



# Islamist Opposition Parties and the Potential for EU Engagement

Edited by Toby Archer and Heidi Huuhtanen

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Toby Archer and Heidi Huuhtanen (eds.)



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## **Islamist Opposition parties and the potential for EU engagement**

Toby Archer and Heidi Huuhtanen (eds.)

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Dr. Sadiki's publications include *Islamist Democracy: (Re) Visions of Polity and Society in the Arab Middle East* (forthcoming in 2008); *The Search for Arab Democracy* (2004); *Progress & retrogression in Arab democratization* (1992) and *Salon Democracy: Re-thinking Arab Democratisation* (forthcoming 2007).

## Foreword

In light of the increasing importance of Islamist movements in the Muslim world and the way that radicalisation has influenced global events since the turn of the century, it is important for the EU to evaluate its policies towards actors within what can be loosely termed the 'Islamic world'. It is particularly important to ask whether and how to engage with the various Islamist groups.

This remains controversial even within the EU. Some feel that the Islamic values that lie behind Islamist parties are simply incompatible with western ideals of democracy and human rights, while others see engagement as a realistic necessity due to the growing domestic importance of Islamist parties and their increasing involvement in international affairs. Another perspective is that democratisation in the Muslim world would increase European security. The validity of these and other arguments over whether and how the EU should engage can only be tested by studying the different Islamist movements and their political circumstances, country by country.

Democratisation is a central theme of the EU's common foreign policy actions, as laid out in Article 11 of the Treaty on European Union. Many of the states considered in this report are not democratic, or not fully democratic. In most of these countries, Islamist parties and movements constitute a significant opposition to the prevailing regimes, and in some they form the largest opposition bloc. European democracies have long had to deal with governing regimes that are authoritarian, but it is a new phenomenon to press for democratic reform in states where the most likely beneficiaries might have, from the EU's point of view, different and sometimes problematic approaches to democracy and its related values, such as minority and women's rights and the rule of law. These charges are often laid against Islamist movements, so it is important for European policy-makers to have an accurate picture of the policies and philosophies of potential partners.

Experiences from different countries tends to suggest that the more freedom Islamist parties are allowed, the more moderate they are in their actions and ideas. In many cases Islamist parties and groups have long since shifted away from their original aim of establishing an Islamic state governed by Islamic law, and have come to accept basic democratic principles of electoral competition for power, the existence of other political competitors, and political pluralism. Jordan and Morocco are examples of the fact that, as countries move towards freer and fairer electoral systems, Islamist parties are willing to



act within parliamentary frameworks. This is still true even if they win elections and take power, as the case of Turkey demonstrates. There will be ideological differences between Islamist parties and the EU, but this should not be enough to make the EU ignore these large opposition movements, which exists right across the Muslim world. Ultimately it is hard to see how the west can credibly promote democracy and human rights in the Muslim world if Islamists are not engaged at some level.

Having said this, it is important to note that movements and countries vary to such an extent that a single policy-line is impossible. An understanding of the diversity between parties and between countries is vital, and this study hopes to illuminate these differences. This report aims specifically at identifying Islamist political organisations, be they parties (in Arabic *hizb*), fronts (*haraka*), or movements (*jabha*), that could be potentially engaged by the EU or its member-states under the rubric of democratisation. Islamism is a wide and contested concept, which makes it problematic to apply western labels such as ‘moderate’ or ‘radical’ to different Islamist groups. The term “moderate Islamist” is heard regularly in the western media, but moderation as a concept depends on the position of the viewer. We asked the contributing experts to seek to identify specifically Islamist parties that are domestically focused – not therefore arguing for e.g. a pan-Islamic caliphate – and that are non-violent and non-revolutionary. ‘Non-violent’ as a term is self-explanatory, but it should not be taken to imply that these groups do not support the use of violence as part of what they deem to be Muslim resistance to occupation in other countries. ‘Non-revolutionary’ means that groups should accept the basic concepts of political pluralism, democracy and human rights, even if these ideas are couched in an Islamic discourse very different to that used in Europe. These are the essential starting points.

Beyond this, we aimed to study the political circumstances in which Islamists operate in each country. We asked the expert authors to explain the nature of the political activity of the parties they were dealing with and the extent of their parliamentary and non-parliamentary activities. The authors were to consider matters such as how these parties relate to current state regimes, whether they have relations with other non-Islamist political parties in their country, and whether and why they might be interested in engagement with the EU.

To demonstrate the difference among Islamists in different countries, the study adopted a country-by-country approach, selecting states from the Middle East, north Africa, south Asia and the Far East, where there is significant non-violent Islamist opposition. The countries selected were Jordan, Morocco, Algeria, Malaysia, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan and the exceptional case of Tunisia where the Islamist opposition has been exiled was also considered. Countries where Islamist parties are already in government, such as Turkey and Iran, were excluded, as were states at war such as Palestine and Iraq.

The contributing authors were all chosen for being well-established academic experts on the politics of the countries that they wrote about. They wrote the chapters based on an analytical framework that was developed by the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (see appendix 1). We believe that the articles will provide further food for thought for those interested in these issues, but we have not tried to draw any broader conclusions or

generalisations at the end. There is not one single general policy recommendation to the EU or member-state governments about engaging with Islamist political parties, although individual authors have made recommendations relating to their country of expertise. Overall, the publication suggests some Islamist parties that should be considered for engagement, how this could be done, and aims to provoke further debate and thought on this pressing matter.

We would like to extend our thanks to the Policy Planning Unit of the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, who financially supported this project.

*Helsinki, 20 March 2007*

*Toby Archer*

*Heidi Huuhtanen*

# Algeria

## François Burgat and François Gèze

The current situation in Algeria is an archetypal model of political obstruction/stagnation *par excellence*, born of extreme repression against the Islamist opposition by an authoritarian regime. The only organised Islamist movements and political parties that are currently allowed to operate are those that have severely compromised their political integrity through their dealings with the centre of power, which is controlled by military secret service chiefs. A genuine democratic transition in Algeria, granting legitimate political space to political Islamist forces who respect the democratic process, would require support from the European Union in the form of the following policy measures:

- firm support for all forces (political, trade union and civil), both Islamist and secular, that have been weakened and dispersed by political repression and which are attempting to work for the reconstitution of a democratic state;
- encourage Algeria to fully adhere to international conventions, including the protection of human rights and anti-corruption initiatives, of which Algeria is a signatory.

### A military regime with a civil visage

In 1954, towards the end of the long and debilitating period of French colonisation (1830-1962), the National Liberation Front (FLN) engaged in armed conflict to win independence. This was initially presented as a secular and nationalist struggle. After seven years of particularly bloody war (which claimed more than half a million victims and displaced at least 2.5 million people), independence was finally gained in 1962. Although Islam was proclaimed the state religion, the FLN government formed a one-party state based on a socialist model, according to which religion occupied little space in the discourse of political mobilisation.

During the 1970s the political opposition steadily increased its momentum as people became disenchanted with the FLN's political and economic direction. Public discontent was focused on failings in the FLN's development model (characterised by the prioritisation

of the public sector and heavy industry and an ineffectual voluntary land reform policy) and the FLN's total grip on the political institutions (a grip even tighter than the one experienced by Algeria's Tunisian and Moroccan neighbours). The FLN did not so much exercise control through a 'popular' political party structure, as illustrated by the former communist parties of Eastern Europe, but more through the omnipotent mechanisms of the secret services, the *Sécurité Militaire* (SM), in a tightly centralised way. In 1978, when president Houari Boumediene died, the political system faced a dilemma: the kingmakers in the army failed to agree on a successor and eventually installed Colonel Chadli Bendjedid as a powerless figurehead head of state. Thus a new political dichotomy emerged with, on one hand, Bendjedid, the nominal head of state, and the shadowy military figures, the real behind-the-scenes political decision-makers, on the other.

This dualism has remained an essential key to fully understanding the Algerian political system. Since the death of Boumediene, each 'elected' head of state has struggled to wrest some power from the military, but all have failed. Since 1990 the influence of the army secret services, the Department of Information and Safety (the DRS, a new moniker for the *Sécurité Militaire*), has broadened and deepened into a hegemonic power structure. This tightening stranglehold on the political system led to a military coup in January 1992 and a bloody civil war (which cost the lives of 200 000 people and saw 20 000 disappearances) that was marked by new levels of state terrorism. This was strategically organised in total secrecy by the DRS chiefs.

Further, these masters of propaganda have enjoyed a considerable degree of success in perfecting a systematic disinformation service, which operates both nationally and internationally to apportion blame for the violence exclusively to 'Islamic fundamentalists'. To this day, the effects of this dual strategy of state terrorism and disinformation continue to shape the Algerian political dynamic.

Today, behind the façade of a civil administration headed by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika (elected in 1999 and re-elected in 2004), the real powerbroker is General Mohamed Médiène, aka 'Tewfik', who became head of the DRS in September 1990. With his vast network of allies in both civil society and the military, his control of the political scene, economic activity and civil administration is absolute. More importantly, he controls the powerful networks of corruption which have grown fat on oil and gas revenues. The 'management' of these networks is the regime's *raison d'être* and is at the heart of the occult power of the military 'decision-makers'.

In order to understand the forms adopted by the Islamist political movements in Algeria, as well as their political evolution since their emergence in the 1980s, this historical context must be fully acknowledged. Before 1989, every manifestation of political opposition, whether secular or Islamist, was hindered or constrained by the government through: a) placating public discontent through a policy of 'wealth redistribution', with oil revenue being used as a tool for social pacification; and b) a relatively sophisticated policy of repression managed by the SM. Apart from this, Islam as a potential religious source of political legitimacy was constrained by state institutions using methods directly inspired by colonial France.

### The promise of political 'liberalisation'

At the beginning of the 1980s, during a period of economic instability which had been precipitated by various factors (e.g. the collapse in oil prices and the obvious failure of the industrial and economic model), President Bendjedid launched a policy of economic liberalisation. In October 1988, social strains and internal divisions inside *le pouvoir* (a cabal of Generals) led to violent popular unrest. Before brutally repressing the protestors (leaving 500 dead), a faction within *le pouvoir* had encouraged violent action, which they hoped would be directed against opponents they wanted to weaken. In February 1989 a relatively pluralist constitution was adopted by referendum, ending the one-party system. At the same time, by legalising all the political groups, including Islamists, various factions of the military junta acknowledged the sclerosis engendered by the old corrupt electoral system. However, the 'opening up' was not a selfless act by the generals – they gambled that a more liberal approach, both politically and economically, would enhance their illicit corruption networks, and the 'liberalisation' of the political and economic structures was tightly supervised: the key decision-makers could still rely on the untouchable powers of the Sécurité Militaire to keep control of the political arena.

In an atmosphere marked by the exacerbation of internal divisions within the military central command, the Islamic Salvation Front (Front Islamique de Salut, FIS) was formed in March 1989 and granted legal political status in September of the same year. More than a traditional political party, the FIS represents most of the trends of Algerian political Islam, which had been gradually coalescing through the 1980s (with the exception of the branch closely associated with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood). From its inception, a significant number of the FIS's steering committee (*majlis al-shura*) were embedded Sécurité Militaire agents (not a scenario unique to the FIS, demonstrating the pervasive influence of the secret services across the political spectrum). In June 1990, the FIS won important victories in both local and departmental elections at the expense of the 'secular' opposition parties.

With the FIS now a serious political player, relations between its leadership and the authorities soon deteriorated, with the latter attempting, through infiltration, to both 'radicalise' and split the party from within. In 1991, in order to weaken the FIS vote, the Sécurité Militaire chiefs' tactics turned towards encouraging the creation of two competing Islamist parties, which were *de facto* subservient to the authorities: the Hamas movement led by Mahfoud Nahnah (considered the main representative of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood), and the Movement for National Renaissance (aka al-Islah or MNI) headed by Abdallah Djaballah.

In December 1991, in spite of the administration's vote-splitting strategy, the FIS comfortably won the first round of legislative elections (receiving 47.3% of the votes cast – as opposed to 5.4% for Hamas and 2.2% for the MNI). Although the turnout was only 24.5%, this figure underestimated the level of support for the FIS because many voters had long since lost faith in the official electoral system and abstained from voting. Facing the loss of political power and all of its implications, heads of the army and secret services (fronted by Generals Khaled Nezzar, Minister of Defence, and Mohamed Lamari) compelled the president of the Republic to resign on 11 January 1992. They pronounced

the dissolution of the Algerian parliament and that, instead of a president, there would now be a 'High Committee of State' (HCE), an interim administration that would be controlled by General Khaled Nezzar. Mohamed Boudiaf, a respected political opponent in exile with a prestigious nationalist past, consented to become head of state.

The HCE formally terminated the electoral process: a state of emergency was proclaimed on February 9, followed soon after by the prohibition of the FIS. In June 1992 Boudiaf, who used his presidential power to try to effect a genuine political and social renewal of the system, was assassinated. It has been established that those responsible for his murder were the very military chiefs whose networks of corruption he was threatening. This was the start of the era of direct confrontation which still characterises Algerian political life today.

### **The 'dirty war'**

The military leadership initiated the chilling process of an authoritarian 'reorganisation' of the political scene, and a declaration of open war against the Islamist opposition, gradually widening their range until the entire population was involved. The success of their unbridled campaign is partly due to the overwhelming endorsement they received from the international community, with very few exceptions. During the 'dirty war', the Algerian generals plumbed new depths of violence, utilising and perfecting all the methods of 'counterinsurgency warfare' which were developed by the French Army during the first war in Algeria. Mass arrests, extra-judicial executions and the systematic use of torture not only weakened but also radicalised vast numbers of grassroots supporters of the Islamist parliamentary opposition: by crushing all forms of democratic expression through repressing the electoral system, the clear objective was to push the entire Islamist opposition into a corner where the only tool at their disposal to effect political change was violence, which in turn justified the government's policy of total 'eradication'.

Consequently, some Islamist groups from marginal radical trends which opposed the FIS entered into armed struggle, and at the same time, as early as 1992, DRS agents effectively infiltrated the newly-created Armed Islamic Groups (GIA – Groupes Islamiques Armés). During this period, even if most GIA leaders and members remained relatively untainted, some GIA 'emirs' were either DRS operatives on active duty, claiming to be deserters, or Islamists who had been co-opted and 'turned' by the security forces. Simultaneously, the DRS deliberately encouraged the development of armed groups through a sophisticated strategy of mass repression which focussed on youths who, in order to resist and/or take revenge, had no other alternative than to join the *maquis*. DRS operatives, holding positions of responsibility in these infiltrated and manipulated groups, manufactured official 'Islamist' statements which were often extremely provocative, targeting various sections of society and encouraging the use of assassination as a justifiable weapon against national and foreign civilians 'in the name of Islam'.

From the beginning of 1995, all independent 'emirs' were eliminated. The GIA came totally under the control of DRS agents and was increasingly used as a weapon of terror against the civilian population until the infamous massacres of 1997 and 1998. The special

military forces, who also launched bloody attacks upon civilians, were regularly prevented by their chiefs from completely liquidating the 'Islamist *maquis*', allowing them to reach safe haven.

The old leaders of the FIS generally shunned the armed struggle in the first two years of the war – it was only in June 1994 that some of them developed a paramilitary strategy and created the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS – Armée Islamique du Salut). The AIS was almost immediately infiltrated by the DRS, and saw itself as the target of threats and operations by its rival the GIA – this led to a confused picture of generalised hyper-violence, which carefully orchestrated misinformation from the DRS attributed exclusively to Islamists.

The military authorities thus succeed in de-legitimising its principal political opposition in the eyes of gullible international opinion. Additionally, after having physically eliminated or 'turned' the majority of players in the Islamist opposition to further the institutional marginalisation of its electoral base, the authorities activated and manipulated the marginal pseudo-opposition parties. From 1995, a certain number of political parties, including the Islamists of Hamas (Movement of an Islamic Society), Mahfoud Nahnah (later the Movement of a Society for Peace), and the MNI of Abdallah Djaballah (later al-Nahda, subsequently al-Islah) were invited to take part in the parliamentary process. This game of 'political pluralism', however, is a mere charade: the elections are systematically rigged and constitutional reforms (which resulted in the creation of a second parliamentary chamber) place considerable limits on the power of the parliament, degrading the electoral process.

In January 1995 an important political event took place which demonstrated a model of political transition that Algeria could realistically use to escape the impasse that it had been prisoner to for the previous fifteen years. On the initiative of the Italian catholic community Sant' Egidio, the principal opposition groups who favoured an agreed political solution – the FIS, the FLN, the FFS (Socialist Forces Front of Hocine Aït-Ahmed), the MDA (Movement for Democracy in Algeria, headed by Ahmed Ben Bella), the PT (Workers Party, led by Louisa Hanoune), al-Nahda, Contemporary Muslim Youth, and the LADDH (Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights) – met in Rome. The representatives of these organisations agreed for the first time to sign a 'national contract', which proposed 'negotiations' with *le pouvoir* to put an end to the 'civil war', and demanded the 'non-involvement of the army in the political process', the 'effective release of the FIS leadership and all political prisoners', the 'end of all confrontation', and a 'return to constitutional legality and popular sovereignty'. All participants – including the Islamist FIS – affirmed the 'rejection of all violence in order to gain or maintain power', the 'respect of the handover of political power between parties through universal suffrage' and the 'consecration of the democratic multi-party system'.

This 'national contract' was right away vehemently denounced by the Algerian regime and, very significantly, by all the so-called forces of opposition that the regime controlled.

### **The impossible 'escape-route out of the crisis'**

By the end of 1998, Algerian society was deeply riven by nearly seven years of civil war, and in particular by the horrific massacres of the civilian population by the GIA, probably with

the involvement of the DRS. Having neutralised the prospect of any effective opposition, particularly from political Islamist forces, for some considerable time, the army chiefs and the DRS decided to begin a new chapter by installing the civilian Abdelaziz Bouteflika (an old apparatchik of the system from 1962 to 1978) as head of state. He was voted into office in April 1999 through a rigged electoral process. In accordance with the demands of his mentors, Bouteflika introduced the 'Concorde Civile', which had been endorsed by a massive majority in a national referendum, on 16 September 1999. In theory, this law should have led to true 'national reconciliation', with the former partisans of the FIS being included in the negotiations.

The legislation however, like so much else, was only political 'sleight of hand', appearing to be a positive reform initiative but actually consolidating the power of a corrupt and divisive regime. Parliament, with little actual power in its hands, was monopolised by a three-party 'presidential alliance': the FLN (which the DRS resumed control of as early as 1996), the RND (a clone of the FLN, created *ex nihilo* in 1995), and the MSP of the 'domesticated' Islamist Mahfoud Nahnah (now deceased). This 'alliance' was formed for the sake of appearances, but it prefigured the type of political structure that the military cabal wanted to 'normalise' in the long run.

The immovable Chief of the DRS, General Mohamed Médiène, in a shaky alliance with the other strong man of *le pouvoir*, General Larbi Belkheir (officially a simple 'cabinet chief' to president Bouteflika and, from 2005, Ambassador to Morocco, but in reality one of the main masterminds in the 'dirty war'), began in 1999 to look for an escape-route out of the political crisis. He drew inspiration from the South Korean and Romanian transitional models where, in 1988 and 1989 respectively, the chiefs of the secret services (the KCIA and the Securitate) succeeded (more so in South Korea than in Romania) in extricating themselves from military-based regimes in which they had occupied key positions and reinvented themselves as business entrepreneurs, taking control of private businesses to ensure their fortunes. Transposed to Algeria, this scenario implies that the military decision-makers will one day have to yield their power to a civil administration, as long as three main conditions are fulfilled:

1. assurances of an unconditional amnesty in Algeria and cast-iron guarantees that they will never face prosecution abroad for all the crimes they have committed since 1992, including the massive misappropriation of funds over the last twenty years;
2. construction of an economic infrastructure that would enable them (and their children) to convert their current source of substantial wealth (unofficial 'commissions' received on imports and exports) into capital that would be invested in large future business ventures;
3. the successful ascension of Islamo-conservatives to the future dominant political class, able to pacify social unrest and protect the economic interests of today's military decision-makers.

However, the system is so sclerotic, and the political class so corrupted and discredited by more than forty years of domination by the SM-DRS, that this scenario faces many



difficulties. President Bouteflika, in trying to create more room to manoeuvre in negotiations with the generals, initially delayed the promulgation of a genuine amnesty for crimes committed during the 'dirty war'. When he finally did so in February 2006 his official edicts contradicted the Algerian constitution and all the international conventions the country has signed. Attempts to siphon off public funds through legitimate business fronts met with spectacular failure, as demonstrated by the case of the corporate group 'Khalifa' which was discreetly promoted by General Larbi Belkheir – the group went bankrupt in 2002, and the billionaire Rafik Khalifa fled to the UK leaving a trail of scandals in his wake.

From 2000 to 2006, only two notable successes were scored by the military decision-makers' strategy: the growing support for the regime from large numbers of former members of the FIS opposition, thanks to a systematic deployment of bribes and various sweeteners, and the cultivation of an Islamist middle class which supports the military regime and the 'career reorientation' of many former 'little chiefs' from the 'Islamist *maquis*', whose budding commercial activities will make them small fortunes. This proto middle class could form the future political base of a co-opted and toothless Islamo-conservative government, and could potentially replace, much to their disgust, the small minority of French-speaking secularists known as the 'eradicators', as they were labelled for their unwillingness to negotiate with Islamists and their enthusiasm for the state policy of 'eradication'.

At the same time, despite an unexpected cash bonanza which saw tens of billions of dollars flood into the state's coffers thanks to the rising price of oil and gas (the export of which accounts for 98% of foreign trade receipts and approximately 60% of the state's financial resources), wide sections of the population, both urban and rural, continue to live in hopeless misery, surrounded by deteriorating infrastructures. Due to the lack of open political frameworks, the opposition manifests itself mainly in 'riots of misery', which have been occurring with increasing and impressive frequency since 2002, and through the growing wave of activism among the new autonomous trade unions, particularly in the public sector.

Facing a potentially damaging social revolt, the DRS chiefs have chosen to play the 'residual terrorism' card. The GIA have been gradually replaced since 1998 by a new mysterious armed Islamist terror group, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). There is little doubt that the DRS has also infiltrated and now manipulates this organisation (even if some factions within it have probably retained some level of autonomy).

The GSPC today fulfils a double role: since September 2001 its mere existence provides the Algerian regime with valuable political capital, able to reap the benefits of aligning itself more closely with the west. In the name of the 'Global War on Terror', the regime is further legitimised in its role as a regional gendarme, integrated within a US (and European) geopolitical and military strategy in the Sahara and the Mediterranean, aiming to stem the flow of migrants heading north through Algeria and control territory which is rich in hydrocarbons. Domestically, the armed violence of the GSPC also serves to justify the state of emergency and the continuation of laws which contravene international human rights conventions. These measures justify the criminalisation of trade union opposition and

'riots of misery'. More importantly, since the beginning of 2006, a map showing the GSPC's intensified terrorist activities (targeting both civilians and the security forces), increasingly matches the sites of the riots, with bombs exploding at the exact locations where riots have just occurred. In brief, it is highly likely that the DRS exploits 'Islamic terror' to curb widespread social anger.

### **Which criteria for a legitimate representation of Islamists?**

The genuine political forces opposed to the Algerian regime have currently been weakened and dispersed. There are extremely few official representatives of the Islamist legalist trend that are still politically credible within Algeria's national borders. This situation can be explained by the extreme 'effectiveness' of the repression that has been imposed by *le pouvoir* since 1992, and by the level of sophistication attained regarding the manipulation of survivors of the massacres: many valuable key players have been physically eliminated, while many survivors (both in Algeria and in exile) have made Faustian pacts and allied themselves, as a matter of self-preservation or self-interest, to the military leaders and their anti-democratic conception of political power.

Within this framework, in gauging the credibility of Islamists as genuine representatives of Islamist trends and legitimate negotiators with the EU, the criteria appear to be as follows:

1. their degree of autonomy in relation to *le pouvoir*, which is both reflective of the strength of their political base and their 'oppositional' credibility;
2. their engagement in seeking and finding a genuine political solution to the civil war, and notably their involvement in the 1995 'national contract' of Sant' Egidio: this 'Sant' Egidio criterion' is reflective of the wholehearted adherence to the principle of the democratic rotation of political parties based on the popular will of the people; considering that the Algerian regime was vehemently opposed to this process (forcing its allies to do the same), this criterion thus reveals how genuine political opponents are;
3. their commitment to a transitional framework for justice, establishing the truth behind the massive human rights violations that have been occurring since 1992, and to ensure those responsible face impartial judgement, be they members of the security forces or Islamist armed groups.

These three criteria can practically distinguish those among the Algerian Islamist trends who have more or less clearly signed up to abide by the basic rules of the democratic process: the two parties which were quickly legalised by the chiefs of the DRS because they knew they could control them, and the various survivors of the banned FIS, divided between those that have done u-turns and allied themselves with the generals, and the others.

### **The official Islamist competitors to the FIS**

In 2006, the 'official' competitors to the FIS, widely discredited in the Algerian public forum, continue to pay the price for their engagement with a thoroughly corrupt system.

The Hamas party, which morphed into the 'Movement for the Islamic Society' (then 'For Peace'), was formed by Mahfoud Nahnah (who died in June 2003), and is currently led by Aboudjerra Soltani. The stranglehold of *le pouvoir* on this movement has been unremitting since its creation. Nahnah ran for the presidency in 1995 and was a member of the government coalition, and his successor, Soltani, became a minister (without portfolio). The fact that Nahnah was initially seen as the Algerian representative of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood movement has led to a paradoxical and unique situation compared to other countries in the region: in Algeria, this strain of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers holds no credibility as a representative of the Islamist political opposition, but the school of thought inspired by the Brotherhood still occupies an important place in the country.

