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How Some Islamic Monarchies Use Religious Ideology to Maintain Domestic Control and Exert Regional Influence: a comparative study of Morocco and Saudi Arabia

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How Some Islamic Monarchies Use Religious Ideology to Maintain Domestic Control and Exert
Regional Influence: a comparative study of Morocco and Saudi Arabia

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by

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Abstract

This paper will attempt to explore the ways in which, and the purposes with which, some authoritarian states seek to use religious ideologies to maintain domestic control and exert regional influence. The two case studies explored here are Morocco and Saudi Arabia, two Arabo-Islamic monarchies in the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region. This paper will touch on historical contexts in which modern religious educational apparatuses were developed and the contemporary contexts in which they now exist, as well as the intents and desires behind such apparatuses. In addition, this paper will explore the benefits of ideological control in a domestic and international sense.

CHAPTER 1: Definitions and Outline of Argument

Many of the terms we will employ in this paper are nebulous by nature. Ideologies are not discrete; often, they resist neat definitions. They exist more on a plane than a spectrum, which can add to the confusion and the chatter around what means what in both the academic and practical senses.

We will proceed with a broad overview of some significant key terms in use in this paper, and winnow these down into working definitions for the purposes of this paper. These definitions will likely not align perfectly with other papers and writings on the topic, but they are meant to be understandable and broadly acceptable.

Religious Extremism

Generally speaking, "extremism" is a vague and ill-defined term that does not necessarily refer to religious ideologies. The entry for "religious extremism" in The Encyclopedia of Social Problems defines it as "a radicalized and intolerant viewpoint that typically sanctions the use of violence to promote a defined, religiously motivated political agenda" (Judd 772). Less provocatively, Hasan and Winter write that: "if to be an extremist is to hold views that are 'outside the mainstream on some issue[s],' to be a religious extremist is to hold views that go beyond the norm within a religion" (Hasan & Winter n. pag.).

Religious extremist groups share several "interlocking characteristics" which include a sense of persecution, a sense of injustice wrought by a larger force, including ideological forces (secularism, the state, colonial powers, invasive military powers), a perceived lack of access or control, cultural or political, over a preferred way of life, a perceived loss of traditional values, and the idea that sacrifices are necessary for the objectives of the group (Judd 772-3). Religious extremists usually do not self-identify as extremists (Judd 773). Religious extremists do not

necessarily politicize their views, nor do they necessarily engage in religious militancy, though

both of these are possible expressions of their faith (Hasan & Winter n. pag.). Religious

extremism and religious fundamentalism are frequently conflated, as are both with terrorism and

terrorist groups; though there is some overlap between these three classifications, they are

distinct (Judd 773). Religious extremism is not a modern phenomena, but including historical

events that fall under this umbrella, such as the Crusades or the Inquisition, is not particularly

conducive to understanding the contemporary social problem posed by religious extremism

(Judd 773).

"Extremism" as defined by Winter and Hasan implies a rejection of "balance" and the

"application of a single ideological perspective to all elements of an individual's life with,

importantly, a fervent disdain for alternative ideological perspectives." Again, religious extremist

ideologies do not necessitate violent action, even when violence is justified within the extremist

ideology (Hasan & Winter n. pag.). In Islam particularly, the Western understanding is that the

rise of Islamic extremism is rooted in the Qur'an and the hadith is spurious; extremism results

from the amalgamation of a number of political, economic, and/or social factors (Hasan &

Winter n. pag.). Canonically, Islam warns against extremism in religious practice, and urges a

level of "balance" (Hasan & Winter n. pag.).

Contemporarily, religious extremist groups "embrace extralegal and violent means to further

their ends, which often clash with the state's goal of keeping the peace and maintaining a

monopoly over the means of violence" (Judd 773). In the West and particularly in post-

September 11 America, Islam is frequently mischaracterized as a religion that lends itself to

religious extremism more so than Christianity; this is simply not true: "moderate Muslims

worldwide are no more prone to violence than are moderate Christians or Hindus. Religious extremist groups, regardless of religious affiliation, have more in common with each other than they do with the mainstream religions that spawned them" (Judd 773-4).

A few examples of religious extremist groups:

The so-called "Army of God" is a pro-life Christian extremist group in the United States whose members rely on a literalist interpretation of the Bible to inform their daily practice (Judd 774). Their religious goal is "to de-secularize U.S. society by emphasizing the evils of birth control, abortion, and feminism and to place the nuclear family at the center of U.S. values"; on a political level, they hope to eventually make abortion illegal in the United States (Judd 774). The Army of God endorses such means as targeted assassinations, including the murder of abortion-providing doctors, and intimidation, which includes physically blocking entrances to Planned Parenthood clinics (Judd 774).

A group more familiar, perhaps, and more applicable to the contents of the rest of this paper, is al-Qaeda, a well-known Islamic extremist group which rallies around the idea that Muslims need to be freed from the "corrupting influence" of the West (Judd 774). Al-Qaeda's doctrines may be characterized as a form of militant Sunni Islam; their religious goals include the creation of a new caliphate as a successor to that of the Prophet Muhammad (Judd 774). Al-Qaeda endorses "self-sacrifice through targeted terror attacks" as a means of achieving this goal, and the group has claimed responsibility for a great number of high-profile terror attacks, including the September 11 attacks in New York City (Judd 774).

For the purposes of this paper, we generally understand religious extremism as outlined by The Encyclopedia of Social Problems.

Religious Fundamentalism

The use of the word "fundamentalist" to describe contemporary religious doctrines is somewhat inapplicable; when the term was coined in the early 20th century, it was used to refer to a particular trend in American Protestantism (Hasan & Winter n. pag.). This "fundamentalist" take on American Protestantism opposed Biblical criticism, and "advocated a literalist interpretation of the Bible" along with moral conservatism and patriarchy (Hasan & Winter n. pag.). Academic examinations of the rising tide of fundamentalism proposed that secularization might be its catalyst (Hasan & Winter n. pag.).

Hasan and Winter adapt the definition of fundamentalism to apply to Islam as "the reading of scripture without reference to normative religious and historical context" and "a trend in which personal interpretation is rejected, where the faithful are urged to read the scriptures in a literal manner and dismiss the contextual, cultural, mystical and historical dimensions of Islam (Hasan & Winter n. pag.). Though fundamentalists claim a non-interpretive approach to canonical texts, fundamentalist religious leaders are often among "the narrowest and most ideologically guided interpreters" as they must revise and adapt texts to apply centuries-old jurisprudence to modern contexts, and cherry-pick those verses and passages that best work with their agenda (Hasan & Winter n. pag.).

Significantly, Hasan and Winter argue that:

> If the term 'extremist' refers to an individual who belongs to a group that deliberately segregates itself from society, rejects cultural norms and looks disparagingly upon non-adherents to the detriment of 'balance', then the term 'fundamentalist' refers to the

individual that justifies the above behaviour by grounding it in the scripture through a purportedly 'literal' reading of the authoritative religious texts.

Fundamentalists, like extremists, need not politicize or militarize their views. Quietist fundamentalists and extremists alike exist and are living proof that having a particular ideological bent does not determine one's actions.

Fundamentalism as a separate classification applied more broadly than the 20th century American Protestantism movement can be defined as a modern movement which opposes imposition by greater forces, such as secular governance, and reflects a "profound fear of annihilation", such as at the hands of modern secularists (Brookings n. pag.). In the modern Middle Eastern context, cases of foreign forces imposing secularism wrought blowback in the form of the increased presence and influence of fundamentalist groups (Brookings n. pag.). Some prominent examples of "Islamic fundamentalism", such as Sayyed Qutb's writings in Egypt or the Iranian Revolution, were in response to violent state repression rather than a desire to revert to fundamentals (Brookings n. pag.). "Political Islam" in this context may be taken to stand for "a manifestation of people's hopes of going back to something more authentic than what had been imposed on them by secular leaders" (Brookings n. pag.).

Islamism

The term "Islamism" was also coined in the early 20th century, though it was not part of mainstream discourse and political vocabulary until decades later. In political discourse, "Islamism" is used interchangeably with "political Islam" as a means of grouping Muslims who actively proselytize or try to activate social change conducive to wider-spread Islamic practice and values (Hasan & Winter n. pag.). Islam, of course, has been political since its inception, so

the term "political Islam" is misleading. Politicized actions may be given to mean actions taken with the "desire to influence structures of governance" (Hasan & Winter n. pag.).

Scholars argue for a variety of definitions of Islamism. Hasan and White argue that Islamism refers to:

> ...a political ideology dressed up in religion and… more aptly described as 'over-politicised Islam', as opposed to just 'political Islam'... Over-politicisation refers to the expansion of the rejectionist traits and solipsistic superiority apparent in extremism and fundamentalism to the political sphere of governance. It does not call for the establishment of a threshold of political acceptability that can be crossed, which would necessarily require moral judgement. It pertains to [I]slamism not only over-politicising Islam, but using the religion as a façade for ideology; not the formation of a political agenda based on ideals apparent in religion, but rather prioritising a political agenda, couched or inspired by religion, in a fundamentalist manner. (Hasan & Winter n. pag.)

More succinctly, William Miles describes Islamism as any "organised activity and/or systemic thought process that strives to bring politics into line with Islamic precepts" (Hasan & Winter n. pag.). Similarly, Sheri Berman describes an Islamist as someone who believes that "Islam should guide social and political as well as spiritual life" (Hasan & Winter n. pag.). Guilain Denoeux meanwhile describes Islamism as "a form of instrumentalization of Islam by individuals, groups and organisations that pursue political objectives. It provides political responses to today's societal challenges by imagining a future, the foundation for which rests on re-appropriated, reinvented concepts borrowed from the Islamic tradition" (Hasan & Winter n. pag.).

Broadly, Islamism for the purposes of this paper refers to an Islamic political ideology which seeks to more strictly align "Muslim-world" politics with traditional Islamic values.

Jihad / Jihadism

Despite its pejorative connotations among non-Muslims and in the West particularly, the word jihad for Muslims refers to a "multifaceted category of action" that is not inherently militaristic

(Hasan & Winter n. pag.). Jihad translates literally to "holy struggle." In the canonical understanding, there is both "greater" and "lesser" jihad -- greater jihad being one's internal struggle against sin, and lesser jihad being an external struggle against those who pose a tangible threat to the survival of Dar-al-Islam, the land of Islam.

Jihadist may be understood as referring to rejectionist Islamist groups who use violence instrumentally and who "ground their anti-state militant actions in the doctrine of global jihad" (Hasan & Winter n. pag.). It is important to note that this is a tiny minority of the overall Muslim population. The majority of Islamists are non-violent; the majority of conservative Muslims are neither jihadists nor Islamists.

Jihadist tactics change situationally; in some contexts, suicide operations and assassinations may be seen as the most expedient choice, in others, conventional warfare strategies may make more sense (Hasan & Winter n. pag.). In the same way, focus on a "near enemy" or a "far enemy" shifts depending on circumstances that make one or the other more politically expedient. Varying degrees of religious justification are needed for either option. Jihadism is predicated on rejectionist violence (Hasan & Winter n. pag.).

Jihadists are invariably extremist and fundamentalist in their ideological bent, and are at the farthest extreme of the Islamist spectrum (Hasan & Winter n. pag.). Extremism and fundamentalism create favorable conditions for the proliferation of Islamism, and Islamism engenders ideological and cultural conditions favorable to jihadism (Hasan & Winter n. pag.). Thus, one cannot approach or address jihadism without first examining the overall conditions that give rise to extremist thought (Hasan & Winter n. pag.).

Radicalism

Simply put, radicalism in the context of this paper will be taken to mean "the adoption of principles that seek to drastically, fundamentally rearrange the status quo" (Hasan & Winter n. pag.). Thusly defined, radicalism is not understood to be inherently negative or violent, though it is characterized as a threat, in a sense, to the status quo.

Wahhabism

Wahhabism is an austere and orthodox doctrine that falls under Sunni Islam (Andrews n. pag.); as a movement, it came onto the scene in the 18th century, calling for revival and reform (DeLong-Bas n. pag.). Wahhabism is dominant in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, primarily (Andrews n. pag.). The name "Wahhabism" derives from that of the sect's founder, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, a religious and legal scholar who lived in the Najd region of the Arabian peninsula -- what is now part of modern-day Saudi Arabia (Andrews n. pag., DeLong-Bas n. pag.). Al-Wahhab opposed innovation and the idea of intercession between Muslims and God -- this puts his ideology at odds with Sufism and Shi'ism both (Andrews n. pag.). He emphasized a return to the religious purity of Islam's origins. Wahhabism was embraced by the House of Sa'ud as part of a religio-political pact in 1744, which ensured its continued dominance in the land that would become modern day Saudi Arabia. The hallmarks of Wahhabism include an emphasis on tawhid ('the Oneness of God'), or the Islamic doctrine of monotheism, an opposition to shirk, or the association of any person or object with God, and a return to individual focus on the Qur'an and Sunn'ah for direct interpretation (DeLong-Bas). Wahhabism falls under the Hanbali school of law in Islam.

Modern cultural features of Wahhabism include emphasis on the segregation of the sexes and a ban on cinemas (Andrews n. pag.). Contemporarily, Wahhabism is often used broadly or interchangeably to refer to Salafism, jihadism, all religious belief and practice in Saudi Arabia, literalist interpretations of the Islamic holy texts, and generally, global Islamic or Islam-referencing resistance movements, however, this is inaccurate and misleading (DeLong-Bas n. pag.). Wahhabism is frequently associated with takfir ideology -- or the practice of one Muslim or a group of Muslims labeling practitioners of alternate interpretations of Islam "kafir" or unbelievers who must be found in jihad, or holy war -- which contributes to this depiction of Wahhabism as particularly intolerant (DeLong-Bas n. pag.). Saudis do not self-identify as Wahhabis, and the term is considered pejorative in Saudi society (DeLong-Bas n. pag.).

