15] This moment during the fifteenth century categorizes changing

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[11] Ibid., 173
[12] Ibid., 171
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., 155.
[15] Ibid., 174.

concepts of frontier empires and a consolidated identity that needed to precede the

extensive eventual aims of territorial conquest the Ottomans adopted.

The True Defenders of Islam: Establishing Ottoman Religious Credibility

After the establishment of the Ottoman Empire, its biggest challenge became

keeping control and credibility of the rulers in all aspects of their lives. With regards to

conquest against non-Muslim entities and forays into Europe, Ottoman rhetoric was not

vastly different from its predecessors; yet, the new challenge came in trying to expand

into Muslim dominated areas. This has been most evident with the rise of the Safavids

and Shi'i Islam, a new constellation of empire and religion that had also amassed a

significant amount of support and existed in close proximity to the Ottomans. Prior to the

rise of the Safavid state the Ottoman's "true organizing principle was loyalty to the

Ottoman dynasty," a facet of the empire that grew as it "gradually accumulated a

charisma of success."[16] The fact that a credible, united Islamic threat to the Sunni elite

did not exist prior to the Safavids meant that religion did not occupy the dominant space

when motivating territorial expansion. Instead, the Ottomans were "primarily motivated

by the desire to conquer wealthy territories," which had predominantly prevented them

from being overly antagonistic towards non-Muslim communities that became a part of

the Empire.[17] However, the rise of their Shi'i neighbors prompted a reevaluation of

public policy and expansionist doctrine, which as the conflicts became more intense,

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[16] Dale, Stephen Frederic. *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 50-56.
[17] Ibid., 56.

emphasized the Ottomans own devotion to Sunni Islam.[18] This would become a strong

tenant in forging the bond between the palace and the religious establishment in the

Ottoman Empire because it allowed an avenue where loyalty to the sultan was

maintained, while bolstering a commitment to Islam. The process of codifying these ideas

into a dynamic interaction between dynastic and Islamic law can be traced throughout the

reigns of Sultan Selim I and Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent or Law-Giver. These

relationships set a tone that would legitimize a new type of war against fellow Muslims

and demonstrates the shifting notion of jihad and warfare in the early modern period.

The fact that the Ottoman Empire had risen to such heights on their ability to

wage successful campaigns meant that the sultan's role as a leader in war was enough to

legitimize his rule.[19] This was especially true in conquests westward towards Europe,

where united forces sought to pit Christianity against Islam in a post-Crusades world. The

legitimizing process began with referencing the sultans as ghazis, a word which has an

everyday sense of "warrior" or "raider" but which, when Islamic jurists and historians

adopted it as one of the terms for a person engaged in holy war, also acquired the sense of

"holy warrior." [20] The intertwining of the warrior and his actions against non-believers in

the frontier gathered elements of Ottoman Turkish folklore and contributed to a new

strand of literature dedicated to questions of jihad.[21] This literature came to shape the

ethos of the Ottoman ruling dynasty, and became a part of how history and rhetoric

shaped the legitimacy of its rule. However, reconciling this rhetoric when combatting

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[18] Hathaway, Jane, and Karl K. Barbir. *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*. Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2008, 37.
[19] Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power,* 120.
[20] Ibid., 120.
[21] Ibid.

fellow Muslims was a new challenge that had not previously been seen before and several

justifications were propagated to maintain the credibility of both the sultan and the

Ottoman Empire. In the fifteenth century, the early years of the Ottoman regime,

chroniclers presented Muslim adversaries of the Ottomans as hindering the holy war, in

essence questioning their devotion to Islam as a whole.[22] This technique also included

accusations of how the actions of these Muslim communities led to the oppression of

other Muslims, "thus making the removal of oppression obligatory for the Ottomans."[23]

Conflating longer tales of history between Osman and his father, Ertugrul, and the

Seljuks, which worked towards proving Ottoman claims of imperial legitimacy,

supplemented these actions.[24]

The spurious nature of the genealogical proofs that Ottoman historians were

continuously creating allowed them to navigate the fifteenth century relatively

unchallenged by their Muslim neighbors, yet, the rise of the Safavids saw the

replacement of these proofs with newer reasoning adduced from the canonical texts of

Islam. The nature of Shi'i Islam that the Safavids practiced was underpinned by their

quasi-divine status, which allowed the Ottomans to present the Safavids as rebels against

the legitimate authority of the Ottoman sultans and, more importantly, "as apostates and

infidels."[25] Thus, from the early sixteenth century, as a response to the preaching of Shah

Isma'il and the establishment of the Safavid order, the Ottomans were able to portray

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[22] Ibid., 121.
[23] Kunt, İ Metin, and Christine Woodhead. *Süleyman the Magnificent and His Age: The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World*. London: Longman, 1995, 145.
[24] Ibid., 146.
[25] Imber, The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power, 121.

their Sultan as the sole legitimate defender of the holy law and to claim "that their rule was a precondition to its coming into effect."[26]

Muslim Rivalries: Letter Exchanges between Selim I and Shah Isma'il

Initial confrontations with the Safavids and their ruler Shah Isma'il began during the reign of Sultan Selim I and after the 1502 establishment of the Safavid real. His reign from 1512-1520 sparked early concerns of how to deal with an empire that drew its power base from "religious sanctity."[27] While the Ottoman government gradually co-opted the religious establishment, in the Safavid regime, religious ideals were the central factor in creating a legitimate government. The rise of Isma'il and his consequent success depended on his followers' belief in his descent from Muhammad's son-in-law Ali which made him the only legitimate successor to the Prophet.[28] Such a doctrine was a danger for the Ottomans, as this new ideology attracted those whose religious and political beliefs were poorly-defined and who saw little place for themselves in the centralized Ottoman regime "being built on the ruins of other Anatolian emirates which once seemed equally viable."[29] Moreover, this claim was problematic for the Ottomans and Sultan Selim as it meant they, and all other Muslim rulers, were usurpers. Sultan Selim certainly tried to quell any form of support for the Safavids in his territories, resorting to force when necessary against those who sympathized with Shah Isma'il.[30] However, the only way that he could directly come into conflict with the ruler of the Safavids, while preserving

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[26] Imber., 321.
[27] Dale., 50.
[28] McNeill., 337.
[29] Finkel, Caroline. Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1923. New York: Basic Books, 2006, 96.
[30] McNeill., 337.

his own religious and political credibility, was through a religious justification.[31] Such

actions also brought him into direct contact with the Shah, and letter exchanges between

the two leaders provide insight into what each person deemed important in legitimizing

their claim to serve as the temporal leader of the Muslim community. Moreover, the

relationship between the Ottomans and other Muslim leaders such as the Mamluks also

shows how the inter-imperial conflict proved opportunistic for the Ottomans and allowed

Sultan Selim to ultimately capture the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

In letters exchanged between Selim and Isma'il, the Sultan set out to defend his

right to rule by quoting from the Qur'an and alluding to examples of history that further

legitimized his claims. Yet his counterpart, the Safavid Shah, perhaps based on his

genealogical claims, felt no such need to quote from the Qur'an or to make counter

claims from history. Instead, Isma'il quotes from "seemingly contemporary Persian

poetry" and appears to simply dismiss Selim's arguments.[32] Sultan Selim begins the

defense of his empire and his claims to lead the Muslim people by quoting from the

Qur'an:

> This is a Scripture We have sent down, blessed; so follow it, and be god
> fearing; haply so you will find mercy.[33]

In trying to set a precedent that Shi'i Islam had complete diverted from the Qur'an and

constituted a heretical movement, Selim aimed to eliminate any fundamental historical

evidence that supported the claims of Shah Isma'il and his relationship with the Prophet.

Not only did Selim undermine Isma'il's claims to legitimate rule, but he also portrayed

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[31] Finkel., 104.
[32] McNeill., 338.
[33] Ali., 6:156, 339.

the Shah as committing a grave sin against Islam and consequently asks him to repent.

The Sultan supports his argument by quoting the Shah's own words and his suggestion

that the Qur'an constituted the myth of the Ancients, therefore stating that any

justifications made on the text were certainly fallible.[34] The Sultan argues that the image

crafted by the Shah suggests he is above the rule of Islam. Selim, by contrast, possesses

the appropriate humility to a divine power, which thus legitimates his position as a ruler.

Selim follows these claims by suggesting that Ottoman success is due to the fact that their

campaigns have been religiously justified and that all their enemies formed elements of

anti-Muslim entities:

> We who are the Caliph of God Most High in this world, far and wide; the
> proof of the verse what profits man is haloed in victory, Faridun
> triumphant; slayer of the wicked and the infidel.[35]

Here Sultan Selim asserts his own right to serve as the civil and religious leader of the

Muslim world and grounding that idea in the claim that their expansion would not have

been as successful if it were not sanctified by a higher power. The tactic of branding all

enemies of the Ottoman Empire, to this date, as "infidels" furthers Selim's claims that his

actions were morally sound in the name of Islam. The letters also imply that Selim is not

yet at the point of taking up arms against the Safavids, an idea that is later substantiated

when he asks instead for fealty from the Safavids and states that they will be granted

"royal favor and imperial patronage" in return.[36] This reluctance to shed Muslim blood is

perhaps representative of a broader problem in framing such actions with sanctioned

religious pretexts. For the Ottomans to truly present themselves as defenders of the

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[34] McNeill., 340.
[35] Ibid., 338.
[36] Ibid., 341.

Islamic faith, their actions against fellow Muslims would require more support from religious institutions, support that had not yet been necessarily provided.

Sultan Selim thus opts for another tactic. His verbal attacks distinguish between religious and cultural differences of the people ruled by Shah Isma'il:

> Addressed to the ruler of the Persians, the possessor of the land of tyranny and perversion. You have incited your abominable Shi'i faction to unsanctified sexual union and to the shedding of innocent blood.[37]

Selim thus distinguished between Muslim and Persian communities. The distinction is key because it provides a justification for Selim to wage war against the Safavids, as it is no longer a battle against fellow Muslims but a campaign against a cultural other. This theme is further substantiated when Selim calls Shah Isma'il a tyrannical ruler, thus meaning that it is Selim's obligation to free those burdened by the Shah's rule and bring them into the Sunni Islamic fold. The emphasis on the fact that Shi'i Islam is exclusively Shah Isma'il's brainchild is also important, because if the two sides were to engage militarily, the deposition of Shah Isma'il would end the conflict and prevent Selim from shedding more Muslim blood. This idea is amplified in the last line where Selim attributes ownership of the Shi'i faction to Isma'il and associates the killings of other Muslims upon his shoulders. The need to consistently re-emphasize this theme is a central part of providing as many justifications for both waging a war against the Shi'is and further legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate. If Selim could show that the Shah's practice of Islam was a departure from the "path of true Islam" then it was possible that

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[37] Ibid., 339.

he could attain the expressed opinion from the religious elites to justify his actions

against the Safavids.[38]

The response of Shah Isma'il also warrants a closer look as it contains veiled

threats as well as phrases that commend the Ottoman Empire. The way in which Shah

Isma'il addresses Sultan Selim to begin with is peculiar and striking:

> May his godly majesty, the refuge of Islam, the might of the kingdom, he
> upon whom god looks with favor, the champion of the sultanate and of the
> state, the hero of the faith and of the earth, Sultan Selim Shah.[39]

The apparent respect that Shah Isma'il affords to his counterpart is never reciprocated by

the Sultan and begs the question as to why the Shah would resort to such kind words.

They suggest a posture of cunning, and a willingness to engage in competitive, witty

exchanges that showcase his literary talents and religious training. The feigned ignorance

of the impending threats from the Ottomans is continued in the Shah's response when he

addresses to the antagonisms in the Sultan's letter:

> Their [Sultan's letter] contents, although indicative of hostility, are stated
> with boldness and vigor. The latter gives us much enjoyment and pleasure,
> but we are ignorant of the reason for the former...We have always loved
> the *gazi*-titled Ottoman house we do not wish the outbreak of sedition and
> turmoil once again as in the time of Timur.[40]

The subtle defense of no wrongdoing taking place in the Safavid regime is under the

guise of acknowledging the Ottoman's as the worthy defenders of Islam, and a

willingness to recognize their title of "holy warriors." The reverence that the Safavids

possessed towards the Ottomans was not an uncommon theme in their history, as many

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[38] Finkel., 104.
[39] McNeill., 342.
[40] Ibid., 343.