Al-Nahda (The Revival) was founded (and is led to this day) by Abdallah Djaballah on ideological premises close to those of the FIS and the Muslim Brotherhood. Despite being formed as a genuine opposition party, al-Nahda very quickly ran into the political reality and had to pay for its legal survival. Present during the Sant' Egidio meeting, Djaballah did not clearly support the process, although he abstained from outright public condemnation. He has since regularly supported and collaborated with the phoney political pluralism pushed by the administration, volunteering himself as a candidate in the rigged presidential elections of April 2004 to give them an outward appearance of democratic legitimacy. Since then, his party has been prey to internal dissension, undoubtedly provoked by the DRS.

### **The heirs of the FIS legacy**

It is obvious that the broad social and political constituency that the FIS managed to build up and mobilise in the early '90s is still the most important component of a potentially effective legal opposition to the regime, but the FIS no longer exists as a political party. Since its banning and dissolution in March 1992, it has been 'represented' – with no current legal basis or coherent structure, even at a clandestine level – by its two historic leaders, Ali Belhadj and Abassi Madani, as well as some of its exiled executives. It is very difficult to seriously evaluate the supporters of each of the players in the broader context of a population which is deeply hostile to the military and security chiefs, and who have been largely deprived of any realistic political perspective despite a genuine will to participate.

As for the EU, the criteria for the identification of credible Islamist interlocutors, both in Algeria and in exile, is currently less a matter of the political positions that they formerly or currently occupy, than of the cautious evaluation of the public's trust that one can attribute to each of them with respect to their bases (and, of course, to their degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the regime). Because of the lack of space here for a more (and indispensable) detailed analysis, we will only concentrate briefly on the most notorious personalities.

*Inside the country*

- *Ali Belhadj* (52), former FIS number two, was held in jail in very harsh conditions for twelve years (1991-2003). His radical vision has considerably softened during the last few years. He can still undoubtedly be credited for attracting popular support and maintaining an independent and genuine autonomy in opposition to the military, making him a very rare and credible political interlocutor. However, his 'radicalist' reputation will make it difficult for the European Union to endorse him. Belhaj could however be represented by mandated interlocutors.
- *Madani Mezrag*, chief of the AIS (dubbed, at the time of its inception in June 1994, as the 'military wing' of the FIS), concluded a unilateral truce with the chiefs of the DRS in October 1997. He has since publicly supported the 'Concorde Civile' process (September 1999), and later the unconditional amnesty of military personnel implicated in the 'dirty war' (February 2006); his credibility has thus been severely diminished, and as early as 1994 a number of experienced observers linked him to the DRS.
- *The members of the former 'Executive Instance' of the FIS abroad*, which was run from Aachen (Germany) by Rabah Kébir, have since the turn of the century managed to forge an agreement with the regime which allows them to return to Algeria, along with other members of FIS delegations from Germany and Belgium. Kébir returned in September 2006: he immediately multiplied initiatives to prepare the creation of an "FIS light", but he and his friends lack political credibility due to their dealings with the Algerian regime.

*Outside the country*

- Since 2003, after 12 years of detention and house arrest, *Abassi Madani*, the former FIS number one, now lives in Doha (Qatar). At 75 years of age, isolated and physically weakened, he is no longer held to be widely representative.
- *Anwar Haddam* has directed (1992-2002) a 'Parliamentary Delegation of the FIS' from exile (a delegation of elected parliamentarians that was appointed by the National Executive Committee headed by Mohammed Saïd and Abderrezak Redjam) in the United States (where Anwar Haddam has himself been in political exile since 1993). It was the Parliamentary Delegation which led the FIS delegation in Sant' Egidio. At odds with the leadership of the Executive Instance, he was approached by the current Prime Minister Belkhadem at the end of 2005, but he has yet to return to Algeria. Despite having preserved a certain degree of autonomy, he does not seem to carry much weight.
- *Ahmed Zaoui* has been exiled in New Zealand since 2002, where he still hopes to obtain political asylum. He belongs to the small number of former FIS interlocutors who have preserved a substantial amount of political credibility.
- *Mourad Dhina* has been residing in Switzerland since the '80s, and was a member of the executive bureau of the FIS until 2004. For several years he and his small circle of allies have advocated a reformist path for the future of the Islamic movement, and have resisted all attempts at co-optation from the DRS. Although relatively isolated, he is a rare independent personality who is capable of representing the expectations of a large swathe of the Islamist Algerian trend, and he fits the 'Sant' Egidio criterion'.

### **A misleading political stability**

Algerian society seems to be enjoying a period of relative economic and political stability at this moment in time (beginning of 2007), mainly due to oil and gas revenues, but it is a fragile stability because of four factors:

First, the dual nature of the political system (real executive power is monopolised by the chief of the DRS behind the democratic facade embodied by an 'elected' head of state), which has existed for the last twenty-five years, is betraying serious signs of exhaustion. The serious illness of president Bouteflika, who is an essential part of the system, and uncertainties over his successor, have contributed to reanimate the conflicts between the various civil and military clans linked to the DRS chiefs. Aged 67 and 68 respectively, generals Mohamed Médiène and Larbi Belkheir are failing to facilitate a political transition towards a new system with new decision-makers. The hyper-concentration of their power could in the medium term lead to serious internal divisions amongst the factions who are jockeying to inherit the power within the junta, making this a potentially important source of destabilisation.

Second, a large part of the populace is living in an increasingly precarious condition: more than 25% of the population live below the poverty threshold, and the middle class are becoming increasingly pauperised (with the exception of war-profiteers). 'Riots of misery' are spreading and could potentially lead to social revolt on a wider scale.

Third, although the hydrocarbon exploration fields are extremely well guarded, to the point that they constitute a country with defined borders, the oil and gas pipelines which run to the Mediterranean coast are exposed to manifestations of social revolt and sabotage which could gradually become more violent.

Fourth, the extent of political and economic corruption, and the total dependence of the economy on hydrocarbons, are serious obstacles to diverse endogenic economic development, which is desperately needed (e.g. the industrial sector is highly inefficient).

### **Possible lines of action for the EU**

It is therefore in the interest of the EU to favour the economic and political renewal of Algeria, pledging to act as guarantors of long-term democratic stability.

This would send a clear signal acknowledging the fact that the EU is fully prepared to include genuinely democratic Islamist forces in its choice of possible partners, and would lend meaningful support to all the progressive forces (political forces, trade unions and truly independent organisations within civil society), Islamist as well as secular, which are currently disappearing but are struggling to work for the reconstitution of a genuinely representative state. Beyond the independent Islamist figures mentioned in the section above, these forces principally include: The Socialist Forces Front (presided over by Hocine Aït-Ahmed), which advocates the necessity of a constituent assembly; the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LADDH, led by the lawyer Hocine Zérouane); the autonomous trade unions that have been forming in recent years (and not been officially recognised) within the public sector (for example SNAPAP). A confluence of these forces, although they are currently relatively atomised, is possible and must be encouraged.

EU action would also help enlarge and protect the political space enjoyed by these progressive forces, especially by securing guarantees from the Algerian government to repeal the state of emergency (which has been in force since February 1992) and to fully respect the international conventions on human rights and anti-corruption measures to which Algeria is a signatory. The EU and its member states would use the legal tools at their disposal to encourage the Algerian government to stop violating human rights (abiding by Article 2 of the EU Algeria Agreement Partnership, codified in March 2005, or item 41.1a of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966) and curtail the mass corruption that is a barrier to any real economic development.

### **Advantages and inconveniences for the EU**

In the short term, the endorsement of such a policy would certainly face severe resistance from the key powerbrokers in Algeria. They may well be tempted, as a form of retaliation, to strengthen the links with the United States which they have cultivated over the last few years at economic (with the increased presence of US oil firms in Algeria), political and military (within the framework of anti-terrorist cooperation in the 'War on Terror') levels, but the EU holds a potential economic trump card in its dealings with Algiers, in that it is by far the largest consumer/buyer of Algerian hydrocarbons (a position that geographic proximity renders irreversible).

Within the EU, it is highly possible that this policy would be contested by Italy and especially France, a number of whose leaders from right across the political spectrum are compromised by their links – politically and economically – with the chiefs of the DRS. These links are in fact dangerous for the EU, especially on a security level (as was demonstrated in 1995 with the horrific terrorist attacks on French soil which were attributed to the GIA, but were in truth initiated by the DRS chiefs to pressurise the French government of Prime Minister Alain Juppé to end their support for the 'national contract' of Sant' Egidio).

The risk of violent destabilisation in Algeria must be avoided in both the medium and long term as that would play into the hands of Islamic extremist trends – it is therefore in the best economic and political interests of the EU to immediately start exploring initiatives that would facilitate the blossoming of the democratic process in Algeria. The EU should, in a prudent but robust manner, support initiatives to help authentically democratic forces, especially those of political Islam: they are currently dispersed and weakened, but there is little doubt that they mirror the aspirations of the majority of the Algerian population.

# Bangladesh

## Ali Riaz

While both international and domestic events<sup>1</sup> since September 2001 have thrust the issue of Islamist politics in Bangladesh to the foreground of media and policy discourses, Islamist politics is not a new phenomenon in Bangladesh. Islamists have been gaining strength over the last three decades, and they were a formidable political force in Bangladeshi politics by the mid-1980s. The primary factor behind their resurgence lies with domestic political developments since the inception of the country, particularly since 1975, but Bangladesh's close links to states in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East on the one hand and changes in global politics, including the rise of political Islam as an ideology, on the other have facilitated the process. The causes of and conditions for the rise of Islamist politics in Bangladesh have been discussed in detail elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> but in this paper I intend to address four issues, namely; the role of Islamists within the political system, the relevance of Islamists to Bangladeshi politics, Islamists' positions with regards to fundamental rights and norms such as pluralism and minority rights, and possible means through which western governments could engage Islamists in dialogue.

### Islamists and the Political Landscape

As in any other Muslim-majority country, Islamists in Bangladesh are not a homogenous and monolithic entity, nor do they belong to a single political party. The political parties that “draw on Islamic referents – terms, symbols, and events taken from the Islamic tradition – in order to articulate a distinct political agenda”<sup>3</sup> can be divided into three broad strands: those who participate, even if they do so grudgingly, in the existing political system; those who refuse to take part in constitutional politics and remain clandestine; and those who operate within the system despite reservations. While these three groups have differences on many issues, including the ideal disposition of an Islamic state, they share the common goal of establishing an Islamic state in Bangladesh through an ‘Islamic revolution.’ Furthermore, they agree that pluralist liberal democracy cannot provide a solution to the ‘moral crisis’ of the nation and its citizens. Political parties belonging to the first strand (and the emerging

third) reject violence as the only means to achieve their goals, but they are not totally averse to the idea of using violence if the situation warrants it. The second group, on the contrary, espouses violence as the only means of establishing an Islamic state. The third group has so far remained outside the traditional political arena.

In Bangladesh, the Jama'at-i-Islami (JI) and the Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ, the United Islamic Front), two partners in the 4-party coalition (2001-2006), belong to the first strand. The IOJ, however, is not a single political party but a conglomeration of seven smaller radical organisations, some of which have previously expressed solidarity with the Taliban regime.<sup>4</sup> The JI, banned until 1979 due to its support for the Pakistani army during the war in 1971, has never apologised for its role in the violence that year. There are, however, other Islamist groups who belong to this strand, but are not part of the 4-party ruling coalition. The Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon (Bangladesh Khelafat Movement), the Bangladesh Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Islam, and the Bangladesh Tariqat Federation (BTF) are cases in point.<sup>5</sup> Although all of these parties are active participants in the democratic process, their ultimate goal is to bring about a change in the nature of the Bangladeshi state and introduce Islamic laws.

It is almost impossible to calculate the precise number of clandestine militant Islamist groups operating within Bangladesh. The estimated number varies between 29 and 53. The most prominent among them are the Harkatul Jihad Bangladesh (HuJiB), the Jaamatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), and the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB). These three organisations, however, can be traced to a single network. Others include Hizb ut Tawhid, Shahdat-i-Hiqma, and Jaish-e-Muhammad. Reliable empirical data about the militant organisations, particularly profiles of the activists, are not yet available, but profiles of the militants arrested since the beginning of 2006 indicate that they are run by returnees from Afghanistan<sup>6</sup> and disaffected youths. Their attacks have generally manifested similar patterns, possibly in response to a central directive, and frequently targeted specific groups – locally prominent NGO's and NGO-run schools, members of the judiciary, and women, to name a few.

The emerging third strand is represented by the Hizb ut-Tahrir Bangladesh (HTB). The HTB is the country chapter of the London-based HT, a leading political actor in Central Asia which launched its Bangladesh chapter on 17 November 2001. It envisions a *sharia*-based *khilafa*, or caliphate. HT is the only Islamist organisation to speak of a caliphate and acknowledge its international connections. Interestingly, HT 'has been gaining most momentum through its activities at the country's universities.'<sup>7</sup> The thing that distinguishes HT from other Islamist political organisations, including the clandestine ones, is that its political agenda is global, and not just confined to Bangladesh. The final stage of the three-stage revolution of the HT, according to their documents, is: 'establishing government, implementing Islam generally and comprehensively, and carrying it as a message to the world.'

The troubling aspect with regards to these organisations is the close relationships between Islamist political parties and clandestine militant groups. While the JI has repeatedly denied any links with the JMB, the confessional statements of suspects arrested in connection with the 2005 bombings<sup>8</sup> and close examinations of their backgrounds have



revealed close links between militant groups and the JI and/or its youth wing. It is now well known that all seven members of the Majlis-e-Shura, the highest body of the proscribed JMB, had been involved with the JI or its student wing the Islami Chattra Shibir (ICS).<sup>9</sup> It is often argued that, since the coalition assumed power in 2001, the line between the underground and the state has been blurred as the presence of the JI in the government has provided militant groups with the opportunity to operate with impunity.

At the same time, Islamists, particularly the JI, are trying to broaden their appeal. Mindful of their limited electoral base (see next section for explanations) the JI seems to have adopted a strategy of “internally colonising” the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). The JI’s policy is to entrench itself by infiltrating the civil service and educational institutions, which will have a long-term impact on the government and policy-making bodies.

### **The Relevance of the Islamists**

The significant position that Islamists currently occupy in Bangladeshi politics is puzzling from both ideological and electoral standpoints. The nation’s tolerant and syncretistic cultural tradition should have been inhospitable to the Islamists, but the acrimonious relationship between the two major political parties, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Awami League (AL), their lack of a clear and convincing ideological perspective and subsequent reliance on issue-based differentiation, and their proclivity towards a ‘politics of expediency’ have enabled the Islamists to gradually gain prominence. The vacuum created by the absence of a social democratic party and/or moderate left parties as a viable alternative has also favoured the Islamists, the Jama‘at-i-Islami in particular, by letting them project themselves as an untainted political force.

In electoral politics, the Islamists have succeeded in fortifying a small but loyal base and have been able to use this to emerge as kingmakers. Both political parties command an almost equal share of the popular vote, but they do not have enough support to form a government on their own. In 1991, the BNP came to power with the support of the JI; and in 1996, the AL had to seek the support of the Jatiya Party (JP), the party of the former military ruler General Ershad, to assume office. The election results from 2001 (Table 1 next page) testify to this fact.

Table 1: Election Results 2001

Party	Number of seats won	Number of votes won	Percentage
BNP	193	22 717 548	40.86
Awami League	62	22 360 194	40.21
Jama'at	17	2 385 904	4.29
Jatiya Party (E) & Islamic Constitution Movement (ICM)	14	4 037 992	7.26
Jatiya Party (N-F)	4	621 515	1.12
Jatiya Party (Manju)	1	243 114	0.44
Islami Oikya Jote	2	375 980	0.68

While the above picture might justify the 'marriage of convenience' between the BNP and the JI in 2001, it is the long-term electoral trend that is puzzling to say the least. Since the new democratic era began in 1991, the JI has played significant roles in either helping political parties to assume office or bringing them down,<sup>10</sup> but their (as well as other Islamist parties') share of the vote has declined significantly (Table 2). Among the major political parties, Jama'at-i-Islami is the only party which has experienced a decline in popular support from 1991 (4.1 million, 12.13%) to 2001 (2.4 million, 4.29%). This is a decrease of around 41% in a decade. The majority of their candidates lost their deposits in 1991 (they contested 221 constituencies), and this number increased in 1996 (when they contested 300 constituencies). The number of seats held by Jama'at-i-Islami declined from 18 in 1991 to 3 in 1996, but rebounded back up to 17 in 2001. Evidently, their share of the vote and the number of seats won moved in opposing directions. The seats that were won by JI candidates are concentrated in a few areas, largely along the Indo-Bangladesh border.

Table 2: Islamists and the Election: The Trend

Party	1991			1996			2001		
	Seats won	Number of Votes	%	Seats won	Number of Votes	%	Seats won	Number of Votes	%
Jama'at	18	4.13 million	12.13	3	3.64 million	8.61	17	2.38 million	4.29
IOJ	1	0.26 million	0.79	1	0.46 million	1.09	2	0.37 million	0.68
Khelafat Andolon	0	93 049	0.27	-	-	-	-	-	-
Zaker Party	0	417 737	1.22	-	-	-	-	-	-

One can conclude from the above statistics that Islamists in general and particularly the JI are exercising influence beyond their support base, and have been putting the majority on the defensive.

### Islamists and Democratic Norms

In spite of the fact that the major Islamist parties operate within the constitutional framework of the country, certain characteristics, particularly their opposition to the idea of pluralism, political or otherwise, and their rejection of democracy as non-Islamic, present a clear danger to the existing political system. The founder of the Jama'at, Abul Ala Mawdudi, and the leader of the Jama'at-i-Islami Bangladesh, Golam Azam, have made it amply clear that sovereignty of the people and/or parliament, a basic tenet of liberal democracy, is a completely unacceptable precept for the party and its followers. Mawdudi, for example, insists that "God's sovereignty covers all aspects of political and legal sovereignty also, [and that] in these too no one other than God has any share. No monarch, no royal family, no elite class, no leader of any religious group, no democracy vested in the sovereignty of the people can participate in God's sovereignty."<sup>11</sup> Echoing the same position, Golam Azam writes, "the people or parliament do not have a legitimate right to take any decision contrary to the laws and regulations imposed by God."<sup>12</sup>

The militant Islamists share the same ethos. The JMB, for example, in a leaflet distributed after the bomb attacks of 17 August 2005, called the present democratic system a creation of *kuffar* (infidels). "Those who want to give institutional shape to democracy are the enemies of Islam," says the leaflet, adding that if they want '*hadayat* (blessings) of Allah,' both the government and the opposition should introduce Islamic law immediately by burying party differences. They called for the rejection of the 'evil' constitution, the removal of all shirks (setting up partners in worship with Allah/polytheism) and *bid'a* (innovations contrary to Islamic teachings), and for people to be allowed to practice Islam in the 'correct' manner. In a similar vein, the IOJ has repeatedly called for secular civil laws to be scrapped and the issuing of fatwas (religious edicts) to be allowed. They have threatened to withdraw their support from the government if the anti-fatwa verdict issued by the High Court on 1 January 2001 is not annulled.

The Islamists' contempt for their opponents is demonstrated in their attitudes and actions towards the Ahmadiyyas, a small Muslim community of less than 150 000 who have been living in Bangladesh since the 1900s. Beginning in 2002, the Ahmadiyyas have come under virulent attack from the Khatme Nabuwat (KN), an umbrella organisation of Islamist groups dedicated to the preservation of the 'finality of the prophethood' of Muhammad. They have begun a campaign to declare Ahmadiyyas 'non-Muslims.' Both the Jama'at-i-Islami and the Islami Oikyo Jote (IOJ) have lent their support to the campaign against Ahmadiyyas. The spiritual leader of the JI, Abul Ala Mawdudi, was charged with inciting violence against the Ahmadiyyas in the 1950s in Pakistan. Although JI leaders have insisted that they are not a part of the KN, the Bangladeshi media have shown that local level JI activists are at the forefront of the KN movement.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, in February 2004, JI leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee inflamed the situation with the publication of his

book *Why Qadianis are not Muslims*. The book is full of venomous statements against the Ahmadiyya community. IOJ leaders have not only supported the measures, but also participate in and organise various KN programmes. In a public gathering on 11 March 2005, the leader of a faction of the Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ), Shaikhul Hadith Azizul Hoque said, 'It (the government) lacks the courage to declare Ahmadiyyas *Kafir* (non-Muslim). Those who do not consider Qadianis *Kafir* are themselves *Kafir*.'<sup>14</sup> Consistent with their contempt of the 'other' – religious or secular – Islamists have been vigorously trying to marginalise, or if necessary annihilate, the Ahmadiyyas. Islamists see the Ahmadiyyas as a serious challenge to their narrow interpretation of Islam, because unlike secularists Ahmadiyyas can offer an alternative interpretation and thus undermine their opponents' legitimacy and subvert their claim to be the true interpreters of Islam.<sup>15</sup>

In terms of their policy towards western nations, there is unanimity among the Islamists; they are anti-western, frequently employ anti-American verbiage to draw attention, and often issue not-so-veiled threats against the United States. For example, the IOJ leader Fazlul Huq Aminee, a Member of Parliament, warned the US and Bangladesh governments in a public gathering in Dhaka on 28 April 2005 not to disturb the religious leaders of the country. 'The west and you [the Bangladesh government] should know what might happen if you disturb us,' said Aminee. Although the JI is critical of the policies of the west towards the Muslim world, particularly towards Palestine, party members are less vocal compared to the smaller Islamist groups. It is also important to note that JI was perhaps the only Islamist party in Bangladesh that didn't extend support to the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War in 1991. While Saddam's secular credentials may have prompted the JI policy, it did not criticise the US-led coalition either. The JI's policy of not antagonising the US administration can be understood from the fact that, despite their opposition to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Jama'at-i-Islami did not organise any protest demonstrations during Donald Rumsfeld's visit in June 2004.

### **Engagement with the Islamists: Problems and Prospects**

The Islamists in Bangladesh present the classic dilemma for western policy-makers: should western governments engage in a dialogue with Islamists? If they do, who should be the partners in the dialogue? What should be the goal of these engagements? It is far more difficult to answer the first two questions than the last. Additionally, answers to these questions also vary according to country. As for the third question, the primary objectives of any engagement are invariably to ensure a dynamic stability, guaranteeing adherence to international norms and strengthening democracy. The goals include reducing the possibility of Islamist movements becoming radicalised and giving Islamists a stake in the system.

Bangladesh has in recent decades become less dependent on western sources for its economic progress (Net ODA as a percentage of GDP was at about 1.9% in 2002/2003), which makes it difficult for international actors to influence domestic politics. Clearly, the opportunities for international engagement at the political level are limited. This is not to say, however, that the country should be left alone to deal with the situation, or that external

influence has no impact at all. On the contrary, the government's decision to clamp down on two militant groups in February 2005 was largely due to pressure from its development partners.<sup>16</sup>

Short-term, poorly designed interventions that fail to address longer term problems need to be avoided at any cost, and it is worth bearing in mind that the government and Bangladeshis are extremely sensitive to anything that smacks of external intervention, however well-meaning the action may be. Overt external pressures from the international community, especially from the United States and Western nations, may cause unintended consequences. It is militants who make the most of such situations, which they use to gain publicity as an excuse to stir up nationalist sentiments, present themselves as champions of nationalist causes, appear as protectors of national sovereignty, and provoke negative reactions among the masses.

In considering a policy towards Bangladesh, particularly towards its domestic political situation, caution must be exercised, and a few issues need to be considered. Firstly, while domestic political dynamics engendered Islamism and facilitated the rise of Islamist forces in Bangladesh, global events influence their acceptability to the larger population. Therefore, the foreign policy of Western nations, and the treatment of the Muslim population within western societies, have a bearing on the legitimacy of the Islamist discourse in the eyes of Bangladeshi citizens. Secondly, while it is necessary to be cognisant of the Islamists' presence in the political arena, the policies of western nations should not undermine the secularist forces representing the majority of the population. Thirdly, participation in elections does not necessarily produce democratic Islamists.<sup>17</sup> Islamists in Bangladesh, as elsewhere, often express their disdain for democracy and declare their intent to use elections as a means to win power. It is yet to be determined whether the Bangladeshi Islamists, under favourable conditions, would seek to institute legal and constitutional changes so sweeping as to practically unmake democracy.

With these caveats in mind, it is necessary to emphasise that the international community cannot pursue a policy of total disengagement either. The Bangladeshi state and political forces, irrespective of their political ideology, should be reminded of their responsibilities to tolerate pluralism, ensure individual freedom, uphold democratic values, and be active participants within the international community. But the engagements need to go beyond the political arena. As comprehending the trajectory of Islamism requires understanding of the social context of Islamism, the causes of the acquiescence of the society, the role of traditional social institutions (e.g. *madrasa*), and the scope of new Islamist cultural movements, to name but a few. A precursor to any dialogue between Islamists and the EU should entail studying these less well documented and far less explored aspects of the phenomenon, and encouraging exchanges among various segments within the Bangladeshi society, and between Bangladeshis and members of the international community.