Salafism

According to *The Economist Book of Isms*, Salafism is "a movement in Sunni Islam that seeks to restore religious purity by hearkening back to the early days of Islam" (Andrews n. pag.). Salafism and Wahhabism are often used interchangeably; while there is doctrinal and featural overlap, mainly that both doctrines call for a return to the practices of early Muslims, they are two separate phenomena. If Wahhabism is largely a fundamentalist doctrine, Salafism is more puritanical. In Arabic, the word "salaf" (from which "Salafism" is derived) refers to a predecessor or forefather (Andrews n. pag.); Salafis have great admiration for early generations of Muslims (Andrews n. pag.).

Much like Wahhabism, Salafism in the Western lens is associated with extremism, violence, and terrorism (Andrews n. pag.). Such is the conflation between extremism and violent extremism -- those who use extreme ideologies to justify violence are violent extremists, but many simply

practice "extreme" versions of faith in a non-violent, unobtrusive way. Salafism, like many

ideologies, has been co-opted by those looking for justifications for their violence, but it is, at

core, a religious doctrine that does not necessitate a political or violent edge. Most Salafis are not

jihadists, and despite the Salafi desire for the establishment of a caliphate (Islamic state), most

reject terrorist groups such as the Islamic State (ISIS) and the legitimacy of their declared

caliphate (Wood n. pag.). For those Muslims who seek an ultraconservative, uncompromising

way of practicing their faith, so-called "quietist" Salafism provides a non-violent outlet (Wood n.

pag.). Quietist Salafis, who represent the majority of Salafis, prioritize personal purification and

religious observance, and believe that Muslims "should remove themselves from politics",

including eschewing voting and membership in political parties (Wood n. pag.). Salafis oppose

anything that thwarts these goals, "such as causing war or unrest that would disrupt lives and

prayer and scholarship" and tend to fall in line with basically any leader to avoid causing discord

(Wood n. pag.). Salafism practiced in this way, though not moderate, is "a form of Islam that the

literal-minded would not instantly find hypocritical, or blasphemously purged of its

inconveniences" thus, an outlet for those seeking a more extreme interpretation of Islam without

a violent, anti-state component (Wood n. pag.).

Terrorism

Terrorism is frequently confused and conflated with extremism and fundamentalism; like many

of the above terms, these three are overlapping but distinct classifications. One must remember

that although Western discourse around terrorism frequently equates all terrorist action with

extremist religious ideology, specifically Islamic ideologies, terrorist groups are not necessarily

religious in their ideological core; they might have a nationalist rather than religious ideology at

their core, for example, as do the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka or the neo-Nazis in the United States (Judd 773).

According to the Encyclopedia of Global Studies (2012 edition), terrorism "refers to the creation of a psychological condition of extreme fear in a population by the unpredictable use of violence to achieve political or political-theological ends" (Jones 1638). Both non-state and state actors may commit terrorist acts, though generally terrorism is the domain of non-state actors (Jones 1638). Historically speaking, state terror has frequently preceded use of terror by non-state actors -- given that the state by definition holds a monopoly on legitimate use of force within their bounds, state terror is when state actors violate norms and existing laws in terms of this use of force (Jones 1638). From a strategic theoretical standpoint, meanwhile, terrorism may be seen as "a method or tactic employed by any social actor, state or non-state, that uses fear to achieve an end… [a]ny moral judgment applied to the act is entirely separate" (Jones 1638). Violence is instrumental to an end.

The modern characteristics of terrorism date back to the French revolution, though terrorism in the post-Cold War era demonstrates a marked shift from the pre-Cold War era (Jones 1638). Contemporary terrorism demonstrates an "increasingly symbiotic" relationship with modern media and technology -- the effectiveness of a terrorist act may be judged by the amount of media coverage it generates (Jones 1639). It stands to reason that Western targets may be more desirable, given the seemingly disproportionate media coverage of terrorist attacks in the West versus in the Middle East itself.

Media coverage and public perception seem to imply a recent rise in global terrorism. The RAND-St. Andrews Chronology of International Terrorism released numbers which imply a

162% increase in the annual number of terrorist attacks post-Cold War (tracked between 1990-1996) when compared to Cold War numbers (1968-1989); given recent conflict escalations in Africa, Asia, parts of Europe, and post-Soviet zones, this increase may be as great as 200% (tracked from 1996-2007) (Jones 1639). The RAND Corporation also reports on the increased lethality of terrorist attacks in recent years, as "indiscriminate killing [becomes] the rule rather than the exception" (Jones 1640).

For the purposes of this paper, we will largely use the term "violent extremism" in place of "terrorism", which is a loaded term.

Moderate Islam

Understandings of what constitutes "moderate" Islam vary; ambiguity around the term makes it a useful tool to Arab/Islamic regimes in pursuit of their own agendas. There is no real consensus, though we may outline what "moderate" Islam is given to mean for the purposes of this paper.

Writing for the Washington Post, Annelle Sheline gives a few takes on what a "moderate" Muslim regime may look like:

> Muslim-majority governments that wish to be labeled moderate generally need to comply with the agenda of the United States. Therefore, the definition changes with U.S. policy goals. Willingness to negotiate peace treaties with Israel earned Egypt the unofficial designation of moderate in 1979, followed by Jordan in 1994. According to the "inclusion-moderation hypothesis," Islamist groups that participate in the democratic process typically merit the label of moderate. However, since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, and particularly since the rise of the Islamic State, moderation has more specifically corresponded to the rejection of violence. (n. pag.)

Obviously, this understanding opens itself to myriad criticisms, including the argument that violent extremism is never truly rooted in religion and thus cannot be solved through the exercise of further control over religious institutions (Sheline n. pag.).

Sakthivel gives a more general working definition; he defines "moderation" as "a willingness to respect the rules of the establishment and the rule of law, to accommodate the will of the majority, and to embrace a pluralistic system that respects the rights and freedoms of all citizens" (9) – this in contrast to the pervasive conception of moderation as liberal-leaning interpretations of Islam, or flexibility in practice and faith.

Hasan and Winter note that, in addition to the notion of avoiding excess, "moderation has the separate connotations of temperance and restraint, which, while lending themselves to non-extremist mind-sets, do not allow for zealously held viewpoints" (Hasan & Winter n. pag.). Essentially, this is a sort of middle-of-the-road approach that does not allow for extremist views on either end of the spectrum.

Sufism

In a nutshell, Sufism is Islamic mysticism, an "esoteric, ascetic and mystical form of Islam" (Andrews n. pag.). The celebrated Arab historian ibn Khaldoun described Sufism as "dedication to 'Allah most High, disregard for the finery and ornament of the world, abstinence from the pleasure, wealth, and prestige sought by most men, and retiring from others to worship alone'" (Andrews n. pag.). The word "Sufism" derives from the Arabic sufiyya, which means "pure path" and "wearing coarse woolen clothes", among other things (Torns 107). Like many movements, Sufism began as a reaction to a particular cultural milieu – specifically, the "lax excess" of the Umayyad caliphate in the 7th-8th centuries AD – but its peak was in the 13th century, at which point it had incorporated religious influences from Buddhism and Zoroastrianism, among other religions (Andrews n. pag.). While it began as an individualistic practice, Sufism morphed into more organized forms, and exists now in brotherhoods and orders

(Torns 108). The history of Sufism is marked by a constant negotiation of space in relation to other authorities, such as shari'ah and Sunni orthodoxy, which has accused Sufis of being non-Islamic (Torns 108). Nonetheless, Sufism is well-integrated into Islamic practice worldwide. Contemporarily, the centralizing and secularizing nature of the modern day nation-state has tended to tighten governmental grips on Sufi orders and expressions, and Sufism has been attacked by political Islam in some places (Torns 357).

In practice, Sufism calls for devotionalism ("dhikr") through meditation, dance, and/or repetition of the many names for Allah (Andrews n. pag.). Sufis decry the literalistic practices of religion and "material corruption in Muslim society" (Torns 108). Sufis seek progressive spiritual ascendency rather than verbal expression or the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge (Torns 108). Among the pillars of Sufism is the so-called "cult of saints" or cult of personalities (Torns 108). The Persian poet Rumi is a well-known Sufi.

Authoritarian States

Authoritarianism is a broad category that describes a method of governance; authoritarian governments are broadly characterized by strong central power and limited political freedoms; monarchies in which the monarch has a monopoly on power are authoritarian. This does not include parliamentary-monarchies in which the parliament has a monopoly on actual power, such as that of the United Kingdom. Frequently, authoritarian regimes control political institutions such as political parties. Public participation in politics and social activism is frequently suppressed. The authoritarian head of state may have vaguely defined powers which shift as needed to maintain the authoritarian's control and power.

Authoritarian governments may perform "regime maintenance" in order to maintain their power, control, authority, and legitimacy. They might make superficial concessions to appease their citizens without giving up any tangible or significant powers.

Defensive democratization is another means through which regime maintenance is performed. The authoritarian in this case seeks to appease the population by enacting some reform, often superficial. This may include political and economic liberalization, elections, the development of a new charter or constitution, and the opening of the state economy.

Outline of Argument

This paper will argue that the control and exportation of religious ideology is a means used by authoritarian states to maintain control over their population and to grow and maintain regional power. Pinning down the exact reason a state may choose to export its religious ideology is impossible; too many varied and variable factors are at play, and attempting to gauge the sincerity of purported intent is impractical. We will make a case for the idea that ideological control, including the intentional cultivation of certain religious ideologies and understandings, is key to a state's exercise of control over its citizenry, and serves as well as a unifying element. When directed outward, in this case via various international educational apparatuses, exercising influence over religious ideologies is a form of soft power that allows the state to gain regional influence and a favorable balance of power.

At the core of this paper is the dynamic of power and control and how each is used by authoritarian states to further their political interests. Control over state religious ideology is part of this dynamic. Each is a function of the other, yet distinct. One may derive power through the exercise of control and one may derive control through the exercise of power, but these are two

distinct phenomena. "Power" here is taken to mean an ability to impose one's will upon another; the ability, in a sense, to exercise control, whereas "control" itself is taken to mean an ability to influence others' behavior or the course of events – "one" and "another" here referring to individuals, groups, states, etc.

At first glance, religious ideology may not seem the most effective path to regional and domestic power and control. When examined as an ideology first and foremost, rather than through a spiritualistic lens, religion and state control thereof are a form of soft power. All states use a combination of soft and hard power to achieve their goals; hard power is understood to be militaristic or otherwise coercive force, while soft power is understood as influence through attraction or perceived legitimacy/desirability (Nye n. pag.). According to Nye: "[Soft power] arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies. When our policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is enhanced." Religious ideologies are co-opted by the state in the same way that secular ideologies (i.e. communism and capitalism during the Cold War) are; this co-optation may be especially impactful in regions where the religiosity of the citizenry is central, as is the case in the MENA region. Ideologies may unify and drive a population. They allow a state to control its narrative and that of its citizenry; they aid in the creation of a national identity, which is key to the institution of the "nation-state."

Authoritarian states must have a monopoly on national identity; key to this in Muslim states is controlling the population's practice of Islam. Monopolizing national identity maintains the authoritarian's ideological control over the population and creates an environment in which the authoritarian may present himself as the embodiment of the interests of the state. Because the

authoritarian both controls and embodies the national identity, the population is groomed to tacitly accept the authoritarian's actions as being in their interest. Of course, authoritarian governments back up this soft power with hard; the population is constantly policed to prevent unrest or uprising. State religious identity is a facet of national identity – in religiously homogenous authoritarian states, the authoritarian government almost always exercises some kind of control over religious practice to maintain the control and authority of the government. This ranges from secularization policies to creating and maintaining a specific state interpretation of a religious ideology. Religion is not only a facet of national identity, but an outlet for mental and emotional escape from the sometimes dire circumstances in authoritarian states. Maintaining control over behavior as well as a monopoly on hope and religious expression adds to the authoritarian regime's power.

Regionally speaking, exporting religious ideology allows an authoritarian regime to exert control and influence in much the same way as domestic control over religious ideology does. The regime expands its influence while exerting soft power over neighboring or similar states. This is a tactic that Saudi Arabia has used for years, successfully so. Now it seems Morocco is beginning to make use of its favorable position, resources, and comparable stability to extend the reach of its influence.

Both Morocco and Saudi Arabia maintain strict control over domestic religious practice and ideology. Like all nation states, these two states actively cultivate specific national identities, including religious identity, as a means of cohesing their citizenry and maintaining the legitimacy of their monarchies. Because Morocco and Saudi Arabia are both monarchies and thus authoritarian states, the respective regimes are each capable of exerting a great deal of

influence and control over daily practice and public narratives surrounding religion and identity. This allows us to draw a more direct link between the state and religious institutions; unlike in a "secular" democracy, wherein the state at least on some level attempts to separate from religious practice, Islam is embedded in the core of these monarchies and in the legitimacy of both regimes.

Saudi Arabia practices religious ideological exportation as a facet of the state's religious and political rivalry with Iran. Exercising soft power in this way has for many years elevated Saudi Arabia in its position among Islamic states. Internal ideological control is part and parcel with the high degree of control exercised by the authoritarian Saudi regime. In Morocco, recent terror attacks have left lasting scars on the monarchy and the Moroccan consciousness; following a 2003 attack, the kingdom began to reconsider the state's religious policies (al-Haitami 4). The attacks coincided with increased images of religiosity, and an increased demand for them; to prevent this need being filled by Islamist groups, the government began taking a heavier hand in religious practice on the ground (al-Haitami 4). This fear of terror attacks, in concert with the threat of uprisings following the so-called "Arab Spring", has pushed the monarchy towards taking a more active role in controlling domestic religious practice, as well as expanding its sphere of influence to increase regional stability and decrease the possibility of further uprisings and attacks.