Safavid chroniclers refer to the Ottomans "as a bastion of Islam in the face of European unbelief."[41] Such a defense places the onus upon the Ottomans to further justify their hostile claims, especially when the Safavids attempted to assert peaceful relations with their neighbors. While the responses of the Shah are complex, he does make clear that if the Ottomans continue their aggressive rhetoric or take action on their verbal threats, then the Safavids will not hesitate to respond in kind:

> If political necessity has compelled you on this course, then may your problems soon be solved. In all friendship we say do what you will. Bitter experiences has taught us that in this world of trial He who falls upon the house of Ali always falls. When war becomes inevitable, hesitation and delay must be set aside, and one must think on that which is to come.[42]

In these last few lines, the intentions and aims of the Shah become visible. The first idea that the Shah communicates is that the Ottoman's threatened campaigns has no religious ground and is born out of political need. From this moment the Shah removes all credibility from Ottoman propaganda, as he does not deem the foundations of leadership espoused by the Sultan to be legitimate. The directness of the Shah's words is a clear departure from the rhetoric that comprised the rest of his response to Sultan Selim. The Shah boldly claims that any campaign against the Safavids is doomed to fail, as all other attempts in the past have failed to abolish the house of Ali. He ends his message with an acknowledgement of the foregone conclusion that the Ottomans will not heed the Shah's warning but will most likely act upon their neighbors, and that this will potentially transform the dynamic between the two empires and set them on a path from which there can be no retreat.

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[41] Finkel, 105.
[42] McNeill., 344.

As the Ottomans searched for religious justifications for their antagonisms with the Shah, they also found themselves in a unique predicament that potentially required action against the Mamluk order. This was an even greater challenge, as the Mamluks were also Sunni Muslims. The Mamluks, a dynasty ruling from Egypt that controlled Palestine, Syria, Iraq and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, could scarcely be branded as heretics by the Ottomans "even in the interests of Ottoman realpolitik," therefore a campaign against them was harder to justify than one against the Safavids.[43] Yet, an opportunity arose when the Mamluk Sultan Qansawh al-Ghawri, hoping to keep his options open, refused to participate in an alliance with Selim against Isma'il. After Selim captured Çaldiran in 1516[44], he declined to enter into a pact with Isma'il against the Ottomans.[45] Neutrality was an interesting option for the Mamluks but one that set the foundations for the Ottomans to attack their Sunni neighbors, as the nature of the conflict between the Ottomans and Safavids required absolute commitment to a particular Muslim ruling faction. In the eyes of the Ottomans, choosing not to side with fellow Sunnis, made you as guilty as those actively fighting the Ottomans. Therefore, the Ottoman religious establishment agreed to support a campaign against the Mamluks on the grounds "that [those] who aids a heretic is himself a heretic, and that to do battle against them might be considered a holy war."[46] The significance of the religious cities played a role in how such a justification was allowed to pass through the religious institutes without serious

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[43] Finkel., 109.

[44] The battle of Çaldiran took place in 1515 between the Ottomans and the Safavids and ended in a decisive victory for the Ottomans. It was the first time the Ottomans annexed eastern Anatolia and Iraq into their order.

[45] Ibid., 108.

[46] Repp, R. C. *The Müfti of Istanbul: A Study in the Development of the Ottoman Learned Hierarchy*. London: Published by Ithaca Press for the Board of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, Oxford University, 1986, 213-214.

rebuke, as victory over the Mamluks made Selim "guardian of the Holy Places of Mecca and Medina and guarantor of the pilgrimage routes by which the Muslim faithful had travelled to sites associated with the life of Prophet Muhammad."[47] The addition of these titles to the ruler of the Ottoman Empire added a significant amount of credibility to the role of the Ottomans in Islamic history and provided more leeway in future expansionist policies in the name of religion. The justifications provided by the religious elites to the Ottoman ruler, from this point onward, suggest a major reconfiguring of Muslim identity as both territorial and ideological threats were deemed serious enough to warrant reexaminations of Islam in order to find the appropriate pretexts for action. This relationship would be further formalized under Selim's successor, Süleyman and his *seyhülislam* (head juris consult), Ebussuud Efendi.

God on Earth: Reordering the Ottoman Hierarchy

Selim I's conquest enfolded former Mamluk territories into the Ottoman domain, and for the first time the Empire possessed a majority Muslim population. The conflicts with the Safavids, and the conquest of Mamluk territories had both contributed to a new focus on religious orthodoxy within the palace administration. Thus, at the ascension of Sultan Süleyman I, after the death of his father, a formalization of the relationship between religious and imperial authority became a major component of the Sultan's agenda. The need for Süleyman to consolidate the dynasty's centralized control became an urgent priority, despite the fact that the Ottomans were now guardians of the two holy cities with their successful victory over the Mamluks, as they had not fully defeated their

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[47] Finkel., 110.

Safavid neighbors. Furthermore, despite the conquests, opposition from other Muslim

legal orders and regional religious establishments still posed a problem for consolidated

rule. Thus, the incorporation of these new realms into centralized Ottoman control

required in the first place "a historical justification for Ottoman claims to pre-eminence

among Islamic sovereigns."[48] It was fortunate that this need arose when the *ulema*

(religious scholars) had come to dominate the intellectual life of the Empire, and the

result was a "reformulation of Ottoman claims to legitimacy in terms of orthodox,

canonical Islam."[49]

The *ulema*s established the "Ottoman sultan as the absolute ruler."[50] The change

in this dynamic, which had now been codified, allowed Süleyman to exercise centralized

power over the broad expanse of the empire as demonstrated by the ability of "his

officials to carry out land registration in European, Arab and Anatolian regions."[51]

Examples of this became prevalent when passages from the Qur'an were purposefully

attributed to the role of the Ottomans in the history of Islam:

> God will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him, humble
> towards believers, but mighty towards the infidels, fighting in the path of
> God and fearing no one.[52]

The "people" in the *ulema*s exegesis was the Ottoman dynasty, thus their acquisition of

the two holy cities was scripted according to the Qur'an. In propagating this idea it

provided a sense of prophetic meaning to the venture of the Ottoman Empire, as

everything they were doing had not fulfilled the edicts of the faith itself. When justifying

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[48] Kunt., 149.
[49] Ibid., 148.
[50] Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power,* 319.
[51] Kunt., 182.
[52] Ali., 5:59.

the Ottoman's campaign to conquer Mecca and Medina from the Mamluks, this claim

prompted a wider change in the Ottoman government that led to redefining administrative

practices in canonical terms. This process was pioneered by Ebussuud Efendi, the

seyhülislam or the highest ranked person of the *ulema*s appointed by royal warrant. He

created an "image of the Ottoman sultan as a truly orthodox sovereign whose rule was in

effect identical with the *shari'a.*"[53] Upon confirming the new Sultan, another duty of the

seyhülislam, Ebussuud gave Süleyman the title of "the one who makes manifest the

exalted word," implying that the Sultan has almost divine status, as it is through him that

God's orders become known to the people.[54] This reinforced the role of the ruler as being

an absolute ruler, for now any disobedience expressed towards him would be a direct

affront to the word of God, both deemed intolerable in the centralized Ottoman order.

Thus, the process began of reconciling the *shari'a* with the governing structures

of the Ottoman Empire. Under the new centralized order there was little room for

multiple forms of legal opinion, therefore identifying a connection that could unite all of

these processes and legitimating authorities was an essential aspect of Sultan Süleyman's

reign. While this was often an assumed aspect of the Ottoman Empire, the size and

diversity that had emerged through expansionism meant, "an inevitable corollary was a

legal pluralism."[55] The fact that the Ottomans remember Süleyman as the "Law-Giver" as

opposed to the title "Magnificent," that dominates western chronicles, suggests that "it

was above all the legal order of his reign that was recreated."[56] During his tenure as

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[53] Kunt., 151.
[54] Ibid., 151.
[55] Imber, Colin. *Ebu's-Su'ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997, 6.
[56] Ibid., x.

seyhülislam, the relationship between Süleyman and Ebussuud materialized into an unparalleled administrative force for the empire as "what gave Ottoman legal practice its unity was the authority of the Sultan."[57] This became true regardless of the confessional differences and distinct legal school, as all were recognized by "virtue of appointment by the Sultan."[58] It was Ebussuud who codified this process and streamlined all religious authority through the Sultan in order to create an image of an all-encompassing leader who had political and spiritual endorsements for his actions.

Ebussuud achieved this by creating a religious hierarchy that positioned Süleyman as the leader and appointer of all those who make legal pronouncements. This created a new norm of legal sovereignty, and jihad too became more inextricably linked to the relationships drawn between imperial, legal, and religious authority and to the edicts of appointed jurists.[59] Their actions were no longer autonomous from the authority of the sultan, as Ottoman practices were based upon the Hanafi tradition, which associated a legitimate authority with the person that "successfully seizes and holds power."[60] This idea became the foothold that provided the ruler with his power base that would hold throughout his various territories because "from him the judges acquire their authority" meaning that all implementations of the law were, in theory, an extension of the sultan's will.[61] Key to the reorganization of the religious hierarchy was the emergence of an elitist cadre of *ulema*s, deriving from this system of centralized power. The strengthening of the sultan's position came through the constant dissemination of these *ulema*s from the center

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[57] Ibid., 6
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., 65.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., 66.

of the empire outwards to the more distant territories. Thus, with this model in place the jurists in their various regions did not have to provide sufficient justification for their rulings or concern themselves with Süleyman's will as their actions had already been justified. Upon the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, the jurists' role was reconciling the "legal status of persons, land and taxation in an Islamic sovereignty," and to do so they deployed legal opinions concerning the role of jihad in defining relations with conquered territories.[62] The fact that Süleyman and his predecessors had always rationalized their conquests with the jihad ideology meant that their new acquisitions were subjected to the "specific rules of warfare" formulated by the jurists.[63] As a result of the jurists' appointment by the sultan, these rules were not seen as undermining his authority or independent of the sultan's rule, but were rather aligned with both the ideological and strategic goals of the Empire. The fact that religiously justified warfare and its conduct "has a central position in the general structure of Hanafi law," also determined the legal status of individuals, of land and taxation, and legitimized an Empire that contained a diverse range of ethnicities and religions.[64] The tradition adopted by the Ottomans to replace the poll tax with threats of forceful conquest of conversion ensured that they could both wage jihad against the "infidel" while minimizing the amount of bloodshed such campaigns might normally entail. The overarching system that Ebussuud sought to establish was a religiously and politically sound government with roots in Islamic tradition effectively ensuring the tactical ability to regulate such a large empire. The former was especially crucial during the reign of Süleyman I, due to the increasing threat

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[62] Ibid., 67.
[63] Ibid., 68.
[64] Ibid.

of the Safavid Empire, where little incentive was needed for the Shi'i faction to question the religious legitimacy of the Ottoman order.

For this Ottoman administration and regulatory body to exist, Ebussuud also had to reorder the hierarchy in the Empire so that the Sultan was undeniably the ruler of the people and, perhaps even more importantly, an extension of the Prophet and God. This process was initiated through the Hanafi theory of ruler ship that through its legal definition gave the sultan absolute power via successful conquests into new regions. Yet, this legal definition was built upon the fact that religious precepts stated the sultan was the leader of the holy wars and heir to the Seljuk dynasty, meaning that all the lands he conquered, regardless of whether they were Christian or Muslim had already been legitimized.[65] This rhetoric was amplified after the acquisition of the two holy cities, which reenergized the Ottoman campaign against the "heretical" Safavids as the sultans were now presented as defenders of the *shari'a* and Islam, of which neither could survive without the Ottoman dynasty's active protection.[66] Ebussuud formalized Süleyman's embodiment of this idea when he gave him the title of "Law-Giver," and inscripted it onto the Süleymaniye Mosque, with the words "as Caliph, he is both the interpreter and executor of God's Law and possessor of the kingdom's of the world."[67]

The need to build the idea of Süleyman as the leader of Islam served the more abstract purpose of winning the ideological battle with the Safavids; yet, it was not the motivating factor that drove the army to fight for their leader, as it was during Salah al-

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[65] Ibid., 73.
[66] Ibid., 74
[67] Ibid., 76.

Din's reign. Instead, military service to the sultan "was a contractual obligation" that differentiated between taxpayers and non-taxpayers as opposed to Muslim and non-Muslim.[68] This is a significant distinction to make because it highlighted how the relationship between the palace and the religious elites had created a structure of government that allowed the Ottomans to portray themselves as the defenders of Islam, while having non-Muslim entities involved in the army. The reconciliation of practical administration and ideological rhetoric is a crucial turning point in the mechanics of a Muslim empire as it facilitated holy war rhetoric as a medium for broader justifications of Ottoman actions. This internal sense of tolerance that was a norm in the Ottoman Empire was consistently rationalized by the work of Ebussuud and his peers, which prompted little backlash from the Sultan as it gave him greater freedom to pursue his politics.