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The international events referred to here are the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001, subsequent retaliation by the United States on Afghanistan, followed by the launching of the so-called 'War on Terror' and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Significant domestic events in Bangladesh include the landslide victory of the center-right 4-party alliance with two Islamist parties as coalition partners on 1 October 2001, systematic persecution of religious minorities after the election, the reign of terror unleashed by a clandestine militant Islamist group in the southwestern part of the country in 2004, and the simultaneous explosion of 450 bombs on 17 August 2005, which was followed by the government acknowledging the existence of a militant network throughout the country.
- <sup>2</sup> Recent publications include: Ali Riaz, *God Willing: The Politics of Islamism in Bangladesh* (Lanham, MA: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004); Tajul Islam Hashmi, "Islamic Resurgence in Bangladesh: Genesis, Dynamics and Implications," in *Religious Radicalism and Security in South Asia*, eds. Satu Limaye, Robert Wirsing and Mohan Malik (Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2004): 35-72.
- <sup>3</sup> Guilain Denoëux, "The Forgotten Swamp: Navigating Political Islam," *The Journal of Middle East Policy*, IX, 1 (March 2002).
- <sup>4</sup> The IOJ was established in 1990. It comprises seven parties: Khelafat Majlis, Nezam-e-Islam, Faraizi Jamaat, Islami Morcha, Ulama Committee, a splinter group of NAP (Bhasani), and the Islami Shashantantra Andolon. The policy-making body of the IOJ consists of a *Majlis-e-Shura* with one member from each of its component parties, and an advisory council. This alliance has undergone several rifts since its establishment. The Islami Shashantantra Andolon (Islamic Constitution Movement) left the alliance in 2001. The IOJ is currently divided into four groups with the same name. At the time of writing, all of these groups were part of the ruling coalition led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).
- <sup>5</sup> During the general election of 2001, more than 15 Islamist parties filed candidates for parliamentary seats. The existence of a large number of these parties is limited to their own letterheads, having almost no influence or mobilisational capacity.
- <sup>6</sup> At the height of the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan some 3,000 people under the leadership of Abdur Rahman Faruki traveled in several batches to Afghanistan and fought alongside other volunteer 'mujahidin.' In the following 4 years at least 24 of them died and 10 became disabled. Those who returned maintained contact with each other and reportedly joined the Harkat-ul-Jihad Bangladesh (HuJiB).
- <sup>7</sup> Mahfuz Sadiq, "Islam's New Face?," *New Age* (Dhaka), Eid Special Issue, 2005, available at: <http://www.newagebd.com/2005/nov/04/eidspecial05/non-fiction03.html>.
- <sup>8</sup> On 17 August 2005 two proscribed militant Islamist organisations exploded more than 450 bombs within a one hour time span throughout Bangladesh. This was followed up with a bombing blitz including four incidents of suicide attacks over the next several months, killing at least thirty people and wounding 150 more.
- <sup>9</sup> Shamim Ashraf, "All 7 JMB Shura men had links to Jamaat, Shibir," *Daily Star* (Dhaka), 28 April 2006.

- <sup>10</sup> Although the JI supported the BNP in 1991 to form the government, they withdrew their support and joined the AL in their bid to unseat the government. The parliament member of the JI resigned in December 1994 along with the AL members forcing the government to dissolve the parliament in late 1995, and the resignation of the cabinet.
- <sup>11</sup> Abul Ala Mawdudi (quoted by Krishna Kumar), “Religious Fundamentalism in India and Beyond,” *Parameters*, Autumn 2002: 22.
- <sup>12</sup> Golam Azam, *Bangladesher Rajniti* (“The Politics of Bangladesh”, in Bengali) (Dhaka: Al Azad, 1987): 5.
- <sup>13</sup> “Khulna bigots threaten to attack Ahmadiyyas,” *Daily Star*, 20 April, 2005: 1.
- <sup>14</sup> “Declare them non-Muslims to get electoral support,” *Daily Star*, 12 March 2005: 1.
- <sup>15</sup> To claim oneself the sole or true interpreter of Islam is essentially against the teachings of Islam. Yet the JI in Bangladesh has begun openly insisting on this. In early 2005, JI chief and cabinet minister, Matiur Rahman Nizami, warned that “speaking against Jama‘at is tantamount to speaking against Islam” (“Speaking against Jama‘at is tantamount to speaking against Islam,” *Daily Star*, 1 April 2005: 1).
- <sup>16</sup> On 23 February 2005, the government of Bangladesh, in a dramatic departure from its earlier stance, had acknowledged the presence of militant Islamist organisations within the country and banned two of them – the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB, the Awakened Muslim People [of] Bangladesh) and the Jaamatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB, the Organisation of the Holy Warriors [of] Bangladesh). The government action came on the eve of the meeting of the leading development partners of Bangladesh – the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Union and USAID “to discuss their aid strategy against the backdrop of rising Islamist militancy, violations of human rights, sliding law and order, and poor governance” the government acted half-heartedly, primarily to appease the donor community.
- <sup>17</sup> This point is drawn from the unpublished thesis of Joel Hafvenstein, “Islamism and Democracy: Political Reform and Social Order in Muslim World,” MA Thesis (Department of International Relations, Boston University, 2003).

## Indonesia

### Greg Fealy

Indonesia has a diverse array of Islamist groups, which is hardly surprising given that, with some 190 million Muslims, it comprises the world's largest Islamic community. The particularities of the country's Islamic culture and political system, however, mean that there are only a handful of groups which come close to meeting the criteria to be Islamist opposition political parties. There are two notable characteristics of political Islam in Indonesia which must first be discussed in order to explain how the groups considered in this report were selected. First, the number of genuinely Islamist parties is small, even though there are more than 100 million Muslim voters. In the two free and fair elections which have been held since the downfall of the authoritarian Suharto regime in 1998, Islamist parties (as defined by this project) gained 16% and 22% of the vote. In the 1999 election, there were 11 Islamist parties, only three of which gained more than 1% of the vote. There were only four Islamist parties in 2004, all of which exceeded 1%. Islamically inclined but non-Islamist parties gained 23% of the vote in the 1999 election and 17% in 2004, with the rest of the 'Muslim' vote going to secular parties. This shows that less than a third of Muslim voters support Islamist parties.

Second, the nature of Indonesia's predominantly presidential system and inclusive political culture means that, since 1998, the line between 'government' and 'opposition' has been blurred, and there has seldom been a clearly defined opposition party in a liberal democratic sense. The four post-Suharto governments have been comprised of a broad cross-section of the political spectrum, with most cabinets containing representatives from nearly all the main parties. Involvement in the cabinet does not always ensure loyalty to the government, however, and parties with cabinet ministers have also been highly critical of government policies and have sometimes opposed key bills in parliament. So none of the main Islamist parties can be called an opposition party in the strict sense of the word, although most have been hostile to the government at different times.

Bearing in mind these peculiarities, the number of relevant groups for this study is small. Three parties however are a near fit for the analytical framework as they: have a clearly



'Islamic' political agenda; serve an at least quasi-oppositional role in that they criticise the government, often on the basis of an 'Islamic' platform; are predominantly domestic rather than pan-Islamic in their focus; are non-violent; and are non-revolutionary. The three parties which qualify are:

- The Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera; PKS)
- The United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan; PPP)
- The Crescent Moon and Star Party (Partai Bulan Bintang, PBB).

Of these, the PKS is the most relevant to this project as it offers the best prospects as a dialogue participant. The other Islamist movements in Indonesia fall outside the criteria because they do not have an explicitly Islamic political agenda, they have a record of violence, and they are sectarian or anti-democratic.

### **The Prosperous Justice Party (PKS)**

PKS was formed in August 1998, the first new party to be declared following the collapse of Suharto's New Order regime. Initially called the Justice Party (Partai Keadilan, PK), it had its roots in the Muslim Brotherhood-inspired Tarbiyah (Education) Movement, which sprang up on state university campuses from the early 1980s. PK was one of 48 parties to contest the 1999 general election, in which it gained 1.4 million votes (1.4% of the national total) and seven seats in the 500-member parliament. PK's failure to cross the 2% electoral threshold meant that it was obliged to launch a new party, PKS, to run in the 2004 elections – although it was actually the same party under another name. PKS's fortunes improved dramatically in this election, however – it received 8.3 million votes (7.3%), a six-fold increase on the previous election, which gave it 45 seats in the new 550-member parliament. The party has three nominees in the current cabinet, though none is a cadre.

The core leadership groups within PKS, at both national and regional levels, are primarily drawn from the ranks of former campus activists, particularly those with close ties to the Tarbiyah movement. Tarbiyah was a new phenomenon in Indonesian Islam which arose during the 1980s, partly as a result of disillusionment with existing Islamic parties and organisations and partly as a response to the regime's tight restrictions on Islamic mobilisation. Tarbiyah activists set out to create a new type of Islamic thinking and behaviour, drawing heavily on Muslim Brotherhood ideology and organisational models to launch their own movement. Emphasis was placed on the personal piety of members, high academic and professional achievements, social activism, and the creation of a 'total' Islamic system in Indonesia, albeit by gradual means. In its early phases Tarbiyah was outwardly apolitical to avoid coming under scrutiny from the state's security agencies, but the movement's activists won control of student senates in the big state universities by the early 1990s. This served as a springboard for the emergence of Tarbiyah as a political force in early 1998 when the Suharto regime began to teeter – a process which was accelerated by Tarbiyah-backed student demonstrations.

When PK was formed in mid-1998, its Tarbiyah founders intended it to be a new paradigm in Indonesian political Islam, and to a considerable extent they have succeeded

in that aim. The priority was to create a genuine cadre party, one set on bringing Islamic values to the very core of its political activism. Recruits could only become members once they proved their religious as well as political commitment to the cause, and advancement within the party depended on establishing a sound record of Islamic activism and intellectual contributions. This was in marked contrast to virtually all other Islamic parties, where there is little serious caderisation, and cronyism and the purchasing of high office is rampant. At the time of the 1999 election, PK had only 60 000 members, although it attracted a good deal of attention due to its clever campaign techniques and articulate spokespeople. The party has grown rapidly since then, however, and when PKS 'replaced' PK in mid-2003, membership had risen to 300 000, and some party leaders estimate there are currently more than 500 000 members.

PKS's success, both in terms of increasing membership and its sharply rising electoral support, can be attributed to two separate but linked factors. First, the party has a strong appeal among what might be termed 'aspirational' devout middle-class Muslims. These are the people who are self-consciously Islamic, many of them having only become 'serious' Muslims later in life, and who want to see Islam become the basis of the reform of public life and socio-economic revival in Indonesia. These new PKS members are normally disappointed with what they see as the corrupt, nepotistic and Islamically compromised activities of other Islamic parties. Whereas PK's initial members were almost entirely from a Tarbiyah background, PKS now boasts a wide-ranging membership, including many activists from mainstream Muslim organisations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. Second, the party has built its electoral appeal largely on the basis of 'secular' reform issues, such as anti-corruption policies, upholding the rule of law, a more equitable distribution of wealth, and better educational, health and welfare services. PKS's slogan in the 2004 election, for example, was 'More Caring and Cleaner' – with the use of Islamic symbols and language being downplayed. Many of the party's new voters in 2004 seem to have been attracted by its 'clean and caring' image, rather than by any specific Islamic appeal.

PKS has predicted it will more than treble its 2004 vote in the next general election in 2009; its official target is 20%. There are, however, signs that this is excessively optimistic. To begin with, PKS has not done as well as expected in local elections in 2005 and 2006, and furthermore, several well-regarded public opinion surveys have shown the party's support to have more than halved since the 2004 election – something PKS leaders say is at odds with their own polling results. It is likely that the party has suffered a backlash for supporting several of the Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono government's highly unpopular policies, such as reducing fuel subsidies. Nonetheless, the probable decline in the electoral fortunes of other Islamic parties such as PPP and the National Mandate Party (PAN) will favour PKS. The party has also benefited from public disapproval of international developments such as the Iraq war and the bombing of Afghanistan, although these are unlikely to make a big difference come election time. The party will probably receive about 15% of the vote at the next election, which would make it the largest Islamist party. PKS's former president, the current chairman of the People's Consultative Assembly, Hidayat Nur Wahid, is also spoken of as a possible vice-presidential candidate in 2009.

To date, PKS has been exemplary in its democratic behaviour. It has worked strictly within constitutional guidelines and has upheld the 'rules of the game'. Unlike most other Islamic parties, it has no 'security units' (commonly made up of thuggish elements) and it has not resorted to physically intimidating its opponents. The party has organised rallies which, despite attendances in excess of 100 000, have been almost invariably well-marshalled and peaceful. The best example of PKS's self-restraint came in the 2005 local elections when a provincial court overturned the party's victory in the district of Depok, just outside Jakarta. The judges were widely suspected of taking bribes to reverse the election result and were later stood down by the Supreme Court, which upheld PKS's win. Throughout the crisis, PKS controlled its incensed supporters and used legal processes and peaceful protests to have the court decision reviewed.

Ideologically, PKS can be described as a moderate Islamist organisation. While it favours more comprehensive "*sharia*-isation" and the creation of an Islamic state under the leadership of a caliph, these goals are to be achieved gradually and are regarded as long-term ambitions. In the short term, PKS accepts a liberal democratic system and Indonesia's religiously neutral constitution and state ideology (known as Pancasila), and it has been willing to enter into alliances with non-Islamist and even non-Muslim parties in order to secure political advantages. The party places great emphasis on predication, arguing that only a deeper Islamic consciousness within society will enable the implementation of Islamic law and the establishment of an Islamic state. Democracy is thus a means to an end, not the end in itself. In reality, there is considerable internal debate within PKS regarding the party's Islamisation timetable. The more ardently Islamist sections of the party are impatient to see *sharia*-inspired legislation and a robust championing of Islamic causes, both domestic and international. On the other hand the pragmatists believe that being 'too Islamic' will alienate the middle ground and jeopardise the party's plans for rapid electoral growth.

PKS has some ambivalence in its attitudes towards the West. Many of its senior figures speak good English, have a Western tertiary education and visit the West frequently. As a result, their awareness of international developments is probably higher than that of any other Indonesian Islamic party. The party also actively courts engagement with Western officials and has an expanding scholarship programme to send its most promising cadre members abroad for further training. Yet, true to its Brotherhood-derived ideology, PKS tends to see the West as hostile to Islam. There is condemnation of US backing for Israel and the Iraq War and strong support for the Palestinian cause (certainly much stronger than that of other Indonesian Islamic parties). The West's 'war on terror' is also regarded with wariness. Attitudes tend to be less suspicious towards the EU than the US.

Of all Indonesia's Islamist parties, PKS offers the best prospects for meaningful engagement. Despite the party's concerns about Western motives and manipulation, its leaders are nonetheless worldly and open to reasoned argument, and PKS is also keen to be seen as a responsible party and to allay impressions that it is fanatical or introspective. All these factors favour a fruitful interaction between PKS and European interlocutors.

### The United Development Party (PPP)

The United Development Party (PPP) was, for much of Suharto's 32-year presidency, the only Islamic party. It was born in early 1973 of a regime-orchestrated merger of the four existing Islamic parties, the two most important of which were Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Parmusi. PPP was, by government intention, an unstable political organisation, with deep doctrinal, policy and personal differences between its NU and Parmusi wings. The regime manipulated these tensions in order to reduce the effectiveness of the party and also systematically stripped it of its Islamic attributes. Nonetheless, PPP served as the main, if often rather tame, focus of political opposition to the regime. In the six elections it contested during the Suharto era, PPP was the second largest party, gaining between 16% and 29% of the vote. PPP quickly re-positioned itself during the post-Suharto transition to democracy, shedding its earlier image of being compliant to a secular regime. The party installed a new leadership and became more overtly Islamist, and a demand that the constitution be amended to oblige Muslims to uphold Islamic law became a centrepiece of its political platform. In the 1999 election PPP gained 11.3 million votes (10.7% of the national vote) and 58 seats in parliament, making it the largest Islamic party, but its share of the vote fell to 9.2 million (8.1%) in 2004, giving it only 52 seats in parliament. Most of the drop in the PPP's vote was attributable to a breakaway faction which formed its own party for the 2004 election. Three party members are currently serving as ministers in the present government.

Most of PPP's support in the past seven years has come from the Outer Islands (i.e. outside Java, which is home to 70% of Indonesia's population). The party's membership is drawn evenly from traditionalist (NU communities) and modernist (mainly Parmusi and Muhammadiyah) Muslims, making it the only Islamic party to attract a sizable vote from each side of the main doctrinal divide within Indonesian Islam. PPP's ability to retain much of its electoral support in the post-Suharto era is due in no small measure to its well-established political machinery – it has a strong branch network and experienced local cadre, as well as good sources of funding, much of which is a legacy of the Suharto period. Most other parties had to establish their organisational structures from scratch in 1998 and were thus at a disadvantage.

PPP's electoral prospects are not bright, however. The party has an aging and ineffective central leadership which has doggedly resisted renewal, and its current chairman (and former vice-president) Hamzah Haz will not seek re-election at the next PPP congress in early 2007, even though none of the leading contenders for his position has a strong electoral appeal. Furthermore, the party is bitterly divided between its NU and Parmusi wings and appears unlikely to reunite into a cohesive party in time for the 2009 election. Public opinion surveys suggest that its support has dropped below 5%, and many pundits believe that it will struggle to arrest this slide in popularity.

PPP has been a prominent champion of an Islamist agenda, including pushing for the constitutional recognition of Islamic law and the regional implementation of *sharia*. While some of this reflects genuine commitment, there is also a sizable measure of political calculation. Unlike PKS, which holds intense internal discussions on matters such as the

Islamic state issue, PPP is dutiful rather than passionate about Islamism. It also accepts Indonesia's religiously neutral Pancasila state as final, and eschews the notion of formally establishing an Islamic state.

The party has a good record of democratic standards – when it e.g. introduced constitutional amendments requiring Muslims to practise Islamic law, it readily accepted their emphatic defeat in the People's Consultative Assembly in 2002. PPP has strongly defended human rights issues, particularly those related to the Islamic community, although it has been less vocal about protecting the interests of non-Muslim groups. The party has several affiliated youth and militia organisations which have a reputation for intimidation and involvement in semi-criminal activity, but the central leadership appears tolerant of this situation and numerous regional leaders' support is based in these affiliates.

PPP's attitudes to the West have been consistently critical. As with all Islamic parties, it opposes US policies regarding Israel and has been outspoken in its criticism of international counter-terrorism campaigns. Hamzah Haz attracted widespread foreign media coverage when he described US president George Bush as the world's biggest terrorist and visited the alleged emir of Jemaah Islamiyah, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, in jail. Haz has also been critical of the Blair government but not, seemingly, other EU countries. Other PPP leaders have taken more moderate stances and are lukewarm on the party's Islamist policies.

PPP presents a less attractive option for EU engagement. Partly this is due to the less intellectual and more parochial nature of the party, which has less interest in international affairs than PKS. It is also partly due to PPP's political decline, which means that it is less likely to be an influential force in Indonesian politics over the next decade. However, dialogue with selected PPP leaders may still be worthwhile, particularly those with less trenchant attitudes towards the West.

### **The Crescent Moon and Star Party (PBB)**

The Crescent Moon and Star Party (PBB) was formed in late 1998 and draws its support largely from the Indonesian Islamic Predication Council (Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia, DDII). DDII was established by members of Masyumi, the largest Islamic party of the 1950s, which was banned by President Sukarno in 1960 and prohibited from reforming during the Suharto era. PBB claims to be the legatee of the Masyumi tradition and it is the most serious of Indonesia's current Islamist parties about formalising the implementation of *sharia*. The party is by far the smallest of the three considered in this report. It gained 2 million votes (1.9%) and 13 seats in parliament in the 1999 election, while in 2004 its support rose to 3 million votes (2.6%), giving them 11 seats in the new parliament. PBB has two ministers in the current government.

PBB has a loyal but narrow support base, with little prospect of expansion. Nearly all of its cadre have a DDII background, and most of its voters come from similar networks. It has limited funding, a weak branch structure, and it has also been riven with internal disputes in recent years, although these seem to have abated during 2006. The party has only a small pool of talented cadre and has relied heavily upon the reputation of its former chairman and present State Secretary, Yusril Izha Mahendra, and the new chairman and

Forestry Minister M.S. Kab'an. PBB will need to change its name and symbol for the 2009 election as it failed to meet the 3% threshold for contesting the next election. It is currently in a parliamentary coalition of Islamic and secular nationalist parties.

As with other Islamist parties, PBB has behaved in accordance with democratic principles. In principle it has committed itself to establishing an Islamic state, but in practice the party has given little attention to the details of how this would be achieved. Both Yusril and Kab'an are quite cosmopolitan figures but there is a strong sectarian sentiment within many sections of the party. DDII has long been preoccupied with perceived 'Christianisation' campaigns designed to weaken the Islamic community. It also has a sharply anti-Western tone to its rhetoric and believes firmly that 'Christian and Jewish-controlled Western governments' are engaged in conspiracies against Islamic-majority countries like Indonesia. Thus, while there are a small number of senior PBB figures who might be amenable to dialogue with the EU, most would probably be uninterested at best and suspicious at worst.

### **Conclusion**

Viewed from the perspective of democratisation, all three Islamist parties considered in this report can be regarded as playing a responsible role. They abide by the democratic rules, accepting the decision of voters in elections and discharging their tasks in legislatures with respect for due process. Each of the parties could, however, do more to promote pluralism and gender equality, as well as providing the public with more considered information on contentious issues such as terrorism, the need for foreign investment in Indonesia, and responsible economic management.

PKS, in particular, warrants close attention. It is receptive to international overtures and keen to improve opportunities for its cadre. Arranging dialogues and international exchanges as well as scholarship for training abroad are likely to be positively received by the party. While some PKS cadre may view this as compromising, there are many who are eager to improve their skill base and gain broader experience of the world. Engagement with them could well be rewarding, though it would be unrealistic to expect any dramatic change in attitude. PPP is also worthy of consideration, although approaches to the party would need to target key figures who are known to be sympathetic and open-minded with regard to international issues.

## Jordan

### Janine A. Clark

The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Jordan, the largest Islamist social movement in the country, has been engaging with and benefiting from successive Jordanian regimes since its inception in 1945. Despite periods of tension, the MB-regime relationship has been one of consultation, cooperation and cooptation. Today, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the MB's political party, holds the greatest number of seats of any political party in parliament, and the Islamic Center Charity Society (ICCS), the MB's charity association, is one of the largest non-governmental organisations in the country.

This privileged relationship between the MB and the regime appears to have come to an end, however; the MB has become increasingly critical of the regime's policies, particularly foreign policies, and the regime has responded with authoritarian measures aimed at limiting Islamist influence, activities and voices. In the context of regional events that have further disrupted the previous *modus operandi*, the result is an MB which is more deeply entrenched in the anti-regime opposition's fold, and a regime that for the first time sees the MB as a security threat. All of civil society, from non-governmental organisations, student organisations and professional associations to political parties, has been negatively affected by this change as the regime's tentative steps towards political liberalisation and democratisation have been reversed in favour of increased authoritarianism.

The heart of the rupture can be found in the tension that exists between the MB and the regime with regards to Jordan's foreign policy orientation. Beginning with Jordan's peace treaty with Israel, the MB has consistently criticised the regime's pro-Israeli and pro-western orientation. This stance, however, does not preclude engagement between the west and specifically the EU and the MB/IAF. Indeed, while the regime may resist such advances, the MB/IAF would perceive engagement as being in their best political interests.

### The Muslim Brotherhood (MB)

As stated above, the MB is a multi-faceted social movement with two basic wings. These are its social wing, social welfare and educational activities conducted under the umbrella of



the ICCS, and its political wing, largely its political party the IAF. However, this commonly used way of categorising their activities does not fully encapsulate the breadth or depth of its operations. The MB is engaged in all facets of public life including education, medical care, charities, religious instruction, civil society organisations, the media, university student council politics, professional concerns within the professional associations, and party politics. As a result, it has far-reaching ties to the Jordanian grassroots and middle classes.

The MB/IAF's moderate behaviour and its focus on cooperation with the regime are largely dictated by the middle-class nature of its membership base. Since the late 1940s and early 1950s, its leadership and membership has been dominated by middle-class professionals and professionals-in-the-making, and, increasingly, by Palestinian middle-class professionals. An important factor in sustaining this middle-class base is the services, jobs and connections provided by the MB and its organisations, the IAF and the ICCS. The MB/IAF's vested interests lie in sustaining a system of cooperation and privilege that allows them continued direct access to supporters and would-be supporters through its many activities and the ability to provide these jobs and services. As a result, it has historically sought to coexist and compete with dominant institutions and social arrangements rather than radically reorganise them.

#### *The Islamic Center Charity Society (ICCS)*

The MB was established in 1945 and obtained legal status as a charitable society under the patronage of King Abdullah I in the same year.<sup>1</sup> The early MB placed a heavy emphasis on education according to Islamic principles and most of its activities took place in schools. After the 1948 war with Israel, the MB's programme became far more comprehensive and political, calling for the implementation of *sharia* law and the establishment of an Islamic order. In 1953 the Brotherhood's status was legally changed to that of a 'general and comprehensive Islamic committee', allowing it to spread its call and be, de facto, politically active. This proved to be an important re-designation because, as a charitable society, the MB was able to survive the 1957 ban on political parties and the imposition of martial law (which lasted until 1989).

With the growth of its activities, the MB established the ICCS to deal specifically with its charity activities in 1963. The ICCS' headquarters are located in Amman and it has four branches, located in Zarqa, Mafraq, Irbid and Ramtha, and fifty-five centres.<sup>2</sup> Its charitable activities grew rapidly, and by the early 1990s the revenues and expenditures of the ICCS far exceeded those of any other Islamic charity in the country.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the ICCS is the largest and the most financially solvent NGO in Jordan, with the exception of those NGO's that were established and are patronised by members of the royal family. The ICCS runs twenty-eight schools (not including kindergartens), one college, two hospitals and fifteen medical centres, as well as numerous income-generation and training centres and centres to help orphans and poor families.

The ICCS' projects are not all alike, but rather fall into two categories – those that are essentially charitable activities charging little or no fees and target Jordan's poor, and those



that are non-profit enterprises offering high-quality private services at a significant cost for the country's middle class. The Islamic Hospital in Amman, for example, is the largest of Jordan's 50 private hospitals, comprising one-fifth of the country's total private hospital bed capacity. It provides some of the best services in the country and its fees are comparable to Jordan's most expensive private hospitals. ICCS schools similarly target the paying middle class. Of the 11 345 pupils in ICCS schools in 1997, only 93 students were on scholarships for orphans and the poor.