Also at play is a desire to avoid addressing internal regime problems, to turn attention away from regime flaws by redirecting the citizenry's focus towards external issues. In the case of both regimes, both of which may otherwise face pressures to democratize, presenting one's state and

ideology as the ultimate in control and stability decreases the criticisms coming in from the West.

The end result of this all is increasing domestic control, regime protection, and increasing regional influence and power. As we will see, these results in and of themselves are strong enough motives for a state to begin a program of intentional religious educational exportation.

Chapter 2: Historical Background & Context

Iranian Revolution

The year 1979 marked a definitive starting point for what would become Saudi Arabia's billions of dollars program to export the Wahhabi ideology through a global educational apparatus. 1979 was the year of the Iranian Revolution. It was the year Afghanistan came under full Soviet control, and consequentially the year in which the United States began backing anti-Soviet jihadist-training camps, and the year that a group of radical clerics seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca and publically denounced the Saudi rulers as weak, un-Islamic Western puppets. In other words, 1979 marked a great shift in both global and regional politics, and set off a chain of events that would arguably come to bear responsibility for the rise of global terror as we know it. After decades of the Saudi educational apparatus in motion, the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York City shifted the terror and retribution landscape yet again. In recent years, the rise of the Islamic State and the threat of so-called "lone wolf" terror attacks may be the straw that will break the alliance between the West and Saudi Arabia. It is within this context that Morocco has begun agitating for a greater role as a "moderate" leader in the Muslim world.

In January, 1979, the Iranian Revolution culminated in the Shah leaving in exile. The revolution empowered a radical Shiite government and served to symbolically challenge Saudi Arabia's Sunni global leadership of Islam -- the regional balance of power began to shift (Shane n. pag.). The new Islamic Republic of Iran spurred an escalation in the competition between Sunni and Shi'a Islam; in an effort to counter Iranian influence, the Saudis redoubled their efforts to spread their version of Sunni Islam (Wahhabism) in the global sphere (Shane n. pag.). Proxy wars between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Shi'a and Sunni Islam, continue in the region.

The term "proxy war" harkens to the idea of the United States and the Soviet Union using local combatants as "pawns on a geopolitical chessboard" during the Cold War (Beehner n. pag.). Generally speaking, a "proxy war" can be defined as a conflict between two states that is fought on third-party ground; the two states actively and equally support opposite sides in a conflict (Peralta). The term suggests a higher-stakes, existential game being played by great powers which eludes compromise (Beehner n. pag.). These proxy wars are not unique to the Middle East; during the 1970s and '80s, there were a number of conflicts in Latin America that became de facto proxy wars between the United States and the Soviet Union, as well as conflicts in parts of Africa and in Vietnam (Beehner n. pag.). Labeling a conflict a "proxy war" carries several suggestions as to how it might play out, including the idea that conflict resolution will come when the outside actors have sufficiently resolved their differences (Beehner n. pag.). The current conflict in Syria is arguably a contemporary proxy war between the United States/the West and Russia -- but there are also arguably any number of other proxy wars happening in Syria, and whether or not the U.S./Russia proxy war is the most significant remains to be seen (Peralta n. pag.). Among these other proxy wars is the one playing out between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the constant regional battle between Sunni and Shi'a Islam (Peralta n. pag.). It seems clear that these two states are fighting for influence by funding and arming opposing sides of the conflict (Peralta n. pag.).

Cold War & USSR Invasion of Afghanistan

In the global arena, the events of 1979 fell towards the end of the Cold War. Afghanistan, a Sunni majority state, came under Soviet control in 1979, and the House of Saud saw "an opportunity to project itself as the global defender of Muslims" (Choksy and Choksy n. pag.). The Cold War was marked by a series of proxy wars between the Western and Eastern blocs,

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primarily the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States saw that the Sunni desire to "weaponize Islamist ideology" could be used for their own tactical advantage in their struggle against the Soviet Union (Choksy and Choksy n. pag.).

United States Begins Funding Pro-Islamic Anti-Soviet Initiatives

With American support, Saudi Arabia began spending $4 billion per year to spread the Wahhabi creed; this includes spending on mosques, madrasas, preachers, students, and textbooks (Choksy and Choksy n. pag.). Training centers sprung up along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, then within Afghanistan itself, centers which focused on growing jihadis "equipped with Wahhabi ideology and American weapons" (Choksy and Choksy n. pag.). These madrasas produced, directly and indirectly, al-Qaeda and the Taliban. These centers span Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America (Choksy and Choksy n. pag.). Propagators of Wahhabism also have access to the four-fifths of Islamic publishing houses worldwide that fall under Saudi control (Choksy and Choksy n. pag.). When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan and attempted to prop up a Communist regime, they faced a legion of mujahedeen (jihadist fighters) who would prove insurmountable in their battle for control of the state (Shane n. pag.). Though arguably Saudi Arabia's intention in propagating Wahhabism may be benign, it is at the very least an attempt to control regional ideologies and exert soft power influence over other Muslim states.

The United States played a key role in the rise of Wahhabi-based education in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Under Reagan in the 1980s, the United States and Saudi Arabia joined forces to finance the mujahedeen in the now-holy war for control of Afghanistan (Shane n. pag.). Reagan even welcomed a number of "Afghan freedom fighters" – with views closely aligned to those of the Taliban – into the Oval Office during these years of cooperation (Shane n. pag.). While Saudi

Arabia spent millions creating mujahedeen training centers, the United States spent $50 million in the later 1980s on a "jihad literacy" project, through which books encouraging violence against non-Muslim infidels, like the Soviet troops, were printed and distributed (Shane n. pag.). There is arguably a direct link between the financing of the mujahedeen during the Cold War and the subsequent rise of al-Qaeda and ISIS; in other words, the West both planted the seeds and provided for the growth of what it now seems to consider its own greatest enemy (Matthiesen n. pag.).

Arguably, the concept of an Islamic terrorist threat conceptually and functionally filled the "terror vacuum" left by the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Hasan & Winter n. pag.). If part of maintaining global military hegemony is having an enemy to fight, then pointing to an ill-defined ideology in a part of the world often treated as a plaything by the West anyway gave the United States reason and justification to fight a war that may never have a definitive ending. In other words, the United States could point to "Islamic fundamentalism" as a new and nebulous ideological threat, thus justifying its continued exertion of military and ideological influence over the rest of the world. Nevermind that "Islamic fundamentalism" is a category so broad as to become meaningless; it is a meaningful classification in the sense that it creates a functional boogeyman for the United States to target. The idea and term "terrorism" was intentionally revived by Western governments during the Cold War to "denote an illegitimate use of violence by sub-state groups increasingly with transnational connections" (Jones 1638).

Role of Pakistani-Afghani Madrasas

The growth of Wahhabi-led madrasas in Pakistan and Afghanistan has had long-reaching consequences. Frequently located in rural communities with little access to alternative sources of

education, these madrasas promote militancy and emphasize students' sacred duty to fight infidels (The Week Staff n. pag.). The radicalized students would eventually represent huge portions of the Taliban and al-Qaeda recruits (The Week Staff n. pag.). Today, Pakistani madrasas pull in students from places like Indonesia and Nigeria, who then return home radicalized (The Week Staff n. pag.).

In Indonesia, this plays into rising fears that the country is becoming more fundamentalist (Vaswani n. pag.). Indonesian society is recently observed to be more "visibly Islamic" than in the past, which on the ground means more Indonesians making the hajj pilgrimage, more women choosing an Islamic style of dress, including hijab, an increase in sharia bank accounts, and an increase in the selection of Islamic media available for consumption (Croft-Cusworth n. pag.). This shift towards increased Islamic expression is happening in concert with an observed decrease in religious tolerance; minority groups face increasing discrimination and violence, fundamentalist groups are more vocally policing "morality" at the grassroots level, and in some provinces elements of sharia law have been adopted (Croft-Cusworth n. pag.). At higher levels of government, laws relating to the censorship of certain websites, films, forms of artistic expression, and public behavior have been adopted as well in recent years (Croft-Cusworth n. pag.).

Without access to non-extremist education, the inevitable outcome of these madrasas is an arguably radicalized population of young people, especially as Muslim countries boast rapidly growing populations. Notably, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, founder of Jamaat al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad, and Osama bin Laden, former head of al-Qaeda, both came of age during the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union (Zelin n. pag.).

Violent Extremism in the Post-Cold War Context

According to numbers released by the Rand-St. Andrews Chronology of International Terrorism, incidents of international and domestic terrorism stood at around 1,673 attacks per year between 1968 and 1989, roughly the Cold War period (Jones 1639). Comparatively, between 1990 and 1996, the incident rate rose to approximately 4,389 attacks per year, which represents a 162% increase (Jones 1639). According to Jones, " The application of these asymmetrical methods (asymmetry assumes an inequality of power between adversaries) is on the rise and [has] rapidly [become] a defining feature of the post-Cold War" (1639). These asymmetrical methods tend to result in greater casualties among civilian populations as they entail sub-state actors avoiding direct military engagement with conventional forces (Jones 1639). Also in the period between 1990 and 1996, double the number of people died in terror attacks as terrorist acts became more extreme and "indiscriminate killing [became] the rule rather than the exception" (Jones 1640). Violent extremism (terrorism) in the 1970s, comparatively, was defined more by hostage-taking and hijackings; rather than large-scale violence, these attacks were seen as successful if they garnered international media coverage (Jones 1640). Violent extremism is generally the provenance of non-state actors, though states may engage in violent extremism as well and often create oppressive conditions conducive to the rise of terror among non-state actors (Jones 1638).

Some analysts argue that the manner in which the Cold War came to an end set the conditions for the rise of global terror as it is today. New global interconnectedness brought about by changing technologies brought an economic boom and population flows, but also "facilitated transnational crime and the globalization of terrorism" (Jones 1640). The United States emerged from the Cold War as the definitive global hegemon, exerting a large sphere of influence. Post-Cold War violent extremism is distinct from Cold War violent extremism in goals, methods, and finance.

Specifically, post-Cold War violent extremism is concerned with identity rather than ideology, takes advantage of new technologies and global interconnectedness, and promotes mass killings as a strategic technique (Jones 1640-1). In the Islamic extremism case, three "actors" promote rising violent extremism: sponsorship by sympathetic states such as Sudan, Syria, or Iran; the legacy of the Afghan war waged by mujahedeen against the Soviet invaders, and the fallout from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Jones 1641). Notably:

> It is worth mentioning that before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, this mode of jihadism was only pursued by the smallest minority of hard-liners; however, throughout the 1980s, this was to change. Answering Abdullah Azzam's call for "global jihād," thousands of [I]slamist fighters flocked to Afghanistan during the war to defend the Muslim ummah and to establish the khilāfah. It was from the ranks of these militants that the likes of Al-Qa'ida would emerge. (Hasan & Winter n. pag.)

The strategic use of signature-less violence aiming for catastrophic impacts was pioneered by terrorist groups in Peru and Japan, but "projected onto a global canvas by al-Qaeda" (Jones 1640).

Rise of Modern Global Terror (post 9/11)

The United States gradually began to reverse course in the 1990s; the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 meant a move away from financing Wahhabi Islam as an explicitly anti-Soviet tactic. This reversal would increase dramatically after the September 11 attacks (Shane n. pag.). American dependence on Saudi oil curtailed the United States' ability to pressure Saudi Arabia towards reform, and consequently reform has been slow to come (Shane n. pag.). Though the Saudi government condemned the attacks, notably fifteen of the nineteen hijackers were Saudi Arabian citizens. The September 11 attacks set off the so-called "War on Terror," which included American offensives in Iraq and Afghanistan, and unleashed large-scale violence across the Middle East. Violent deaths in the MENA region post-9/11 number over 200,000, which does

not include the likely far greater numbers who have died from malnutrition, a damaged health system or environment, and so on ("Costs of War" n. pag.).

Modern Islamic extremist ideology is marked by a Manichean worldview which pits Muslims against non-Muslims and necessitates the immediate re-establishment of a caliphate as panacea for the injustices suffered by modern Muslims. Violent extremists see political violence as a means to this end (Hasan & Winter n. pag.). Al-Qaeda in the 1990s may have been a discrete terrorist group, but today, it is more "a wide-ranging fighting movement that conducts insurgencies" (Hasan & Winter n. pag.). Arguably, ideologues such as al-Zawahri view jihad as more of a means to perpetuate their own relevance than a theological necessity; grounding their violence in religion gives them a "rhetorical justification for existence" (Hasan & Winter n. pag.). Both jihadism and Islamism arose over the course of the 20th century in response to modern political issues (Hasan & Winter n. pag.).

A more recently empowered group, the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS) has proven a formidable player in the terrorism arena. ISIS is a militant Sunni movement which seeks to establish and defend a caliphate, claiming theological and political authority over Muslims worldwide (CFR n. pag.). ISIS has successfully claimed territory in Syria, Iraq, and Libya, but the group lacks true political institutions, and its state-building has been defined by extreme violence; this calls into question the Islamic State's ability to sustain its military and territorial gains (CFR n. pag.). More alarming for the West is the group's remarkable success at inspiring lone wolf terror attacks, notably the San Bernardino attacks in California, the Bataclan Theatre attacks in Paris, and the recent attacks in a German Christmas market. It must be taken into account, however, that laying claim to these lone wolf attacks works in ISIS' favor by

heightening perceptions of the group's power, and therefore there is incentive for the group to lay claim to attacks for which it cannot reasonably claim responsibility. In Iraq and Syria, where Sunnis have felt sidelined and disenfranchised, the Islamic State took the opportunity to capitalize and expand on this sectarian discontent (CFR n. pag.).