Regional Challenges and Pragmatic Policies

The triumphs of Süleyman and his chief juris consult Ebussuud may have crafted a new legal and imperial framework for the authority of the sultan, but it could not preserve the Empire from continued regional challenges and external threats. These would reach a climax in the early to mid-seventeenth century, when shifts in global trade and new imperial powers transformed the Atlantic Ocean into a dramatic challenge to Ottoman sovereignty. Ottoman reformers became intent on creating strategies to reinforce the power of the Empire, and these addressed both regional and ideological challenges in a new mode.

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[68] Ibid., 77.

Aziz Efendi, a seventeenth-century Ottoman statesman, highlighted the need for practical domestic policies in the face of these new challenges. He explicitly made these points concerning revived threats along the Safavid frontier, and suggested that the Kurdish populations in this region should be targets of Ottoman efforts to assert greater control. His main point was that "denying material support to the Kurdish in the border areas would hamper the Ottomans' ability to function as an effective deterrent against Safavid incursions."[69] This type of message was interesting because it was phrased as an explicit need to protect the Kurds, who were part of the Ottoman Empire, but a departure from the tradition of anti-Shi'i polemic. Aziz Efendi held that even though the Kurds were practicers of Sunni Islam "economic necessity or military insecurity" could force their hand into a new allegiance with the Safavids, and therefore the government should seek to prevent this from happening.[70] Aziz Efendi remarked upon the changing administration of these lands not because any territorial shift had taken place in Ottoman governing, but rather because the sheer expanse of Ottoman territories had afforded power to certain individuals in these regions that did not necessarily comply with imperial rule. While Aziz Efendi's remarks come after the reign of Selim and Süleyman, they provide clear insight into issues present throughout the entire Ottoman dynasty.

Aziz Efendi began his recommendations by reminding his audience about the governorship that was intended in the lands, which was aimed to protect the people while ensuring a system of economic efficiency. These processes were built with administrative

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[69] Efendi, Aziz, and Rhoads Murphey. Kanûn-nâme-i Sultânî Li 'Azîz Efendi: Aziz Efendi's Book of Sultanic Laws and Regulations: An Agenda for Reform by a Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Statesman. Cambridge, MA: Printed at Harvard University, Office of the University Publisher, 1985, v.
[70] Ibid., viii.

effectiveness with detailed registers of how tax and revenues could be collected without imposing unfair practices upon the people:

> Stewards, in turn, protected and preserved the villagers and collected the revenues with justice and equity, aware that when they gave account of the revenues in detailed registers each foresighted minister would ask them to swear that they had not included any forbidden or ill-gotten gains in their accounting.[71]

While, the legitimacy of this process did rely on the promise of an individual, in essence it worked due to the fact that it was an efficient way to administer such a large empire. It was also a mechanism that assigned a specific occupation for the protection of the people in these lands that meant that there was a greater sense of security for their own finances and the government's finances. Yet, this process changed under the administration of greedy Ottoman officials in the area:

> The vezirs abandoning the above-described imperial system of assigning long-term trusteeship over their prescribed lands to trusted stewards farmed out these domains formerly belonging to the imperial domain on a short-term year-to-year basis to members of their own household and allowed them to ruin and destroy them.[72]

Vezirs, Ottoman provincial governors afforded a degree of autonomy in their respective regions, had clearly violated the system set up to ensure economic efficiency in return for imperial protection. Such blatant disregard towards the rule of the sultan was perhaps uncommon in an empire that had inspired such devotion to their ruler, but certainly not unheard of. It was these actions that Efendi was most concerned about because of the Kurdish region's strategic importance to the Ottoman order. Consequently he was unsure

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[71] Ibid., 4.
[72] Ibid.

of whether or not their religious convictions were enough to prevent them from favoring

new leadership:

> Not only is this treachery to the sovereign, but it also gives consent and
> encouragement to oppression and injustice and creates obstacles to good
> deeds and benefactions.[73]

Aziz Efendi's comments are a clear departure from what the sultan had intended Ottoman

rule to consist of in these provinces. Creating an informal code that had allowed the

Ottoman's to maintain order in their empire in return for collecting taxes, the Ottomans

assured that all of their people would be provided with protection. Such a system

guaranteed security from the government while not appearing overbearing and intrusive

in these regions:

> Sultan Süleyman too on his part satisfied and delighted the hearts of the
> Kurdish commanders by issuing grants of proprietorship containing clear
> terms of conferral and extended to them the shade of imperial protection.[74]

Yet, the nature of the Ottoman Empire allowed these vezirs to often govern as they saw

fit, mainly because the Ottomans had conquered so many territories that it was impossible

for the sultan to overlook the administration of all of them. This relationship had worked

somewhat successfully when the importance of strategic location was of greater priority

to the provincial leaders, but when the vezirs ignored their duty to the Empire, the

potential distress caused to the sovereignty of the sultans could be significant. This was

especially the case for territories that were not in close proximity to the capital or major

provincial garrisons, where dispersing the army could be achieved with less logistical

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[73] Ibid., 5.
[74] Ibid., 14.

stress. Thus, part of Aziz Efendi's comments contains a request for the current sultan to

take action in this region because of its importance:

> Under the circumstances therefore if it should be the will of his imperial majesty in whom felicity abides that the country of Kurdistan to be restored to its prosperity and abundance and that the Kurdish chiefs acquire strength and power and attain the capability for the services which until this date they have performed.[75]

Thus, were the sultan or central government to take action in this region it would ensure

greater protection for the empire as a whole. This is a point that Aziz Efendi tries to

communicate by remarking upon the services that the Kurds potentially provide,

foreshadowing that while they have engaged in these duties so far, their continued loyalty

is not a certainty and something that should definitely not be taken for granted. Therefore,

Aziz Efendi proposes that the sultan's intervention would prevent such a possibility from

every manifesting:

> Then whereas previously they [Kurds] had all been reduced to weak kittens, not only would they be transformed into fierce lions and comparable to raging elephants in seeking out the Iranian heretics, but they would also act as a firm barrier and a coterminous boundary and obstacle between the territory of the Iranian redheads and your majesty's well-protected realm, thereby, by God the exalted commander and with the fortune and strength to be able to challenge the Shah of Iran, would not this be a most great and momentous blessing?[76]

In Aziz Efendi's final plea to the sultan, he reconciles the same issues that Ebussuud

struggled with in trying to marry practical administration with ideological superiority.

Aziz Efendi believes that his suggestion is an extremely logical and religiously sound

proposition because it empowers the Kurds strategically to the point that they do not have

to question their Sunni Muslim faith. Moreover, there is the sense that the Kurds would

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[75] Ibid., 15.
[76] Ibid., 17.

be able to take a more active role in the defense of the Empire as Aziz Efendi suggests

such empowerment would not only be able to protect them from advances by the

Safavids, but also enable them to fight the Shah preemptively. Whether such independent

decision-making was envisaged in the sultan's plans is certainly an intriguing question,

but it does allow for more flexibility when determining how to become the singular, more

dominant faith. There is also an interesting acknowledgement of the status of the Kurds

in the Ottoman Empire, who were being described as an "obstacle" to a foreign invasion

and suggests their communal status in the Ottoman order. This was certainly recognized

in the nineteenth century of the Ottoman Empire as the Kurdish *beys,* chieftains of small

tribal groups, rebelled against their leaders and spearheaded new territorial shifts in

Anatolia.

In the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire it is important to acknowledge that

yoking religious doctrine to ideological supremacy often invoked recrimination and

violent opposition. After the reign of Sultan Süleyman, various groups emerged that

became part of a backlash to the assertion of imperial power through religious

justification. There were a number of revolutions and revolts, where students and scholars

tried to reinforce their interpretation of the law and imperial space. As part of this

movement, there was a reassertion of the purity of Islam and an effort to return to the

fundamentals of the faith. Of particular note were the Kadızadeli movement and the role

it played in the post-Süleyman Ottoman order. The emphasis of this movement rivaled

the Sufi orders in the seventeenth century, and its leaders premised their claims upon the

need to rid any corruption they found inside the Ottoman order. For the movement,

corruption was portrayed as innovation, and the result of the Empire's distortion of Islam

as it conquered new territories.[77] Yet, these corruptions were located not only in the

credibility that the Ottoman religious elites had preached in order to profess the sultan as

the one true ruler, but also towards certain types of prayer, pilgrimages to the tombs of

saints, the use of coffee, tobacco, and opium, and Sufi rituals that included dance and

song.[78] Thus, a movement that aimed to assert more binary notions of what constituted a

true Islamic identity challenged the tolerant atmosphere that the Ottoman rulers had

attempted to propagate. The fact that the followers of this movement were drawn from

modest aspects of the Ottoman political spectrum was particularly appealing because

many of these people had watched as Christians and Jews had risen to much higher ranks

in the Ottoman government. While, the Kadızadeli movement was not successful in the

reorganization of the Ottoman order, it was not because their ideology was deemed

infallible, but rather because it depended upon elite patronage that was often manipulated

to specific ends.[79] Thus, if certain political figures no longer had need for the movement

or they found that the militaristic elements of it were deemed to be too destabilizing to

not only the Ottoman order but also their positions, the movement was often cast aside.

Yet, this movement demonstrates that the Ottoman administrator's efforts to bend

religious legal precepts and the doctrine of jihad to its own will had not gone unnoted.

Thus, the nature of Ottoman conquest, the establishment of a new version of imperial and

religious orthodoxy, and the opposition to this move from Seyh Bedreddin to the

Kadızadeli movement illustrate the diverse ways in which jihad was mobilized in the

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[77] Zilfi, Madeline C. "The Kadizadelis: Discordant Revivalism in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 45, no. 4 (1986): 254.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid., 260.

Ottoman realm. These historical processes reveal a new dimension for the concept of jihad, one that could be incited when its ideological importance served the purpose of maintaining law and order. Or, when frontier problems continued to plague the Empire, might be minimized when practical administrative duties prioritized cooperation over volatile rhetoric.

The chronology of the Kadızadeli movement is of particular interest, as its eventual demise in the 1730s was on the eve of the rise of Wahhabism. Links between the founder of Wahhabism, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, and aspects of the Kadızadeli movement are crucial in determining where the foundations of the future Saudi state emerged. Similarities between the two ideologies can be seen in their respective tenets with the ultimate aim of returning to traditional interpretations of the Qur'an and dispelling other notions of Islam that had arisen during the rise of the Ottoman Empire. The connections that Wahhab had to significant patrons of the Kadızadeli movement cannot be understated, especially "given the staunchness of the Kadızadeli in general and their prominence on the Ottoman scene for so long" an environment that Wahhab was raised in.[80] Wahhab himself, who is described as having studied under numerous scholars, "specifically gaining scholarly authorizations in hadith from three of his teachers, Shaykh 'Ali Afendi al-Daghistani, Shaykh 'Abdullah ibn Ibrahim al-Najdi and Shaykh 'Abd al-Latif al-Ahsa'i, all of whom studied in Damascus," creates a connection to the strongest advocates of the Kadızadeli movement.[81] Thus, tracing the lineage of

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[80] Currie, James. "Kadizadeli Ottoman Scholarship, Muhammad Ibn 'Abd Al-Wahhab, and the Rise of the Saudi State." September 24, 2015. Accessed April 3, 2016. http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/110266323/kadizadeli-ottoman-scholarship-mu-ammad-ibn-abd-al-wahh-b-rise-saudi-state, 279.

[81] Ibid., 280.

scholarly authorizations from Wahhab to his predecessors and the chronology of the two movements means that some of the teachings that influenced Wahhab would have had their roots in the movement a few decades earlier. This is especially likely when considering that the scholarly authorizations that his teacher's received were from "Hanbali hadith circles in Damascus, at a time of heightened Kadızadeli activity there."[82] While the geographical distance between Damascus and Najd, where Wahhab began preaching, challenges the relationship between the two, it does reveal the prevailing winds of change that had gripped Islam in the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Ultimately, it was this window of opportunity that Wahhab would embrace in reviving many aspects of the Kadızadeli movement in his own ideology of Wahhabism.

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[82] Ibid., 283.