The vast sums of money that pass through the ICCS have led many analysts to refer to it as the economic wing of the MB. While ICCS finances are not legally allowed to flow to the MB or the IAF, these vast sums and services are quite persuasive in sustaining a large constituency within the extensive network. Just as influential is the fact that the ICCS is a significant employer; members of the ICCS board and branch boards, along with the professionals who work in the schools and medical facilities, are all paid employees. Based on data from 1997, the total number of ICCS employees in their medical facilities was 1 366. Similarly, the education sector provides numerous jobs, not just in terms of teachers, but also the large extended support staff and those who benefit from the 'trickle-down' effect such as bus drivers, guards, messengers, cleaners and maintenance personal. In total in 1997, 2 395 people were hired by the ICCS to work in its private hospitals, schools and college, most of whom were educated middle class professionals. Estimates from 2006 place the total number of ICCS employees at 4 500.<sup>4</sup> These figures do not include the various support services that benefit from the ICCS such as businesses that sell the necessary supplies, or even restaurants and hotels that host ICCS meetings or workshops.

#### *The Islamic Action Front (IAF)*

The historical organisational and institutional advantage that the MB held over all the other political organisations, which enabled it to freely access people and provide jobs and services, served it well when Jordan reintroduced parliamentary elections in 1989. MB-affiliated candidates won twenty-two seats which, combined with approximately ten independent Islamists who also won seats, created an MB-dominated Islamist bloc that controlled 40% of the assembly. Following the elections, the MB and other prominent independent Islamists began negotiations to form an umbrella political party – albeit one dominated (ever more so as time goes on) by the MB. In 1992, after the introduction of the new Political Parties Law which legalised political parties, the IAF received its license.

The IAF's increasingly strained relationship with the regime, a result of Jordan's peace treaty with Israel (see below), is reflected in the IAF's subsequent results at the polls. Largely as a result of a new electoral law that most analysts argue was aimed at limiting the number of parliamentary seats won by the IAF, the party won only sixteen seats in the 1993 parliamentary elections. Combined with the seats won by independents, the Islamist bloc managed to dominate twenty-two seats – significantly lower than in 1989. In 1997 the MB's Consultative Council decided to boycott the parliamentary elections in protest over both the new electoral law and the severe restrictions on press freedoms that were introduced in the months preceding the elections. Parliamentary elections were suspended in 2001,

but the IAF re-entered electoral competition in 2003. With the electoral laws largely still in place, the number of IAF seats remained low, but they gained more than any other political party with seventeen in total.

### Finding Islamists

In keeping with the International Crisis Group's definition (see appendix), Islamism is the active assertion and promotion of beliefs, prescriptions, laws, or policies that are held to be Islamic in character. Moderate Islamist organisations are commonly defined as Islamists who are non-violent and non-revolutionary (in other words, accepting of the basic concepts of political pluralism, democracy and human rights), and whose political agenda is limited to the nation-state and not aimed at the creation of a pan-Islamic state.

While making important distinctions between moderate and radical Islamism, this definition may mask more than it reveals. Defining and finding moderate Islamism according to this ideal model is a difficult task because Islamist groups are internally diverse, often having internal factions or streams including those with moderate and radical religious interpretations and activities they are willing to support or engage with. In addition to this, Islamist networks overlap, resulting in cross-membership between segments of moderate and more radical Islamist groups. Lastly, moderate Islamist organisations' agendas are often vaguely stated, with few specifics regarding areas that concern western governments such as pluralism, the competition for power, freedom of religion, and rights for ethnic minorities and women.

Having stated these provisos, the MB in Jordan can be considered a moderate Islamist organisation and it refers to itself as such.<sup>5</sup> It has always operated openly and has never espoused violence. Despite voices in the party which feared the corruption or dilution of MB values should they enter party politics, it decided to enter the secular political system. It furthermore engages in internal elections and internal debate resulting in the reform of party policies and ideals. Politically, it calls for procedural democracy, i.e. the peaceful competition for rotation of power through elections. It justifies democracy and democratic participation through the Islamic principle of *shura* (consultation). The people's right to choose their leaders is rooted in *shura*.

In this vein, its recent document on political reform which was posted in October 2005 on the IAF website ([www.jabha.net](http://www.jabha.net)) calls for the rotation of executive power and greater political participation and pluralism. It also calls for a separation between the executive, legislative, and judicial powers, emphasising an increase in the parliament's powers. These reforms are to be conducted within the framework of Islam – which the MB/IAF recognises as the only source of legislation.

MB/IAF leaders insist that, should they come to power, they would not “monopolise it”, and they would “not exclude anyone”. Should other parties/ideologies/religions come to power through elections, they would accept their leadership. The latter is an easy statement for them to make, as all the other political parties in Jordan are substantially weaker in size, finances, popularity and even public recognition. The IAF does however cooperate with parties with diverse ideologies, including leftists and communists, in a variety of extra-

parliamentary coalitions and committees, particularly over issues regarding foreign policy and sovereignty (see below).<sup>6</sup> They further argue that Christians are welcome in the party as long as they accept the party's principles, and they claim that they have a small number of Christian members.

However, it must be noted that their beliefs do not tolerate individual rights that contradict the core values of Islam and *sharia* (Islamic law). This affects women's rights in particular. The IAF argues for and encourages women to participate politically and seek leadership roles, and there are a significant number of women on the IAF's *Shura* Council, although there have never been any women on its Executive Council (despite a membership base that is approximately 50% women). Furthermore, it had its first (and only) female candidate in the 2003 parliamentary elections. However, in parliament it was also vociferously opposed to two proposed legislative amendments regarding women's rights – one granting women the right of divorce on demand and the other eliminating legislation which reduces the sentences of men who murder female relatives in the name of honour.<sup>7</sup>

The IAF would benefit the most from any political reform of the electoral system (which presently discriminates against ideologically-based parties as opposed to tribal candidates, and against urban areas where the majority of IAF supporters reside). This confidence that it would win a majority in the event of electoral reform enables it to easily gloss over any contradiction between majority rule and the party's beliefs. In claiming that they represent the majority of people, they do not specify in detail the rights of those who reject Islamic law or aspects of it. An inconsistency between their claims and the will of the Jordanian public was evident in the 1990s when Islamists briefly held posts in the cabinet and attempted to enact legislation that called for sexual segregation and the mandatory veiling of women in specific contexts. The vocal public outcry against these proposed laws taught the IAF a lesson about the need to appear moderate and inclusive.

That the MB/IAF supports participation in the political system and cooperation with the regime has been repeatedly confirmed by its actions. However, the degree to which inclusion leads to greater ideological moderation has not been substantiated one way or the other. As the newly elected Controller General of the MB, Salim al-Falahat, recently stated, the IAF is moderate but that moderation does not mean giving up any national or *sharia* duty, nor does it mean weakness or making concessions.<sup>8</sup>

### **Muslim Brotherhood and the regime<sup>9</sup>**

The MB's current relationship with the regime is at a crossroads. Although it has had conflicts with the successive regimes, historically it has benefited enormously from its privileged position as the sole legal non-governmental (and quasi-political) social organisation for approximately three decades. As stated above, much of the MB's success can be attributed to its protected status as a charity organisation, which it enjoys in return for its political support of the monarchy. While the MB criticised various policies, it by-and-large refrained from criticising the political structure or the legitimacy of the monarchy itself. However, this privileged relationship began to slowly erode in the early 1990s, and to

unravel completely in recent years, perhaps most seriously in 2006. The turning point, as stated above, was Jordan's peace with Israel.

Building on the 'Washington Declaration' of July 1994, which announced the termination of the state of belligerency between the two countries, Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel in October 1994.<sup>10</sup> In re-orienting Jordan's foreign policy from one of 'Arabs versus the enemy' to one of 'peace camp versus the anti-peace camp',<sup>11</sup> King Hussein argued that the peace treaty was a strategic option for Jordan which the country had little choice but to sign up to. In order to escape the international isolation that the country had been experiencing since the 1991 Gulf War when it decided not to join the coalition against Iraq, and especially since the Oslo peace accord in 1993, the government argued that Jordan needed to join the peace camp.

Jordan's Islamists took an immediate and leading role in opposing the peace treaty and later, after the signing of the treaty, to "normalisation" with Israel. Their opposition reflected their rejection of the existence of Israel in any form or context. Leftist groups were quick to join the MB. They voiced concerns that, without Arab solidarity and support, the issue of Palestine would never be resolved. In reaction to the peace treaty, seven leftist parties joined forces with the Islamists and created the "Popular Arab Jordanian Committee for Resisting Submission and Normalisation", and by the late 1990s centrist groups joined the opposition to normalisation and new joint initiatives were spawned. The most famous of these was the National Committee for the Cancellation of the Israeli Trade Fair. The goal of the National Committee was to create a nation-wide boycott of the Israeli trade and industry fair that was to be held outside Amman in January 1997. The four-day protest gathered over 3 000 protesters and successfully discouraged virtually any Jordanian attendance.

The negative reaction towards the peace treaty thus spawned new types of political arrangements – it brought the MB/IAF closer together with parties with which they had been divided historically due to ideology and their relationships with the regime. While some of these arrangements were directed specifically at the peace treaty, others expanded to include a growing number of issues. Created in 1994 under the leadership of the IAF, the Higher Committee for the Coordination of National Opposition Parties is an extra-parliamentary coalition comprising thirteen opposition parties,<sup>12</sup> including the IAF, several leftist parties, the Communist party and two Ba'thist parties. It meets regularly, sometimes weekly, to jointly coordinate activities in order to advance their common interests.

As the public came to support the Islamist-led opposition to the peace treaty and normalisation of relations with Israel, the regime responded with increasing repression. Even prior to signing the treaty, anticipating the opposition it would evoke after nearly 50 years of hostilities with Israel and in the absence of a comprehensive peace accord for the Middle East, the regime sought to ensure the passing of the treaty in the 1993 parliament by amending the electoral law (which is still in effect today). While, under the old system, voters could cast as many ballots as there were seats in his/her district, the new "one person, one vote" law gave each voter one vote regardless of the number of seats. The new law forced voters to choose between competing loyalties, such as choosing between a tribal/familial candidate and an ideologically-based party (conservative, leftist, Islamist,

nationalist, and so on). In a country where tribal loyalties remain strong and where most social, economic, and political objectives are achieved through traditional patronage and kinship relations, political parties found themselves at a distinct disadvantage. The new electoral law further undermined parties by adjusting the electoral districts so that they disproportionately favoured traditionally tribal areas (the backbone of the monarchy's support) as well as rural areas and small towns.<sup>13</sup> As opposition to the treaty mounted, the government rolled back more political liberties, e.g. regulating speeches in mosques and introducing laws controlling the freedom of the press and new restrictions governing demonstrations, student council and municipal elections, and political activity within professional associations.

This dynamic has continued as the regime pursues policies that the opposition parties, particularly the MB/IAF, regard as betraying the solidarity of the Arab-Islamic states at the behest of the American hegemonic powers. Since the accession of King Abdullah II to the throne in 1999, Jordan's external policies for the most part have mirrored those of King Hussein. Although Abdullah II has simultaneously sought to re-establish good relations with Jordan's Arab neighbours, he has actively pursued economic and political relations with western industrialised states by forging stronger alliances and aid ties with the United States, Britain and the EU, as well as international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. The regime has tied Jordan's economic development to policies based both on privatisation and foreign investment. Politically, after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York, Jordanian-American ties grew stronger as Jordan backed the US war on terrorism in Afghanistan, the US invasion of Iraq and the ousting of Saddam Hussein.

In response, Islamist activities have expanded in scope (though not necessarily size) to protest the regime's foreign policies and the roll-back of political liberties. The declining relations between the regime and the MB/IAF appear to have reached breaking point. Indeed, it has altered fundamentally with the regime regarding the MB as a security threat and, most recently, targeting the life-blood of the MB, the ICCS.

Analysts point to the recent Hamas victory in the Palestinian Authority elections in January 2006 as playing a pivotal role in breaking the historical relationship. On the one hand, it has inspired and emboldened segments of the MB/IAF, with IAF leaders asserting the party's strength, articulating their policy priorities, and demanding political reforms. Shortly after Hamas won the elections, Azzam al-Hunaidi, leader of the IAF parliamentary bloc, posted a message on the IAF website saying that Islamists would be ready to take power in Jordan after winning a majority of seats in the next parliamentary elections. While the statement reflected the obvious goal of any political party, it appeared to upset the unspoken agreement that the MB would not challenge the moderate politics of the royal family or the family itself by gaining control of the government.

The heightened tensions between the regime and the MB subsequent to Hamas' victory must be put into the context of the recent hotel bombings in Amman and the regime's consequent increased focus on security. In November 2005, Jordan was the target of several high profile terrorist attacks linked to the prominent al-Qaida leader, Abu Musab

al-Zarqawi. Suicide bombers attacked three hotels, killing 60 people and injuring over 100. While the MB/IAF was among the first to organise anti-al-Qaida demonstrations in the aftermath of the bombings, it became one of the leading targets of the new security-conscious regime. In January 2006, the government charged IAF leader Jamil Abu Bakr with “harming the dignity of the state.”<sup>14</sup>

More importantly, the Hamas victory and the MB/IAF’s newfound confidence raised regime fears of the “Hamatisation” of the MB/IAF – the growth of a Palestinian-dominated stream in the leadership that advocates the motifs and strategy of Hamas.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, political analysts in Jordan have begun to write of four currents within the MB – in addition to the ideological hawks, doves and pragmatic centrists, the fourth current (and labelled as such) is the Hamas current. It is no coincidence that prior to the IAF and MB elections (in February and March 2006 respectively), an article appeared in the government-controlled *al-Ra’y* newspaper with the headline “Is it true that Hamas will appoint the new Secretary General of the Islamic Action Front?” Most analysts believe that this was a government attempt to manipulate the outcome of the MB elections.

Tensions between the regime and the emboldened MB continued with the Jordanian security force’s discovery of a cache of weapons and the arrest of ten Hamas members for allegedly targeting sites throughout the Kingdom. The IAF immediately accused the government of fabricating the event.

However, MB/IAF confidence over-stepped its boundaries (or perhaps provided the government with an opportunity) when al-Zarqawi was killed by coalition forces in Iraq. Referring to al-Zarqawi as a martyr, four prominent IAF MP’s went to the family home of al-Zarqawi to express their condolences. All four were promptly arrested under Jordan’s anti-terrorism laws and charged with “fuelling national discord and inciting sectarianism.”<sup>16</sup> In support of the government, Speaker of the Lower House Abd al-Hadi Majali issued a statement on behalf of the majority of MP’s (predominantly independents) which demanded an apology from the IAF and clarification of the IAF’s position on various issues, including its allegiance to the country and the Hashemite leadership. There was also a series of unprecedented pro-government demonstrations protesting against the four arrested members and supporting the families of the victims of the Amman hotel bombings by Iraqi terrorists in November 2005.

The IAF refused to apologise and issued a statement together with other opposition leaders stating that the four MP’s were targeted due to their vocal opposition to official policies and that the “ruling authoritarian coalition” bears responsibility for all the crises befalling the Jordanian people. In addition to the immediate release of the four MP’s, it furthermore demanded the end of hostile actions against Hamas, the withdrawal of the Wadi Araba agreement, the creation of a “national rescue government” comprised of personalities known for their stand in support of the nation, and support for the armed resistance movement in Palestine, Iraq and all Arab lands.

On 5 July the government took aim at the financial pulse of the MB and, as a result, its ability to sustain and expand its constituency, the ICCS. Having in its possession the final report of an investigation conducted by the Audit Bureau and the Ministry of Social

Development on the ICCS' financial records, the cabinet sent the report to the public prosecutor. The 1 700-page report details charges of financial impropriety. These include charges that equipment purchased for the Islamic Hospital kidney and eye units were improper and overpriced, as well as other accusations of e.g. improper issuance of loans and hiring of consultants. On 9 July the government struck and announced that the work of the Administrative Committee of the ICCS was suspended with immediate effect. Banks were instructed not to allow any ICCS transactions.<sup>17</sup> Four members of the ICCS board were eventually ordered to step down from their positions. All four have been replaced by new representatives elected by the ICCS.<sup>18</sup>

The events of July 2006 exposed serious divisions within the MB. Following a meeting with the prime minister in mid-July, the MB issued a statement in which it underlined the following: commitment to national principles, the constitution and laws; prioritisation of national interests over all other interests; allegiance to the king; condemnation of terrorism in all forms; and rejection of extremist Islamic thought. The internal MB reaction to the statement was profound, with 18 out of 40 members of the MB's *Shura* Council resigning from their posts arguing that the government was targeting the MB and that the movement's leadership should not have been so quick to reconcile and compromise with the regime and the government. While all eighteen were eventually persuaded to remain in their elected positions, their attempted resignation is a clear indication of the internal debate that has been unleashed within the MB.

Politically, repression has had a multi-faceted impact. In its effort to secure its political and economic policies and prevent the Islamist-led opposition from dictating the streets, there has been an alarming re-assertion of authoritarianism in Jordan. Second, it has antagonised relations between the MB/IAF and the regime. As one Islamist stated, it is now us against them. Third, it has contributed to a consolidation of the anti-regime opposition. Fourth, political repression has had its desired impact – Islamist activities are fewer in number and size and the massive demonstrations of the late 1990s are a thing of the past. Political parties are weak, activities in professional associations have been curbed, and university student activities are limited to largely academic and administrative issues.

### **Political Relevance of the MB/IAF**

IAF deputies charge that in freer and fairer elections they would win 40-50% of the vote. However, until that time, the strength of the MB/IAF is difficult to measure. While it has a strong showing in the electoral booths and can bring thousands of protesters onto the streets, certain caveats lead some analysts to raise doubts about the MB's popularity. Analysts point to the fact that the IAF popularity at the polls is largely due to the low voter turnout in Jordan and the weakness of the other opposition parties. Not having benefited from a privileged relationship with the regime as the MB did (indeed, having been the subject of political repression), Jordan's other opposition parties remain at a distinct disadvantage in comparison to the IAF. They are weak and suffer from voter shyness as the average citizen continues to equate opposition party support with visits from internal security. Furthermore, Jordanians are simply not voting in large numbers, leaving the field wide



open for the IAF to mobilise its own supporters. Finally, analysts point to the MB electoral successes in the professional associations arguing that these are not representative of the people's will as voter turn-out at these elections boxes is also low.

Indeed, two national polls seem to confirm these analyses. In a May 2006 survey of 1 000 people selected randomly from throughout Jordan, conducted by the Jordan Center for Social Research, only 19.7% of respondents stated that they would vote for candidates from the political Islamist tendency if parliamentary elections were held today.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, when respondents were asked in an open-ended question which party they would vote for in parliamentary elections, only 9.3% said they would vote for the Islamic Action Front. Similarly, in its annual public opinion poll, *Democracy in Jordan*, conducted in September 2005, the University of Jordan's Center for Strategic Studies found that 4% of respondents stated that the IAF was the most representative of the political, social and economic aspirations of Jordan's citizens – this was a drop from 6.6% in the 2004 poll and 14.7% in 2003.<sup>20</sup> And similar to the Jordan Center for Social Research poll, when respondents were asked which of the current parties in Jordan they believed to be qualified to form a government, 82.4% said “none” and only 2.5% said the IAF.

Having said this, the IAF remains the largest party in Jordan at the present time. It is too early to assess the impact of the events of this summer. There is much at stake. The MB holds the most seats of any party (despite an electoral system that is designed to reduce its share of the seats). It is the leading opposition party, dominating, for example, the HCCNOP. By demonstrating moderate and cooperative tendencies, it may also in fact have gained a new audience and support-bases. It furthermore dominates the executive boards of several of the (largest) professional associations, which it uses as a springboard for its political activities. It is able to fill the streets when it calls for a demonstration or rally, it provides economic services and jobs for thousands of people and, perhaps most importantly, it is able to instil its social values in Jordanian society through its schools and other education programmes.

Polls aside, there can be no doubt that electoral reform (such as proportional representation which the IAF advocates) would benefit the IAF, at least in the short run. The Jordanian regime appears deeply threatened by the MB. Reform presents the monarchy with a real challenge because it means undermining the electoral advantage granted to Jordanians of Jordanian origin (as opposed to those of Palestinian origin), particularly in the villages of prominent tribal elites that have historically supported the regime. Political reform also serves to further undermine the chances of moderate and secular candidates. At stake therefore is the very nature of the state in Jordan – with its pro-western policy-orientation – and the future of the monarchy as supportive voices lose ground to Islamist forces. While the MB, despite its vocal criticism of government policies, has continued to state that it is ready to cooperate with the regime, the relationship between the two has fundamentally shifted; it may not be possible to return to the old *modus operandi*. Indeed, the regime will most likely feel threatened by any sort of engagement between western powers and Islamists that may ultimately pressure it to reform. The regime's preferred option will most likely be an avoidance of political reform and continued authoritarianism. Neither is sustainable in the long run.



### **MB/IAF Engagement with the West/EU**

Following the recent IAF elections, it released a statement clarifying its positions. On the Arab and Islamic level, it affirmed support for the resistance in Palestine and Iraq, the Palestinian people's option, Hamas, and all factions and trends that carry out resistance and work to regain Arab rights. It condemned the US and Zionist occupation of Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan. The IAF furthermore renewed its call to pursue Arab unity, respect nations' choices, and eliminate foreign hegemony and influence. Along these lines, it also condemned foreign threats and interference, particularly American and Zionist, in Lebanon, Syria, Sudan and Afghanistan and attempts to prevent Iran from using nuclear power or carrying out scientific research in the field.

Barring relations with Israel or the condition that it must recognise Israel, the MB/IAF has been consistently open to overtures from Western officials. Warming relations with western powers works to the MB/IAF's benefit as it serves to profit politically from the appearance of being moderate, increased legitimacy as the head of Jordan's opposition and leading proponent of democratic reforms, and any consequent western pressure on the regime for democratic reforms. The MB/IAF has shown itself to be open to a variety of forms of political dialogue including workshops on aspects of party life and democratic strengthening. Its opposition to the west lies far less in any opposition to democracy or to relations with the west than to western hegemony – the dictation of western cultural values at the expense of others via military but also economic and social policies.

Having said this, a strengthening of IAF power in the government would most definitely result in attempts to abrogate Jordan's peace treaty with Israel. The current Secretary General of the IAF, Zaki Bani al-Rashid, has indicated that should the Islamists form the government in the next elections, they would "bring a referendum" to the Jordanian people which would seek to overturn the 1994 Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty. The degree to which the IAF would uphold international norms, particularly human rights, and laws would also be placed in question if these contradicted their interpretation of Islamic laws. To what degree they would be upheld or not is unclear, both because the party has not been explicit and because of the nature of the party and the internal debates between different streams over its future direction.

Despite some historical exceptions, the leadership of the MB and particularly the IAF has been consistently willing to work with the regime and foreign governments, and the EU should take advantage of this. While there are divisions within the MB/IAF, including those regarding the legitimacy of the present regime, the MB/IAF remains united and continues to work within the political system in Jordan. As the largest political party and the most vocal force resisting authoritarianism in Jordan, the organisation cannot be ignored.

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> See Marion Boulby, *The Muslim Brotherhood and the Kings of Jordan, 1945-1993* (Atlanta, Ga: Scholar's Press, 1999); Shmuel Bar, *The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University and the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 1998); Ali Abdul Kazem, "The Historical Background of the Muslim Brotherhood and Its Ideological Origins," in *Islamic Movements in Jordan*, ed. Hani Hourani (Amman: al-Urdun al-Jadid Research Center and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1997).
- <sup>2</sup> [www.islamicc.org](http://www.islamicc.org)
- <sup>3</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the ICCS see: Janine A. Clark, *Islam, Charity and Activism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Quintan Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001).
- <sup>4</sup> *Jordan Times*, 10 July 2006.
- <sup>5</sup> For more details on the IAF beliefs, see Jillian Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); IAF website: [www.jabha.net](http://www.jabha.net).
- <sup>6</sup> See Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation*. See also Janine A. Clark, "The Condition of Moderation: Unpacking Cross-Ideological Cooperation in Jordan," *IJMES* 38, 4 (November 2006): 539-560.
- <sup>7</sup> See Janine A. Clark, "'Honor Crimes' and the International Spotlight in Jordan," *Middle East Report* 229 (Winter 2003): 38-41.
- <sup>8</sup> Interview on *al-Arabiyya TV*, 12 March 2006.
- <sup>9</sup> Portions of this section were published in Clark, "Conditions of Moderation".
- <sup>10</sup> For details on the treaty and Islamist opposition to it, see Mustafa Hamarneh, Rosemary Hollis, and Khalil Shikaki, *Jordanian-Palestinian Relations: Where To?* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1997); Adnan Abu-Odeh, *Jordanians, Palestinians and the Hashemite Kingdom in the Middle East Peace Process* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1999); Paul L. Scham and Russell E. Lucas, "'Normalization' and 'Anti-Normalization' in Jordan," *MERIA* 5, 3 (September 2001): 54-70; Danishai Kornbluth, "Jordan and the Anti-Normalization Campaign, 1994-2001," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 14, 3 (Autumn 2002): 80-108; Marc Lynch, "Jordan's Identity and Interests," in *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, ed. Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002): 26-57; Idem, *State Interests and Public Spheres* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Jillian Schwedler, "More Than a Mob," *Middle East Report* 226 (Spring 2003): 18-23; Idem, "Cop Rock: Protest, Identity, and Dancing Riot Police in Jordan," *Social Movement Studies* 4, 2 (September 2005): 155-175.
- <sup>11</sup> Kornbluth, "Jordan."
- <sup>12</sup> Parties that are considered anti-regime are referred to as opposition parties by the Jordanian press and political analysts. Despite a history of co-optation and accommodation, this includes the IAF. Pro-monarchy tribal independents and tribally-dominated centrist parties are not considered opposition parties (and do not call themselves as such); they furthermore do not belong to the HCCNOP which is composed entirely of opposition parties of differing ideological persuasions.
- <sup>13</sup> With the politically destabilising effect of large numbers of Palestinians entering Jordan in 1949, 1967 and after the First Gulf War, the state in Jordan historically has provided subsidies and preferentially recruited key Jordanian tribes into various parts of the state apparatus in order to

ensure Jordanian support. A tribal elite was thus created as key tribes were granted higher-level positions in the state apparatus; other tribes were incorporated into the state via preferred hiring in the army and civil service. Positions in public institutions, access to public universities, the military, bureaucratic and government contacts all flow through the Jordanian tribal structure. Tribalism thus has come to be synonymous with privileged access by Jordanians (of Jordanian descent) to the system of patron-clientelism which is fostered by the state. For in-depth discussions of tribes and tribalism in Jordan, see Schirin H. Fathi, *Jordan: An Invented Nation?* (Hamburg: Deutsches Orient Institute, 1994); Linda L. Layne, *Home and Homeland: The Dialogues of Tribal and National Identities in Jordan* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994). The gerrymandering of the electoral districts ensures that Jordanian voters carry more political weight than Palestinian voters by granting, for example, three seats for 220 000 eligible voters in Amman's Second District where the majority of the population is Palestinian versus three seats per 24 000 eligible voters in the Tafilah District where the majority is Jordanian.