After the United States' invasion of Iraq, the massive surge in violence created a milieu in which apocalyptic explanations made more sense to the Sunni public (McCants n. pag.). The subsequent uptick in sectarian violence again opened opportunities for the Islamic State to step in and appeal to discontented Sunnis (McCants n. pag.). In 2010, the deaths of several leadership members of the Islamic State brought Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi to power as the new "commander of the faithful." Baghdadi claims direct descent from the Prophet Muhammad's tribe, the Quraysh, which gives him the necessary legitimacy to call a caliphate into being (McCants n. pag.). The ability of the Islamic State to co-opt traditional designations of legitimacy inherently calls into question the legitimacy of other states that use these same designations, such as Morocco and Saudi Arabia.

Violence and gore may not seem a logical method of state-building, but history and ISIS' present success demonstrate its efficacy. The al-Saud family and its Wahhabi allies were brutal in establishing their power, and re-establishing their power, as was the Sunni Taliban coming to power in 1990s Afghanistan (McCants n. pag.). The Taliban were extremely violent in their rise; they murdered thousands of unarmed citizens, including Shi'a and ethnic minorities, and the women and children in cities and villages which proved resistant to their rule (McCants n. pag.). These groups combined violent suppression with collaboration with local tribes with whom they shared ethnic or religious ties (McCants n. pag.).

With the rise of the internet, the means of disseminating extremist and fundamentalist views has radically shifted. Whereas before, person-to-person contact was the primary method of spreading fundamentalism, hundreds of websites now exist for the perusal of would-be fundamentalists worldwide (Choksy and Choksy n. pag.). This tends to decrease by several degrees Saudi control over the Wahhabi narrative. Muslim parents decry these websites, and claim that "the biggest issue right now is the Internet -- it's Sheikh Google" (Choksy and Choksy n. pag.). Beyond radical websites championing violent extremism and inflexible fundamentalism, the internet provides great opportunity for funneling money to the cause (Choksy and Choksy n. pag.). Saudi sources pass money through multiple bank accounts, often via Qatar and Kuwait, to the accounts of mosques and imams who then pass the funds to Wahhabi organizations and individuals abroad (Choksy and Choksy n. pag.).

Modern violent extremism has an increasingly symbiotic relationship with modern media and technologies, which function to broadcast terrorist acts and reinforce their symbolism and general relevance (Jones 1639). Whereas hijackings or hostage taking in the 1970s could guarantee a rapt audience in the West, today's terror techniques have increased in shock value and are more likely to involve mass civilian death (Jones 1639). The success of a terrorist act may be measured by the extent of the media coverage it generates; this naturally encourages an escalation of tactics and scale (Jones 1639).

Contextualizing Violent Extremism in Case Study Countries
Morocco faced its own battle with organized terror in 2003, when an attack in Casablanca claimed the lives of forty-five people and injured over a hundred more (Gozlan 109). The attack left lasting scars on the monarchy and the Moroccan consciousness; following the attack, the

kingdom began to reconsider the state's religious policies (al-Haitami 4). The attacks coincided with increased images of religiosity, and an increased demand for them; to prevent this need being filled by Islamist groups, the government began taking a heavier hand in religious practice on the ground (al-Haitami 4). Because the attackers had come from the impoverished shantytowns outside of Casablanca, the government initially believed the miserable conditions there were to blame, but the profile of those who engage in terrorist activities continues to shift (Gozlan 109). The kingdom's massive security apparatus, including an extensive network of informants, remains hard at work countering the threat.

Saudi Arabia has likewise had to contend with internal terror attacks. Despite efforts to turn extremists' ire outwards, the kingdom has increasingly been targeted by terror and will likely continue to contend with this shift in tide. Al-Qaeda "waged a campaign to destabilize Saudi Arabia between 2003 and 2006" which was successfully crushed by the government (al-Omran n. pag.); today, ISIS presents a new challenge to authorities, who say that "the group is more sophisticated in its planning and recruitment" (al-Omran n. pag.). The Saudi government offers millions to citizens who provide information that helps foil terrorist attacks in the kingdom (BBC Monitoring Middle East). The government in recent years has dismantled a number of cells planning large-scale attacks; these cells have been linked to ISIS and al-Qaeda (BBC Monitoring Middle East, "Saudi Arabia dismantles" n. pag.).

Conclusions

Definitions, understandings, methods, and impacts with regards to violent extremism and perceptions thereof have shifted from the Cold War to the post-Cold War contexts. The use of terrorism, or more so, use of the threat that it may pose, by the West and particularly the United

States in a contemporary context creates a mechanism through which Western entities may continue to exert control and influence throughout the Muslim world by justifying continued military intervention. Ideologies are nebulous entities, impossible to defeat -- in this context, "Islamic extremism" as an ideology provides an outlet for the United States (and the West more generally) to justify unending military engagement in the non-Western world; this helps the United States maintain its status as the global hegemon. The long-term impacts of this are vast and disturbing; already the destabilization of the MENA region is known and felt. It is within this context that we situate our study of Arab monarchies' use of religious ideology to maintain domestic control and stability and exert regional power and influence.

Chapter 3: Saudi Arabia Case Study

Historical and Contextual Background

Saudi Arabia is a predominantly Muslim country that commands a large portion of the Arabian Peninsula. The historically nomadic population in modern-day Saudi Arabia became more settled upon the discovery of oil in the 1930s and the subsequent economic boom (World Bank n. pag.). Up to 85-90% of the population practices Sunni Islam, but a minority of 10-15% practice Shi'a Islam (CIA n. pag.). Though there are expatriate communities of various faiths, public religious expression is severely restricted for non-Muslims (for instance, non-Muslims are not allowed public places of worship and must only practice their faith within their homes), and the state-sanctioned form of Sunni Islam has primacy (CIA n. pag.). The bulk of the population falls into the 25-54 years age bracket, but there is a substantial youth bulge represented in the 0-14 years age bracket; the median age in the country is 27.2 (CIA n. pag.). Riyadh is the capital city.

Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy. The current monarch is King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz al-Sa'ud; he ascended the throne in 2015 (CIA n. pag.). There are no political parties. Citizenship is patrilineal. The legislative branch is comprised of a 150-member council appointed by the king; in 2013, former King Abdallah granted women 30 seats on the council (CIA n. pag.). The judicial branch consists of a high court and a series of lower courts, all chiefs appointed by royal decree.

Former King Abdallah introduced some reform measures between 2005 and 2015; these included social and economic initiatives and were seemingly driven by "personal ideology and political pragmatism" (CIA n. pag.). These initiatives included expanding employment as well as social opportunities for women, increasing the role of the private sector, and working to attract foreign investment (CIA n. pag.). The Arab uprisings of 2011 largely missed Saudi Arabia, though the regime did face some protests among Shi'a Muslims who protested detention of political

prisoners and endemic discrimination, primarily; the regime responded cautiously but firmly, and used its state-backed clerics to counter the political activism (CIA n. pag.).

The roots of the modern Saudi state wind back to the 18th century, to a pact made between Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad ibn Sa'ud. The Arabian peninsula had been in decline; when Islam arrived, it brought a new social order and a sense of unity to a population that had been "fractious and isolated" (Wynbrandt 24). By the 18th century, economic conditions in Arabia were deteriorating, and to make up for lost income the Bedouin tribes began to escalate their raids on settlements. This "insecurity and instability underscored the need for a centralized authority" (Wynbrandt 114). Within this context, the religious order of al-Wahhab and the political machinations of ibn Sa'ud would become inextricably intertwined. Muhammad ibn abd Al-Wahhab was an intensely religious scholar who called for a return to the principles set down by Muhammad (Wynbrandt 114). He took an uncompromising stance against Sufism and the sorts of pagan practices going on throughout the Arabian peninsula at the time, such that he went about destroying sacred tombs and trees that the people there had taken to worshipping (Wynbrandt 114). To promote the kind of strict monotheism that al-Wahhab wanted to see in Arabia, he needed military backing, and fortuitously, a local emir found himself in need of religious backing to serve his political ends – the emir Muhammad ibn Sa'ud needed religious support to preserve a taxation system that ran counter to shari'a law (Wynbrandt 115-7). The two men shared a vision of an independent Islamic state based on simple, austere faith (Wynbrandt 118). In 1744, the two made a pact to collaborate on their goals, and thus began the eminence of the House al-Sa'ud in what was then still Arabia (al-Farsy 13). Since the 18th century, the House al-Sa'ud has experienced two temporary declines, and is now on its third rise – the modern state of Saudi Arabia came together in 1932 (al-Farsy 14-5). Wahhabism and the rule of the House of

Sa'ud remain intertwined; the Wahhabi doctrine remains central, and the royal family depends on the legitimacy granted by the support of the Wahhabi religious establishment.

Saudi Arabia's unique position of authority in the Muslim world derives from its control of the Hijaz, a region which includes Islam's two holiest places, Mecca and Medina. Saudi imams travelling to countries outside of the region have automatic credibility – they wear Arabian robes, speak Arabic, and wield a generous checkbook (Shane n. pag.). These lend an air of legitimacy and the practice of a more "original" or authentic Islam that is perhaps idealized in non-Arab Islamic states. Saudi royalty disavow the kingdom's responsibility for the outcomes of such generous channels of money, claiming that the money is charity meant to help Muslim brothers and sisters in the world (Choksy and Choksy n. pag.).

State Use of Religious Ideology to Maintain Domestic Ideological Control

The Islamic character of Saudi Arabia was central from the start. When the Saudi state was formally established, it centralized shari'a and the teachings of Muhammad as the basis of the constitution, and made Arabic the official language (Rugh 42-3). It is a fundamental assumption of the polity of Saudi Arabia that the Qur'an is more suitable for Saudi Muslims than a secular constitution -- so long as it is correctly implemented (al-Farsy 39). The Islamic nature of the state benefits from the lack of religious pluralism: there are no churches, synagogues, temples, or shrines of any other religion; the whole population is Muslim except some foreigners who may practice only in the privacy of their own homes (al-Farsy 39-40).

In modern Saudi Arabia, the religious and political establishments remain deeply intertwined. The ulema, or council of religious legal scholars, has been able to gain strength and influence in periods of political sensitivity. In order to gain the approval of the ulema for state policies, the

Saudi government has often made concessions -- these include concessions in terms of culture, curriculum development, and control over the educational apparatus (Prokop 78). The political and religious families are connected by power and family alliances, and "...the senior ranks of the Wahhabite devotional and legal institutions have acted as legitimizers [sic] of the successive transitions of power within the House of Sa'ud, both peaceful and seditious" (al-Azmeh 78). The Wahhabite institution is built upon the twin pillars of the public good (maslaha) and devotional puritanism, while the Saudi family relies on twin policies of retaining the loyalty of prominent tribal figures while simultaneously knocking out competing power bases, such as grassroots organizing bodies (al-Azmeh 81, McLachlan 100). Typical to the "oil impedes democracy" hypothesis, "...oil wealth has served to fossilize the political system since oil income has been concentrated in the hands of the ruling family and used as an instrument for securing its continued monopoly of political power" (McLachlan 91). The Wahhabi movement underpins the family and especially their preeminent position vis-a-vis the tribal system (McLachlan 99). For reference, Wahhabism and Salafism are defined in the first chapter, and remain the defining religious ideologies of the Saudi state.

In-state, public education is a primary means of maintaining ideological control. The curriculum taught in public schools across the country is "circumscribed by the concern to preserve the religious foundations of the regime" (Prokop 77). Islam is a main legitimizing source for the al-Saud family. Following an uprising at the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979 (to be further explored at a later point), the Islamic content of the curricula was strengthened, and the state increased funding for religious universities and colleges, as well as for missionary activities, religious summer school programs, and the building of new mosques (Prokop 78). The educational objectives of the country also stress the importance of creating a sense of loyalty and

obedience to the state and to Islam, and the duty of spreading Islam's message and defending it against enemies (Prokop 79). Religious education is emphasized at all grade levels. Notably, obedience to authority is also emphasized in Saudi textbooks as a civic duty (Prokop 79). Authority in this context points to God, the rulers, teachers, and familial heads. The purported benefits of obedience are many: a unified society, security and reassurance, and reward from God (Prokop 80). Disobedience is thus equated with dissension, *fitna*, or trying to create conflict.

Formal educational institutions are not the only means of indoctrinating a population. Informal teaching also plays a role - in mosques, at home, and in the media (Prokop 82). The mosque is particularly important to the education of older Saudis, for whom illiteracy rates remain high (Prokop 82). Contextual factors in the education system, such as teacher personality, classroom dynamics, and social background, also have a role to play (Prokop 82).

The Saudi government allocates considerable financial resources to the education system. Though a few private educational institutions exist, they remain under the supervision of government agencies, who impose requirements relating to the curriculum and other matters (Rugh 41). Education is highly subsidized for Saudi students: at all levels, students pay little to no tuition, and university students receive monthly stipends (Rugh 42). Saudi Arabia spends more than almost any other Arab country on all levels of education, but at the same time puts the least priority on post-secondary education (Rugh 42). Perhaps the Saudi government intentionally spends the most on young children to better instill norms and values as a means of suppressing ideological controversy in young adults. Though the Saudi educational system has historically been highly dependent on foreign skilled labor, particularly coming from Egypt, the

focus now is shifting to a greater proportion of Saudi teachers and laborers in the workforce in general (Rugh 42).