IV

Modern State Making: Institutionalizing Religious Zeal & Political Aims through the Ikhwan & Ibn Sa'ud

D espite the Ottoman Empire's unprecedented amount of success in both establishing and administering such a vast region of land, its gradual loss of territory amidst increasing interstate global competition allowed new politically empty spaces to emerge. While for many territories this decline provided an opportunity to retake their independence, in the central and eastern parts of Arabia the fortunes of the Ottoman Empire had little impact on the lives of many tribal systems that had long since existed. The aridness of the region meant there were few incentives for either the Ottomans or the Europeans to seek out territorial influence or fully conquer this area. As a result, an exploration into the movements of the eighteenth century can largely be seen as arising and responding from local conditions.[1] Of these movements grew one of the most significant political and religious entities that would re-shape Sunni Islam's identity on the global stage. The union formed between Muhammad ibn Sa'ud and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab would become a powerful bond that forged a new nation, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and a lasting basis for the legitimacy of the state. While critics of the Kingdom assert that the form of Islam practiced in the Kingdom is at complete odds with contemporary standards of human rights and misinterprets the egalitarian vision of Islam, the Kingdom's steadfast affirmation of the foundations it was based upon

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[1] Bas, Natana J. *Wahhabi Islam from Revival and Reform to Global Jihad*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, 8.

is a testament to the lasting union between two influential individuals in its history. The very basis of the Saudi state was founded upon a religious and political union that set a precedent for the future of the country. The relationship between ibn Sa'ud and Wahhab reveals how different spheres of influence were reconciled with one another in order to achieve a single power. However, this was not always such a blessed union and the relationship's troubled history reveals the immense effort entailed in this state-making enterprise. Moreover, the rise and fall of the Ikhwan Movement, an Islamist ideological commitment to purifying Islam, forms a critical component in the history of Saudi Arabia as it highlights the return of a crusading mentality dependent on binary connotations of insiders and outsiders. The movement also articulates the tension that exists in any effort to preserve a certain type of religious sanctity with political goals crucial to the progress of a nation. Once again, in this context, zealous religious rhetoric, espoused as jihad, resurfaces as a cornerstone of the Ikhwan's actions and played a central role in the emergence of the modern Saudi Kingdom.

The First Saudi State: Wahhabi Ideology & Political Patronage

The very foundations of Saudi Arabia provide the first instance of a relationship between religion and politics, one that would be revised two centuries later with the emergence of the Ikhwan. The relationship built between ibn Sa'ud and ibn Wahhab grew out of unique circumstances that later shaped the nature of the Ikhwan movement as well. The history of Saudi Arabia can be traced back to the central region of Najd, where a lack of interest from foreign conquerors meant the region's history had been marked "more by local tribal warfare and chieftains struggling for power than by its position as part of a

broader state or empire."[2] Such an environment was able to exist in Najd because the area

"had no claim to commercial or religious importance" thus held little interest for the

stronger powers in Arabia, such as the Ottomans.[3] This culture allowed the Najdis to

retain their individuality and independence without incurring serious repercussions from

any surrounding centralized power.[4] Thus, there was little pressure in Najd to conform to

a particular Muslim identity or political authority, leaving an ideological open space for

the promulgation of different forms of Islam. It was in this space that Wahhabism first

gathered momentum, and would later contribute significant character to the future Saudi

Arabian identity.[5]

Within this ideological open space a consistent emphasis on *tawhid*, or the

oneness of God, emerged almost as a reaction to the diverse set of interpretations taking

place in the Ottoman Empire. In essence, the reformers that were present in Najd

advocated for a return to the fundamentals of faith - the Muslim scriptures of the Qur'an

and the *hadith* - as the "sources of guidance that would lead to the socio-moral

reconstruction of society."[6] The fact that these reformers were aware of the changing

nature of Islam is an important issue to be aware of, because it acknowledges that these

preachers had travelled throughout the Arabian region and observed such interpretations

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[2] Ibid., 7.

[3] Ibid., 8.
[4] Vassiliev, Alexei. *The History of Saudi Arabia.* London: Saqi Books, 2000, 70.
[5] This is not to say that the Ottomans had little interest in the Arabian Peninsula as a whole. The Ottoman occupation of Yemen, 945-1045/1538-1636, highlights foreign interest in the region. Yet, it is crucial to understand that at the most simple level, Ottoman interest in certain parts of the Peninsula provided specific assets. In the case of Yemen, the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina were brought into the Ottoman order as well as key trade routes with India in spices and textiles. Whereas, the aridness of the Najd did not provide these benefits or an equivalent hence, its ability to go relatively unnoticed in its social, religious and political development.
[6] Bas., 9.

and their role in defining a political system. Therefore, derivatives of certain religious movements, such as the Kadızadeli movement, may have had an influence on the religious sentiments that later emerged in this space. The belief that important Qur'anic interpretations had been lost as Islam became inextricably tied to a more centralized and modernizing political system was a new challenge that had not previously existed for Muslim-based polities. It was the aim of these reformers, through the fundamentals of Islam, to enable society to rediscover the meaning of the religion in its original context in order to determine "the eternal value or ethical guidelines" contained within it.[7] However, it is crucial to acknowledge that these reformers, although they called on the authority of a pure Muslim past, acted in a new medium of the modern. The past legitimized their novel actions in the present, especially in that sense that they sought to re-interpret the heritage of Islam in ways that would be meaningful "in both the private and public spheres."[8] This meant that the proponents of ibn Wahhab challenged the authority of tribal orders, as they inserted religious beliefs into public life, and proposed that God should stand at the center of the political order. As a result, it became necessary for the reformers to seek a political alliance for their own protection, and they in turn provided a legitimate religious base for the tribal leaders.[9] These associations were to become the foundations of Saudi Arabia, as it was during this tumultuous time that the tribal lineage of ibn Sa'ud provided protection to the teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab.

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[7] Ibid., 11.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., 13.

A local Najdi, ibn Wahhab spent time travelling throughout the region, accumulating knowledge on Islam and its practices from the various parts of the Ottoman Empire. His exposure to the religion came primarily through Hanbali juridical doctrine, what is perceived to be the most conservative legal school of Islam. The Hanbali School of jurisprudence requires a very literal reading of scripture and eschews interpretative efforts by scholars; consequently it is of little surprise that ibn Wahhab's teachings required such an orientation to scripture.[10] Moreover, Wahhabism's fundamental precepts are derived in part from the medieval jurist Ahmad Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyya and his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, which were both aimed at returning to orthodox Islam in the midst of Mongol invasions, and defined true Islam as that "practiced by the very first generations."[11] Throughout ibn Wahhab's travels he noticed how the Muslim *umma* and its political leaders had deviated from the principles of monotheism as "people indulged in *bida*, considered the worst sin" for orthodox Islamists.[12] *Bid'a* was the act of innovation in religious matters and often used as a mode of recrimination against temporal power. These accusations were reminiscent of the backlash the Ottoman Empire faced in the aftermath of Sultan Süleyman's reign by the Kadızadeli movement. Thus, there was certainly a reactionary element to the changes in Islam that came from reorganizing the religion to fit a political mold. However, for Wahhabism to be sustainable it had to accommodate the shifting arrangements of its time, otherwise it would have endangered itself to the point that it would have ceased to exist. Consequently, it is interesting that Wahhabism preaches a return to orthodox Islam in

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[10] "Wahhābīya." *Encyclopedia of Islam, First Edition (1913-1936)*, 3.
[11] Lacroix, Stéphane, and George Holoch. *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011, 11.
[12] Vassiliev, 74.

order to ensure the power of religion to shape political conditions, when it too was dependent on alliances for its very preservation.[13] Wahhabism flourished precisely due to political and social upheaval, as the consistent sense of political turmoil in central Arabia, with multiple warring tribes, had led to "an atmosphere of widespread popular dissatisfaction in the area of religion."[14]This fostered an environment that perhaps encouraged religious influences in political affairs as "striving for new ideals" in order to quell chaos created a sustained link between Islam and politics in the Arabian Peninsula.[15] The challenge lay in finding an aspect of Islam that resonated with the rule of a particular political leader, and more importantly, one that would not pose a threat to the administration of their territories. The alliance between the House of Sa'ud and ibn Wahhab achieved a unique balance--it wove political stability with religious legitimacy and thus created a cohesive mechanism for centralized rule in the heart of the Najd.

Wahhabi doctrine required ultimate commitment to its beliefs. The fact that there needed to be both private and public recognition of the oneness of God meant those who could not outwardly prove their dedication would not be deemed as true advocates of the fundamentals of Islam. It is interesting that followers of ibn Wahhab never named themselves Wahhabis, instead, the members of the religious sect thought this would have been contradictory to their teachings, as it would detract from the principle of oneness and fierce dedication to perceived unity in the past. To provide ibn Wahhab with public recognition or superiority in a religious context was to say that he shared the same space as God, and that was not what ibn Wahhab was preaching. Thus, those who did follow

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[13] Lacroix., 4.
[14] Vassiliev., 76.
[15] Ibid.

this interpretation of Islam referred to themselves as either "monotheists or simply

Muslims" with the inherent implication that this was the only true form of Muslim

belief.[16] Wahhabi followers therefore viewed any other Muslim that did not share their

teaching to be far worse than polytheists.[17] To a certain extent, this was not particularly

surprising, as Muslims who did not adhere to this dogma were deemed partially

responsible for the corruption of the religion that had caused the moral decay of society.

Despite the rigidity of its ideological convictions, the movement quickly gained a

popular following due to its intrinsic connection to Najd, an area that had been left

relatively unscathed by the religious innovations taking place in the Ottoman Empire.

Therefore, central to maintaining the success of ibn Wahhab's ideology was making sure

the unity in Najd remained untainted, as it was the central population base that the

followers originated from.[18] In many respects the ideology of Wahhabism fit perfectly

with the bedouin[19] mentality because it did not require them to change practical aspects

of their lives, such as conducting raids for economic support. This was how the bedouin

maintained their economic independence, and as such it was an extremely integrated part

of their lives. Through Wahhabism, such behavior did not have to change instead, under

the banner of jihad and Islam it provided increased impetus to engage in such actions.[20]

Direct linkages between the context of the Arabian Peninsula in the lifetime of

Muhammad and the patterns of contemporary living in the region reinforced the

relationship between Wahhabi principles and tribal realities. Furthermore, a union

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[16] Ibid., 74

[17] Ibid., 77.

[18] Ibid., 79.

[19] The term bedouin is the anglicized version of *bedu*, which was a specific designation that literally translates to nomad or wanderer.

[20] Ibid., 80

between Wahhabis and tribes was particularly appealing because it provided an extremely mobile military force that could materialize with little notice when necessary, which would later become significant in the formation of the Ikhwan as well.

The banner of jihad would prove to be a central force in the growth of Wahhabism, and it also fueled an ideological division between in-groups and out-groups. The nature of Wahhabism promoted the idea of returning to the fundamentals of the religion and interpreting and reinterpreting the holy texts in order to gain a more insightful and long lasting set of beliefs. Yet, interpretation led to difference, and the proliferation of opinion was something Wahhabi traditions guarded against. They did so by forming a rigid distinction "between exclusivists and inclusivists."[21] This divide was important because "inclusivists" were of the thought process that regardless of whether or not a Muslim decided to follow the Wahhabi track, they were still believers in Islam.[22] Whereas, the exclusivists were definite proponents of a binary interpretation of jihad and asserted that those who were not Wahhabis were infidels. This division materialized in later dealings with the Egyptians in 1818. The fact that the prevailing trend of Islam practiced in Egypt was not Wahhabism led to eventual clashes with the Egyptians. Yet, the inclusivists advocated for a different course of action that may have prevented the end to the second Saudi state. Their preferred mode of action would have led them into discussions with the Egyptians, not to accommodate their beliefs but to reveal that it was inferior to Wahhabi ideology.[23] It can be argued that this method of action was merely preventing the inevitable, as it seems unlikely that the Egyptians would have conformed

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[21] Lacroix., 12.
[22] Ibid., 11.
[23] Ibid., 13.

to their Wahhabi counterparts, especially when they were aware of their superior military strength. Yet, it does reveal that even though Wahhabism was a strictly conservative form of Islam, within it there were differing attitudes in how this conservatism should be enacted in order to achieve goals that united politics with religion.