<sup>14</sup> The charges stemmed from articles on the IAF website that criticised the government tendency to appoint officials based on connections rather than expertise or parliamentary consultations.

<sup>15</sup> Jordan officially expelled Hamas in 1999.

<sup>16</sup> Three of the four were tried. One was acquitted and the other two, Muhammad Abu Faris and Ali Abu al-Sukkar, were given limited jail sentences. On 30 September King Abdullah II pardoned the two.

<sup>17</sup> In 2005, the ICCS dispersed 14 million dollars in scholarships, treatment bills and other grants to its members and supporters. Deutsche Presse-Agentur (2006).

<sup>18</sup> Analysts, such as Ibrahim Ghuraiba, argue that by allowing the ICCS to replace the four members, the government has demonstrated that its actions were not politically motivated. *Al-Ghad* 22 June 2006; *Al-Ghad* 28 June 2006.

<sup>19</sup> [Www.jcsr-jordan.org](http://www.jcsr-jordan.org) .

<sup>20</sup> [Http://www.css-jordan.org/polls/index.html](http://www.css-jordan.org/polls/index.html) .

# Malaysia

**Farish A. Noor**

This article will address the question of which Islamist political parties, movements and NGOs in Malaysia are best suited and able to be invited into talks with the EU. It seeks to identify the Islamist groups and actors that have been most intensively and consistently involved in nation-building and Islamisation (here defined as the deliberate attempt to inculcate Islamic values and norms into the process of nation-building and state formation, as well as the conscious attempt to make Islamic values and norms the basis of governance) via constitutional and organised means; which groups have been most open to engaging in dialogue (including critical dialogue) with other political-ideological groups; which groups have been at the forefront of a lawful/peaceful struggle for Islamisation; and which have retained an 'authentically' Islamic profile and mode of self-representation vis-à-vis society and the state.

The chapter will begin with a cursory overview of Malaysia's development from independence in 1957 to the present state of the nation, where Islam has been brought to the centre of national politics and social life. It then seeks to explain how and why the shift to Islamisation began in the 1970s, looking at both domestic and international variable factors, and analyses the modes of contestation in the Islamisation debate, focusing on the specific actors and agents involved. It concludes with some recommendations on how the EU could constructively engage some of these actors and agents in meaningful dialogue beyond the stereotypical restating of differences and towards a meaningful interaction on the basis of shared praxes and compatible political goals.

## **From secular democracy to state-sponsored Islamisation**

Malaysia today stands out as a 'model Muslim state' that is looked upon very favourably by the west as well as the Muslim world. As one of the world's few newly-industrialised Muslim countries, it is often presented as a model to be emulated by others. The country has never had a *coup d'état* or experienced military rule, and despite its authoritarian form of politics (with a powerful state police and security apparatus as well as highly centralised

and personalised rule by the executive branch of the state), Malaysia's human rights record remains better than neighbouring Thailand, Indonesia or the Philippines.

Islam has been a factor of Malaysian social and cultural life since its arrival in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and spread across the archipelago during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Malay-Muslims now make up the country's biggest ethnic-religious communitarian bloc, with more than 57% of the population.

Malaysia became independent on 31 August 1957, but unlike Indonesia it did not have to fight for it. It is important to note that Malaysia began as a constitutionally secular democratic state. As far as the question of an Islamic state was concerned, the matter was well and truly outside the scope of the Malaysian government's interests. Malaysia's first prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman fell back on the political realities of the time as an excuse for not turning the country into an Islamic state. In his own words: "Our country has many races, and unless we are prepared to drown every non-Malay in the sea, we can never think of an Islamic administration."

Malaysian politics was largely dominated by the Malay-Muslim United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and its opponent the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS). Both parties fought for the Malay-Muslim vote because they knew that winning the Malay majority would mean access to power and government. UMNO remained a nationalist conservative party while PAS maintained its struggle for an Islamic state through constitutional means.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s Malaysia was a stable state that experienced the slow transition from an import substitution-based agricultural and tin-based economy to an industrialised one. The discovery of oil and gas reserves in north-east Malaysia further boosted national assets, while Japanese and western foreign direct investment (FDI), as a by-product of the global recession, helped to fuel the Malaysian economy from the 1970s onwards. Two of the main domestic factors that contributed to the rise of Islamism in the country were migration from the countryside to urban centres on the west coast of the peninsula and the urbanisation and industrialisation of the countryside. The spread of lower and higher level mass education produced an urbanised workforce that was mobile and better able to access global media networks. High levels of expenditure on foreign education also meant that, in relative terms, Malaysia had more students studying abroad than any other country in south-east Asia, increasing the level of contact with Islamist groups overseas.<sup>1</sup>

External factors also contributed to the rise of Islamism in Malaysia: (1) the economic and political failure of many secular Muslim states such as Turkey, Iran (under the Shah), Pakistan (under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto) and Egypt (under Nasser and Sadat) suggested that the secular capitalist developmental model did not work in Muslim societies; (2) the failure of the Muslim leadership worldwide to counter the ambitions of Israeli and American hegemony also suggested that weak leadership among Muslims was the source of their problems; and (3) the rise of Islamist regimes like Iran under the Ayatollah and Pakistan under Zia ul Haq in 1979 suggested that an Islamic state or mode of governance was a real possibility.

By the 1970s Malaysian society was more pluralised, alienated and urbanised than ever before. Student discussions revolved around global affairs and developments in other Muslim countries abroad, while new academic and student-led Islamist groups such as the Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (ABIM), the Islamic Representative Council (IRC) and the Darul Arqam movement contested the hegemony of both the ruling UMNO party and the Pan-Malaysian Islamic party.

In response to the constant political challenge posed by PAS and the rise of new Islamist groups like ABIM, the UMNO-led government began to react. Malaysia's experiment with 'statist-developmental-modernist' Islam began in 1981 when the country experienced its fourth peaceful transition of power, which saw the doctor-turned-politician Dr. Mahathir Mohamad become the country's next prime minister. The 1980s witnessed the implementation of the UMNO-led state Islamisation policy, which was designed to promote and project UMNO's vision of Islam as a modern way of life, culture and government. As Shanti Nair (1997) puts it:

Domestically, Islamisation focused on the distinction between 'moderate' Islam, which was deemed more appropriate in the context of Malaysian society, and more radical expressions, which were unacceptable to the government. The conflict between 'moderate' and 'extreme', in effect, encompassed intra-Malay rivalry.<sup>2</sup>

Malaysia's Islamisation programme was thoroughly institutionalised, instrumentalised and patronised by the state, leading to initiatives like Islamic banking, the creation of the International Islamic University, and various Islamic think tanks and research centres. It also led to the creation of a parallel religious bureaucracy as part of the state's attempt to co-opt the potential Islamist opposition. Thus, by the late 1980s, an 'Islamic public sector' was developed which continues to expand today. The tactic of state co-option was the primary means of controlling the Islamist opposition in the face of a slide towards more radicalism among some of the Islamist groups in the country.<sup>3</sup> In the meantime the over-emphasis on Malay-Muslim communitarian demands both increased the level of public Muslim expectations and marginalised the needs and concerns of the non-Malay and non-Muslim communities, further polarising Malaysian society.

Today Malaysia, a nearly-industrialised Muslim-majority state that is seen as a positive model for other developing Muslim countries, stands at the crossroads. Its political structures remain directed towards the maintenance of a fragile ethnic and religious consensus between the various ethnic and religious communities, and its location in the heart of south-east Asia means that it is exposed to currents of political thought and Islamist resurgence across the region. The Malaysian government remains committed to the US-led 'war on terror', and Malaysia now hosts one of the region's western counter-terrorism intelligence-gathering centres. In order to retain this coveted position of relevance, the Malaysian state under Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has embarked on yet another form of Islamisation, promoting the new statist ideology of 'Islam Hadari' or 'Societal Islam', which seeks to make Islam a relevant and dynamic faith and value system for Muslims in the modern world.

### **Contestation and Conflict: Agents and Actors in Malaysia's Islamic debate**

The two main protagonists in the Islamisation debate in Malaysia remain the ruling UMNO party, which leads the National Front coalition, and the Malaysian Islamic party PAS.

Following the resignation of Prime Minister Mahathir in 2003, UMNO has managed to re-capture its popular support base, thanks in part to the reformist agenda proposed by Prime Minister Badawi. The Malaysian state remains highly centralised, with a strong police and security apparatus, but it is economically stable and politically quiet.

PAS, on the other hand, has suffered a major slide in its popularity ratings and today holds control of only one state (Kelantan) by virtue of a single State Assembly seat in the Kelantan assembly. It remains politically relevant thanks to its large support base in the north, claiming to have around 800 000 members and twice as many supporters. The Islamist party is experiencing a major internal rift, however, between the older generation of traditionalist-minded *ulama* leaders and a younger generation of technocratic university-educated urbanised Islamist intellectuals and activists.

ABIM has domesticated itself by aligning with the ruling UMNO-led government. It now focuses mainly on domestic social reform (without any undue emphasis on economic structural reform, which was on its agenda in the 1970s), as well as increasing its international profile as an aid and relief NGO. ABIM was immediately present in the aftermath of the tsunami disaster as well as the Pakistan earthquake of late 2005.

Malaysia's rapid development and political stability has also opened up space for civil society and has led to the proliferation of both religious and secular NGOs. In the sphere of religious society the country now has many religion-based NGOs serving the communitarian needs and demands of Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Taoists and Sikhs alike. These groups have occasionally contested key public interest issues such as freedom of religion and the right of Muslims to convert to other faiths. Although Islamist NGOs may differ with regards to ideology and tactics, they present a united front in the face of perceived 'challenges' to Muslim hegemony. In 2002 the Islamist NGOs took part in a campaign to persecute six Malaysian Muslim intellectuals and three secular local NGOs, whom they claimed had 'insulted Islam' and were accused of 'spreading false teachings' about the religion. The Islamist NGOs also worked together during the recent 'Muhammad cartoon controversy', and have chosen to boycott an attempt to create a Malaysian Inter-Faith Council, an initiative sponsored by the German Heinrich Böll Foundation.

#### *Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)*

PAS is currently struggling to remain relevant in Malaysian politics. The conservative rhetoric of the party's *ulama* leadership was successful and effective in mobilising support in the 1980s, but is now seen as *passé* and out of touch with local and international reality. PAS has been in power in Kelantan since 1990, but has so far failed to engender the economic development of the northern state, which remains the poorest and least developed in the country.

Furthermore, the increasingly bellicose rhetoric of the PAS leaders, who called for a '*Jihad* against the West' and who openly supported the failed Taliban regime, only served to



alienate vast sections of the Malaysian electorate including the non-Muslim minorities, the urbanised Malay liberal middle-classes and the foreign investor community. PAS's image has thus taken a beating, and the party is largely seen as outdated and unable to govern. The only support base it has left is in the northern Malay state of Kelantan, which is largely rural.

In the urban sectors of west Malaysia, PAS is trying to establish its presence via its network of PAS-linked and PAS-funded NGOs and public interest groups. PAS leaders in urban areas are largely university-educated professionals who are modernist Islamists in their technocratic outlook. Focusing more on structural issues such as economic reform, political and economic development, press freedom and civil society, this new generation of PAS leaders are worth cultivating, although they are still in the outer circle of power.

Many of the younger outer-circle PAS leaders have a more cosmopolitan outlook, and their professional careers ensure that they are more cognisant of the needs of a plural society in need of development. Some of these leaders, like Ustaz Nashruddin Muhammad Isa, Dr. Hassa Ali, Mustafa Ali, Dr. Kamaruddin Jaafar, Dr. Zulkifli Muhammad and Dr. Hatta Ramli, are part of PAS's Research and Analysis Bureau, and have produced academically sound and coherent analyses of the country's present problems, seen and analysed via the tools of social science rather than recourse to theology or the politics of nostalgia.

To reach out and engage with this younger generation of PAS leaders would expose them to parallel developments in the western world and also ensure that the communication channels would remain open if they assume control of the party.

PAS is currently an unlikely candidate for government in Malaysia because the party remains deeply divided between the conservative older generation and the more technocratic younger generation of leaders. An engagement with the latter may therefore empower them even more by giving them international recognition and help to ensure that power and authority within the party falls into the hands of the modernist-technocrats rather than a second generation of conservative traditionalists.

#### *Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (ABIM)*

ABIM is nowadays a mainstream public interest group and NGO that works to further Muslims' communitarian demands. It remains the biggest Muslim NGO in Malaysia, but joining the mainstream of social and political life has also developed its bridging capital and it has begun to work with other faith-based groups. It remains however anti-secular in its outlook.

As part of ABIM's make-over, the NGO has decreed that all its leaders must be below the age of 40. Its leadership is made up of outstanding local Malaysian academics and activists such as Dr. Yusri Muhammad and Dr. Azril Muhammad, whose profiles as academics and lawyers have improved ABIM's image as a serious social-oriented NGO with genuine social reform goals. ABIM has also been very effective as a conduit of regional and global Muslim interests, collecting funds and sending relief aid to disaster-hit areas such as Indonesia after the tsunami disaster and Pakistan after the earthquake in Kashmir in 2005. In the 1980s and 1990s ABIM was directly involved in aid and relief campaigns in Bosnia, Pakistan and



Afghanistan, and it boasts strong connections with global Muslim groups and parties like Jama'at-i-Islami in India/Pakistan/Bangladesh and al-Ikhwan al Muslimin (the Muslim Brotherhood) in the Arab world.

It is important to engage with the ABIM leadership now as they remain committed to the development and deepening of civil society and civil society institutions. Many of the campaigns led and supported by ABIM lend themselves to similar concerns in the west, such as the campaign for press freedom and transparent governance, and against corruption and police abuse of power. In this respect ABIM should now be seen as a model civil society organisation or NGO, and should be approached accordingly.<sup>4</sup>

It is vital to approach the ABIM leadership now to expose them to the realities of civil society struggles in the western world today. ABIM in turn has expressed a willingness to engage with the west and has been more circumspect with regards to its critical stance towards western powers. Its leaders did not, for instance, blindly support the Taliban or Saddam Hussein's regime during the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2002-2003, and were willing to engage in collaborative ventures and campaigns with western secular pacifist groups.

In this respect ABIM represents the first choice as possible agents and actors for long-term dialogue with the EU. The idea of an internship programme which would allow ABIM members to come to the EU and work with secular western NGOs should be taken seriously. This would have the additional aim of sending western interns to work with ABIM to compare and contrast methodologies and tactics.

### **Identifying Actors and Agents for Dialogue and Cooperation**

Malaysia's Islamist sector consists of a broad spectrum of different party-political organisations, mass movements, NGOs and interest groups. They differ with regards to ideology and praxis, but with few exceptions most have operated within the confines of the Malaysian constitution.

None of the major mainstream Islamist groups have opted for the politics of violence, although PAS in the 1960s was seen more as a radical leftist-Islamist party that supported the banned Malayan Communist Party (MCP) and its military wing. In the 1980s PAS's rhetoric became more revolutionary, but it remained modernist and governance-oriented in its outlook. In the 1980s PAS members were known to have travelled to Afghanistan to take part in the *mujahidin* struggle, and some of them later returned to actively participate in insurgency movements in southern Thailand, the southern Philippines and Indonesia.

During 2001-2002 PAS leaders openly denounced the American government and the Malaysian government for its willingness to support Washington's plans to invade Afghanistan and Iraq and enact regime change in both countries. The more vocal elements of PAS's leadership called for a '*Jihad* against America' that never materialised, and despite claims that PAS was prepared to send its members to Afghanistan to support the Taliban regime, not a single member of PAS actually took part in the battle between the Taliban and US forces. Officially PAS has remained a constitutional party abiding by Malaysia's laws and election procedures.

Apart from the leaders and members of the ruling UMNO party, there are options for dialogue with the two most important and visible Islamist groups in Malaysia today: PAS and ABIM.

Both PAS and ABIM remain the most visible, vocal, present and active Islamist non-state actors and agents in Malaysia today. They are the only two Islamist movements/parties of any standing whose impact may have lasting consequences for Malaysia's future development. A closer study of both organisations and active dialogue with their leaders should be a priority of the EU if it wishes to engage in serious dialogue with Malaysian Muslims.<sup>5</sup>

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> See Farish A. Noor, "Islamisation by Degrees: Europe in the formation of new Islamist consciousness among Malaysian students and activists between the 1970s and the 1990s," paper for the international conference *Cosmopolitanism, Human Rights, and Sovereignty in Multicultural Europe* (organised by the Institute of European Studies, UC-Berkeley and the Centre for Global, International, and Regional Studies) UC, Santa Cruz, 4 and 5 May 2001.

<sup>2</sup> See Shanti Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy* (London: Routledge and ISEAS, 1997): 91.

<sup>3</sup> See Farish A. Noor, "Malaysia: The Drift Towards Religious Politics," *Encounter* (Delhi) 3, 2 (Mar-Apr 2000); "Blood, Sweat and *Jihad*: The Radicalisation of the Discourse of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) from the 1980s to the Present," *Journal of the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEA)* (Singapore) 25, 2 (August 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Farish A. Noor, "Vanguard of an Islamic Civil Society? The Political Development of Malaysia's Islamic Youth Movement (ABIM) from 1970 to the present," unpublished paper at the conference *Religion, Transnationalism and Radicalism* (organised by the International Institute of Asian Studies (IIAS), International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM), Africa Studies Center (AFC), International Institute for Social History (IISH) and supported by CNWS (Research School for Asian, African, and Amerindian Studies), CERES (Research School for Resource Studies for Development) and ASSR (Amsterdam School for Social Science Research), Amsterdam, 20-21 June 2003.

<sup>5</sup> See Farish A. Noor, *Islam Embedded: The Historical Development of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party PAS: 1951-2003* (two volumes) (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute (MSRI), 2004).

## Morocco

### George Joffé

The Islamist scene in Morocco is complicated and ranges from clandestine groups who are wedded to violence at both state and trans-national levels through to pressure groups and political parties that renounce violence and accept the concept of political plurality. This pattern has held constant over many years, although the groups involved have changed and the trans-national dimension of violence associated with political Islam is far more recent, only really dating from May 2003, when there were serious incidents in Casablanca, and March 2004, when Moroccans were implicated in the bombings in Madrid. Indeed, much of the latter kind of violence is associated with Moroccan migrants in Europe.

In terms of moderate Islamists accepting political pluralism and renouncing violence, there are two movements that should be of interest to the European Union; the al-'Adl wa'l-Ihsan (Justice and Charity) movement and the Parti de Justice et de Développement (Hizb al-'Adala wa'l-Tanmiyya) (PJD). Each movement arises from a different branch of the Islamist movement in Morocco and, to appreciate the full range of political attitudes they demonstrate, the history of the movement should first be understood.

#### **A brief history of Islamist movements in Morocco**

Morocco was unusual amongst Middle Eastern and North African states in that its political institutions emerged relatively unscathed from the colonial era. Although the monarchy had been subordinated to French control as part of the Protectorate system created there in 1912, the first French Resident-General, Marshall Hubert Lyautey, demonstrated a great respect for the country's indigenous political institutions and thus ensured their preservation until independence in 1956. Just as important was the fact that the Moroccan sultanate – now a monarchy – astutely realised that its interests lay with Istiqlal, the nationalist movement and now a leading political party, after it was created in 1944.

As a result, the monarchy emerged from the colonial period as the hegemon of the Moroccan political scene and, given its tradition as a caliphate, as the dominant legitimate force within the religious sphere as well. One of the consequences of this has been the

marginalisation of Islamic activists simply because of the prestige that the monarchy holds for the majority of Moroccans, given its religious status. This was also the case during the reign of King Hassan II, despite the oppressive nature of his rule. It also meant that Islamic activism tended to either be confined to quiescent, moderately political and often traditional approaches, or adopt a radical position, strongly opposed to the monarchy. The monarchy, in turn, responded to such movements either by co-option or by repression, and both techniques have been used on occasion.

Three basic tendencies have underlain the Islamist experience in Morocco. One of the oldest, localised around Tangier and led until his death in 1989 by Sheik al-Zamzami, but with a branch in Casablanca now controlled by his son, is essentially non-political, emphasising social observance and strict adherence to the *sunna* – the practices of the Prophet Muhammad. It has often been inaccurately described as Wahhabi, much to the irritation of its adherents. It is now of minor importance, appealing to the traditional merchant class, but it could provide a link to the trans-national movements, as occurred with the neo-Salafi movements in Saudi Arabia in the wake of the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Another, under Sheik Abdesslam Yacine, now known as al-‘Adl wa’l-Ihsan, derives from Salafiyist traditions – the Islamic revivalist movement of the late nineteenth century – and reflects a Moroccan tradition going back to Sidi Muhammad al-Ja‘far al-Kattani, who opposed Sultan Mawlay Abdelhafidh at the start of the twentieth century, as well as the more internationalist practices of the al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin (Muslim Brotherhood).

Although the movement has a relatively marginal position, it has considerable moral stature, largely because of its founder’s confrontation with King Hassan II, whom he criticised in an open letter entitled *al-Islam aw al-Tufan: risala maftuha ila malik al-Maghrrib* (Islam or the volcano: an open letter to the Moroccan king) in 1974. It has obtained some reflected support from the activities of the Pakistan-based Jama‘at al-Tabligh wa’l-Da‘wa (Society for Communication and Islamic Call) which is active throughout North Africa. This organisation is peaceable and completely apolitical, although there have been recent allegations in Europe that one faction inside it has become politically active and is responsible for recruitment to extremists groups.

The third tendency is thoroughly modernist and highly politicised, being directed specifically against the monarchy. It has been the most marginalised, but it has also been partly co-opted by the monarchy, and it now forms Morocco’s dominant formal Islamic party, the PJD. Its current ideology, as exemplified by its website ([www.pjd.ma](http://www.pjd.ma)) reflects a moderate, non-violent, pluralist position, and it has a significant presence in Morocco’s lower parliamentary house, the House of Representatives. Its original radical position has now been taken up by trans-nationalist radical Islamist groups operating in Morocco and Europe; these have strong links to Morocco and derive mainly from the *salafi-jihadi* tradition and the *mujahidin* in Afghanistan.

*The Parti de Justice et de Développement*

The origins of the PJD lie in the radicalisation of Abdalkarim Muti', a former schools inspector and member of Morocco's leftwing opposition movement and current governmental party the Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires (USFP). This, in turn, was born of a split in the original leftwing movement, the Union Nationale des Forces Populaires (UNFP), in 1972. The UNFP was itself the result of a split inside the original independence movement, Istiqlal, in 1960, when Mohammed Ben Barka led the socialist wing of the movement away from its predominantly nationalist and Islamist parent.

Abdalkarim Muti' converted to Islamic activism after a pilgrimage to Mecca in the 1960s and created a radical Islamist movement, al-Shabiba al-Islamiyya (Islamic Youth), which by the early 1970s had attracted a significant following among high-school and university students. The movement challenged the hegemony of the left in the educational sector and clashes between the two escalated. At the same time the movement set up a military wing under Abdelaziz Nouamane, the Harakat al-Mujahidin al-Maghribiyya. In December 1975 a senior member of the USFP, Umar Benjelloun, was assassinated, and the al-Shabiba al-Islamiyya was blamed for the event – although the movement claimed that it had been framed by the government which had actually been responsible.

Within three days Abdalkarim Muti' had fled Morocco and has never returned. He eventually went to Saudi Arabia, where he was alleged to have been involved in the Grand Mosque attack in 1979, although the fact that he was apparently still there in 2000 suggests that this was not the case. Soon afterwards the al-Shabiba al-Islamiyya began to fragment under the twin pressures of government repression – in 1984 seventy-one members of the movement were tried, receiving sentences ranging from four years to death – and an attempt by Abdalkarim Muti' to control the group's activities in the most minute detail. By the 1980s a series of groups had emerged, seeking formal recognition and abandoning their radical past. This radicalist tradition was only maintained by an exile group in Belgium that has since disappeared.

One branch, under Abdalilah Benkirane, actively sought formal recognition as a political party and began to develop links with the Casablanca branch of the al-Zamzami movement. In the mid 1990s – by which time he was suspected by the rest of the Islamist movement in Morocco of having become a pensioner of the Palace – Mr. Benkirane and his supporters in *Islah wa-Tawhid* (Charity and Unity) were co-opted by the Mouvement Démocratique Populaire Constitutionnel (MDPC), a recognised political party which was created by a former member of the independence movement, Dr. Abdalkarim Khatib, in 1967, and which pledged allegiance to the Royal Palace in 1972. Dr. Khatib has been a close associate of the monarchy despite his constant involvement on the fringes of the Islamist movements since independence in 1956.