Serious efforts to reform the Saudi education system may not yet have begun, but changes are stirring as the political body begins to understand the necessity of adapting it to current realities (Prokop 87). The impetus exists, driven by demographic and economic challenges; a fast growing population calls for more jobs in a market where the number of government jobs, at least, is expected to remain static (Prokop 87). The government is increasingly aware of the need to change the educational system to ensure the economic survival of the country - the oil wells will not last forever, after all (Prokop 88). There is commitment to expanding and improving the educational system as a means of expanding the Saudi economy; these expansions include increasing subject diversity, emphasizing science, increased vocational training and study of English, and increasing privatization of education as well as study abroad (al-Farsy 255; Rugh 44).

State Use of Religious Ideology to Exert Regional Influence

Contemporarily, two major events led to fundamental regional power shifts: the United States' so-called "War on Terror" post 9/11, and the Arab uprisings in 2011 (Ighani 2). The "War on Terror" and the toppling of the Iraqi regime at the hands of the U.S. government served to remove Iraq as a major power in the region; the Arab uprisings destabilized the entire region and notably Syria and Egypt – the elimination of these three major powers "intensified the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran" (Ighani 2). Their rivalry was at once intensified and redefined; recent years have demonstrated a new emphasis on the part of each state in their support of proxy terrorist groups (Ighani 2).

The year 1979 marked a number of definitive events in the Middle Eastern region and in global politics. The Iranian Revolution culminated in the empowerment of a conservative religious establishment and the declaration of an Islamic Republic under a religious cleric – a far cry from the relative modernity and liberalization the country had experienced under the previous government. Saudi Arabia felt the scales shifting in the region; the new Shi'a republic represented a threat to Sunni regional power.

Though there has always been a degree of religious tension between Shi'a Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia, since the Iranian Revolution the conflict between the two states has slid into a geopolitical competition (Ighani 1). Sectarianism fuels the conflict, but it boils down to each state perceiving the other as an existential threat. Before the overthrow of the shah in 1979, Saudi Arabia and Iran were both pro-Western monarchies that served as the two anchors of regional power in the Middle East (Ighani 2). Pre-revolution Iran and Saudi Arabia worked in relative cooperation.

When the Iranian Revolution struck, the regional balance of power between Saudi Arabia and Iran was threatened. Iranians toppled their secular monarchy and installed an Islamist regime; this regime, in addition to threatening Saudi Arabia's claims to religious authority (which are rooted in its stewardship of Mecca and Medina) called for Muslims everywhere to overthrow their leaders (Fisher n. pag.). The Saudi regime increasingly feared internal unrest, especially at the hands of their Shi'ite minority and Iran's particular ability to influence them; this contributed to the sectarianization of the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran (Fisher n. pag.).

To make matters worse, religious politics within Saudi Arabia were causing trouble for the House of Saud as well. In November, a band of zealous religious clerics seized the Grand

Mosque in Mecca and held it for weeks, using this platform to publicly criticize the House of Saud (Shane n. pag.). The clerics agreed to fall back in line only if the House of Saud agreed to crackdown on immodesty in the kingdom and work to more aggressively export Wahhabism (Shane n. pag.). "Immodesty" here alludes to some small steps towards modernity that the kingdom had been taking; after the events at the Grand Mosque, movie theaters and record stores were shut down, and the religious police were further empowered to punish those who transgressed against the kingdom's Islamic laws (The Week Staff n. pag.).

After the revolution, tensions between the two states became increasingly colored by religion and sectarianism (Ighani 2). Continual regional conflict exacerbated this trend, particularly the first of many proxy wars between the two states. When Saddam Hussein's Iraq invaded part of Iran in 1980 in order to seize control of oil-rich territory, the Saudis chose to back the Iraqi forces in an attempt to stop the Iranian Revolution (Fisher n. pag.). This set a pattern of Iranian-Saudi struggle via proxy; Iran would hereafter see the Saudi regime as an existential threat to its own state order (Fisher n. pag.). Between 1989 and 2002, Saudi Arabia worked to "harden Sunni-Shi'ite rifts" by promoting anti-Shi'a rhetoric in schools, universities, and the media; this all to cultivate sectarian fears on the ground (Fisher n. pag.). This included the growth of Saudi Wahhabist schools both domestically and internationally as the state increasingly exported the Wahhabi fundamentalist ideology to places without pre-existing Shi'ite communities – South Asia, for example – to increasingly alienate Iran (Ighani 2). Notably, these increased sectarian fears and violence would later feed into ISIS' ideology (Fisher n. pag.). When the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (a Saudi ally) led to increased American regional involvement, the regional balance of power tipped further against Iran (Fisher n. pag.).

In 2003, the Iraqi vacuum opened. The toppling of the Iraqi government by American forces left an opening that the Iranians raced to fill; because Iraq's largest demographic groups are Shi'ite, Iran had substantial influence (Fisher n. pag.). Saudi Arabia's campaign to increase sectarianism in the region here began to backfire; the Saudi regime now had less ability to leverage influence, and additionally, militant Sunni groups in Iraq had begun to turn to jihadism, further destabilizing the region (Fisher n. pag.). Another proxy battle ensued in Lebanon between 2005 and 2010, destabilizing the area further.

The so-called Arab uprisings, which began in 2011, toppled governments across the Middle East-North Africa region; worryingly for the Saudis, this included a number of their allies. Fearing Iran would again rush to fill power vacuums with regimes amenable to their own, the Saudis rushed to close them first, aided by their ability to give billions of dollars in aid money (Fisher n. pag.). Above all, in their relationship with Iran, the Saudis fear losing ground and fight "[hard] to retain influence wherever it [can]" (Fisher n. pag.).

At the time of the Iranian Revolution, the Soviet Union was concurrently invading Afghanistan and attempting to prop up a communist regime. The United States took advantage of regional insecurity to further their own political ends; Saudi Arabia's drive for dominance over Shi'a Iran made the country a perfect ally in the United States' war against the Soviet Union and their battle with Iran, who had taken a number of American hostages. Afghanistan became the playing field in which the United States would attempt to curtail the Soviet's attempted expansion of power and in which, in collaboration with Saudi Arabia, the first anti-Soviet jihadist training camps came to be (Shane n. pag.). The United States and Saudi Arabia would each spend millions of dollars funding these camps and encouraging violence against the 'infidel' Soviet troops – and

any non-Muslim infidels (Shane n. pag.). According to Choksy and Choksy, "the successful anti-Soviet campaign in Afghanistan came to be seen as divine confirmation of jihad as necessary for Islam's global ascendance." Thus, jihadism became self-perpetuating and imperative for Saudi Arabia's continued dominance in the Muslim world.

Under the current monarch, King Salman (2015-), Saudi Arabia has "increased its foreign policy pursuits and introduced domestic reforms across all sectors"; this includes the Vision 2030 plan, which is comprised of a series of economic and social reforms meant to reduce Saudi Arabia's dependence on oil (Ighani 3). King Salman has also expanded Saudi military involvement in foreign conflicts -- this includes proxy wars like the one in Yemen (Ighani 3). Saudi Arabia's recent execution of Shi'ite leader Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, among others, resulted in the termination of the state's diplomatic relations with Iran (Ighani 4). The two countries are also increasingly competing on the international oil market, especially after the Iran nuclear deal (Ighani 4).

Despite some conflict, Saudi Arabia invests heavily in developing countries, especially Muslim countries, and particularly in educational spheres abroad. Their means of involvement includes building and funding new mosques, Islamic cultural centers, schools, and universities, and disseminating the Qur'an and religious textbooks, among other things. Of note - Saudi financed schools abroad recruit students to be trained as mosque leaders and clerics, who go on to open schools and religious centers with a Wahhabi-inspired worldview in their own countries (Prokop 83-4). Saudi Arabia's oil wealth has given the state the money to invest in the propagation of Wahhabism (Prokop 84).

The Wahhabi worldview, in collaboration with messengers fanatical in their fervor, acts as a

destabilizing force upon export (Prokop 83). Wahhabism represents an interpretation of Islam

that is foreign to the Islam prevalent across the Muslim world; this message, when combined

with an influx of Saudi money and resources, tends to conflict with local traditions and

community leaders (Prokop 85). Sufism especially is rejected by Wahhabis, eschewed as

polytheism, which causes conflict in the many traditions worldwide that embrace Sufism and

Islamic spiritualism (Prokop 85). The severe puritanical nature of Wahhabism does represent a

challenge to it "taking root more widely"; veiling requirements, for example, can seem

objectionably alien in societies that had become largely secularist during the Cold War (Prokop

85).

An unreleased 2013 study ordered by the U.S. State Department evaluated the content of official

Saudi school textbooks. The textbooks were known to contain what could perhaps be considered

violent content; though Saudi Arabia claimed to be reworking their school materials, to date the

textbooks contain such content (Shane n. pag.). Shane lists some specifically objectionable

material:

> Seventh graders were being taught that "fighting the infidels to elevate the words of
> Allah" was among the deeds Allah loved the most, the report found, among dozens of
> passages it found troubling. Tenth graders learned that Muslims who abandoned Islam
> should be jailed for three days and, if they did not change their minds, "killed for walking
> away from their true religion." Fourth graders read that non-Muslims had been "shown
> the truth but abandoned it, like the Jews," or had replaced truth with "ignorance and
> delusion, like the Christians." (n. pag.)

This represents attempts on the part of the Saudi state to increase sectarianism and religiously-

based divisions throughout the Muslim world. This kind of education does not necessitate

violence, of course, but it does plant the seeds of the sort of Manichean divisiveness in identity

that facilitates more extremist views of other religions and sects. In Pakistan particularly this is

very much the case; some madrasas at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border particularly seem to preach a distorted version of jihad (Prokop 86).

These textbooks and materials are distributed not only within Saudi Arabia, but in a great number of other countries as well (Shane). Abroad, these teaching materials work in conjunction with Saudi-funded schools, Wahhabist educators, and mosques with Wahhabi imams, all of which are "ultimately controlled by an international Wahhabist educational body" (Shane n. pag.).

What kind of influence does this tend to have on the rest of the world? Because the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam is alien to most other practices across the world, the influx of this message combined with Saudi's money and resources is frequently disruptive to local traditions, particularly Sufi traditions, which Wahhabis reject and consider polytheism, or shirk (Prokop 85). Education in madrasas has been the main method of teaching throughout the Islamic world for centuries, and to this day provides educational opportunities where none would otherwise exist (Prokop 86). In countries without a strong educational system, especially poorer countries where the public school system is deficient, Saudi madrasas are often the only option. Saudi Wahhabist ideology may effectively displace local tradition and become the dominant ideology due to greater access to funds and resources.

Finding a case that exemplifies the Saudi educational apparatus' direct effect on Muslims abroad is tricky; too many variables come into play to allow for any kind of direct causal link to be found between Saudi influences and violent extremism. In Europe, and particularly in Belgium and France, where immigrant neighborhoods are effectively segregated slums overstuffed with North African Muslims, so-called hotbeds of extremist thought coincide with a significant

presence of Saudi-trained, fundamentalist imams (Shane n. pag.). Many if not most of the mosques in Belgium, for example, were built with Saudi money and are staffed with Saudi Wahhabist imams preaching hardline views (Shane n. pag.). A book by Hind Fraihi on the Brussels immigrant neighborhood, Molenbeek, reveals substantial extremist Saudi literature propagated by Saudi-trained imams and encouraging polarization while glorifying jihad (Shane n. pag.). Notably, the agents behind a number of recent European terror attacks had their roots in these impoverished immigrant neighborhoods.

Indonesia, home to the largest Muslim population in the world, offers another kind of example. Saudi Arabia has been funding mosques, educational materials, and teachers there for decades (Shane n. pag.). Money from Saudi donors has been traced to campaigns against non-Wahhabi forms of Islam in Indonesia (Shane n. pag.). We explore this further in chapter three.

Farah Pandith, the first United States special representative to Muslim communities, travelled to a number of Muslim countries between 2009 and 2014, and found that the presence of Saudi-based Wahhabism in these countries has an insidious and profound influence (Pandith n. pag.). Wahhabism in these communities, Pandith claims, acts to "chang[e] the local sense of identity; displacing historic, culturally vibrant forms of Islamic practice" and leaving instead a narrow, monolithic Islamic practice and identity (Pandith n. pag.). In her opinion, combatting extremism requires us to "disrupt the training of extremist imams and create imam training centers [worldwide]... that are free of Saudi funding and that offer a diversity of Islamic practices… reject free Saudi textbooks and translations that are filled with hate… [and] expose the Saudi financing of extremist groups masquerading as cultural exchanges and 'charity' organizations" (Pandith n. pag.).

Conclusions

Since the inception of the modern state of Saudi Arabia, the regime has carefully maintained control of domestic religious ideology, and had exported this ideology to some extent from the start. There was a marked uptick in the Saudi state's ideological exportations after the Iranian Revolution, as regional power dynamics shifted. The Saudi regime sought to capitalize on rising sectarianism; to this end, the state sought to grow the strength and influence of other Sunni states as a means of maintaining a favorable balance of power with Shi'a Iran. In recent years, some changes in the Saudi methods have become apparent. The Saudi state now contends with the rise of militant, extremist Sunni groups such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State that are not only out of the control of the Saudi state, but also actively pose a threat to regional stability and call into question the Saudi regime's legitimacy. This seems to be a pressure point for change in Saudi ideological exportation methods and designs. Additionally, certain economic considerations would seem to drive a change in the domestic educational apparatus towards a more modern, expansive pedagogy. The Saudi ideological exportation model has successfully disrupted local traditions throughout the "Muslim world" and implanted a Wahhabist ideology – the broad-reaching implications of this implantation are difficult to fully grasp. True steps away from ideological dominance as maintained by this domestic and international education apparatus are perhaps incumbent and likely, but change will take decades.