The union between ibn Sa'ud and ibn Wahhab resulted from particular circumstances that made each of them aware of the mutual benefits that might arise from their union. Ibn Wahhab's influence in his home of 'Uyayna had increased to the point where many locals had embraced his interpretation of Islam and were enforcing it as a mechanism of governance. This enforcement reached a climax when a case of adultery was brought to him and a woman admitted to the act and was punished with stoning, in line with Wahhabi doctrine.[24] Ibn Mu'ammar, the ruler of 'Uyayna, had allowed Wahhab to act freely up to this point because the latter had agreed to support and expand Mu'ammar's rule "over Najd and possibly beyond."[25] However, ibn Wahhab's actions gained the attention of Ibn Ghurayr, of the neighboring tribe Bani Khalid, who held substantial influence over Najd, and he pressured Mu'ammar into forcing Wahhab to leave 'Uyayna.[26] While there is speculation over why Ghurayr acted in this manner, there exists the possibility that he had made his own agreements with his own religious *ulema*s who were the driving force behind these actions, thus preserving their religious power base against the rising popularity of ibn Wahhab. The expulsion of ibn Wahhab led him to Diriyah, which was ruled by ibn Sa'ud. With the common trend in Najd consistently

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[24] Vassiliev., 80-82.
[25] Lacey, Robert. *Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Modernists, Terrorists, and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia*. New York: Viking, 2009, 53.
[26] Bas., 24.

forcing religious and political leaders to unite in order to more effectively serve their

goals, ibn Sa'ud and ibn Wahhab consequently discussed a union. Having witnessed the

influence ibn Wahhab possessed over the people of 'Uyayna, he recognized what

prospects were possible with this relationship and how they would aid his own

"ambitious plans."[27] On the other hand, ibn Wahhab had realized that his influence had

little worth if he had no means to protect his followers or to ensure that his practices

would not encounter any backlash. Thus the need for "military support" and political

backing was a necessity.[28] The alliance was concluded in 1744 and with that, the first

Saudi state emerged.

The union between these two influential individuals was divided on the basis that

ibn Wahhab would be responsible for religious matters and ibn Sa'ud would be in charge

of political and military issues. This arrangement was intended to take the form of ibn

Wahhab interpreting the sacred text and ibn Sa'ud being responsible for the governance

and application of Wahhab's interpretations. Moreover, ibn Sa'ud would also be

responsible for the wellbeing of all areas where their texts could not be interpreted or

lacked an opinion "provided the actions did not contradict any clear shari'a principle."[29]

With a firm platform set, and clear guidelines as to how this dynamic would operate, ibn

Sa'ud conducted his very first raids on his neighbors. The rewards were distributed in

accordance with Wahhabi doctrine, "one fifth went to Muhammad ibn Sa'ud and the rest

to the fighters."[30] This was an important moment in the new union because the success of

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[27] Vassiliev., 82.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Vogel, Frank E. *Islamic Law and Legal System: Studies of Saudi Arabia*. Leiden: Brill, 2000, 163.
[30] Vassiliev., 83.

these raids ensured the protection of ibn Wahhab as his doctrine of Islam brought clear

material rewards for the efforts of those who subscribed to it. This success was the

catalyst of a chain reaction that changed the "very character of local power" as supporters

of ibn Sa'ud gradually replaced independent sheikhs.[31] The exponential growth of

Wahhabism in the first Saudi state did not go unnoticed or unchallenged and in fact, one

of the biggest opponents of this renewed commitment to Islam was Wahhab's brother,

Sulaiman. The sheer aggression with which Wahhabists pursued and executed their new

beliefs brought Sulaiman and Muhammad into confrontation:

> Sulaiman once asked his brother Muhammad, 'How many are the pillars
> of Islam, O Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab?' 'Five', he answered.
> Sulaiman replied, 'No, you have added a sixth one. It reads that one who
> does not follow you is not a Muslim. To you, it is the sixth pillar of
> Islam.[32]

The belief that Wahhab's teachings had grown to the point that he was now regarded in

an almost divine status is certainly ironic, given the importance that was placed on fierce

monotheism and the absolute oneness of God. The fact that Wahhabism had filled a void

of religious zeal that had been absent from the Arabian world for a few centuries is

crucial in understanding why his teachings were so passionately embraced. It is in this

light we can see the foundations that would bind the House of Sa'ud and Wahhabism for

the next 300 years and recognize that the relationship would consistently dominate

political practices.

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[31] Ibid., 124.
[32] Daḥlān, Aḥmad Ibn Zaynī. *Khulāṣat Al-Kalām Fī Bayān Umarā' Al-Balad Al-Harām*. Al-Qāhirah, 1888, 232.

Political Instability in the Intervening Years

The first Saudi state existed until 1818 when the Ottoman viceroy of Egypt, Mehmed Ali Pasha, destroyed it. If the Wahhabists had kept their raids in the general area of Najd, there is little chance that the rest of the Muslim world would have noticed their actions, as had been the general history of Najd. Yet, after the death of ibn Sa'ud in 1765, the lineage of the House of Sa'ud continued to expand the Wahhabi mission and in 1801 these raids extended towards Karbala, the Shi'i shrine in eastern Iraq, and the Sunni controlled town of Hijaz.[33] Throughout the Ottoman Empire, the Hijaz was a territory that the Ottomans refused to concede to local leaders, yet, at this juncture in their reign they were not in a position to fully engage with the Saudis in order to recover it. Therefore, they sent Mehmed Ali Pasha, the semi-independent commander of their garrison in Egypt to recapture the city.[34] Mehmed Ali came into conflict with Saud's great-grandson, 'Abd Allah ibn Sa'ud ibn 'Abd al Aziz, who was quickly overcome by the strength of the larger and superior Egyptian army. As a result, 'Abd Allah took the opportunity to retreat back into the center of the Saudi state, however, they were further pursued by the Egyptians and made their final stand in Diriyah, which they managed to hold onto for two years before capitulating.[35] Prior to these conflicts, ibn Wahhab had also passed away although in the nineteenth century his religious field was expanded to a small number of other families from Najd. These families soon emerged as a "veritable religious aristocracy, the exclusive guardians and preservers of the intellectual legacy of

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[33] Metz, Helen Chapin. *Saudi Arabia: A Country Study.* Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1993, 5.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.

al-Wahhab against his detractors."[36] Yet, without a strong military to support this religious doctrine, it was also subdued for a period of time.

The disappearance of the first Saudi state sparked a series of competitive battles and tension within the House of Sa'ud regarding who should be responsible for its return. This competition was shaped by who had access to power and what resources they could afford to assert a claim to become a worthy successor to his rule.[37] During this period of time there seems little to suggest that much had changed in the Wahhabi ideology, and consequently it became more of background issue while the House of Sa'ud tried to reorganize its political structure. The fact that a smaller second Saudi state reemerged in the Najd in 1824, and was unable to extend its influence beyond this region, is reflective of the political instability that marked this period of time. This was the general trend of the early- to mid- nineteenth century and climaxed towards the end of the century when the al-Rashid family challenged the House of Sa'ud from Jebel Shammar, in Northern Najd.[38] The power struggles between the different brothers in the House of Sa'ud had led to a power vacuum, which was the direct cause of the defeat and exile of the Sa'ud in 1891.[39] As the al-Rashid tribe emerged as the ruling family of Najd, the House of Sa'ud retreated for sanctuary to Kuwait.[40] It is from these roots that the role of the Ikhwan would become significant and the world would see Wahhabism emerge with renewed vigor in alliance with 'Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad al-Sa'ud or as he would simply become known as, ibn Sa'ud.

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[36] Lacroix., 10
[37] Ibid.
[38] McLoughlin, Leslie J. *ibn Sa'ud: Founder of a Kingdom*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993, 11.
[39] Ibid.
[40] "History of Arabia." Encyclopedia Britannica Online. Accessed February 20, 2016. http://www.britannica.com/topic/history-of-Arabia.

The Rise of ibn Sa'ud & Founding the Ikhwan

During his exile in Kuwait, ibn Sa'ud built a relationship with the ruler of the country, Sheikh Mubarak predominantly based on a series of consistent conflicts between the Kuwaitis and the Rashidis. Under Mubarak's tutelage, ibn Sa'ud was exposed to various political and military teachings as well as having the opportunity to campaign with Mubarak on multiple occasions. His father took an active role in imparting Wahhabist beliefs and thought processes, which also supplemented these experiences in the formative years of his life. This is an important moment in ibn Sa'ud's life as Sheikh Mubarak was not an extremely strict adherent of Sunni Islam, and ibn Sa'ud's father's disapproval of this way of life was the beginning of his son's relationship with Wahhabist Islam. The commitment that ibn Sa'ud would make to Islam would become much more formalized after marriage to his third wife, Tarfa "a descendant of the founder of the Wahhabi doctrine."[41] The commitment that ibn Sa'ud had made to the history of Wahhabism is crucial in determining his orientation on the spectrum of Wahhabism and how he balanced it's extremely conservative ideals with political pragmatism. After the death of Muhammad ibn Rashid in 1897, there was a significant opportunity for the House of Sa'ud to recapture Najd, as his successor was young and inexperienced.[42] Thus, after gaining the support of the Kuwaitis, ibn Sa'ud, 26 at the time, set out on a raiding expedition into the Najd, which proved to be relatively successful. Consequently, it provided the momentum for ibn Sa'ud to further these exploits leading to the successful

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[41] McLoughlin., 38.
[42] Ibid., 18-20.

attack on Riyadh and the beginning of the third Saudi state.[43] The success of ibn Sa'ud once again prompted the intervention of the Ottomans, aiding the Rashidis, who defeated a Saudi army. However, the death of 'Abdulaziz al-Rashid at the hands of the Saudis in 1906 ended the Ottoman presence in Najd. With the opportunity to restore the House of Sa'ud to its former glory in Najd almost complete, ibn Sa'ud looked to establish a similar style of order as in the first Saudi state, which led to the founding of the Ikhwan.

The motivation for creating this union between religion and politics was to bring back a semblance of order as it existed in 1744. Between the combined power of religion and "the sword" the new Saudi state would ensure a greater degree of security for its people as well as "centralization of governmental authority and universality of religious practice."[44] The bond that ibn Sa'ud sought was thus not unique to Saudi history and in fact he actively recognized that the Najd had the "inherent superior capacity to re-unify the peninsula" because of the foundations laid there by his forefathers and by ibn Wahhab.[45] Recognizing that he needed his own force to protect the territories he had captured, the Ikhwan proved to be the perfect weapon in the early stages of this Saudi state for several reasons. Due to the nomadic bedouin lifestyle, movement amongst these people was central to the culture, a factor that ibn Sa'ud counted upon when he began "preaching an Islamic revival."[46] His success in persuading these people to settle into "semi-religious-military-agricultural communities called *hujar*" was the basis of the

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[43] Fisher, Sydney Nettleton, and William Ochsenwald. *The Middle East: A History*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2004, 697.
[44] Habib, John S. Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam: The Ikhwan of Najd and Their Role in the Creation of the Sa'udi Kingdom, 1910-1930. Leiden: Brill, 1978, 4.
[45] Ibid., 5.
[46] Ibid., 6.

Ikhwan lifestyle, as it required little change to their everyday activities.[47] These efforts

were not extremely difficult as the history of the Najd elevated Wahhabism to become the

spiritual center of the region, and ibn Sa'ud simply reminded people of this in the post-

Rashidi era.[48] With this in mind, ibn Sa'ud recognized the benefits of approaching the

bedouin people in the formation of a militant arm as they provided an "ascetic, military

force, which could be mobilized and demobilized swiftly with the political reliability and

loyalty of the villager."[49] Through this medium of protection, ibn Sa'ud ensured that these

settled colonies were strategically placed around the Najd in order to ensure the most

effective style of security he could guarantee.[50] In securing a military force for the

protection of this region, ibn Sa'ud had carved out a renewed independence for his

people, which was secure enough to prevent any immediate threat to its borders.

The perfectly crafted mechanism by which ibn Sa'ud managed to convince the

bedouin people to join his cause was the inextricable link between their lifestyles and the

principles of Wahhabism. As a result, the Ikhwan of Najd emerged in 1913 and came to

be known as those bedouins "who accepted the fundamentals of Orthodox Islam of the

Hanbali School as preached by Abd-al-Wahhab."[51] The literal meaning of the term

Ikhwan is "Brethren" or "Brotherhood" and was the uniting factor and term for men of

the bedouin population who "left their abodes and became settled in a special place

[Islam], and built for their homes mud huts known as *hujar* as a sign that they left their

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[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., 10.
[49] Ibid., 6.
[50] McLoughlin., 43.
[51] Habib., 16.

own detestful life for another more beloved life."[52] The bedouin lifestyle and mentality was now grounded in religious sanctity, and became the main ideological driver of their aggressive raids and conquests of other lands. The renewed crusading mentality that was based in religious zeal was reminiscent of Salah al-Din's speeches that motivated his troops against the Crusaders. The sense of spiritual invigoration that dominated the lives of the Ikhwan came to be their identifying factor as they carved out an image of military enforcers for the House of Sa'ud. This posture soon earned them a badge of fear from non-Wahhabists and furthered their own commitments to the ideals and beliefs that ibn Wahhab had highlighted a few centuries ago.