Under this rubric, the new combined movement participated in the November 1997 legislative elections, winning 9 seats, although it claimed it would have won 14 had the election not been fraudulent. The following year the party changed its name to the PJD and, in the September 2002 legislative elections, won 42 of the 325 seats, including 6 seats for women candidates, although it had only fielded candidates in 60 percent of the constituencies. Its success was quite unexpected and was seen as a warning to the Moroccan

regime of the growth of Islamist support inside Morocco. After the Casablanca events of 2003, the party was advised by the government to restrict its activities and, in the local elections of that year, it only fielded one-third of the candidates it had originally intended.

#### *al-'Adl wa'l-Ihsan*

The founder of al-'Adl wa'l-Ihsan, Abdesslam Yacine, was educated at the traditional al-Yusufiyya university in Marrakesh before going on to become a teacher of Arabic and then a schools inspector in 1956, the year that Morocco became independent. In 1965 he had a spiritual crisis and joined a Sufi order, the Butshishiyya, which he left in 1971 because he considered its members decadent. He became politicised in the 1970s when he read works by members of the Muslim Brotherhood; Hasan al-Banna, its founder, and Sayyid Qutb, its most prominent theoretician who was executed by the Nasserist regime in 1966.

In 1974, inspired by their critiques of contemporary Islamic society, he wrote his famous open letter to King Hassan. Not surprisingly, he was detained and spent three-and-a-half years in a psychiatric hospital before being confined to house arrest in Salé. He also spent two years in prison in 1985-1987 after he had attempted to publish a newspaper, which was banned. He was only released from house arrest towards the end of the 1990s following a campaign by his daughter, Nadia, who has now become the major voice of his movement.

After his open letter and subsequent detention, he began to build up a following amongst students and the bourgeoisie when he was released in 1979. In essence, they closely adhered to the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood regarding the peaceful Islamisation of society as a preparatory stage to the construction of an Islamic polity, although, unlike the Muslim Brotherhood, they never criticised the Sufi movement of which its founder had once been a part. Given the prevalence of Sufi orders in Morocco, this may have been a tactical adjustment.

Initially, at least, the movement eschewed the democratic option, although this has now altered and it currently seeks a pluralist political society. Its strength became evident during the 1990s through a massive demonstration against the coalition that fought against Iraq after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, a manifestation that was repeated in subsequent years. The movement itself has, however, always been denied registration as a formal political party, so its real strength is difficult to judge. It took part, as did the PJD, in the major demonstration against the liberalisation of the personal status law, the *mudawwana*, in March 2000 in Casablanca.

#### **The extremist Islamist fringe**

The crushing of the al-Shabiba al-Islamiyya in the 1970s and its subsequent fragmentation meant that such extreme groups virtually disappeared from the Moroccan scene for 20 years or more. Fragmented extremist groups appeared among Moroccan migrants in Europe in the 1980s and Moroccans became radicalised by both the Iranian revolutions and the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. However, the reintroduction of radical political Islam into Morocco emerged only in the wake of the decision by the king to counter the growing moderate Islamist movement by encouraging Saudi-influenced religious scholars

and preachers to visit Morocco and bring funds from Saudi Arabia to build up religious institutions.

In the wake of the Gulf war in 1991 these radicals began to imitate their mentors in Saudi Arabia, rejecting both the American presence in Saudi Arabia and the Saudi regime which had admitted them and, by extension, the monarchy in Morocco. Although they suffered arrest and were prevented from using official mosques, they set up unofficial mosques in the poor quarters of major towns and began to attract a significant following from the very poor, advocating *Jihad* in Afghanistan and elsewhere and adopting an ideology akin to that of al-Qaida and the *salafi-jihadi* tendency, albeit confined to the Moroccan arena.

At the same time a new element was introduced to the extremist movements in the form of Moroccans who had fought in Afghanistan, some of whom had been trained in the camp of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, who began to return and inspire more recruits. Eventually, in the mid-1990s, the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (Jama'at al-Mujahidin al-Islamiyya li'l-Maghrib) established its own camp. It remained outside Morocco, however, its activists mainly moving into the migrant communities in Europe. Its militants re-emerged in Spain and Saudi Arabia and were held responsible for the Madrid train bombings in March 2004, whilst its leader, Abdelkrim Mejjati, was killed in Saudi Arabia in 2005.

This group, however, was always too weak to establish itself in Morocco. Instead, radical groups, led by personalities such as Zakaria Miloudi and Youssef Fikri, inspired by radical sheiks such as Omar al-Haddouci, Hassan Kettani, Ahmed ar-Raffiki, Abdelkrim Chadli and Mohamed Fizazi, began to emerge in Tangier, Fez and particularly Casablanca. These groups imposed a strict discipline on the populations of the impoverished districts in which they operated and created cult followings.

Thus, in Sidi Moumen in Casablanca, Zakaria Miloudi created the al-Sirat al-Mustaqim (Straight Path), which segregated itself from the local population but also repressed it intensely; Youssef Fikri and his followers actually executed those who disagreed with them. It was from this background that the Casablanca bombings of late May 2003 emerged. In the wake of the bombings, these radicals and imams who had inspired them were arrested and are now in prison.

The Moroccan authorities have alleged that they were all members of a *salafi-jihadi* movement or al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra, thus implying that they were part of a trans-national terrorist movement. This seems highly unlikely as, although they were inspired by Salafiyyism, there has been no real evidence of instrumental trans-national links, either in the Casablanca or Spanish events. Furthermore, Moroccans in general have had the frightening example of what happened in Algeria to warn them of these dangers, so such extremism has only been a marginal event. Nevertheless, the Moroccan authorities arrested 2 000 people and introduced a ferocious anti-terrorism law in 2003 which is still in force.

### **Legitimate partners**

In the light of the comments made above, it would appear that only two movements present themselves as potential partners for dialogue with the European Union – the PJD



and al-'Adl wa'l-Ihsan. They are both peaceable and both appear to accept the concept of political pluralism. However, the origins of the PJD lie in the original violent radicalism of Moroccan political Islam, and al-'Adl wa'l-Ihsan originally rejected the concept of political pluralism. In addition, both rejected King Mohamed VI's initiative in 2000 to liberalise the status of women through reform of the *mudawwana* – although both appear to have accepted the reforms that were made in 2004.

Both are, furthermore, anxious to attract international approval for their positions, and are willing to engage with western politicians and the media. Thus on 23 May 2006 the *Financial Times* published a lengthy interview with Lahcen Daoudi, a senior figure in the PJD and, on 1 June 2006 a similar interview with Nadia Yacine, the daughter of the founder of al-'Adl wa'l-Ihsan. Both put forward impeccably modernist messages, although they differ over the status of the monarchy, which the PJD accepts but al-'Adl wa'l-Ihsan questions.

The PJD, after being thrown off-balance by the events of May 2003, has now recovered its confidence as a major opposition party and claims that its support base is growing as the government fails to resolve the economic problems facing the country. American sources confirm this and a poll conducted by the International Republican Institute suggested that up to 47 percent of the population supported it. The party has also engaged in a public relations campaign with trips to France, Spain and now the United States, which was visited by the party secretary-general, Saadeddine Othmani.

Indeed, the United States considers the party an acceptable partner for discussion. The Moroccan government, alarmed by its success, has suggested that it is not as moderate as it claims, pointing to its original opposition to the new laws liberalising the status of women and to its opposition to cultural liberalisation. The party intends to increase its political challenge at the next elections, due in 2007, and will undoubtedly do well – some commentators argue that it could become the majority party in the lower House of Parliament – although this will certainly exacerbate the suspicion in which it is held, particularly if recent opinion polls are correct, as it could then easily become the governing party.

The problem it faces is that, up to 2003, its newspaper *al-Tajdid* (Renewal) was outspoken in its attacks on westernisation in Morocco. Also, its declared aim is an Islamic state under the monarchy, although this has now been sidelined because recent Moroccan legislation makes it illegal for a political party to have a platform based on religion or ethnicity. Its political programme is rather vague in terms of its approach to civil liberties and economics, so it is difficult to judge to what extent it will really operate within the formally democratic institutions under an absolute monarchy that currently define government in Morocco.

al-'Adl wa'l-Ihsan is in a very different position. Firstly, this is because it cannot operate as a formal political party and is thus far more vulnerable to government oppression – 300 of its activists were recently arrested for a brief period. Secondly, it has not been prepared to compound with the monarchy, looking instead originally for a revived and purified caliphate as its political model. It seems that it has now accepted the idea of a pluralist political system.



It is not clear, however, whether this is a genuine conversion or a tactical move in that, once in power, it would seek to alter the constitution. Last year its spokesperson, Nadia Yacine, told a newspaper that Morocco would be better off as a republic. Although the government threatened to prosecute her for this statement, it now seems to have dropped its plans, partly because of criticism from the United States. The comment does, however, raise some questions about the movement's willingness to accept the current political system in Morocco.

This means that the movement is not in a position, unlike the PJD, to anticipate a role in formal political life in the near future, although it will undoubtedly gain increased support from the growing popularity of political Islam within the country. It seeks a more orthodox religious solution for Morocco's problems, adopting a position close to that of the Muslim Brotherhood, and has long eschewed any question of political violence.

Nadia Yacine herself has been able to put forward her views in the United States, particularly in American universities. The movement takes particular comfort from the fact that the Moroccan government has just begun to train women as imams – which it sees as potential recruits to its cause. In other words, it is confident that it can realise its political ambitions within the current political system in Morocco.

Despite government criticisms, both movements seem to have accepted and supported the Instance Équité et Reconciliation, the commission that has for the last year been investigating – in public – the repression in the reign of the king's father, known in Morocco as "*les années de plomb*". In other words, despite their different reservations about the current legal status of women in Morocco and social liberalisation, they support the government's promotion of human rights and freedom of expression.

They both also recognise the nature of the modern international community of states and appear to be prepared to support Morocco's role within it. They look to Europe and the United States for support and engagement. As such, both seek to put forward the image of modern movements based on political Islam – the PJD adopting a position close to that of the governing party in Turkey and al-'Adl wa'l-Ihsan being closer to Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. However, despite their declared political positions, neither has been subjected to the acid test of their political positions through the responsibility of government.

It seems clear that the European Union should engage directly with the PJD and that it should do so urgently, as this is a movement that may be in power within a matter of months. The engagement could consist of contact to establish the nature of its political programme and values, and to see to what extent its organs might fit within the context of MEDA support programmes for civil society. There would also be a role for the European Parliament to contact the party's parliamentary deputies and provide them with support. Of course, all such contacts would have to be made in ways that would be acceptable to the Moroccan government, and they must also take into account the attitudes of other formal political movements inside the country, which will expect similar treatment.

## **Pakistan**

### **Iftikhar H. Malik**

Like some other ideologies, Islam currently embodies an often ambivalent and rather forceful combination of religion and politics, and it is possible for Muslim regimes and Islamist groups to find the perfect systemic solution in its discourse. Confronted by harrowing problems with governance, uneven economic development, uneasy pluralism and a precarious regional geo-political terrain, Pakistan has always been projected and idealised as an Islamic utopia by a wide variety of Islamist parties. Islam has played a leading role in the formation of Pakistan and the country's domestic and regional policies, being called upon to legitimise and lend credence to some of the slogans which reflect popular dismay over a half-century of political instability combined with a global Muslim anguish and sense of humiliation on several fronts.

The reinvigoration of Political Islam in recent years owes much to domestic politico-economic problems, along with a widely shared sense of dismay and disillusionment which is felt by millions of Muslims all over the world. In trying to deal with this situation, the EU and its partners need to take certain tangible ameliorative steps to win over the confidence of the Muslim world and initiate efforts to resolve the problems that have aggrieved Muslim population groups for decades. The EU needs to be seen as a healer rather than an opportunistic and hegemonic power, which would only exacerbate the clash of civilisations by turning mundane issues into inter-faith conflicts. EU nations and governments have often negotiated with ethnic, sectarian, secessionist and even militant forces both within Europe and across the globe, and this same kind of vital and dynamic strategy is required to understand and engage some prominent religio-political groups in the Muslim world in dialogue. A great and growing sense of alienation and of being by-passed is already proving non-productive, and is feeding wider instability.

It is easy to quickly characterise various religio-political groups as inherently anti-western, anti-democratic and anti-reformist by tarring them with the same brush, but given the diversity of Muslim peoples and societies – owing to ethno-national and other doctrinal variations – various clusters and parties have diverse contexts and strategies. They

may have their own reservations about several moral and social issues, but most of them invariably reflect a pervasive disillusionment with the state of Muslim affairs in general.

These problems are a product of economic and political disempowerment, which is further compounded by an increasing sense of alienation at an international level where, in their eyes, Muslims are either totally marginalised or simply misperceived as totalitarian, sexist, anti-democratic spoilers. Averse to the status quo, these Islamist groups want to see a radical transformation of their situation and, while offering Islam as a panacea, they refer to a glorious past when Islam was a force to be reckoned with.

Political Islam is both a protest as well as a formidable opposition and, despite all its ambiguities, it seeks an honourable life for the usually poor and oppressed masses. It is neither anti-modern nor anti-western per se, though it uses such rhetoric to question and negate the moral and political legitimacy of the ruling elite within the Muslim world. There are of course strong sections of Muslims which represent totalitarian, sexist and anti-western propensities both in practice and conviction, but the vast majority of Muslims seek only economic and political empowerment. It is neither an ordained clash of cultures nor a clash of fundamentalist beliefs, but a turning point in global politics; fresher and more forward-looking initiatives from a developed north/west can be harnessed to seek global peace and secure inter-dependence. A consensus on ballot-box politics and efforts to secure the just resolution of political conflicts over and above partisan policies and interests across the Muslim regions will certainly ensure a more tangible interface with Muslim political and dissident groups. Any meaningful and long-term engagement with these sections may also steer them towards a more civic and peaceful strategy that could neutralise undiminished polarisation within these polities.

For many Muslim opinion groups, and for the masses in general, the west evokes respect as well as suspicion. On the one hand, these Muslims envy the higher living standards guaranteed by better political systems, economic egalitarianism and a pervasive respect for human rights, but they are also suspicious of discretionary interventionism and the protection afforded to the corrupt and coercive elite across the Muslim regions. An alert, humane and sensitive west, as epitomised by the EU, can surely avoid increasing suspicion and conflict, and that is where engagement with several Pakistani groups is urgently suggested.

This paper recommends a constructive and patient engagement with two major Islamist parties in Pakistan: Jama'at-i-Islami (JI) and Jamiat-Ulama-i-Islam (JUI). They can both be viewed as possible partners in a dialogue to help spread the politics of the ballot over the bullet, as these two religio-political parties are certainly Islamist by any definition and have avoided the use of violence throughout their domestic history. They have been active in the political arena for more than half a century, have used all kinds of techniques – print media, rallies, mass contacts and alliances with other political forces both inside and outside the government – and champion Islam-based politics as the solution to various problems confronting Pakistan. They are led by politicians who are basically practicing Muslims who can be defined as religious scholars (*ulama*). They command support amongst various cadres, regions and classes of the population.

However, before expanding on their history and potential for inclusion in a possible EU-Islamist dialogue, it is necessary to know the historical and ideological background of these forces within the context of Muslim south Asia and present-day Pakistan. Such a background will certainly help us understand the diversity as well as similarities among the forces of Political Islam, and its complex yet potentially manageable relationship with the EU, which for several tangible reasons of its own could offer a new beginning.

### **Historical and Ideological Contours: The Macro Situation**

Recourse to Islam as a collective political platform and panacea for multiple socio-economic and politico-psychological problems may be a result of a pervasive sense of disempowerment, where a glorified past and disenchantment with an abrasive or often opportunist modernist elite present it as the ultimate and perhaps only healer. Given that there has been a clear and persistent connection between Islam and politics since the classical era (the Prophet's time followed by the four Pious Caliphs), Islam has been regularly upheld by both the ruling elite and dissenters for their own respective reasons, while ordinary and often poor people have viewed it as an ideal alternative.

During the colonial era, the crestfallen Muslim elite – themselves often the beneficiaries, if not the creations of modernity – used Islam to unite disparate and often seminary societies and eradicate tribal and ethno-sectarian divisions. However, the westernised elite, also called modernists and reformists, sought a better future in adopting western ideals of statehood, education, urbanisation and industrial development, whereas the revivalists, also known as purists and traditionalists, advocated a back-to-grassroots approach. Both ideological groups, however, agreed on change, the urgent need for independence, and greater popular participation.

This duality is currently in a rather polarised state, often turning westernised modernity into a heavily contested arena of conflicting ideologies and stances. The political ingredients of this strife are born of continued problems with governance (corruption and coercion), as well as the pervasive perception of global Muslim marginality. Troublesome political issues such as Palestine, Kashmir, Chechnya and Moroland, among others, are juxtaposed with a communitarian failure to provide any help during debilitating and often humbling events such as the Iran-Iraq War, the Rushdie affair, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, civil war in Afghanistan, and mayhem in Iraq under Saddam Hussein and since he was disposed. The elevation of Islam as the main identity marker among Muslim minority communities across the world may be a result of a quest for identity within a pluralist and secular environment.

Thus the rise of a greater emphasis on Islam as a political vehicle, despite various contestations and sectarian volatility, is both a historical and contemporary phenomenon. The greater mobility, education, and salience of diverse groups, along with technological developments within the context of a visible unevenness, have acutely transformed the current phase of ideological polarity, and with the dissolution of the Cold War it naturally appears as one of the main features of our time.

However, in these prefatory remarks, one must be careful to not see Muslims on the whole as problematic or exceptional. Careful attention is needed to see that Islam and modernity are not perennial enemies: political Islam may posit the west as an enemy but the west also symbolises numerous achievements that Muslims may idealise in their own pristine utopias. While a monolithic west evokes suspicion as well as envy among Muslims all over the world, irrespective of their ethnic and national backgrounds, a monolithic Islam also evokes images of hordes of angry, hungry people, ready to change western demographics and democracies from both within and without. West-led discretionary interventionism, uneven foreign policies and assaults by neo-conservatives, ultra-rightists and evangelists have only added to this suspicion, while clusters like al-Qaida or other disparate militants and rhetoricians continue to muddy what are already murky waters.<sup>1</sup>

### Historical Dualism within South-Asian Islam

Looking at south-Asian Islam, one sees the above polarisation as a persistent reality, but it only dates from the latter half of the nineteenth century, when purists and reformists tried to institutionalise themselves amongst the Muslim population group. While the All-India Muslim League, established in 1906, saw redemption for Indian Muslims in a sovereign nationhood and a selective modernisation within the overarching context of Islam, purists led by *ulama*, mostly linked with the Deoband seminary (in present-day India), saw Islam as the only and ultimate solution to a complicated Muslim predicament.<sup>2</sup> The Muslim League, led by M. A. Jinnah (also called Quaid-i-Azam [1876-1948]), is largely credited for the evolution of Pakistan as a sovereign state in 1947; the *ulama* usually criticised a territory-based Muslim nationalism, although some of them did support a composite Indian nationhood.<sup>3</sup> The Jami‘at-i-Ulama-i-Hind (JUH), established in 1920 soon after the defeat of Ottoman Turkey in the European wars, talked of a free India and a greater Muslim identity, and wrestled with the Muslim League over the demand for a separate Muslim state. The JUH, with clerics and seminaries all over British India, including present-day Pakistan, allied themselves with the Indian National Congress (INC), a party established in 1885 and subsequently led by Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) and Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964).

While most Muslim revivalists remained more concerned with religious and social issues until 1947, one of the most important and organised parties aiming at the religio-social regeneration of south-Asian Muslims proved to be the Jama‘at-i-Islami, founded by Syed Abul Ala Mawdudi (1903-1979).<sup>4</sup> He was a journalist with deep religious leanings who lived most of his life in northern India and then in the princely state of Hyderabad, until he decided to move to the Muslim-majority province of Punjab in British India. Here, in 1941, Mawdudi established his seminary in Lahore and founded the JI, which aimed for the individual and collective Islamisation of Muslims. He found faults with the west and pro-west Muslims, and emphatically called for a “back-to-roots” approach in his Urdu works, which included monthly magazines and commentaries which were widely available to a growing number of middle-class Muslims in south Asia.

Like other *ulama*, he was a non-militant pan-Islamist; he decried nationalism, feminism and total democracy, considering Islamic *sharia* to be the divine law that could redirect

Muslims back to lost glory. His JI never desired to become a mass party overnight, since he thought that Islamic revolution should be brought about by resolutely preparing a cadre of morally upright and politically well-integrated Muslims. This gradualist change, according to Mawdudi, would ensure an eventual transformation, at which time an Islamic state like that of the Prophet and the Pious Caliphs would emerge.

He blamed past monarchies for the Muslim decline and saw westernisation as a source of serious problems for contemporary Muslims. However, unlike the JUH, he did not support an all-India based nationalism, nor did he support the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan. His was a slow, gradual and well-chartered strategy for an Islamic revolution to create a divine statehood, what he called *hukumat-i-Islahiyya*, in which women would be veiled and only a few – on the basis of their knowledge and piety – would form and explain the laws that would apply to all. Although the Koran and Prophetic traditions would be the mainspring of these (*sharia*) laws, their interpretation in his ideal Islamic state would be entrusted to the chosen few, not to the masses as such. The masses would have no sovereignty in the literal sense as Allah would be the ultimate sovereign, and ordinary people would be his mere vicegerents through these select-few intermediaries. In other words, he saw the JI as preparing the masses for this Islamic Utopia, with its cadres painstakingly performing the groundwork to transform society and the state. The boundaries of the states, and the role of minorities and relationships with non-Muslims remained rather ambiguous in Mawdudi's Islamic state, though he fervently believed in the systemic self-sufficiency of Islam.

Many observers have found reverberations of Mawdudi's teachings and activism in the ideas of Sayyid Qutb, the Egyptian intellectual who was eventually executed by President Nasser in 1966. Qutb had been influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood, an early 20<sup>th</sup> century religio-political organisation in his native Egypt, but his major inspiration came from Mawdudi's Islamic revolutionism.<sup>5</sup>

### **Pakistan: Contestations and Conflicts**

Like Qutb, Mawdudi had problems with most of the Pakistani regimes, but although he was imprisoned in the early years of Pakistan his scholarly pursuits and a slowly expanding JI remained unstoppable. Mawdudi visualised Pakistan as an Islamic state, modelled on the classical era, and he saw the transformation of society and state as mutually interconnected. To him, this state was to be an *ideologised* state that would lead others in establishing divine rule and going beyond territorial nationalism. The solution to the Muslim socio-political and economic predicament was not to become pseudo-western; rather it lay in establishing polities akin to the classical era. The concept of *Jihad*, for both internal purification and mounting a collective and even armed struggle, was to play a crucial role, but it could only be declared by the select-few Islamic elite, not the Muslim laity.<sup>6</sup> In other words, democracy was to be an elitist-led system in which sovereignty would be the preserve of Allah, whose laws would be reinterpreted by a *jama'at* (party). While acknowledging the distinction between *Muslim* (generalist) and *Islamic* (specific), Mawdudi was a revivalist, pan-Islamist ideologue, more akin to the classical Greek philosophers who advocated the concept of an elite-centric leadership, although he hated western definitions of democracy and traced

everything back to early Islamic traditions. Mawdudi never attended the well-known north Indian seminary of Deoband, which has produced a large proportion of influential *ulama* and leaders of religio-political parties across the sub-continent.<sup>7</sup>

Mawdudi, Qutb and many contemporary Islamists appear similar in their views and strategies because of their emphasis on a puritanical form of Islam, which must be established by propagation (*da'wa*) and even activism. This activism has two facets: working through the available civic instruments and/or simply overthrowing current regimes. The west is not seen as a distant alien; it maintains a presence across Muslim societies through powerful institutions, all the more so thanks to help from the surrogate elite. Setbacks in all the political conflicts – from west Asia and the Caucasus to southern and south-eastern Asia – have to be countered by tackling the inner enemy along with its external defenders. Both these enemies embody the forces of *jahiliyya* (literally “ignorance”, but more accurately meaning those who are morally astray), and Salafi/purist Islam is the answer by virtue of its being more than a mere theology. Instead, it is a *din* – systemic solution for all kinds of human problems – in which politics and religion, similar to the Prophetic era, are combined.<sup>8</sup>

With the partition of British India, the Muslim religio-political parties such as the JUH, JI and even the ML were also divided, and their counterparts and successors soon established themselves in a young Pakistan. Mawdudi was already living and publishing in Lahore, while the JUH had evolved into the Jami'at-Ulama-i-Islam (JUI), with its own powerful seminaries across the Indus regions, especially among the Pushtuns of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). The Muslim syncretists – as opposed to the purists – have always viewed Sufi saints (*pirs*) not merely as holy men but as eternal spiritual mentors and intermediaries between God and ordinary disciples. By nature, most south-Asian Muslims have been Sufi-orientated, whereas the JUH and JI, along with other Deoband-related *ulama*, have viewed *pirs* as a major source of Muslim decadence (here, they certainly appear more like their Wahhabi counterparts). While Deoband was emerging as the central seminary for a revivalist Islam, the pro-Sufi movement also began to evolve in the nearby town of Rai Bareilly in the late nineteenth century. Unlike former and future publicists (*Tablighis*), these defenders of Sufi Islam organised themselves in Pakistan as Jami'at-i-Ulama-i-Pakistan (JUP).