Chapter 4: Moroccan Case Study

Historical Background and Context

Morocco is a predominantly Muslim country in the north-west corner of Africa, roughly the size of California. Notably, the population of Morocco is more than 99% Sunni Muslim, with a tiny Jewish population, no indigenous Christian population, and no significant religious differences between the Tamazight and Arabic-speaking populations (Munson, St. John, & Zeghal n. pag.). Rabat, mentioned several times hereafter, is the capital city.

Three distinct periods mark our study of Morocco – the pre-colonial (circa 19th c), colonial, and postcolonial periods. Pre-colonial here will refer to the period of time directly before Morocco became a French protectorate, though we will situate our study in a longer range view of Moroccan history as well. We would be remiss to neglect remarking upon the significance that the transmission of Islam and the intertwining of the Arab and Amazigh (Berber) cultures has had upon all aspects of Moroccan history since the 7th century, when Arabs invaded North Africa resulting in "a historic disruption and discontinuity" and introduced Islam into the mix (Naylor 57). Though prior to 1860, Morocco was little affected by European influences, the connections between Morocco and Europe, the Middle East, and Africa were and are significant (Burke 3, 19).

Governmentally speaking, pre-colonial Morocco was marked by a "blend of Ottoman-style bureaucratic government" and a mix of tribalism and popular Islam not unlike that of Iran or Afghanistan (Burke 1). Geographic diversity lent itself to sturdy tribalism; according to Burke, "the history of Morocco has… been described as an un-ending tug-of-war between the forces of regionalism and the central power" (Burke 1). Culturally, Morocco was and is marked by the intertwining of Arab and Amazigh culture (Burke 3).

French colonial presence in Morocco was preluded by their invasion and colonization of neighboring Algeria (Burke 20). At the same time, Morocco was in dire financial straits – the kingdom's economic situation was already precarious before going to war with Spain in 1859, and the subsequent indemnities Morocco had to pay Spain set the economy spiraling and drained the Moroccan treasury (Burke 20). Beyond the aggressions of France and Spain, even minor European countries were becoming aggressive towards Morocco and North Africa (Burke 26). Growing friction between Moroccan tribes and French and Spanish posts of control foretold coming battles for political control of the country (Burke 28). At the same time, Morocco was going through the beginnings of a period of modernization, but international events and powers underscored the structural weaknesses of their political system (Burke 39, 213).

King Muhammad V had accrued much prestige during the decolonization era, which served to strengthen his power and influence and to legitimize him as the national ruler (Naylor 229). The new king secured the state by suppressing Amazigh (Berber) insurgents, reforming the Sufi orders, and consolidating the liberation forces into a national army (Naylor 225). He smartly encouraged a multi-party system to prevent an opposition force from consolidating, while maintaining control over the most important ministries (Naylor 229). The Sufi orders posed a threat to the cohesive Islamic message that the state wished to promote; by co-opting the Sufi orders and establishment, King Muhammad V was exercising control over the religious narratives of the state. Muhammad V died prematurely and unexpectedly, which brought crown prince Hassan to the throne in 1961 (Naylor 229).

As king, Hassan was politically capable but highly repressive, and undertook policies which sought to control and contain oppositional forces (Naylor 228). Though there was a brief period

of liberalization near the end of his reign, during which Hassan sought to "restage" his monarchy, the years of his rule are known as the "leaden years" of the 1980s and featured severe repression and infamous detention (Naylor 233). His death in 1999 brought his son, Mohammad VI, to the throne. He remains the head of state.

When King Mohammad VI took the throne, he ushered in what seemed like a breath of fresh air for the country. Determined to carve out a more positive legacy than that of his father, King Mohammad VI has introduced a number of reforms to the kingdom, and has advanced such issues as women's rights and religious reform (Haitami 5). Though ostensibly reform-minded, King Mohammad VI has yet to give up any tangible power, and the state remains largely authoritarian, despite being structured as a parliamentary-monarchy.

The Moroccan royal family claims direct descent from the Prophet Muhammad; this, in concert with the king's role as "Amir al-Mouminin" (or Commander of the Faithful) and Morocco's religious homogeneity, gives him immense religious authority (World Policy Blog n. pag.). The Moroccan people have thus far proven extremely amenable to religious reforms proposed by their king, especially in the wake of modern terror attacks (World Policy Blog n. pag.). Serving as Commander of the Faithful supplies a religious validation to buttress the king's outsized control over the religious landscape particularly, and serves to link him to Moroccan religious identity as a whole (Sakthivel 5). Significantly, the Moroccan king's status as Commander of the Faithful is recognized by largely all Muslim-dominant countries, which adds weight to his international religious authority and appeal.

Moroccan Islam is rooted in the Maliki school of Islamic law, which has its roots in the 8th century Arabian Peninsula but today is prevalent across North Africa. The Maliki school puts

strong emphasis on the hadith reports, and compared to the other three main schools, Maliki Islam is distinguished by reliance on the practice of the companions as a source of law (Oxford Dictionary of Islam n. pag.). Malikism, according to Boum, "is largely based on a pragmatic interpretation of the Quran and of the Prophetic tradition making public interest [(maslaha)] a foundation of any religious interpretation" (Boum n. pag.). The Moroccan state preaches the values of "openness and tolerance"; this, of course, is an ambiguous message, and intentionally so (Boum n. pag.).

Modern Moroccan politics are marked by the extreme repression of Hassan's "leaden years" – one of the ways in which former King Hassan sought to maintain power and control of the kingdom was by co-opting various political opposition groups. Modern Islamic fundamentalist movements have challenged the monarchy since the 1970s; this became more visible during the brief period of liberalization initiated by King Hassan towards the end of his reign (Munson, St. John, & Zeghal n. pag.). Today, to counteract this challenge, King Mohammad VI continues his father's co-optation, primarily with Islamist parties. Morocco's "deep state" (makhzan) includes the king, his close friends, the military, and various security apparatuses, and continues to have broad control over the state, including outsized influence over the economy, the judiciary, and the political party landscape (Sakthivel 2).

Currently, Islamist parties represent a significant portion of the political scene in Morocco. The moderate Islamist Party of Justice and Development (PJD), for instance, was overwhelmingly successful in the 2011 elections (Haitami 2). In an effort to maintain control over the political scene, King Mohammad VI had a friend start the Party of Authenticity and Modernity (PAM), a royalist party meant to keep political power diffuse and prevent the emergence of any real

political opposition to the monarchy (Gozlan 106-7). The al-Adl wal-Ihsan (Justice and Charity; AWI) movement is another Islamist party, illegal but tolerated thus far by the monarchy (Gozlan 107). Al-Adl wal-Ihsan's stated goal is to "develop local Islamist discourse not unlike views held throughout the Arab world", and the party opposes the "Westernization" of the kingdom (i.e. progress towards women's rights, Morocco's political alliance with the West, pro-Israel discourse, and the Western lifestyles of the Moroccan upper class) (Gozlan 107). Despite low ratings of support for the party, there are fears that in the impoverished and rural regions of Morocco, support for such a platform may be more widespread than reported (Gozlan 107). The PJD, on the other hand, aligns with the monarchy in terms of wanting to combat extremism in the country and especially among Moroccan youth. The party is moving towards a less religious mission; the party platform has moved markedly away from the more ideological branches and is now seen as less of a threat to the status quo (Sakthivel 1-2). The monarchy has exercised its authority to allow Islamist political participation only "within certain proscribed (sic) lines" meant to constrain Islamists' power and ideological goals while ensuring their survival and continued (if limited) appeal (Hamid & McCants 2). Islamist groups in Morocco have worked within the political bounds set by the Moroccan state to achieve their goals, creating a complex and mutually effective dynamic between the two (Hamid & McCants 2-3).

Developing Concerns for the Monarchy

King Mohammad VI fears the threat of terrorism intensely, and this fear has deeply colored his reign. The deadliest terror attacks in Moroccan history struck in 2003 in Casablanca; bombs detonated at various locations killed 41 people and injured over one hundred (BBC n. pag.). The attacks were first linked to the misery of the slums whence the bombers had come, and the state acted accordingly to counter the appeal of extremist ideas in areas of intense poverty (Gozlan

109). Fearing the triggering effect of the excesses of the newly wealthy on the impoverished, the Palace attempted to "buy off" the poor masses with "Festivals of the Shantytowns" – these festivals featured bands and young musicians and attempted to spread joy and fun in Moroccan slums (Gozlan 110). Today, as many states have discovered, the terrorist profile has shifted and continues to do so; young businessmen, students, and people from wealthy and respected families have all fallen to the appeal of terrorism (Gozlan 109). In order to counter violent extremism, the state has called for assistance from the global community in order to develop strategies that go beyond military might to include economic and human development (Sprusansky 54). Additionally, the state has undertaken sweeping reforms to the religious and political sphere as a means of self-protection through maintaining ideological control; these reforms are presented as modernization goals in order to best showcase Morocco as a modernizing, moderate state, an example for the Muslim world and a natural ally of the West.

One of the ways in which the Moroccan state sought to protect itself from internal attacks was by "[taking] a series of measures to absorb the growing momentum of political Islam" (Haitami 1). Primarily, these measures consisted of an overhaul of the religious field; the state sought to reform and control the dynamics of religion in Morocco (Haitami 1). As part of this overhaul, new programs were introduced to include women in the religious field as leaders and scholars; these women are known as murshidat (Haitami 1). Murshidat are women trained by the state as religious authorities who offer spiritual counseling and religious instruction to different social groups (Haitami 1). The murshidat program represents a new form of activism wherein the old parameters of religious authority are redrawn, and social reform and collective piety promoted (Haitami 1). According to the BBC, murshidat are the "first women ever in any Muslim country that can perform the functions of a male Imam in a mosque" (Haitami 6).

The Moroccan king has outsized control over the country's religious landscape; some of the ways in which the Palace acts out this control over Morocco's religious infrastructure include: dictating mosque hours, requiring ministry certification of all imams, choosing the sermons used in Friday prayers, and filtering out fatwas from foreign (Sakthivel 5). Anecdotally, it has been said that the mokeddem (the network of government informants) are present in most mosques, monitoring the imam's adherence to the sermons provided for him. Islamist groups must meet in private spaces, as the public sphere is thusly dominated by the state (Sakthivel 5).

Broadly speaking, women's rights were one arena in which the new king sought to reconcile Morocco's specific brand of Maliki Islam with modern, secular standards (Haitami 5). Mohammad VI offered reform by including women speakers at important national events, and by appointing women to religious councils (Rausch 64). The kingdom's goal is the incorporation of women experts and authorities into national networks and institutions of religious education; notably, this process has been extensively covered by the state-controlled media (Rausch 64). Special national news features highlight the murshidat program, documenting their training regiment and job duties (Rausch 64-5). The state's declared intent with these new expansions to religious education is to serve less privileged groups by providing them access to programs and services, as well as to promote religious institutions that are transparent, accountable, relevant, and importantly, consistent in their output (Rausch 65).

Reform to the family code, "moudawana," followed in the year after the Casablanca attacks as the government more actively pursued new interpretations and messages around Islam (Berman n. pag.). The 2003 reforms were, on paper, transformative: polygamy was banned, women were given free choice of their marital partner, women and men were given equal rights in marriage,

women were given more rights after divorce, and the minimum age for marriage was raised to 18 (Gozlan 111). Unfortunately, the lived reality for most Moroccans was not as markedly transformed. These reforms did not address a series of critical underlying problems in the kingdom, including widespread illiteracy, feudalism, profound poverty, and crippling patriarchal norms (Gozlan 111). To this last point, although the state has made progress in women's rights, real advances are impossible until there are underlying shifts in practice and mentality -- including in the courts, which frequently grant legal exceptions for underage marriages, which represented 10% of all marriages as of 2009 (Gozlan 111).

The murshidat program allows the state to extend its control over the religious sphere. Murshidat have a unique means of accessing women in underdeveloped parts of Morocco; from the state's perspective, this creates a pathway to constraining extremism by empowering rural women to be the voice of a tolerant and flexible Islam for their families and communities (Haitami 7). Alongside this extended control, the state's reputation benefits from the murshidat program as well. Morocco presents itself as a model country among the Arab states in terms of gender equality; the extensive media coverage focused on the program highlights this as an intention of it (Haitami 6).

Morocco's counterterror initiatives are wide ranging. The Congressional Research Service claims that: "Morocco has closed unregulated mosques, introduced amnesty and rehabilitation programs for those convicted of terrorist crimes who renounce their ideology, modernized the teaching of Islam and begun promoting moderate religious values on television and radio" (Waterman n. pag.). The government has also created comic books and games for young children that teach Moroccan Islam, begun peer education programs for teenagers, and revamped the

academic curricula for Moroccan educational institutions in order to delegitimize and discredit

the more radical interpretations of Islam that are advocated by extremist networks such as al-

Qaeda and the Islamic State (Berman n. pag.). The launch of state-sponsored religious TV

programming is significant, given the number of Islamic media networks owned and operated by

the Saudi state.

It bears mentioning how religious education is conducted in public schools in Morocco, given

the importance of public school dissemination in the Saudi state. According to Boum, the king

"recently instructed his ministers of education and Islamic affairs to re-evaluate the religious

textbooks used in public schools. The introduction of values consistent with a tolerant Islam to

K-12 students is thought to be the last major component of the government's strategy to fight

religious extremism" (n. pag.).