As ibn Sa'ud continued to expand in the Najd region and beyond, the Ikhwan became even more important for achieving the successful unification of territory. At the same time, however, a British foreign presence was also increasing in the region as they sought to create resistance to Ottoman power from within the Arab provinces. While the Ikhwan continued to become a threatening armed movement with increasing fanaticism, it served ibn Sa'ud's interest "to conceal the rapid rise and military capability of the Ikhwan."[53] In doing so, ibn Sa'ud could prevent the British interference in these affairs, which was continually requested by the Sharif of Mecca and King of Hijaz, Hussein ibn Ali al-Hashimi, both of whom were concerning about ibn Sa'ud's expanding power. At this time, the British were in favor of aiding Hussein because it served their purpose against the Ottomans, yet, a threat to Hussein's power could also bolster the Ottoman forces in European territories. While King Hussein appealed to the British for help in his

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[52] Wahbah, Ḥāfiẓ. *The Arabian Peninsula in the XXth Century*. Beirut: Slim Press, 1961, 293.
[53] Habib., 20.

matters with ibn Sa'ud and the Ikhwan, the fact that ibn Sa'ud had managed to cloak the

Ikhwan's military capability was central in any aid coming, as seen in these

correspondences between Hussein and the British:

> What concerns me above everything else is that HMG should compel the Emir [ibn Sa'ud] to abolish and disperse what he calls the Ikhwan - the political society in the cloak of religion.[54]

The British version of events suggests a different story:

> King Hussein would hardly be justified in demanding the suppression of the Ikhwan in ibn Sa'ud's sphere, though he may take what measures he chose to exclude them from his own. As this is primarily a religious affair concerning independent Arabs, it would be difficult for HMG to take action.[55]

In these instances the veil of religion proved more powerful than ever for ibn Sa'ud as it

allowed the Ikhwan to act with political immunity and without fear of backlash from a

British supported King Hussein. The fact that the British perceived mutually exclusive

spheres of politics and religion and refused to become involved accordingly, worked to

ibn Sa'ud's advantage. The British, concerned with the outbreak of war in other parts of

central and southeastern Europe, avoiding becoming entangled in what they perceived to

be an issue of religious ideology. This moment isolated King Hussein from his foreign

allies despite recognizing the central role that the Ikhwan played in ibn Sa'ud's

expansion.

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[54] Letter from King Husayn to the Acting British Agent, Jidda, 18 September 1918, Public Record Office, MSS, Foreign Office, Vol. 3390, Document Number 161898.
[55] Letter from King Husayn under cover of a letter sent by Wingate to Balfour, 3 October 1918, Public Record Office, MSS, Foreign Office, Vol. 3390, Document Number E 177496.

Institutionalizing the Ikhwan & the Growth of Political Power

As part of their broadening relevance to ibn Sa'ud's expansion, the Ikhwan came to embody several mannerisms that were crucial in the process of establishing a sense of identity and independence of their own. The central tenet that appears in all accounts of the Ikhwan is their "religious fanaticism, more, their eagerness to die in battle on behalf of God and Islam," which gave birth to all other practices of the Ikhwan.[56] Consequently, actions such as refusing to return the Islamic salutation to non-Ikhwan individuals or covering their face as opposed to looking at those perceived to be infidels, fed into the notion of a religiously motivated duty to keep their religion as pure as possible.[57] This behavior comprised elements of the Hanbali school of thought as it required literal interpretations of the holy texts in order to "return to pure Islam which Muhammad had preached and where is worship is due to God alone."[58] The Ikhwan's unwillingness to compromise in their actions was rooted in the fact that they believed such behavior to be virtuous. Moreover, becoming an armed faction of ibn Sa'ud's order propagated their religiously fanatic mannerisms due to the political patronage received.[59] The origins of the Ikhwan came from ibn Sa'ud seeking them out and providing them with this religious purpose, while their fanaticism was cultivated as they grew more and more powerful. In many respects the bedouin's religious education would have come from the local *ulema* that espoused these ideas as they circulated through religious education.[60] At the beginning of ibn Sa'ud's political ventures it served him well to have this overly zealous

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[56] Habib., 25.
[57] Ibid., 31.
[58] Ibid., 32.
[59] Ibid., 36.
[60] Ibid.

sect because it compensated for a lack of imposing military forces, yet, as the movement continued its growth and as more bedouins became enamored with it, the rigid ideological goals of Wahhabism began to pose a threat to the political stability ibn Sa'ud sought.

Thus, the relationship between ibn Sa'ud and the Ikhwan constantly changed in response to the shifting power dynamics in Arabia. As already mentioned, the Ikhwan served a significant purpose at the beginning of ibn Sa'ud's campaign for power as there was little else he could rely on to change the status quo. However, once ibn Sa'ud had established himself as a political entity, he had to play a much more diplomatic game in order to ensure stability and thus the acquiescence of the people he presumed to rule. His focus on status quo diplomacy challenged the revisionist goals of the Ikhwan and the orthodoxy of Wahhabi ideologies more generally. Still, while ibn Sa'ud did not necessarily share all the ideological commitments of the Ikhwan, the reality was "he was unable to be the omnipresent overseer of Ikhwan conduct," in all parts of the kingdom.[61] The movement itself was out of his control. The success of the Ikhwan caused a rush to replicate their standards and way of life, "with a zealousness that could not be contained," and as this progression took place the Ikhwan continued to bring "nonconforming to obedience."[62] In many respects the Ikhwan were aware of this, and consequently assumed a degree of autonomy in their activities stating they were sanctioned by ibn Sa'ud even if this was not the case:

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[61] Ibid., 37.
[62] Ibid., 79.

> Assaf ben Hussein el Mansur to Brother Rcheidren Smeir. Greethings! YOU are aware that the Sultan of all the Arabs has ordered me to write you this letter to inform you that you must let me know by special messenger whether you are following the Moslem creed of Abdul Aziz. Safety is for those who understand. You have been warned. You only have yourselves to blame.[63]

Such a statement demonstrates the way in which the Ikhwan also used their connection to ibn Sa'ud for their own purposes, but as ibn Sa'ud increasingly turned to ensuring a position of absolute supremacy, he feared the impact of doctrinal dogmatism. In fact at the height of the Ikhwan's power, ibn Sa'ud tried to prevent forced conversion because he realized the backlash it would have from the British, one that would prevent him from attaining a position of absolute power.[64] The changing relationship between the Ikhwan and ibn Sa'ud reflects the struggle between defining a movement by its religious goals as opposed to its political goals. For the Ikhwan, their birth revolved around religious texts and fighting in a battle that had been waged since the Crusades, whereas, ibn Sa'ud recognized the importance of this history but tried to reconcile it with modern standards of political deliberation and deliberation.

In order to maintain the fragile balance between these two potentially contradictory forces, ibn Sa'ud had to define the parameters in which the Ikhwan could operate in the new Saudi state. Therefore, ibn Sa'ud continued his pragmatic efforts in using the Ikhwan for his own ends while "skillfully bypassing its more extreme requirements."[65] Ibn Sa'ud approached this relationship by formalizing certain aspects of Wahhabism that the Ikhwan were concerned with, in order to ease the tension between

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[63] Transmittal of documents by Field-Marshall Viscount Allenby to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 17 October 1922, Public Record Office, MSS, Foreign Office, Vol. 7715, Document No. E 11186/248/91.
[64] Habib., 38.
[65] Vassiliev., 231.

the political and religious bodies.[66] By appeasing the Ikhwan through the introduction of

strict Wahhabist regulation, ibn Sa'ud was able to show his own commitment to the

religion and ensure that a greater proportion remained loyal to him as opposed to the

Ikhwan. One mechanism for achieving this was through the establishment of the League

of Public Morality. This organization enabled ibn Sa'ud to demonstrate his own religious

beliefs, and yet still emphasized his control over the zealous Ikhwan, as it was an

institutional pathway to religious control. Within the League, ibn Sa'ud "ordered the

Ikhwan to inform them about all deeds that were permitted by the faith, although they

were not allowed to take unauthorized reprisals."[67] The centralization of religious

authority restrained the Ikhwan from being able to enforce their own methods of religious

governance and gave greater power and control to ibn Sa'ud. The need to reign in such

religious zeal became even more apparent as ibn Sa'ud acquired increasing political status

after the conquest of Mecca in 1925. While he was able to do this with little bloodshed "it

was essential that ibn Sa'ud should win the approval of the Muslim world and reassure

Muslims that the new custodianship of the Holy Mosques was a change for the better."[68]

In many ways, control of Mecca gave the Ikhwan increased impetus to continue their

religious incursions, as they now felt sanctioned as defenders of these cities. However,

after ibn Sa'ud became the ruler of these newly acquired lands he realized the importance

of tempering the movement as greater gains could be made through diplomatic ventures.

This new development in the relationship meant the Ikhwan's role would be duly

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[66] Ibid., 270.
[67] Ibid., 271.
[68] McLoughlin., 80.

subdued and potentially cast aside in favor of diplomacy and consequently brought the Ikhwan and ibn Sa'ud into open conflict.

The need to reorder the hierarchy of ibn Sa'ud's regime was closely related to growing relations with the British, who recognized him now as the superior force in the region. Curbing the Ikhwan's religious zeal was crucial for preventing greater British intervention and preserving the newfound independence that ibn Sa'ud had fashioned. The inability to control the Ikhwan during the pilgrimage season of 1926 led to severe conflicts with the Egyptians and a large casualty rate that ended diplomatic relations with the country for 10 years.[69] The fact that such behavior would warrant closer attention from other Muslim nations as well as the wider world meant ibn Sa'ud had to take more concrete action to protect his political legitimacy. Consequently, the ruler ordered that "no Ikhwan leader was to be governor of any Hejaz city" hopefully disassociating himself and his government with the image of "unrestrained savagery" that the Ikhwan now presented to the world.[70] The actions of ibn Sa'ud were not entirely unprecedented, as the history of Saudi Arabia had predominantly recognized the role of tribal groups as those who "were expected to fight for the state, not to function in any leading political or administrative capacity."[71] However, in the formation of ibn Sa'ud's rule, the Ikhwan recognized that the role they had played was much greater than any other previous tribal entity and understood from this that they formed the basis of the Saudi military forces. These practical factors, combined with their own religiously motivated, political

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[69] Ibid., 85.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Kostiner, Joseph. The Making of Saudi Arabia: 1916-1936: From Chieftaincy to Monarchical State. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993, 74.

ambitions presented ibn Sa'ud with special problems.[72] Moreover, the fact that ibn Sa'ud

continued to build his relationship with the British caused internal struggles as the

Ikhwan had become known in his regime as protectors of the "legitimate interests of

Islam" winning them support from many of ibn Sa'ud's peers.[73] After winning Mecca,

ibn Sa'ud had been seen as distancing himself from the people in order to gain favor from

the British, and this compromised both his local legitimacy and his standing in the eyes of

other regional Muslim political leaders. These issues would confront each other as the

Ikhwan soon realized how ibn Sa'ud was trying to further subdue their religious mission

in favor of a different type of political stability.

British Influence & the Decline of the Ikhwan

As ibn Sa'ud's actions against the Ikhwan increased, these tensions began to

escalate and led to disruptions with regards to the future course of the Saudi state. The

Ikhwan were becoming more and more aware that ibn Sa'ud's actions against them were

driven, at least partially, by the growing British influence in Saudi affairs. As a result,

they became more vocal about ibn Sa'ud's lack of commitment to Wahhabism's ideals

because of his growing contact with the English, and how such actions were contrary to

the state the Ikhwan were committed to creating.[74] The dynamic between the Ikhwan and

ibn Sa'ud became more obvious to the British who appeared to empathize with ibn Sa'ud

in the situation:

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[72] Ibid., 102.
[73] Habib., 129.
[74] Habib., 80.