In other words, since 1947, while the Muslim League and other centrist parties failed to show any open resistance to modernity, the JUI, JI and other similar Salafi groups came to focus their energies on Islamising Pakistan. The JUP has often raised the flag of Islam, but has stopped short of any organised and transformative campaign for Political Islam. Thus, in Pakistan we see a tri-polar form of contestation that involves revivalists and modernists on the one hand, and revivalists fighting it out among themselves on the other. The fact remains that the JI and JUI, despite similar views, pursued parallel and often even hostile politics, whereas both of them see the JUP and parties like the (Pakistan) Muslim League or, later on, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP),<sup>9</sup> as surrogates kowtowing to western interests. The JUI and JI have always opposed regional and ethnic parties across the Frontier and urban Sindh, and see in them a further debilitation of Muslim society.<sup>10</sup>



Due to deep problems of governance which have been caused by intermittent military rule, conflictual pluralism and complex regional geo-politics, Pakistani regimes have always looked to Islam as a legitimising and uniting force for a disparate nationhood. Pakistan's western backers usually helped the country negotiate its economic and security challenges, largely because its geo-political location suited their Cold War prerogatives. Besides this, the country has been mostly ruled by a westernised elite, even if they have used Islam rhetorically as well as in their own personal lives. General Zia ul Haq's military regime (1977-1988) was tolerated and even greatly assisted by the developments in the Cold War that followed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, when Iran was already under a Khomeinitic dispensation. The Zia regime was anchored on three trajectories, commonly known as "the three A's" in Pakistani parlance: Allah, Army and America. The clerics from the JUI, JI and JUP were all co-opted by Zia during the Afghan resistance (*Jihad*), while the CIA, Pakistani ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) and other similar western intelligence agencies turned Pakistan into a front line state. Its Frontier and Balochistan provinces harboured millions of Afghan refugees and offered sanctuary to Afghan Mujahidin – the forerunners of today's Taliban.<sup>11</sup> Here the training camps worked in close league with some seminaries (*madrasas*), while the JUI and JI were able to cultivate wider lobbies within the Afghan Resistance.

Mawdudi died in 1979 but, although the JI benefited from a closer proximity with General Zia ul Haq, his successor Mian Tufail Ahmad lacked the charisma and erudition of his predecessor. It was Qazi Hussein Ahmed, the Pushtun firebrand who succeeded Tufail Ahmed, who turned the JI into a full-time activist organisation which allotted its intellectual and ideological work to scholars such as Professor Khurshid Ahmad. However, in the heady decade of the 1990s, with a political vacuum in Afghanistan, Islamabad sought a "strategic depth" in this neighbour to counter its old enemy in the east (India), and began to help organise Afghan students at Pakistani seminaries. Since most of these seminaries were run by the JUI, now led by Maulana Fazlur Rahman and Maulana Sami ul Haq – both of whom had connections on both sides of the Pak-Afghan borders – the JUI emerged as the focal point of this new phase in activism. The students from the seminaries, who were called Taliban, were eventually catapulted onto the political stage in Afghanistan in 1996, combining forces with the JUI, ISI and Pushtun Afghans, all of whom were working for their own specific interests.<sup>12</sup> In the meantime the defiance in Indian-controlled Kashmir, with young recruits coming in from several revivalist groups in Pakistan to join the Kashmiri militants, began to hurt India. The JUI and JI again led the contributions in terms of both men and material – often in cahoots with Islamabad – but the JI seems to have focused more on the Kashmir Valley, while the JUI mainly helped the Taliban.

Both the JI and JUI have been deeply angered by General Pervez Musharraf's alignment with the United States' war on terror and hostilities in neighbouring Afghanistan following 9/11, and his retreat on Kashmir is also viewed with suspicion and hostility. However, both of these parties, perhaps for the first time, are aligned together in ruling the Frontier's provincial government, while in the central government in Islamabad they form an opposition group called the MMA (Muttahida Mahaz-i-Ammal, or Combined Action

Forum). During the elections in 2002 they – especially the JUI – gained the majority of seats in the NWFP and Balochistan in the provincial assemblies, and they achieved a similar result in the national parliament thanks to an ascendant wave of anti-Americanism, and also because General Musharraf kept the mainstream PML and PPP at bay. The leaders of these two parties – Mian Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto – were prime ministers during the 1990s and have been living in exile since the military coup in 1999.<sup>13</sup>

The MMA, combining the JI, JUI and other regional groups, may like to gain more electoral clout by continuing its anti-Americanism, postulating on an Islamic Pakistan, and promising the primacy of Islam in Kashmir and Afghanistan, but General Musharraf's own position with regards to his decision to relinquish the office of Army Chief at some stage, banking on pro-Army politicians within the country (called the Quaid-i-Azam Muslim League), could shift loyalties on all sides. Elections are due in 2007 and it appears that Musharraf wants to stay on as president, although he is fully aware that the army remains his real power base. Having said that, western governments may continue to support his reform-oriented policies to avoid chaos in the country, or even the total dominance of the Islamist groups. Musharraf is currently under both domestic and US pressure due to turbulence in the tribal regions of Waziristan and his inability to gain any major concessions from India on the thorny issue of Kashmir.<sup>14</sup> Musharraf would like (and appears likely) to be re-elected through the existing assemblies for another 5-year presidential term beginning in 2007, before the next elections, so there is quite a political flurry of activity within the country and in London, where the majority of Pakistani exiles live or meet.

### **Ideal Partners or Spoilers**

As suggested in the initial section, both the JI and JUI are fully qualified partners for any possible EU-Islamist dialogue in reference to Pakistan. While the Sufi and syncretic groups remain fragmented into several localist shrines, purists such as the JI and JUI, owing to their education, organisation and mobility, have been able to turn themselves into enduring political and ideological forces. They are the flag-bearers of Political Islam, although not the only ones, as several other groups such as Lashkar-i-Tayyaba (LT), Lashkar-i-Jhangvi (LJ) and Anjuman-i-Sipah-i-Sahaba (ASSP), with their *Jihadist* and often sectarian unilateralism, have been banned. Such groups were never enthusiastic about electoral politics, and often carried out their own pursuits in an underground fashion through all kinds of domestic networks and props.<sup>15</sup>

The JI is supported by middle-class – small-town as well as urban-based – Muslims, in Pakistan, and it has a similar following in India and Bangladesh. It has a limited presence in Afghanistan as well, and it is interesting that, in all these countries, it operates within the national frameworks, even though Syed Mawdudi, as mentioned above, was against territorial nationalism. In Pakistan and Bangladesh the JI has strong student cadres called Islami Jami'at Tulaba (IJT), who bring in fresh blood every few years, although the JI avoids rushing to become a mass party and is very selective in its membership. Becoming a member is a slow and arduous process, and desertions are very rare. Secularists see it as the most well-organised and well-entrenched party which is talking of systemic alternatives, and it has coordinated networks of men and women all over the country.

The JI in Pakistan has been in opposition for a very long time and its leadership has often suffered imprisonment. It has been very close to several regimes as well, and has thus played different roles at different times. For instance, during the civil war of 1971 it supported west Pakistani forces in their bid to maintain the nationhood of the country when the eastern wing wanted to secede, but it later accepted the realities. In 1973, while sitting on the opposition benches, it cooperated with other legislators to agree on the national Constitution of 1973. It was an important component of the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) in 1977, which demonstrated against Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and then, after he was ousted, collaborated with the military regime of General Zia ul Haq for the next eleven years. During the 1990s it participated in every election, raised political and moral issues, took a vocal stance on Kashmir and Afghanistan, and criticised corruption. It was initially uncomfortable with Ms. Benazir Bhutto's premiership by virtue of her being a woman, but it accepted her during her second term. The JI never associated itself with the PPP in coalition, and was mostly supportive of the Mian Nawaz Sharif-led PML. It still pursued electoral politics after General Musharraf's coup in 1999, but as in the 1990s it maintained a populist posture in the form of mass rallies. It participated in the provincial and national elections of 2002, despite serious bickering over Musharraf's alliance with the US and his about-turn on policies regarding Afghanistan and Kashmir that Islamists had supported. The JI joined several other Islamist groups in organising anti-US and pro-Taliban rallies, but refused to boycott the elections and has been at the forefront of the opposition at the national level. It supported Musharraf's presidential bid, and has been in coalition with the JUI in the provincial government in the NWFP. In this way it combines electoral and populist strategies and is not an obstructionist force which would take up arms or even refuse to work with national political mechanisms.

As regards its views on revolutionary ideals and methods, the JI posits the Islamic system as a revolutionary ethos, but one that should be obtained through the gradual transformation of society and the state. Off and on, all through the 1990s, some students from its affiliate, the IJT, used violent tactics against other students, but the JI itself opposes the political use of bullets. It has followers amongst south Asian Muslims who have settled abroad, especially in the UK, where it is engaged in scholarly and seminary activities. The Leicester-based Islamic Foundation was founded by the *na'ib-amir* (deputy leader) of the JI, Professor Khurshid Ahmad, who is a senator back in Pakistan and has often held important office in Islamabad. The JI accepts the plural ethos in the UK and elsewhere in the Muslim world, although it talks of a super-ordinate Islamic identity. However, to its credit, it does not encourage Shia-Sunni or such sectarian or even ethnic violence, although its views on Ahmadis as non-Muslims are all too well-known. Thus, there are some contradictions in terms regarding the JI's attitudes towards minorities' human rights, while on women it feels that Islam is quite clear on the matter; they feel that western-style feminism will only engender immoral behaviour among younger people leading to feuds (*fitna*). In the same vein, the JI does not allow any kind of sexual liaison outside marriage, and finds homosexuality abhorrent.

The other major group of Islamists in Pakistan who could be involved in a constructive engagement are the national and provincial leaders of the JUI. Inspired by the Deobandi way of presenting Islam as the supreme cure for all Muslim predicaments – like many other Islamists in British India – the JUI changed its former preference for a united, independent India in 1947. From then on its *ulama* undertook to Islamise Pakistan, although its major areas of concentration have been in the NWFP and Balochistan. Some of its publicists were also able to build up links with Afghan purists while they were on the Frontier.

The JUI leadership has also come mainly from Pushto-speaking clerics, who have followers and colleagues across the Western regions of Pakistan and also in Karachi. They abhor visiting Sufi shrines, use Urdu for their sermons, and, through their *madradas*, have trained imams (clerics to lead congregational prayers) to serve in mosques in the rural and tribal regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan. In the NWFP, often Pushto and Arabic are the languages of instruction in its all-male seminaries and the free-board-and-lodging arrangement encourages orphans of the Afghan and other wars to flock to them. Here they were called Taliban (students), and they eventually launched themselves as political leaders of post-Mujahidin Afghanistan. The Daraluloom seminary at Akora Khattak by the Grand Trunk Road outside Peshawar was close to several Afghan refugee camps. It was led by Maulana Sami ul Haq and prepared generations of Pakistani clerics and Taliban.<sup>16</sup> Even Mulla Muhammad Umar was reportedly a student at this seminary earlier on.

Maulana Haq and Maulana Fazlur Rahman are personal rivals and lead two separate factions of the JUI, but Fazlur Rahman has the largest following in Dera Ismail Khan and the Kohistan district of the NWFP, tribal regions (called FATA), Balochistan and Karachi. These leaders believe in working through the system and have used ballots as well as rallies to forward their political objectives. Their relationship with the Army and General Pervez Musharraf is similar to that of the JI and, being part of the MMA, the JUI is the largest and most formidable element in the alliance. It is significant that the JUI is the ruling party in the trans-Indus and strategically important provinces of the Frontier and Balochistan.

The JUI has been involved in Kashmir and Afghanistan, although it is more pronounced in the latter, and after 9/11 it organised massive anti-US demonstrations. Like the JI, they do not want to shrink the borders of Pakistan, but think of it as an ideological state where systemic changes are needed akin to the classical era of the *Khilafa*. Most of their clerics in the country and their followers are well versed in traditional Islamic learning, but they do not have a good modern education, and they view western might with envy and respect. In terms of membership and education standards, they are behind the JI and ahead of the JUP – the latter not having a formalised electoral and political nomenclature.

Both the JI and JUI deride Sufis and shrines and are thus critical of the JUP who, to them, lack purism. The JUI has never advocated any violence, although it has used *Jihadi* rhetoric, and some of its former members have formed their own parties/blocs and been involved in Kashmiri strife. JUI leaders formed coalition governments during the early 1970s, both in the NWFP and Balochistan, and are now again running these two provinces through the established institutions. Off and on, in the Frontier provincial assembly, there are emotional speeches and resolutions to ban music and other “un-Islamic” cultural

practices. These are mainly to appease conservative elements, but banks and other such institutions have been allowed to go on working.

Fazlur Rahman and some of his fellow cleric parliamentarians have been refused visas for certain EU countries in the past, which they have called a conspiracy against Islam, yet since their visits to India their vocal criticism of the latter has been considerably toned down. There have recently been contacts with the JUH across the border in India, and a greater learning and unlearning has come about, with some positive results on all sides.<sup>17</sup> Like several other Islamist groups, the JUI considers itself purist, pan-Islamist, Salafist and opposed to westernisation, although it benefits from modern facilities, including IT. Unlike the JI, the JUI is too radical for some Gulf States, and Maulana Fazlur Rahman was even once deported from Dubai soon after his arrival in the port city. As with the JI, there have been rumours of financial support from outwith Arab quarters, although this is difficult to confirm. The JUI considers Ahmadis outside the pale of Islam, and feels that Islam gives sufficient rights to minorities while women have to stay indoors – within the *chaadar* and *chardiwari*.

With militant groups banned, in hibernation or underground, it is all the more important to win over the confidence of forces like the JI and JUI.<sup>18</sup> Whether they maintain their vote in the 2007 elections or lose seats to mainstream national parties – if free and fair elections are allowed by the generals – Political Islam is not going to disappear from Pakistan's political spectrum. Both the JI and JUI have tangible organisations and durable networks which will ensure their longevity. Urdu literature, text books, socio-economic problems and a sense of victimhood and resentment among global Muslims – the product of an arrogant and hostile west – will keep the seminaries and clerics busy on all fronts. Even if they were to fall short of gaining a majority of seats, they would still be crucial coalition partners and vocal opposition forces.

These two groups will gain more support if:

- the army disallows/restricts the PML and the PPP from conducting a free election campaign, and if they suffer a total or partial boycott or ban
- the US and their EU partners get involved in Iran, and if the west Asian situation becomes more problematic
- India refuses to budge on Kashmir and creates more difficulties for Musharraf, as these parties can mobilise anti-Indian sentiments and elements
- the Taliban are somehow seen to be winning in Afghanistan
- General Musharraf is killed or replaced by a fundamentalist general who radically changes Pakistani foreign policies (this is unlikely as the armed forces are pro-west per se).

If their following grows and they are able to gain more seats, they will continue to rule the NWFP and Balochistan, and could be powerful partners in a coalition in the central government in Islamabad. Maintaining peace could be in their own best interest, but there is a possibility of a dangerous slide towards sectarian and personal factionalism, which

could make Pakistan ungovernable. The Islamists could start fighting among themselves which, like Afghanistan in the 1990s, could lead to a dangerous melt-down of the polity. In that situation, India, China or even Iran could undertake some extra-territorial measures which could complicate the situation in south-western Asia. The main guarantee of avoiding this horrendous scenario is the consolidation of a democratic culture and enduring constitutionalism. Pakistani politics should be an open arena for all kinds of political debates and processes, and the army must look to political parties of all persuasions as assets and not just formidable enemies.

In the case of religio-political forces taking centre stage, their relationship at that stage with the US and the EU may show either pragmatism or a deep siege mentality – if they are left on their own. Like Hamas, they could feel that the west is literally and eternally anti-Muslim, and that all this sermonising discourse on democracy is superficial. In that case, Afghanistan and Kashmir may see some covert support from Pakistan but the army and bureaucracy will stop any extreme policy shifts. Women and minorities may well suffer however, as their policies show extremism against their own vulnerable groups. The best way, in any case, would be to stay engaged with them and avoid following the sad France-Algeria (FIS) fiasco of the 1990s. Also, it is advisable to begin this constructive engagement now, instead of waiting for a point further down the line, by which time it might be too difficult or too late to establish bridges. The EU can help the army, clerics and other political forces evolve a consensus on at least the basic issues of governance. Here the US may be seen as suspect given its size and past role, but there are several positive indicators in favour of the EU – both as a new actor and as an honest broker – especially if it is led by Finland or another non-colonial/non-interventionist state!

### **Islamists within the Political System**

In Pakistan the JI and JUI have had a curious relationship. In the early years of the country they were kept at bay, although governments would often use Islam to help create a harmonious Pakistani nationalism. They would appease or pressure these groups. In the first two decades the JI – like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt – was feared and suppressed, and Syed Mawdudi was imprisoned after receiving the death sentence. The General-President Muhammad Ayub Khan (1958-1969) chose not to hang him, but the polarisation persisted until the 1971 crisis, when the JI joined the army to fight the Bangladeshi separatists. During the 1970s, ZA Bhutto remained in awe of the JI, and even tried to win the religious groups over by getting Ahmadis declared a non-Muslim minority.<sup>19</sup> Under Zia ul Haq, and since then, the JI has often worked in close collaboration with Islamabad, especially on regional issues such as Kashmir and Afghanistan.

As mentioned earlier, despite their objections to Musharraf assuming the presidency while anomalously holding on to his office as Army Chief, the JI has not rocked the boat. In the same manner, the JUI has been in and out of governments and, despite serious criticism from several human rights groups over some of their recent cultural policies in the NWFP and Balochistan, they have been allowed to run the administrations in both these provinces. The Musharraf regime has put several religious elements in detention

and banned all militant outfits, but has avoided pursuing a vendetta against these groups. There has been domestic and external criticism of seminaries (*madradas*), and at one stage in 2002-2003 the clerics were unhappy over official preening of their curricula, but Islamabad and the MMA finally agreed on some acceptable modus operandi, much to the chagrin of modernists. Pakistan is often blamed for not “doing enough” to capture Taliban sympathisers, but the country faces serious unrest in the tribal regions of Waziristan due to its military operations, and it is also getting jittery over this multi-directional criticism. Hundreds of Pakistani troops have been killed by Pakistani Pushtun activists, but the JUI and JI have offered only a muffled amount of criticism and have thus avoided creating more difficulties for Islamabad.

These two parties have pursued gradualist and co-optive policies, always avoiding direct attacks on Islamabad, and while they have often held mass rallies they have never encouraged violence. The collapse of other parties, resentment against the military-led regime, developments around the country and a growing anti-American sentiment can enlarge their audience and cause them to intensify their rebukes, so it is crucial to keep them within the system and talk with them. It is not advisable to pressure Islamabad to ditch them or marginalise them or they will come back with a vengeance and further erode Islamabad’s authority in the vital border regions.

If the JI and JUI retain existing levels of electoral support and grassroots following, or keep on gaining more seats and votes in the assemblies, they could become more confident and pressure Islamabad to pay less attention to the west when they make their policies. They could make the establishment more responsive to their Islamist demands and could even implement their Islamist agenda through legislation. That is one possible extreme scenario were they to be left out in the cold, but, on a more positive note, a large electoral following and a greater majority in the assemblies might make them more moderate and responsive. Their being part of the system and electoral politics are powerful guarantees that they will not become radical, but it also depends on how they view Islamabad and its external backers. If Islamabad becomes too careless they could stage mass rallies and create a lot of tension, although they will stop short of getting themselves kicked out.

If they gain more power they might become wiser and more responsible as they would have to deliver. In that sense they would avoid being reckless, although their infighting could lose them support among the masses. They could try to make certain changes in the political system, such as beefing up *sharia* courts, ending coeducation, making further restrictions on the visual media, resisting reforms of the *madradas*, and promulgating separate electorates for minorities. However, since they usually hold majorities in the trans-Indus provinces, they might demand more provincial autonomy in economic and administrative areas.

If they were to gain more power through elections they would certainly be willing to talk to the US and EU to assess the situation. There would be an initial element of suspicion on both sides but, depending on the nature and extent of the confidence-building measures, they might respond. Coming from a different cultural and class background, there might also be some initial misunderstandings, particularly as so much has been made in recent



times about the clash of cultures, but patience, respect and gradualism can help restore confidence on all sides. It also depends on the state of west Asian politics at that time, and how manageable issues like Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and (now) Iran have become, or if they have even been resolved. If the US carries on with its gung-ho policies and the EU or some of its members tag along militarily, mutual suspicion will increase and, like the Burmese generals and Hamas, Islamists will turn inwards and become more scornful of their critics. In other words, there is a greater need for a rethink NOW, and measures must be taken to instil confidence so that Islamist politicians are not essentially seen as al-Qaida sympathisers. The best policy would be to open up communication channels with political movements and groups across the Muslim world. Existing reservations and the war on terror have created a serious deficit in this respect which, if it is allowed to increase, will only aggravate mutual suspicions.

### **Islamists, Liberal Democracy and International Norms**

Due to suspicions which date from the colonial era, post-colonial interventions and support for authoritarian regimes, most of the people in the developing world, Muslims included, are sceptical about western attitudes and policies. They feel that a powerful west subtly controls most of the international institutions, which are easily moulded to serve specific interests. Rhetoric on human rights, democracy and good governance is usually interpreted as doublespeak which lacks substance and honesty, so one encounters frequent references to double standards and hypocritical sermons. Even the middle classes and otherwise mundane opinion groups across the Muslim world share a similar distrust, and conspiracy theories about a north Atlantic hegemony abound. Political Islam is not only posited as a means of resistance to this hegemony by the religious elite, but even middle-class urban groups may see it as a challenge to an almost invincible, irreverent and ascendant west. That is how clerics, *bazaaris* and leftists all found a common focal point in Iran, and similar kinds of convergences can be seen in many other Muslim societies. The EU needs to make bold and fresher efforts to transmit the right messages to such clusters.

For the sake of their own survival, the JUI and JI would not go beyond certain limits in challenging the west. They cannot afford to open new fronts and may benefit from anti-western feelings, but only to a certain extent. They are not country-wide forces, only operating in certain areas and communities, and they will have to recognise their limitations. The common experience so far is that, however despite provocations, they will use the existing institutions and venues to pursue their politics. Pakistan cannot have an Iranian-style revolution; it would only fragment along sectarian and ethnic lines, and the JUI and JI would do their utmost to avoid running that kind of risk. There are three scenarios with possible attendant ramifications:

1. If either of these two groups came to power – which is currently impossible despite their claims of offering alternatives to the nation – they could certainly try to reach out to more conservative sections and would bring about all kinds of changes to justify their stance. These changes would be in civic areas and could affect human rights.

2. If they remain coalition partners, their interest would again be to work within the system without losing public support. In this situation, however, they would be more amenable to negotiations and could be more receptive to persuasion.
3. If they remain in opposition they might keep using Islam as the ultimate solution, mixed in with a bit of anti-western sentiment to keep the pot boiling, but they would be equally curious to see if western powers could at some stage negotiate with them. Such negotiations, needless to say, can offer legitimacy in any competitive political system in the developing world.

The most likely scenarios are the second or third, as groups cannot form governments on their own in the centre given the diverse nature and huge size of Pakistani polity.

The two groups' attitude towards democracy has already undergone significant change owing to a greater amount of debate on the topic both inside and outside the country. They would love to accept it through the Islamic concept of advice (*shura*-cracy), but they cannot turn the clock back. They will certainly remain uneasy with terms like liberalism and secularism, but human rights will sit closer to Islamic dictums in this area, called *huquq al-'ibad* (rights and duties of humanity). Secularism and feminism, like liberalism, will be acceptable if they are couched in some kind of Islamic jargon. They might carry on insisting on a uniform *umma* (single community), but they are gradually getting more receptive to pluralism.

Human rights can be easily pushed if these groups are not made out to be in some way exceptional, and if a preamble is made along the lines of Islam guaranteeing human rights – otherwise human rights as a secular ideology and a part of modernity will prove contentious. That is why the role of NGOs is viewed with suspicion, for all kinds of class and culture-related factors. Women's rights, to them, will mean something quite different from perceived empowerment in a given democratic set-up. They demand separate roles for minorities, especially the Ahmadis, but could be more accommodating towards non-Muslims. Hindus could come under the spotlight if Indo-Pakistani relations take a turn for the worse.

They will certainly comply with the UN and other treaty engagements, but may not be forthcoming on several issues such as Israel, alliances against any other Muslim nation, and the nuclear programme. In this case leaving them alone or, at the other extreme, pressuring them to comply, would be equally counterproductive. Israel's own genuine efforts to resolve the Palestinian predicament, and its acceptance by the Palestinians, could gradually open the way for its recognition. The JI and JUI will be less amenable to any external pressure on this front, and pushing them on this will be non-productive, especially during the current tense period.

If they are in government then ongoing dialogue will certainly assuage the anger they feel towards the west. Ordinary clerics will use Muslim political issues in their Friday sermons to take the west to task, but their leaders, as seen in the case of India and Britain, will show restraint, although there will always be exceptions.

### Western Engagement with Islamists

There are certainly more advantages and fewer, if any, disadvantages in pursuing engagement with the JI, the JUI and even some other smaller or splinter groups. Testing the water could be a good exercise in itself to weigh up all the available options and let them feel that the west is not against Muslims per se, and is not simply preoccupied with the modernist or westernised elite. It will make them clarify their own positions, reflect on human rights issues and democracy, and differentiate between various western powers. A strategy that avoids seeing them as monolithic could offer several openings for future engagements that could lead regional forces to a more sober and constructive interface. Plus, the global dimensions of this clash of cultures, which has seen Muslims feeling the heat of Islamophobia, could also get a shot of the kind of healthy sensitivity that seems to be evaporating dangerously with each passing day. Engagement would mean that the west respects as well as listens to Muslim voices and is not arrogantly indifferent to them. This could also benefit inter-communal relations within the EU, where a Muslim sense of marginalisation may gradually recede to allow a more confident reassessment. In addition, intolerant forces on all sides would lose a few fangs, making an increasingly plural Europe a totally different and justifiably positive experience for all concerned.