The Arab uprisings that sprung up across the Middle East and North Africa beginning in 2011

included Morocco, though uprising is perhaps too strong of a word to describe the protests that

took place briefly and were met with immediate (if immaterial) capitulations by the state.

Morocco has so far been "spared the dynamic of rebellion, which has transformed so many of the

Arab people from passive subjects of despotism to clear-minded citizens of fledgling

democracies" (Gozlan 102). Morocco's protests are known as the February 20 Movement and

showcased citizens' demands for social equality and democracy, and their resentment of the

corruption rampant in the kingdom (Haitami 2). Significantly, the participants protested not the

king himself, but his privilege and wealth -- King Hassan II's legacy combined with the strategic

policing of free speech in the kingdom ensures that Moroccans avoid any direct criticism of the

king (Gozlan 102). The monarchy is the anchor of national identity in Morocco; to question it is

still "political folly" (Gozlan 109). What is clear from the resulting capitulations by the state is that King Mohammad VI is terrified of a true revolution in his country; it seems clear that the king understood that "he needed to make changes in appearance in order to change nothing fundamentally" and thus, a reformed constitution and the supposed move towards democracy ensued (Gozlan 103).

The 2011 constitution purports to shift the country towards democracy and accountability; in reality, it leaves key provisions untouched and affirms the king's power and ultimate authority (Gozlan 112). The state claims it wants to gratify the demands of the Moroccan youth who played such a key role in the protest movement, but those agitating for change find themselves at once recognized and harassed by the government (Gozlan 112). This spurious capitulation by the state is exemplified by the extraordinary means used to get out the vote on the new constitution; the mokeddem (the network of informants who report to the secret police) went to work shuttling Moroccans to the voting booths (where they, rather than the usual group of educators, manned the booths) and spreading rumors that those who abstained from the vote would have their requests for housing and welfare payments frozen (Gozlan 104). Widespread fear of terrorism and unrest worked in the king's favor to keep Moroccans docile and neutralize the development of a more revolutionary movement (Gozlan 104-5).

In October of 2012, Morocco launched the Rabat Plan of Action (Sprusansky 54). Among more concrete goals, such as an imam training program, the initiative calls, somewhat ambiguously, for the promotion of tolerance (Sprusansky 54). Several countries in the MENA region have asked for Morocco's help in implementing components of the plan, including the imam training program (Sprusansky 54). The state sees regional injustices as the root of the Islamic State's

appeal, namely: regional wars, the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, colonialism and neocolonialism, the breakdown of traditional values, and the perceived degradation of Muslims by the West (Sprusansky 54). ISIS smartly targets young people prone to response, and offers the dream of a utopian Islamic caliphate to those disappointed by the regimes in their own countries (Sprusansky 55). The Moroccan state recognizes that young people must be made to feel in control of their futures, and should thus take the lead in anti-extremist programs (Sprusansky 55). The state also emphasizes reintegration of reformed extremists over punishment, and offers rehabilitation programs led by other recovered fighters – the state wants other Moroccans to see these individuals as normal people reacting to legitimate problems in illegitimate and dangerous ways, not outsiders to be unduly punished (Sprusansky 55).

State Use of Religion to Maintain Domestic Control

Among the king's interrelated "modernization" goals are a reformed national religious education apparatus and an effective national network for public transmission of religious knowledge meant to promote the state's brand of Islam (Rausch 65-6). According to the state's handbook on the matter, the Moroccan Islamic perspective is meant to promote "harmony among all the voices" in the kingdom, and "national religious and cultural identity" (Rausch 66). This unity centers around four pillars: the ash'ari doctrine (one of the orthodox theologies of Sunni Islam, which promotes clerical authority and rejects cause and effect reasoning), the Maliki school of jurisprudence (purportedly an "open" and "adaptable" school), Sufism and Sufi ethics (to honor and control the space for spirituality) and the politics and desires of the Commander of the Faithful, the king (Rausch 67).

According to Sakthivel: "The recent branding of Moroccan Islam as 'moderate' and 'tolerant' hinges, in part, on the embrace of Sufi history as a bulwark against the tendency toward Salafism" (6). This represents an attempt to maintain state control over religious messages while serving as a conciliatory gesture towards Sufi populations, but primarily, the state means to co-opt Sufism (which has always been integral to Moroccan Islamic practice) as a counterweight to Salafism and Wahhabism (Sakthivel 6). Further, Sakthivel argues that: "While these efforts aim to counter religious extremism by guaranteeing access to standardized, moderate Islamic teaching, they also mark an attempt by the palace to extend its reach into spiritual lives and over the religious sphere. The effort to 'standardize' Islam and encourage religious homogeneity is thought to reinforce stability and deepen the regime's religious authority and legitimacy" (6).

The murshidat and state-approved imams deliver the standardized and controlled message of the state. The state's means of control is not, of course, foolproof, and may well be more effective in corralling the religiosity of those whose sense of religious identity errs towards the passive, rather than stemming from spirituality or a need for divine understanding (Sakthivel 6-7). In addition, much of the king's legitimacy is derived from the Ulema, and could diminish if the Moroccan people begin to seriously question the Ulema's credibility (Sakthivel 6-7). Islamist groups such as the AWI provide an outlet for those more spiritually inclined; the AWI has intentionally gone about its work in a way that has allowed it to pervade Moroccan society -- they operate soup kitchens, deliver meat to the poor on Eid, offer medical services, literary, and religion classes -- with the goal of linking political and social activism to the spiritual transformation of Morocco (Sakthivel 8).

State Exertion of Regional Influence

Morocco began to increasingly reevaluate its place at the intersection of Western and Muslim/MENA culture as fears of global terror began to rise in the early aughts. Already the national conscience had been scarred by the 2003 Casablanca terror attacks, and the rise of the Islamic State (and the perception of rising global terror) hastened Morocco's readjustments. As documented, the state began to develop internal mechanisms for control over religious ideology within Morocco. In recent years, this desire for ideological control over the state's Islam has begun to expand outward.

The dearth of moderate imams in Europe and in the so-called "Muslim world" generally created an opportunity for the Moroccan state to promote its own Islamic ideology both by exporting Moroccan imams and by training the imams of other states. Saudi Arabia had previously been the controlling force in terms of spreading and controlling Islamic ideologies both in the West and in the Muslim world. The Moroccan state saw an opportunity to promote itself as the exemplar of Muslim moderation, gender equality, and progress. The state would directly benefit by increasing its control over its own citizenry, decreasing rates of terrorist activity within the kingdom, minimizing revolutionary sentiment, and generally increasing the king's control over Moroccans.

Additionally, Morocco has always taken a great deal of pride in its relationship with the United States, and generally the kingdom seeks a positive and privileged relationship with the West. Becoming the West's ally in counterterror tactics plays to this goal and heightens their image as a safe, trusted, pro-West Muslim country. Alliance with the global hegemon is the natural desire

of all non-hegemonic states; allying with power promises protection for the state and carries desirable economic benefits.

Though this appropriation of "moderate" Islam is playing out throughout the region, Morocco demonstrates a particularly developed strategy in doing so. In 2015, the International Imam Training Center in Rabat officially opened its doors as part of a slew of initiatives launched by King Mohammad VI in a greater anti-terrorism push (Sheline n. pag.). Morocco both perceives and presents itself as a bastion of religious tolerance and moderation, and successfully so: already, students from a number of African and European countries have gone to study Moroccan Islam (Alaoui n. pag.; Sheline n. pag.). Morocco's political climate lends itself to such work; the Moroccan state can point to its own stability as proof that its version of Islam fosters a calm and peaceful society.

The Imam training center requires Moroccan students to complete a one-year term, whilst students from other African nations must study for two years, and those from France for three (Berman n. pag.). The school's administrators claim that "these longer stays are intended, in part, to 'unwind' bad religious teachings that are now endemic throughout Europe and Africa" (Berman n. pag.). Rather than focusing entirely on Qur'anic study, the Institute's curriculum spans thirty separate subjects, including philosophy and psychology, and a focus on the geography, history, and politics of students' individual home countries. The institute also offers vocational studies (Berman n. pag.). All foreign students at the Institute are treated as formal guests of Morocco, meaning they are given a monthly stipend and the Moroccan government foots the bill for their education (Berman n. pag.). So far, the countries that have opted to send

their imams to the Institute include France, Belgium, Tunisia, Gabon, the Ivory Coast, the

Maldives, Libya, Mali, and Guinea (Boum n. pag.).

This imam-training initiative on the part of the Moroccan government is not entirely new; the

kingdom has provided training to foreign scholars since the early 1960s to much the same

objective: dissemination of its "'Islam of the middle path doctrine,' a vision of religion based on

tolerance, intercultural dialogue, and respect of other faiths" (Alaoui n. pag.). This new Institute

represents, instead, a scaling-up of an old initiative. The 1970s were marked by economic crisis

throughout the MENA region, leading to youth disenchantment with their governments' abilities

to offer viable religious, economic, and political pathways (Boum n. pag.). The 1980s saw the

emergence of non-state Islamic preachers who contested state-sanctioned discourse and

religiosity (Boum n. pag.). Morocco faced these challenges alongside other Muslim states.

Moroccan women's expanding role in the religious and political scene is significant, and

demonstrates the strategic depth of the monarchy's reform. Women's rights and abilities to be

active participants in the social, political, economic, and cultural fabric of their country is critical

in and of itself, but beyond this, we must consider that the Moroccan state sees women as

playing a critical role in their counterterror agenda. According to the World Policy Blog:

> A University of Miami study examining women's roles in extremist groups found that
> there are many more women in the Islamic State than researchers previously thought…
> although there are more male than female members of the Islamic State, the women in
> the group tend to possess stronger connections with other members because they serve as
> communicators and messengers. Applying this influence that women can clearly have in
> a community to combatting terror could encourage moderate religious interpretations.
> (World Policy Blog)

This may well be the true intent of the Moroccan state in expanding women's rights and roles in

the country. The murshidat program allows the government to demonstrate its support for

religious reform whilst retaining all true control over the reform and the messages. Murshidat have an active presence in schools, prisons, hospitals, and mosques, promoting the state approved version of Islam (World Policy Blog n. pag.). Women are given religious authority and are thus able to feel empowered and supported as they challenge their traditional roles, but the government retains ultimate control (World Policy Blog n. pag.). This also serves Morocco's global reputation as a place of modernity, progress, and Westernization.

Beyond providing imam training, a program which costs the Moroccan state a not insignificant amount of money, some claim that the government's intentions stretch beyond religious objectives into geostrategic goals meant to "increase its global influence" (Alaoui n. pag.). Alaoui argues that the Moroccan state wishes to constrain the growth and appeal of the Islamic State, specifically, and religious extremism more generally, whilst also becoming "the African-Muslim hub". Both are conceivable goals: the Moroccan state can provide the necessary tools for foreign imams to detect extremism in their communities, as well as in Moroccan communities, which plays to their overarching fear of the rise of global terror, and at the same time, can gain geostrategic power by becoming an African hub of sorts (Alaoui n. pag.).

Berman claims that "The [Institute], and the ideas it promotes, lies at the center of the complex counterterrorism effort that Morocco has erected over the past decade and a half—one that has put the North African state on the frontlines of the intellectual struggle against radical Islam" (Berman n. pag.). Intellectually speaking, Boum agrees that the imam-training program is designed to address new methods being used by independent preachers, who have by-passed traditional methods and institutions as well (Boum n. pag.). The Institute means to create a network of educated religious leaders in the Moroccan-Islam-mold to spread their teachings in

order to combat the dark mirror network of religious leaders spreading more fundamentalist or radical interpretations of Islam (Berman n. pag.). The program is, at least, emblematic of the end of Morocco's perception of its own exceptionalism in terms of religious extremism. The state's self-perception of religious credibility and tolerance remains, and is key to both internal and external validations of its place as a leader in the ideological battleground taking place in the modern Muslim world (Berman n. pag.).

A less virtuous and altruistic lens through which to view Morocco's imam-training program is that it provides a handy cover for the lack of tangible reforms happening within the state. Sheline argues: "For an international audience more concerned with security than democracy, a PR campaign dedicated to promoting moderate Islam is an effective way to enhance the Moroccan government's soft power" (Sheline n. pag.). And indeed, the West actively embraces any state who claims to be fighting so-called "radical" Islam -- America's longtime partner Saudi Arabia, for example, is not the likeliest of choices. Further, Sheline argues that: "Promoting a vague moderate Islam — through international declarations, religious training centers or interfaith initiatives — has not proven an effective antidote to violent extremism" and this is a valid critique, although the degree to which the opposite holds is difficult to pin down (n. pag.). Morocco certainly stands to benefit on several levels from the success of its counterterror initiatives and the imam-training program specifically, and the state prizes its relationship with the United States particularly, as well as its role as a Euro-African hub. Notably, the U.S. tends to support Moroccan Islam despite the fact that Morocco is not a democratic state, which represents a departure from the values we purport to support.

There are, of course, any number of criticisms for this program, including those already mentioned. The Global Risk Insights blog cautions that the unconscious message from this program may well be yet another assertion that some arbitrary version of Islam, in this case Moroccan Islam, is the most correct and only true way to be Muslim (Global Risk Insights n. pag.). Is this then any different than the Islamic State preaching such ideas? The Institute remains essentially a pilot project – three years is too short a timeline to draw many meaningful conclusions – but administrators are convinced that the Institute will soon become a meaningful piece in the fight against so-called radical Islam and "contribute to the adoption of the 'correct' interpretation of Islam the world over" which, again, validates these criticisms of the program (Berman n. pag.).