> The Ehwan are hated and feared. They hardly form a suitable basis for Eben Sa'ud's empire, since, with their commander, they would be the first to reject Eben Sa'ud should he fail to follow all of the prescriptions of their creed. They now accuse him of being too mild toward other Muslims and too obedient to the Europeans, and their disapproval of his attitude is increasing with his introduction of various reforms.[75]

The political sentiment voiced by the British resonated with the stability that ibn Sa'ud was attempting to build. The key challenge between the Ikhwan and the emerging Saudi state lay in differing motivations and priorities of the two groups. Ibn Sa'ud's political sentiments did not make him devoid of his religious obligations, rather "certain areas gradually became understood as depending exclusively on the princes, such as relations with foreign powers, explaining why the traditional Wahhabi *ulema* did not oppose Saudi Arabia's alliance with the United Kingdom in the early twentieth century."[76] Yet, the Ikhwan saw this as a corruption of Islam, and the state they wished to create would not consider foreign powers, especially non-Muslims ones, as allies as these alliances would stain the purity of Islam.

As the situation progressed, ibn Sa'ud realized that he would have to confront the Ikhwan in a manner that would prevent a full-scale rebellion from not only the Ikhwan, but also from many tribal leaders who sympathized with their cause or resisted the incursion of centralized control more generally. As ibn Sa'ud worked to restrain the activities of the Ikhwan, he issued orders that prevented them from raiding Iraqi citizens, a controversial action because Iraq's non-Wahhabist doctrine presumably opened them up to raids and military challenge. British reactions to such dealings applauded ibn Sa'ud

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[75] Musil, Alois, *Northern Negd (A Topographical Itinerary): American Geographical Society,* Oriental Explorations and Studies No. 5, edited by J.K. Wright, 303.
[76] Lacroix., 8.

as a model politician who had managed to restrain the Ikhwan as much as possible, as

former Lieutenant-General Sir John Bagot Glubb recalled:

> Caution had always distinguished the policy of Abdul Aziz ibn Sa'ud. He
> had been confident of his power to defeat other Arabian princes, like Ibn
> Rashid, but he was not prepared to engage in hostilities with Britain. The
> Ikhwan were able to quote against him his own pronouncements of an
> earlier date. The Iraqis, they claimed, were renegade Muslims, whose lives
> and property were forfeit to the Ikhwan. Ibn Sa'ud was a model of a
> common sense and prudence. If he encouraged fanaticism, it was to use it
> as an instrument to achieve his object; he was never himself a fanatic. To a
> wild and unruly people, however prudence and common sense offered few
> attractions.[77]

Britain recognized the superior position of power that they held in the situation due to

their military supremacy and growing financial interest in the state. Ibn Sa'ud also shared

this knowledge, which was perhaps what fuelled his compliance with British officers

whenever needed. However, the Ikhwan were unable to see the pragmatism of the

situation because the religious sentiment that motivated them was not to be challenged on

the basis of logistical alliances. As far as the Ikhwan were concerned, the British

represented the infidels that Islam had been at war with for centuries, and consequently it

was their religious duty to fight them. It is this ideology that also motivated the Ikhwan in

their actions against the Iraqis and drove them to questioning ibn Sa'ud's rule because he

was foregoing the principles the Saudi state was based upon:

> The Ikhwan were intoxicated with their own strength, and claimed that it
> was their fighting power, which made ibn Sa'ud great. By challenging the
> king on the question of war with Iraq, the Ikhwan were able to claim
> religious sentiments on their side. The Iraqis were not Wahhabis and were
> therefore renegade Muslims, against whom holy war was a duty. It was

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[77] Glubb, John Bagot. *War in the Desert: An R.A.F. Frontier Campaign*. New York: Norton, 1961, 193.

ibn Sa'ud who was guilty of religious laxity in being unwilling to engage in hostilities against the enemies of God.[78]

By framing the situation from a religious standpoint, the Ikhwan were unwilling to concede ground on such matters. Moreover, the fact that the Ikhwan had been successful in their campaigns thus far was further incentive for them to continue fighting because in their eyes, victory was a result of having a morally superior reason to go to war. The main Ikhwan leaders, Faisal al-Dawish and Sultan bin Bajad, were aware of this argument and saw no reason to compromise their actions, especially with a non-Muslim power:

> The issue was complicated by the fact that the movement was conducted under a religious banner; claiming to be genuine defenders of the faith and accused ibn Sa'ud of ignoring the true religion and collaborating with the infidel British for the sake of his vested interests.[79]

Amongst other grievances that the Ikhwan listed against ibn Sa'ud was his use of modern technology, borders delineated towards British forts so as to protect them, and his consistent efforts to disrupt the expansion of holy warfare.[80] Ibn Sa'ud gradually reorganized that he needed to create a military force of his own, since he could no longer rely on the Ikhwan, and began campaigning amongst other tribal leaders in his kingdom. The rhetoric communicated to these leaders was two-fold: first, he claimed that the Ikhwan were seeking an independent state that prescribed religious conformity, and that this move would require these leaders to lose all control over their tribes. Second, he insisted that the superior technology of the British meant it was extremely implausible that the Ikhwan would continue to proceed unchecked in their raiding ventures; instead, it

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[78] Ibid., 200.

[79] Ibn Hizlul, Saud. *Tarikh Muluk AlSa'ud*[The History of Saudi Kings](Matbaa al-Riyadh, Riyadh, 1961), 293.

[80] Habib., 133.

was simply a matter of time before the British intervened more aggressively. The fact that the Ikhwan raids in Kuwait had already engaged an RAF response, and the Ikhwan were threatening other realms that had treaties with the British, meant the Ikhwan were provoking the inevitable and ibn Sa'ud implored these leaders to see reason.[81] Ibn Sa'ud played upon the traditional issues that divided nomads and settled people when recruiting these leaders to his cause with the nobility from the oases "keen to protect its interests against the rebel nomadic population."[82]

After raising an army fully capable and equipped to fight against the Ikhwan, the two sides met in the Battle of Sabilla in March of 1929. The outcome was unanimous in favor of ibn Sa'ud because of his willingness to embrace modern technology. The Ikhwan, with swords and sticks, came up against a Saudi force with machine guns and cavalry. The victory for ibn Sa'ud was essential in consolidating his rule once and for all and changed the nature in which religion and politics interacted. In the aftermath of the battle an important development was the "rejection of the claim of the Ikhwan that they could proclaim Holy War, without the permission of the Imam, that is to say ibn Sa'ud."[83] The modern union that ibn Sa'ud had formed between religion and politics left him in an unparalleled position of power in the new Saudi state. This is not to say that Wahhabism moved towards a less conservative position, but rather that it was now realigned with contemporary political practices managed by the state apparatus. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as it exists today, still practices Wahhabi Hanbali Sunni Islam, and in many ways

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[81] Wilson, Peter W., and Douglas Graham. *Saudi Arabia: The Coming Storm*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994, 45.
[82] Wahbah., 302.
[83] McLoughlin., 89.

this form of Islam has been unchanged since the eighteenth century.[84] Yet, ibn Sa'ud recognized the importance of the institutionalization of Wahhabism in order for the country to grow socially, economically and politically. As the political landscape continued to change, it was important for ibn Sa'ud to reconcile Islam with broader standards of the time. As a result, the relationship between ibn Sa'ud and the Ikhwan demonstrate another crucial moment in the history of Islam and jihad where a particular context defined the medium through which the tension between religious ideology and political realities was expressed. Thus, the history of Saudi Arabia illustrates the way in which even internal to a region and a political ideology the fortunes of affiliation to doctrine and belief change based on various historical conjunctures.

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[84] This is not to say that the tension between religious and political institutes no longer exists today and in fact, in some instances it has been exacerbated. A common criticism of the Kingdom is that it does little to prevent interpretations of Islam that encourage the use of violence against outsiders. *The Interpretations of the Meanings of* the Noble Qur'an in the English Language by M. Khan and T. Hilali highlight such an instance. Within this text the authors interpolate the words "the Jews" and "the Christians" when the Qur'an refers to the infidels, based upon a specific historical moment between the Prophet Muhammad and his initial followers. The impact of such action takes away from the contemplative nature that many Islamists, including Abd al-Wahhab, state that Muslims should follow when reading the Qur'an. The actions of the authors, which was certified by the religious institutes and distributed around the world, attributes fixed meanings to the Qur'an and consequently explains the perpetual state of war certain Muslims feel their lives require. This example highlights the tension that exists contemporarily between the religious institutes and their political counterparts. While ibn Sa'ud constrained the activities of a particularly zealous sect, his actions do not detract from the overall influence that Islam has had in the formation of a Saudi Arabian identity. Therefore, it will always be difficult to restrict religious intensity in Saudi Arabia and why a complete overhaul of governance is unrealistic because of its inextricable link to the country's origins.

Epilogue: Identificatory Politics

The events of September 11th, 2001, incited a global conversation about the relationship between religious devotion and violence. This led to new identificatory politics that assumed linkages between Islam as a belief system and the violent actions of the September 11th perpetrators. The all-too easy collapse of Muslim into terrorist has escalated with the rise of Da'esh and a new global concern with the relationship between Islam and violence. I remember exactly where I was when 9/11 took place; I had just returned home from a football match in Bahrain, and it was a week before my 8th birthday. My parents were sitting on the couch, my brother was standing in the doorway, and everyone's eyes were fixated on the TV. Yet, all I make out was a big plume of smoke. I often talk to my parents about that day and ask them if they ever could have imagined the implications of that moment. Their response suggests they feared a backlash, as my dad had been involved in the first Gulf War, and had a sense of the political dynamics of the region. But neither had ever comes close to conceptualizing the chaos that has now engulfed the region for over a decade. This region, my home, played a significant role in shaping my own identity. As an Indian that had never lived in India, a Hindu that did not speak Hindi and a Catholic that had never been confirmed, my identity was in flux, and yet also inextricably linked to the culture and community that had become my home. For 18 years, until I came to America to continue my education, this culture and community was a mixture of expatriate and local Arab influences. Yet,

questions concerning a global dialogue about Islam and violence never permeated my thought process on a regular basis because I was still young and more importantly I was still at home, in the Arab world. I choose to call it the Arab World because it is a gross oversight to regard the entire Middle East as a composite of Muslims; this is a simple and common oversimplification of the history of the region. This oversight is partially what I have tried to address in my research, highlighting the shifting narratives and historical processes that have led to the present day emergence of nation-states and their uneasy relationship with Islam.

As a result of these events it has become easy to scapegoat Islam, and Muslims find themselves in similar positions as other marginalized groups, such as the LGBTQ community, African-Americans or other immigrants. For each of these communities it is easy to blame the entire group when fears and insecurities are consistently propagated by skewed rhetoric, regardless of the source. However, when such behavior takes place, we have to ask the question who will bear the brunt of such speech? I look upon this question with a personal affliction, having spent so many years in Arab and Muslim communities that raised me to be aware of my surroundings and the people that inhabit them. Islam now faces increasing criticism and believers have been forced to defend the faith in the face of every new instance of violence. This constant pressure to defend the religion has also forced Muslims to choose whether or not to publicly acknowledge their faith. This choice plagues believers and turns faith into an issue of identificatory politics.

Identity Conflicts in America

Having attended college in California, my interpretation of this conflict certainly

has an America-centric perspective to it, but I believe this perspective captures key

dynamics that can be used as a microcosm of a more global perspective. While I have my

own opinions of what Islam consists of and what it means to people, Muslim-Americans

have to wrestle with the narrative propagated by mass media and align it with their own

beliefs. There is a large number of personal blogs that pertain to the identity conflict, and

they all make a point of first acknowledging that the writers were Muslim and

Americans, or Muslim-Americans. The need to dispel any notion that one part of the

hyphen constitutes a greater proportion of their identity than another was immediate.

Moreover, these blogs assumed that both components of the hyphenated identity could be

reconciled in today's world. This assertion emerged as the blogs addressed several sub-

topics that have impacted the emergence of a narrative that defends this composite

identity. This is especially the case as blog writers discuss the difference between the

Islam practiced by radical groups and propagated by conservative politicians and

activists, and what they truly believe the religion represents. Or when they confront rising

Islamophobia and its role in the immigration debate.