Conclusions

In sum, two recent developments seem to propel new Moroccan regime initiatives around exportation of religious ideology and extended control of domestic religious practice. Namely, these developments are the Arab uprisings, and the ways in which they play into the king's fear of rebellion and loss of regime control, and the rise of global terror, and the ways in which this plays to the king's fear of instability in the region and at home. The nature of an authoritarian regime is that it wants to maintain its own power and control over its state and people; to this end, legitimacy of the regime is important, as is domestic and regional stability. Maintaining control over domestic religious ideology serves to maintain the state's monopoly on ruling legitimacy; exerting regional influence via religious ideology serves to maintain regional stability and cohesion. The imam training program and other noted initiatives are too fresh for us to determine the scope of their success. Certainly it seems from experience on-the-ground that

the regime (or at least, the king) still wields a great deal of power and influence over Moroccan

identity, religious practice, and daily life.

Chapter 5: Impacts, Outcomes, and Conclusions

Impacts

Among the impacts of these religious ideological exportation programs and internal mechanisms for religious ideological control are those of the first degree, or impacts on the states of Saudi Arabia and Morocco themselves, and those of the second degree, or impacts on other states in the global umma and in the West.

The Saudi Arabian regime, like all authoritarian regimes, craves stability and control. The Saudi/Iran rivalry sets off this need for control and regional dominance; as the nature of this conflict has become increasingly sectarian, control of regional religious ideologies has come to the forefront. In recent years, the rise of specifically Sunni violent extremist groups such as ISIS and the more mature al-Qaeda has demonstrated some of the downsides of encouraging sectarian violence. Saudi Arabia today seems increasingly reactive to perceptions of shifting Western allegiance; specifically, the Iran nuclear deal with the United States seems to have set off fears in the Saudi regime that the United States is backing away from its support of Saudi Arabia in favor of an alliance with Iran. Saudi Arabia's ability to exercise international influence seems to be decreasing; certainly in coming years as the oil wells begin to dry up we will continue to see shifts in Saudi influence and regional power.

The Moroccan regime equally craves stability and control. In the face of rising incidences of violent extremism, and particularly in reaction to a number of domestic terror attacks, the Moroccan monarchy demonstrates a need to control domestic ideologies and suppress internal attacks. As well, the Arab uprisings of 2011 inflamed the authoritarian fear of rebellion and loss of control. A cohesive national identity already existed, was already propagated by the government; in recent years, the religious nature of this identity has become foregrounded and

focused. Aiding the state's efforts is the fact that Moroccans themselves, though they may desire a more democratic state, are largely afraid of being stricken with the same instability that impacts the rest of the region. To that end, Moroccans are willing to accept superficial concessions and move at a slower pace towards change if it means avoiding widespread turmoil and destabilization.

Both regimes benefit from turning the focus outwards; rather than the spotlight staying on the regime which may be failing its people or failing to meet pressures to democratize, the regime may turn attention to ideological problems or external agents as a means of self-protection. This redirects not only outside attention, but internal pressure from the citizenry. This redirection meets the authoritarian regime's need for stability and control.

In Southeast Asia, and particularly Indonesia, we have seen a fundamental shift in religious practice and belief in recent years that correlates with an influx of Saudi money and religious education. Indigenous religious practice has been significantly disrupted by this influence.

Europe faces a dearth of qualified imams; those that are there are largely Saudi-trained and perhaps not adequately versed in how Islamic practice might be adapted from the Saudi context to the European. European states grapple not only with an uptick in terror attacks, but also with the rising flood of refugees from destabilized places such as Syria. Faced with this situation, European states are grasping for solutions -- the Moroccan imam training program provides one such possible solution.

In September 2015, French President François Hollande signed a joint declaration with the Moroccan government around the training of French imams in Rabat; the declaration claimed

that "the training would promote 'an Islam with the right balance' that conforms to 'values of openness and tolerance' and 'fully anchored in the values of the Republic and secularism'" (Huguen n. pag.). Fifty or so French imams are expected to begin training at the Institute annually, after which they will return to France for further training on the role of religion in French society (Huguen n. pag.). This move is directly linked to French counterterror policy; in the wake of several terrorist attacks in France, including the Charlie Hebdo attack, debate has opened up around the role imams may play in combatting radicalization (Huguen n. pag.). France is actively deporting imams for "preaching hate", 40 or so as of June 2015, and civics lessons have been incorporated into France's imam-training efforts presumably in order to instill a sense of duty and loyalty to the French state (Huguen n. pag.).

In addition to France, Belgium is another European state actively pursuing Morocco's imam-training programs. This seems logical; Belgium, like France, has been the target of high-profile terror attacks in recent years, has a large immigrant Muslim population which has remained largely segregated and impoverished compared to Belgian nationals, and whose population is largely francophone. Russia and Morocco have also recently agreed on a plan to accept Russian imams into the Institute in the near future (Berman n. pag.).

States in Africa and the Middle Eastern region are also grappling with the aftershocks of the Arab uprisings and subsequent regional instability. As such, these states are also looking for solutions or alternative paths to grasp onto. Mali, for example, specifically asked for Moroccan assistance "in promoting the kingdom's more spiritually oriented, politically moderate and tolerant brand of Islam, known as the Sufi-Maliki tradition, as an alternative to the extremist Salafi-Wahhabi strand promoted by al-Qaeda and militant groups" demonstrating a regional

understanding and possible shift away from Saudi-dominant religious ideology and education (Waterman n. pag.). Indeed, Morocco has coupled its regional approach to foreign policy with the use of "religious diplomacy as well as security cooperation with Africa" (Jabrane n. pag.). Morocco is seen as authoritative not only because of the king's role as "Commander of the Faithful" (which is largely recognized by other Muslim-majority countries), but also because of perceptions that its "moderate" version of Islam has successfully kept more fundamentalist (Wahhabi) ideologies at bay, and because of its historic role in spreading Islam in Africa (Jabrane n. pag.).

It is difficult to gauge the success of the Moroccan imam training program in particular at this stage; as it was only begun in 2013, not enough time has passed to measure impacts. Decades down the road, much more will be known and conclusions more readily drawn; for now, suffice it to say that Morocco is offering an alternative to the Saudi model of religious education that has dominated, an alternative that purports to be more moderate, and thus, more Western-friendly. It is not a reach to say that this program will be accepted positively by most of the world, but whether or not it will have any tangible effect on the incidence of terror attacks, for example, remains to be seen.

Outcomes

Among the outcomes of these machinations are increased ideological control, domestically and internationally, and shifts in the relationship between Morocco and Saudi Arabia and their respective regimes.

In both Morocco and Saudi Arabia, domestic ideological control is integral to regime legitimacy and state stability. Islam is integral to the state in both cases; both states exert great control over

the public education system (including the religious elements) and religious education directly vis-a-vis mosques. Both regimes control the messages disseminated in mosques and generally control public practice of religion as well as public religious narratives. Saudi Arabia exerts additional control by legally restricting the practice of non-Saudi Islam and non-Islamic religions.

It is worthwhile to consider the relationship between these two states as well. The Gulf Cooperation Council, created in 1981, currently consists of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. The Council has always been a bit of a closed-club; however, in the wake of the 2011 Arab uprisings, the GCC proposed membership to both Jordan and Morocco (Rousselet 1). Significantly, these are two constitutional monarchies that both managed to contain in-country uprisings (Rousselet 1). Jordan seems a more likely contender due to its geographic and economic proximity to the GCC; Morocco is much farther from the other GCC countries (Rousselet 1). Morocco renegotiated this proposal for membership into a strategic partnership with the GCC, planned over five years and to include five billion dollars worth of financial aid for development (Rousselet 1). The Arab uprisings transformed both internal and regional balances of power; consequently, relations between Morocco and the GCC have changed as well (Rousselet 1). Historically, Tunisia rather than Morocco was the Maghreb country most invested in by GCC countries. This recent GCC outreach to Morocco and Jordan likely represents a recognition of the common destiny of MENA (Middle East/North Africa) monarchies – including the possibility for their shared demise.

Despite this increase in developmental aid from the GCC, Morocco's main economic and trade partner is still Europe (Rousselet 2). The Gulf monarchies' investment represents an opportunity

to feed Morocco's expanding economy, and the benefits are mutually appealing: complementary investment and trade flows (Rousselet 2-3). Morocco's economy is promising; since the 1990s, the country has implemented policies of economic liberalization and openness (Rousselet 2-3).

The GCC is a "cooperative structure" meant to build political solidarity in response to external threats, rather than a true alliance or integrative structure (Rousselet 3). The Arab uprisings shook the Arab world to its core and generated growing concern over regional stability (Rousselet 3). In this context, Morocco seems remarkably stable; the king skillfully managed the demands of the protestors by reforming enough to appease without truly giving up power. If Morocco joined the GCC, the group would add a stable, model monarchy, and gain political weight in the region (Rousselet 3).

Morocco and Saudi Arabia are both Sunni monarchies, which suggests a certain desirability to building up a Sunni axis to counter the Shi'a threat (Rousselet 3-4). In fact, Morocco severed diplomatic ties with Iran in 2009 (Rousselet 3-4). Adding to the sense of a common destiny, both the royal families of Morocco and Jordan have powerful symbolic weight given that they are purported descendents of the Prophet Muhammad, and all the royal families maintain strong ties by inter-marrying (Rousselet 3-4).

There is no all-encompassing category or definition for Arab monarchies; they are diverse, and tensions and rivalries are deeply rooted, even within cooperative structures like the GCC. Just because Morocco and Saudi Arabia are both monarchies, modes of governance and exercise of power are not guaranteed to be the same, and in fact differ greatly (Rousselet 5). Though a diplomatic axis may be workable, underlying disputes and rivalries – such as exists between Saudi Arabia and Qatar – remain (Rousselet 5). In the religious sphere, Morocco and Saudi

Arabia's respective state brands of Islam are quite divergent, and the Gulf countries generally rely on stricter interpretations of Islamic law than Morocco and other Muslim countries (Rousselet 6).

Morocco seems to prefer a privileged partnership rather than a membership in the GCC. Rousselet contends that Morocco faces a choice between Maghrebi integration and participation in the GCC, and has chosen to be the big fish in North Africa rather than a player in the Gulf countries' game (6). Morocco may be choosing to prioritize its role as a leader in North Africa, but the country's relationship with neighboring Algeria is still diplomatically paralyzed and their staunch refusal to grant independence in the controversial case of the Western Sahara does not point to an advantage in seeking such regional cooperation and power (Rousselet 6).

What seems more likely is that Morocco is working to maintain a degree of separation – both in image and in practice – between itself and the Saudi-led Gulf monarchies. It is no accident that Morocco is beginning now to assert itself as a "moderate" alternative, ideologically speaking, to Saudi Arabia's Wahhabism. Morocco's imam-training program is only just getting off the ground, but the king has carefully crafted an image of Western-friendly, moderate Islam for his country since he came to power in 1999. Not only is this moderate image economically and politically advantageous for Morocco, but it also furthers the goal of maintaining regional stability. Promoting a more flexible, peaceful form of Islam is a strategy to counteract the more violent, fundamentalist ideology at hand and the terror attacks which seem to come along with it. Suppressing terrorism maintains peaceful regional stability and protects Morocco's lucrative tourism industry.

Conclusions

Morocco and Saudi Arabia are two authoritarian regimes chasing many of the benefits of near-complete control of domestic ideologies as well as the benefits of soft power ideological influence within the region. Each is in a unique position of authority vis-a-vis the "Muslim" world, and has a unique opportunity to influence Islamic ideologies within the region and worldwide.

As noted, Saudi Arabia's claims of a unique position of authority in the Muslim world derive from its control of the Hijaz, a region which includes Islam's two holiest places, Mecca and Medina. Saudi imams travelling outwards have the bonus credibility of coming from the homeland of Islam (Shane n. pag.). Regardless of their claims, the outcomes of these programs have been largely disruptive to indigenous Islamic practice and belief. Though it would be difficult to argue causation, there is a correlation between the massive influx of money in foreign mosques and the exportation of Saudi ideology and the rise in international violent extremism.

The Moroccan king derives a specific kind of authority from his purported ancestry; as a descendent of the Prophet Muhammad, he is a "commander of the faithful" (in the same way that the king of Jordan is, and al-Baghdadi claims to be) (al-Haitami 5). Both monarchies are seen as uniquely authoritative in the Muslim world, which lends credence to their leadership as well as to the ideologies they promote. The "commander of the faithful" claiming that something is or is not Islamic carries more weight than a figure with less vested authority.

In a conversation with their American counterparts, Moroccan officials expressed their belief that the Moroccan "'human-centered' approach to counterterrorism and security" could serve as

a model for the Middle East and Africa (Waterman n. pag.). Morocco has intentionally set itself

up as a partner in Western counterterrorism efforts, especially with the U.S.; the state has been

"particularly forthcoming in providing intelligence as well as symbolic support" in the wake of

the September 11 attacks in the U.S., and more so since the 2003 Casablanca terror attacks

(Sakthivel 43). As Europe has begun to grapple more and more with terror attacks and cultural

clashes as demographics shift across the continent, authorities are considering the role imams

might play in smoothing the way forward. Independent preachers who work outside the control

of the Ministry of Religious Affairs are seen by Europe as more of a threat, for example, than

imams who are trained using state-sanctioned curricula (Boum n. pag.). Going forward, the

impacts of Morocco's imam training program and their extended reach for ideological control

will become clearer. The results of years of Saudi ideological influence are more readily visible,

though the level of regime influence will likely continue to fluctuate in the coming years as

Saudi Arabia re-evaluates its programs in terms of both destabilizing impacts and the drag they

may present on the Saudi economy.

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