With the USA in the midst of an election season, many of these rhetorical

messages have embodied a larger degree of polarization that has amplified attitudes, both

positive and negative, towards the Muslim community. Many Muslims have directed

their outcry towards politicians who have used their public platform to advance popular

misconceptions about the religion. As one blogger stated, "In the 1st debate, Rick

Santorum spoke at great length about Islam not really being a religion thereby excluding

it from the same legal protections as other religions. To hear him speak about Sunnis,

Shia, Jihad, and the Caliphate you'd think he were an expert on Islamic Studies. Except

all his "facts" were wrong."[1] The disturbing reality that such blatant oversights regarding

Islam now have a platform that reaches many people is certainly a cause for concern and

contributes to making boundaries that currently divide global communities. For many

Muslims, statements such as the one made by Santorum mean that on a daily basis they

have to actively clarify what Islam really is to friends, neighbors, and colleagues or else

face increased marginalization and suspicion. In this volatile contemporary world,

religious beliefs do not hold the same private sanctuary in a person's life as they did in

years past; to some extent critics argue that when those private beliefs disrupt the public

order than rights to religious devotion are forfeited. Yet, this argument overlooks the fact

that Islam was never monolithic and contains an inherent conversation concerning the

relationship between religion, politics, and violence, has drastically shifted in its sense of

communal welfare from its inception in the late antique world to its current realization

across the globe.

However, when the religion carries years of historical developments and nuances,

overlooking these differences accentuates binary thinking, xenophobia, and contributes to

antagonistic frameworks of in-groups and out-groups. The same blogger acknowledged

the need to differentiate the way in which vocabulary is used to describe violent actors

and alienate potential allies stating, "The phrase 'Radical Islam' is insulting to potential

Muslim allies. When you insult your allies, you help recruit for ISIS. The war they claim

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[1] "An American Muslim." An American Muslim. Accessed March 07, 2016.
https://salaamsblog.wordpress.com/.

to want to win is prolonged every time they put their low information base above the safety and security of all Americans and our troops overseas."[2] The complexity of the situation places the Muslim community in an extremely difficult position, with those who want to help unable to consistently do so for fear of being typecast as the same people conducting crimes against humanity. When a scenario like this one arises, how can a cohesive effort emerge that combats the actors elements that have resorted to such brutal means under the banner of Islam. Suggestions that groups like al-Qa'eda and Da'esh arise inherently from Islam, or can be explained solely through religious factors, insults both the inherent diversity of that religion's history, as well as the socio-economic and political developments in the present that shape the evolution and the rhetoric of these groups.

The intersection between politics and religion is certainly not a new phenomenon; yet, the added degree of polarization that has accompanied it in recent decades contains more worrying implications. Recognizing that people in powerful positions have the ability to profoundly shape public opinion through new media platforms and do so across the political spectrum heightens the problem. Rick Santorum is not the only individual who has raised anti-Muslim sentiments, Michelle Bachmann, Allen West, John Bennett, Bill Maher and of course Donald Trump have all "made discriminatory and Islamophobic statements regarding Muslims in recent years."[3] Elected representatives, candidates, and popular media figures freely express discriminatory sentiments. In past months many

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[2] Ibid.
[3] "Enough Is Enough: No More Tolerating Hate from Elected Officials." Young American Muslim. 2015. Accessed March 07, 2016. http://blog.chron.com/youngamericanmuslim/2015/01/enough-is-enough-no-more-tolerating-hate-from-elected-officials/.

Americans have debated whether these sentiments merely reflect public opinion, or are

part of a new media environment that builds on inflammatory statements. Preying on a

tense environment of fear allows for great political gains to be made, doing so, however,

by questioning the religious viability of Islam "fuels the cycle of hate and ignorance" and

undermines the very principles that this country was founded upon.[4] This is not a

criticism leveled only at America, as anti-migrant points of view have become a feature

of public discourse across Europe as well, and contributed to the revitalization of fascist

parties. The greater concern is how such standpoints rest in personal opinion rather than

those grounded in historical awareness. The propagation of these ideologies leads not

only to a society of greater partisanship, but also endangers the lives of everyday

Muslims who seek to reside in harmony with the country they call home.

With such polarized public opinions becoming more of a norm, the Brookings

Institute conducted a survey with regards to the American public's attitude towards

Muslims and Islam. The conclusions drawn from the survey are of particular note, as

many Americans clearly differentiated between Muslim people and the religion of Islam,

viewing the latter more unfavorably than the former.[5] The ability of politicians to take a

commanding role in defining the direction the dialogue takes highlights the importance of

the individual spokesperson in this national narrative concerning Islam. It is easy for

people to hate an abstract concept, yet, meeting an individual and recognizing that they

may share similar goals and aspirations changes the dynamic of that relationship.

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Telhami, Shibley. "What Americans Really Think about Muslims and Islam." The Brookings Institution. December 09, 2015. Accessed March 07, 2016. http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2015/12/09-what-americans-think-of-muslims-and-islam-telhami.

Ultimately, this phenomenon (acceptance of the individual and discrimination against the religion) becomes hard to ignore when confronted with anti-immigration policies that also specifically target Muslims and contribute to rising Islamophobia. Yet, creating an environment that facilitates mutual understanding and sympathy on an individual level becomes difficult, especially for the Muslim community as one blogger stated, "being Muslim in America means being identified by only one aspect of my identity. It means being told exactly what it means to be Muslim in America and having very little control over the narrative."[6] Many critics of immigration believe that the principles of Islam cannot be reconciled with democratic institutions and principles; yet, this cannot be true because, as the same blogger stated, "American Muslims encompass a number of sects, races and viewpoints on domestic and international policies, presidential candidates, and everything else."[7] As such, American Muslims embody the deliberative and diverse aspects of the country that center on the freedom to embrace different beliefs and ways of being. However, as a result of 9/11 and the chaos that has ensued, freedom to create one's own identity has been denied to American Muslims, leaving them instead in a posture of defense.

Final Thoughts

As the title of this thesis suggests, there is an increased focus on the role of jihad in Islam, yet, the historical examples provided in the chapters do not always explicitly mention jihad. A historical investigation of the relationship between Islam and

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[6] Naqvi, Zehra. "What's It Like Being Muslim in America?" The Huffington Post. November 16, 2015. Accessed March 07, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zehra-naqvi/what-its-like-being-muslim-in-america_b_8569378.html.
[7] Ibid

justifications for warfare requires a constant comparison between religious ideology and

its context. At times historical processes led to the propagation of aggressive elements of

jihad and Islam and at other times either minimizing these elements or using rhetoric to

sustain political positions without outright warfare. As this thesis explores only a few

contexts, it can also only offer partial assessments of the historical evolution of jihad as

both a mode of warfare and a political ideology. Yet this research is a singularly

important, as the prevailing theme in the post 9/11 world ignores history and denies the

importance of comparative theories concerning the relationship between jihad and

religious belief. As a result, oftentimes Muslim organizations, such as the All Dulles Area

Muslim Society, have had to publicly state their position on issues involving Islamic

groups or risk being an advocate for extremist actions, as a spokesman stated "we feel

responsible, as citizens, as Muslim, to defend our faith from these evildoers. At ADAMS

this also means ensuring that children learn to become both good Muslims and good

Americans."[8] I always find it interesting when an entire group of people is held

accountable for the actions of the minority. The events of 9/11 have not only

reinvigorated the rhetoric of the Crusades, the binary of conflict between Islam and the

West but also reflect an inherent imbalance in this rhetoric. The fact that mass media

often postulates Islam versus the West, rather than Islam versus Christianity, and does not

take into account the complex relationship between religion and violence within the

history of Christianity highlights this imbalance. As a result, few, if any, blame

Christianity for the Holocaust, but rather a particular political figure, Hitler, and the

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[8] "Setting the Record Straight." *The Economist.* March 09, 2015. Accessed March 07, 2016.
http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2015/03/muslim-americans.

movement he mobilized, Nazism. Yet, Islam is consistently blamed for the actions of Osama bin Laden, al-Qa'eda and Da'esh.

A crucial point of contention that arises from the current predicament that Muslims find themselves in concerning defensive postures revolves around the different set of standards that their religion is subjected to. Criticisms of the religion as a whole stem from its inherent complexity and the multiple interpretations that emerge as a result. This is a concept that I wished to highlight throughout my thesis, the fact that in different times, different people propagated a particular form of Islam to achieve certain goals. Again, this is not a new or radical perception of either religion or history, but critics of Islam tend to ignore both. Moreover, they conflate misinformation for truth for example by arguing that "there is no single authoritative interpretation of Islam - unlike Catholics, Muslims have no pope who can settle doctrinal debates."[9] The idea that a complete centralization of authority in Islam would solve all the issues associated with the religion is another gross oversight, and is an entirely invalid comparison to make. The internal splintering within the Christian religion is not unlike the various forms of Islam; therefore, the premise that a central authority for the majoritarian branch of the religion is the reason for its perceived unity undermines the historical developments in the religion itself. Critics further contend that the form of Islam practiced by extremist groups "derived from coherent and even learned interpretations of Islam," a statement that on its own is not entirely false.[10] While this idea may be true, it should also be accompanied by the fact that religions based on scripture always contend with questions of interpretation.

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[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.

This is true for each monotheistic tradition, where for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam debates concerning how religious should be interpreted are a core part of the historical evaluation of each faith. These groups have, in many cases, taken their direction from certain aspects of Islamic theology but if the core of the religion is the Qur'an and the hadiths, then as stated throughout this thesis, a true understanding requires intensive examinations between all texts. When taken in isolation, anyone would be able to communicate that Islam represents a particular point of view, but this argument oversimplifies the religion. Therefore, the burden rests in how one interprets the texts and their connections to each other. The gravity of the implications of this problem is highlighted by the fact that scholars have attempted to tackle this topic over many years and have yet to come to a definitive conclusion. The various interpretations that could exist also prompt critics to believe that Islamic groups have "as much legitimacy as anyone else," yet, this becomes an issue for the individual as opposed to the religion itself.[11] Within any religion, one could argue that there are elements of aggressive and violent actions especially that of the book, but the religious spectrum that emerges rest in individual interpretation.

The cycle that begins from such criticisms of Islam perpetuates the divide between different communities. Having lived a significant proportion of my life in the Middle East, I have benefitted from the generosity of the religion and its people. Therefore, I often think about how I can help others see and believe that Islam does not inherently advocate extremist behavior, such as that of Da'esh, as much as another religion does. The study from the Brookings Institution found that "demographically,

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[11] Ibid.

younger people and those with higher education have slightly more favorable views of

Islam and Muslims."[12] It is not specifically that having an education means you

understand the historical diversity of Islam but rather it encourages an individual to think

critically about the issues at hand, providing a different dimension to the conversation.

Consequently, generating a personal connection to the religion in any form increases

"favorable views of Muslims; this holds across the political spectrum."[13] Such

conclusions provide me with optimism in the sense that I hope those who read this thesis

will also critically question their beliefs and endeavor to further understand Islam. I have

never been particularly religious, yet, my mother, a conservative Catholic, always argues

that religion provides a sense of peace and sanctuary to many people and that is its

ultimate beauty. I cannot fault such an argument because as an institution, religions have

emerged parallel with the emergence of settled human life and cooperative communal

system. Therefore, I would state that in holding different religions to different standards

we place a different value on the lives of those who practice different religions. If this is

the case, then humanity has undermined itself to a much larger degree and forgotten that

"identity is a relationship and people define themselves in part as a function of how

others view them."[14] With this in mind it is important to recognize differences between

communities and individuals without labelling them and to allow this difference to enrich

patterns of global connectivity rather than to set standards which demonize them.

A recent talk by Michael Sells, the John Henry Barrows Professor of Islamic

History and Literature at the University of Chicago and a specialist in Qur'anic scripture,

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[12] Telhami.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

stated that the way in which the academic community can combat Islamophobia and groups such as Da'esh is to communicate the complexities of the religion in a clear and cohesive way. However, this task becomes inherently more difficult when a majority of the population in America has no background in Islamic history. Therefore, Sells suggested that more than delving into the depths of the religion, one should speak about Islam and religion as a whole with "due respect."[15] In order to do so, Sells stated that there were three criteria one must adhere to: sensitivity, no oversimplification of events and people, and, most importantly, no moral judgment.[16] Presenting Islam in line with these principles opens a line of communication between individuals that potentially casts aside previously held prejudices. Still, it is difficult to insert a respectful approach to the religion if participants in a conversation assume from the onset an antagonistic relationship to Islam. It is thus my conviction that students and scholars have a moral obligation to circulate new knowledge and interpretations of the past, so as to work against the biases that have developed, and thus perhaps challenge the barriers the plague religion and the global community in the 21st century.

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[15] Sells, Michael. "Wahhabi Doctrine and Global Conflict." Lecture, Claremont McKenna Athenaeum, Claremont, CA, March 25, 2016.
[16] Ibid.

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