The EU-led engagement will certainly be good for these groups as it will add to their prestige and ego. However, it will also make them gradually revise their preconceived notions about western powers and elites. They may expect western regimes to listen and even persuade or pressure the competitive elite to relent, which might put Europeans in the position of interlocutors – a challenging but equally constructive undertaking!

Regimes, whether run by modernists or Islamists, may initially view these contacts and engagements with suspicion, or may feel insecure, but in the long run they will come around to accepting their use. They would also take the religious elite more seriously and the EU would itself be in the enviable position of playing the role of healer, as in Sri Lanka or earlier in the Israeli-PLO dispute, before it withdrew rather unproductively. These dialogues could push the democratic agenda further up the list, as Muslim regimes will have to be democratic if they want more people in the EU to listen to them, and they could be held accountable for known cases of human rights violations. The EU would be seen as a proactive bloc, rather than a tired political elephant that leaves its prerogatives to somebody else.

As seen above, the EU, through informal and occasionally formalised engagements with Pakistan, either inside or outside the country, could offer Islamists the opportunity for a rethink, redefinition and realignment on the full gamut of national, regional and ideological issues. Face to face, with respect and restraint, their engagement could bring areas of disagreement and common ground into the open, and could lead to the JI and JUI revising their attitudes and policies on several issues. They will get the feeling that the EU takes them seriously; is ready to listen to them; and is prepared to negotiate. Confidence-building measures will go a long way and, after all, ETA, the IRA, Northern Irish loyalists and other similar groups have often been offered talks at the highest levels. However, care must be taken to ensure that such talks do not insist on the prior or permanent recognition

of Israel, nor should they be seen as an extension of US diplomacy through a third party, if the entire exercise is not to prove futile. Such talks will help stabilise Pakistan's political institutions, as the religious elites may not like to lose their gains and access to the EU power elite. In addition, such less publicised meetings can be used to highlight the universal nature of human rights and Europe's positive approach to issues such as the Muslim diaspora and Turkey's EU membership. Such pointers will go well as a formative background to any successful start.

### **Considerations of Possible Western/EU Engagement**

There have been episodic engagements in the past; during the Afghan resistance there were US-led and even EC-based initiatives. Diplomats in Pakistan can sound out the EU authorities on possible individuals and specific short-term and long-term agendas, besides suggesting the venue and modalities. For instance, talks should not be held during Ramadan – the month of fasting – or during the pilgrimage (*Hajj*). Religious and dietary considerations must be sensitively accommodated, and the atmosphere should be less formal and more cordial, without being paternal or arrogant.

Professor Khurshid Ahmad could certainly be a good contact for the JI as he divides his time between Islamabad and Leicester. Some women must also be engaged, and journalists and academics. The group should not consist solely of male politicians. For the JUI, there are good contacts in Islamabad, Peshawar, Quetta and Karachi. The government of Pakistan must be kept aware of the modalities and be engaged at some later stage through a tri-polar set-up. The Islamists and Islamabad will both be initially wary of each other, but efforts must be made to get the ball rolling over meals and outings until the ice is sufficiently broken to allow for substantial discussions to begin. The eventual aim of these would be to secure consensus on all the contentious issues. There should not be too much publicity at any stage, although it should not be a totally secret affair either, as too much discretion could also engender suspicions, making the JI and JUI run for cover to avoid being labelled “sell-outs”.

The regime could be initially suspicious if it is not taken into confidence beforehand. In other words, the mechanics, intentions and possible advantages should all be put on the table for the regime to evaluate it properly. The regime should never feel that the rug is being swept from under its feet, or that the west, earlier in a war with Political Islam, is now trying to rehabilitate it to see off the modernists. Confidence-building measures on both sides should be conducted in an open spirit prior to the meetings, which should happen at intervals and must not turn into a big jamboree. The engagement will certainly open up various avenues of discussion and opportunities on all sides, away from routine and arcane diplomatic niceties.

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> There has been an enormity of literature on substantive themes such as Islam and the west, modernity, fundamentalism, neo-conservative clusters, and the various forms of Muslim discourses, offering diverse perspectives. Such studies have certainly received greater impetus in recent years following events such as 9/11. While the Muslim intelligentsia has complained of objectification and negative media spotlight, the Huntingtonian clash of civilizations has equally led to more interest on Islam-related subjects. West Asian politics and the emergence of more vocal Muslim youth groups against the backdrop of an IT revolution have proven to be the crucial push factors behind a steady supply of written and visual material on the above themes. I have discussed this in greater detail in my study: *Crescent between Cross and Star: Muslims and the West after 9/11* (Oxford, 2006).
- <sup>2</sup> For a good intra-Muslim debate and politics of Muslim India, see Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan, 1857-1964* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).
- <sup>3</sup> For more on this founder of Pakistan, see Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- <sup>4</sup> Syed Mawdudi has attracted an enormous scholarship within his own party and from scholars of contemporary Islam. See, Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdudi & the Making of Islamic Revivalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
- <sup>5</sup> Studies on al-Qaida and similar other contemporary groups seek out Qutb as the ideological mentor of their activism. See Paul Berman, *Terror and Liberalism* (London: Norton, 2003).
- <sup>6</sup> For his own views, see, Syed Mawdudi, *Al-Jihad fi Sabil Allah (Jihad in the Path of God)* (Lahore, 1989, reprint). Also, Frederic Grare, *Political Islam in the Indian Subcontinent: The Jamaat-i-Islami* (Delhi: Manohar, 2001).
- <sup>7</sup> Many people seek the origins of present-day Islamists such as the JI, the Taliban and other similar groups in Pakistan, from a puritanical Wahhabi tradition that evolved in southern Arabia in the eighteenth century and is now the guiding principle for the Saudi regime. See Charles Allen, *God's Terrorists: The Wahhabi Cult and the Hidden Roots of Modern Jihad* (London: Little, Brown, 2005).
- <sup>8</sup> Allama Khomeini (d. 1989) symbolised similar views in his writings and, to him, Islam had to be implemented through *Jihad* and activism, sanctified by select-few guardians of the faith. Despite his Shia doctrinal background, Khomeini appears akin to Mawdudi, Qutb and many other contemporary Salafis.
- <sup>9</sup> Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a former Oxford graduate and landlord from the Sindh province. He was a foreign minister under General Ayub Khan in the 1960s and then parted company with the military president to form his own PPP. A firebrand, Bhutto talked of Islamic socialism and became the leader of post-1971 Pakistan. He was overthrown in 1977 by General Zia ul Haq and two years later was hanged for allegedly ordering the killing of a political opponent. Since his death, Benazir Bhutto, his oldest daughter and a former Oxford student, has been the leader of the PPP and was twice the prime minister during the 1990s. She has lived in exile since 1996. For more details on them, see Stanley Wolpert, *Zulfi Bhutto of Pakistan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); and, Benazir Bhutto, *Daughter of the East* (London: Hamilton, 1988). For a political background, see Iftikhar H. Malik, *State and Civil Society in Pakistan: Politics of Authority, Ideology and Ethnicity* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997).

- <sup>10</sup> These ethnic parties claim to represent Pushtun, Baloch, Sindhi and Urdu speaking (Muhajir) communities.
- <sup>11</sup> For a detailed account of the CIA's biggest-ever operation, see George Crile, *My Enemy's Enemy: The Story of the Largest Covert Operation in History. The Arming of the Mujahideen by the CIA* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003).
- <sup>12</sup> For details, see Iftikhar H. Malik, *Jihad, Taliban and the Hindutva: South Asia at the Crossroads*, (Oxford, 2005); and. Owen Bennet-Jones, *Pakistan in the Eyes of Storm* (London, 2003).
- <sup>13</sup> There are corruption cases against Ms. Bhutto both in Pakistan and Switzerland, while Sharif is reported to have signed a deal with Musharraf for a safe passage to Saudi Arabia and now London. Both these leaders have nation-wide followings in Pakistan and have always opposed each other. A few weeks back they met in London and in May 2006 agreed to follow a "Charter of Democracy in Pakistan". It includes 20 areas of consensus and aims at restoring a fully-fledged political and democratic set-up in the country. Elections are due in 2007 in Pakistan and there is a supposition of Musharraf continuing for another 5-year term as president, with the help of some pliant groups in the assemblies. However, people in Pakistan, as seen in my own interviews and press reports, know that without his military uniform, General Musharraf will be vulnerable to all kinds of opposition.
- <sup>14</sup> For some analysts, Musharraf has been partially sidelined as was noticed during President Bush's recent visit to the sub-continent, but the question being discussed in Washington, London and elsewhere is: who next? On the one hand, Musharraf is seen as a reliable asset, but at the same time the country's governance problems are due to the military's de facto position, and the continuing political instability in two provinces has led some foreign observers to favour a "smooth" changeover before it is too late.
- <sup>15</sup> These groups belong to the Sunni majority in Pakistan, whereas Shias account for 20% of the country's population and have their own religio-political organisations. Usually on the receiving end, the Shia militant groups have often retaliated by attacking Sunni rallies and mosques. The Shia militant group Sipah-i-Muhammad (SM) was also banned in 2002 along with these Sunni outfits, although all of them have now gone underground.
- <sup>16</sup> Based on personal visits and interviews in 2002-2003.
- <sup>17</sup> A few years back, the leaders of the JUH visited Peshawar to commemorate the founding of the JUH, and in May 2006 Maulana Fazlur Rahman was visiting India – which is certainly a major development given his criticism of India over Kashmir for so long in the past.
- <sup>18</sup> Some Pakistani analysts from academic and media circles still feel that the MMA were able to gain an upper hand in the national and provincial elections of 2002 only because Musharraf kept the mainstream parties such as the PPP and PML at bay. To such observers, if the playing field were level for all the parties, Pakistanis would overwhelmingly vote for the PPP, PML and similar centrist organisations, leaving clerics in the lurch. This could be partially true, but to see Political Islam as a temporary phenomenon is not a proper understanding of a complex situation.
- <sup>19</sup> Founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908) in British India, the Ahmadiyya Movement views him as a promised Messiah and in some cases even as a Prophet, a claim which to other Muslims is anathematic. Campaigns against them have often demanded their declaration as a non-Muslim minority because of their views over the finality of the prophethood. Mawdudi was one of the leaders of such campaigns in the early 1950s when martial law was declared in Lahore due to

pervasive unrest. During the premiership of ZA Bhutto, the Pakistani parliament declared them a non-Muslim sect, and since then their leadership has moved to London, with several Pakistani Ahmadiyya exiles now settled in Germany, the UK and several other EU nations. Under General Zia (1977-88) further restrictions were imposed on them, although human rights groups have been demanding the abolition of such legislation. For details on the current situation of minorities in Pakistan, see Iftikhar H. Malik, *Religious Minorities in Pakistan* (London: Minority Rights Group International, 2002).



## Tunisia

### Larbi Sadiki

The Islamist movement in Tunisia is noted for five specificities. Firstly, the movement is EU-based and more 'Europeanised' than any other brand of Islamism, bar Turkish political Islam. Secondly, the movement represents a rare breed of political Islam whose 'democratic acculturation' preceded 9/11. Thirdly, it is a rare case of a movement whose 'power-base' is either negligible or difficult to gauge after nearly two decades in the political wilderness, the result of two factors: state persecution and proscription, which was initiated in the late 1980s, and the self-imposed exile of the movement's leadership. This is a movement that has been de-linked from its homeland power base since the late 1980s, when thousands of its leaders and members fled Tunisia as the state set about its systematic eradication. Fourthly, it is the least 'institutionalised' and 'adaptable' of all Islamist movements, lingering in permanent exile, especially within the EU. Lastly, while the movement, the al-Nahdah Party (NP), suffers from failure in terms of political praxis, its thought shines out on the Islamist scene, a factor that is attributable to the party's seminal ideologue and leader, Rashid al-Ghannoushi. The movement compensates for being de-linked, without a homeland power, by following Sheik Ghannoushi's 'liberal' thought, and this is the root of the movement's 'staying power'.

Paradoxically, the NP conjures up simultaneous images of failure and success. Its success lies primarily in the realm of thought, making it theoretically one of the most congenial to engineer 'Islamic liberalism', while its failure lies in its incapacity to organise or mobilise politically in a way that would thrust it back into the foray of homeland politics. Changing Tunisia while in exile, or struggling for freedoms or rights from Paris or London, has its limitations. In Tunis the NP is noted more for its absence than its presence.

What the NP can therefore claim is moral capital for its conducting *ad hoc* and somewhat 'amateurish' campaigns of political protest from the margins of exile. Its political capital overlaps with moral capital, but political capital in terms of election potential, a wide power base and an ability to mobilise continues to escape it. This paradoxical blend warrants further exploration, as its implications for Islamist politics in particular, and pluralism in general, in Tunisia are far-reaching.

What is apparent, then, is the zero-sum game into which political Islam and state 'Ataturkism' are locked. Nowhere in the Arab world are the battle lines between secular nationalism and Islamic nationalism more clearly drawn than in the North African nation-state. As in Turkey, secularism underpins nationalist modernisation, but unlike Turkey the 'boomerang effect' of modernisation, as evidenced by the return of political Islam to established politics, is nowhere to be seen. 'Ataturkism', in its Bourguibist (after the late President Habib Bourguiba) form, has for the foreseeable future eradicated political Islam as a rival source of power, value-assignment and democratic competition. However, it would be a case of reductionism to assume that the failure of the NP to carve out its own niche in Tunisia's political process is solely due to failed political praxes. There is more than meets the eye, as shall be elaborated on below, particularly the 'pacifist' tendency of the NP's political thought.

### **What distinguishes Tunisian Islamism?**

The most relevant specificity to Tunisian Islamism concerns the brand of Islam found in Tunisia. Post-colonial Islam in the Arab Maghreb (Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia) differs from the Islam of the Levant, the Arab Gulf or the rest of the Arab Middle East. To a certain extent, colonialism created a rupture in Arabo-Islamic continuity in the Maghreb as French colonialism, with its assimilationist tendencies, upset both culture and identity. The resulting *Francisant* (Francophile: advocates of a modernity based on the French model of language, culture, nation and state-building) and *Arabisant* (Arabophile: advocates of a culture and identity based on Arabic, Arab history, and Islam) divide lingers on in the Maghreb, albeit in varying degrees. Thus, even with the departure of the French in the early 1960s, the cultural scene remained 'fuzzy' in the region, and Tunisia is no exception. In fact, Bourguiba was to an extent the best symbol of Francophile identity and culture, not only in Tunisia but also in the entire Maghreb. His brand of republicanism, secular politics, the Personal Code Status, and hostility to pan-Arabism and political Islam were all illustrative of the staying power of the Francophile model, as well as the divide on the politico-cultural map in Tunisia and the Maghreb in general.

The implications of this are significant with regards to identity, as this divide manifested itself in the discourses and policy preferences of the anti-colonial elites in the Maghreb. In Algeria the divide pitted Farhat Abbas (pro-France) against the followers of Ahmed Bin Badis (who advocated an Arab, Arabic-speaking, Muslim Algeria). In Tunisia, Bourguiba's staunchest rival was Ahmed Bin Youssef, who championed pan-Arabism and a brand of Arabo-Islamic culture and modernity. This legacy is a constant in the post-colonial political landscape of Tunisia, as shall be explained below. No understanding of political Islam in Tunisia can be complete without accounting for this history.

The other specificity that distinguishes Tunisia from its Maghreb context is its own rich history on three fronts. The first is the tradition of continuous statehood. Tunisia stands out in this regard, for no other Arab or Muslim state boasts a similar history with the exceptions of Egypt, Oman and Turkey. The Tunisian post-colonial state was not entirely a post-colonial invention, as continuous dynastic rule under the Hafsids and Husseinites spanned

several centuries of *dawla* (state) and statecraft. This statecraft included tax-collection, a centralised bureaucracy, an institutionalised army, and centres of high learning, the most famous of which are the Zeitouna and Kairouan Mosque-Universities.

The second historical specificity is the tradition of reform. With such a rich history of institutionalised government, learning and bureaucracy, Tunisia was sufficiently endowed to be a leader in the field of social, religious and political reform during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The so-called '*asr al-nahda* (Arab Liberal Age) had three centres: Cairo in the Orient, Damascus in the Levant and Tunis in the Maghreb. As the Arab world reeled under the juggernaut of colonialism, the search for answers on how to stem the tide of the then rising threat from an industrially and militarily superior west occupied the minds of religious scholars and statesmen in these capitals. Tunisia's own enlightened 19<sup>th</sup> century statesmen, Khair al-Din Pasha, and the intelligentsia he gathered around him, were vociferous about reforming religion, knowledge, and politics by learning from the Christian west. It was not then by mere coincidence that Tunisia, under Khair al-Din, inspired by the reforms taking place in the then weakened Ottoman Empire, produced the Muslim world's first constitution, and for a while had a representative council modelled on European parliaments – although this had a short-lived and chequered history.

This *nahda* (renaissance) period today inspires both Bourguibists, including President Ben Ali, and Islamists. When Islamists were asked by the regime to change their name, it was natural for them to settle on the label 'Nahda', which carries historical pedigree and significance. They dropped the name 'Islamic Tendency Movement' to become known, since the late 1980s, as Hizb al-Nahda (Nahda Party). But even a change of name was not sufficient to win them legal status because the consolidated regime in Tunis was not serious about sharing power with the Islamists, who were at the time gathering political momentum.

Lastly, Tunisia is tied to the EU by a history of mutual co-operation and even political affinity. Tunisia has today close to a half-million migrant residents in France and close to 200 000 migrant families residing in other EU states. This means that some 7% of the North African state's population are actually EU residents; most are legal but large clandestine communities also live in France, Italy, Belgium and Germany. Tunisia's EU migrant population serves as a 'conduit' of 'liberal' ideas, as well as a source of remittance, to their homeland. In addition to this, Tunisia receives more than 4 million tourists from around the EU, half of which hail from France and Germany, and an increasing number are coming from Italy, Spain, Nordic states and the UK. Tunisia has clearly geared all its foreign relations, including trade, towards the EU, where it has succeeded in wooing entrepreneurs and businessmen. It is therefore logical that the EU is on the first tier of interest for Tunisian foreign policy-makers. The Maghreb is second, with the rest of the Arab World coming in third. Historically, Tunisia's 'heart' has been with the EU from the time of the two World Wars, when it sided with the Allies.

The 'political', 'historical' and 'economic' capital in EU-Tunisia relations presents opportunities for substantive democracy and the promotion of human rights. This report will outline a number of propositions in its conclusion.

## Historical background

The aforementioned divisive legacy resurfaced in Tunisia when sickness began to debilitate the ailing Bourguiba in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and the questions of succession and pluralism became hot political items in the dynamic fledgling civil society. Tunisia in the late 1970s and early 1980s had a very liberal labour movement (led by the late trade unionist Habib Achour, who headed the then powerful Tunisian Workers' General Union – TWGU [the French acronym is UGTT]), and a liberal faction was part of the ruling Neo-Destour Socialist Party (NDSP) (led by Ahmed Mestiri, who later split from the NDSP to go on and found the country's most active opposition party, the Socialist Democrats' Movement – the SDM – in the early 1980s).

Tunisia had a chance in the early to mid-1980s to engineer a democratic transition that would have had all the ingredients of success – a diverse civil society, visible women, vociferous students' representative councils, a factionalised ruling party, an autonomous labour movement, and the Arab world's first human rights league – but it was 'sabotaged' by the men close to the ailing president and the security apparatus (of which the incumbent president Zinelabidine Ben Ali was a chief).

In the midst of that ferment the first seeds were sown for the emergence of an Islamist force. With the rise in 1981 of the Islamic Tendency Movement (ITM), the precursor of the current NP, Tunisia's political map acquired representatives of every political hue, from the far left (communists) to the far right (SDM). Of all the trends that seemed to threaten the ruling party, perhaps none received more attention than the Islamists, especially after the state waged and won a campaign for control of the labour movement. The state relied on a two-fold strategy; it employed corporatist tactics in its control of the labour movement, which has been co-opted by the state since the mid-1980s, turning it into a shadow of its former self; and it emasculated or coerced into silence and marginalisation labour leaders who were not amenable to co-optation. Habib Ben Achour and many of his comrades were sent to prison by special courts.

Once the battle for containing the labour movement was won, the Islamists were next on the state's agenda in their quest for political control. Bourguiba's hostility towards the ITM resulted in 'politicised' trials and placed the whole country in a continuous state of 'war' against sizable segments of the country's civil society. Dissidence was punished severely. The country lost thousands of its cadres to self-imposed exile, mostly to Ba'athist states (whose visa-free entry for all Arabs made them natural destinations for students and pan-Arabist dissidents), France (a French-speaking welfare state and so a natural destination, especially for those who had migrant relatives or could qualify for asylum benefits), and the rest of the EU states (due to its geographical proximity and favourable access to political refugee status). The brutality meted out to Islamists in Tunisia between 1989 and 1991 drew the attention of EU human rights organisations and even governments.

It is most important to note that, after initially taking refuge in Algeria and Sudan, in the early 1990s Tunisian Islamists began to flock to the EU, where many were accorded refugee status. Today, the NP is mostly based in France and the UK, with lesser numbers living in other EU states. This has of course been a source of tension between the Tunisian

authorities and the host EU states, who have continued to refuse requests by Tunis to deport or evict Islamists of Tunisian origin. The EU, by virtue of it playing host to the largest exiled Tunisian Islamist population, is directly and indirectly a party in the continuing duel between the regime and the Islamists.

The events of 9/11 have more or less 'vindicated' the Tunisian state's human rights violations against Islamists. The regime in Tunis feels that its anti-Islamist stance of exclusion and repression has been justified, but its crackdown began in the late 1980s, 14 years before 9/11. The Tunisian authorities' attitude was to seize on 9/11 as an opportunity to say, "We have been telling you all along that Islamists are terrorists." The 'truth' is that Tunisia's Islamists were nothing like the Islamic Group or Islamic Jihad in Egypt; they were not like the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in neighbouring Algeria; and they were definitely nothing like Bin Laden's al-Qaida. The reasons behind the NP's exclusion from Tunisia have nothing to do with what would happen in New York in 2001, but followed a classic trajectory which followed singular rule in several Arab states, where potential rival centres of power are pre-emptively sidelined both via the ballot box and, if that does not work, via the bullet. The reasons behind the standoff between the authorities and the NP were to be found in Tunis, not New York.

### **Domestic political background**

The NP began its political activism and quest for political power on behalf of those who championed Islamic heritage and Arabo-Islamic civilisation, i.e. a discourse and practice that favours a greater role for a value-system that accords priority to Islam and 'Arabhood' in the arena of development and modernisation. The NP thus entered the political arena, becoming a part of the ongoing dispute between the *Francisant* and *Arabisant* factions, to use this simplistic formula.

Its entry signalled a rekindling of the divisive legacy that has marred the search for modernity, national identity and 'Tunisian-ness'. This divide, which was bequeathed to the politico-cultural map by colonialism, was submerged for a while in the immediate post-independence period as the newly-founded republic enjoyed its 'honeymoon' period of statehood, and Bourguiba's charismatic leadership and patrimonial nationalist mentoring went relatively un-opposed, with state welfarism succeeding in rallying the populace behind the president and his NDSP. Socio-economic subsidies, along with free education, temporarily placated potential power contestants, and were instrumental, as was the technical aid provided by Europeans (French teachers and academics), in producing educated and technocratic elites in a fairly short span of time. Within one generation, from the time that it became independent in 1956 until the early 1980s, Tunisia produced an expanding 'middle class' and an elite with a vested interest in political participation and contestation.

If the state meant subsidies as a mechanism for 'buying' the populace's loyalty indefinitely, then it was wrong; centrifugal forces were amassing within the ruling NDSP and the labour movement, who both wanted a slice of the 'political cake'. The only obstacle was Bourguiba's own singularity; the country's national mentor was not in any way amenable to the idea of

power-sharing. After all, until he was deposed in a bloodless coup in 1987, he was president for life, which is hardly a republican principle for a man who was so highly regarded in western capitals as ‘moderate’ and ‘liberal’. There is some truth in this description, however – he engineered the inclusiveness of women in a way that is still impossible in the rest of the Muslim world; argued in the 1960s for the recognition of Israel and a two-state solution for the Arab-Israeli conflict; and was never fond of military or clerical meddling in politics. However, his ‘liberalism’ and ‘moderation’ had limits, especially with regards to his zero-tolerance policy towards the ITM and Islamists in general. Trials against the movement and its top leadership were manipulated to the point where they were nothing more than ‘kangaroo courts’, acting on Bourguiba’s whims handing down life terms and death sentences.

The divide was never deeper, and the uncertainty the country plunged into was only stopped by the coup of November 1987. There was an audible sigh of relief when Ben Ali masterfully steered the country away from the precipice, and national reconciliation was achieved in 1991 with a National Charter, modelled on the Spanish concord that facilitated the southern Mediterranean country’s democratic transition. However, if the Spanish concord led to inclusiveness, its Tunisian counterpart did the opposite. A solid performance by the Islamists in by-elections in the late 1980s sounded the alarm bells within the ruling party when unconfirmed figures put the Islamists’ percentage of the national vote at 20-25%. It was not enough to win control of the government, but was enough for stalwarts in the ruling party to see the threat posed by a fully rehabilitated and licensed Islamist movement 10 or 20 years down the line. In Arab politics, perceived threat equals ‘actual’ threat on the domestic front.

So Ben Ali, who won the confidence of the Islamists after releasing their leadership and allowing them some margin of existence in the late 1980s, became their new oppressor in 1989-1991. Once again the divide deepened, and Tunisia re-entered a period of unequal state-society relations. Ben Ali was never in any danger of losing electorally to the Islamists, who might only have been making a lot of noise about commanding a large portion of the national vote, but it was never really tested. The NP would not have won more than 30-35% of the national vote in any pluralist and free and fair elections.

New claimants for power are currently engaged in a political struggle for freedom within Tunisia, adding ‘colour’ and diversity to the country’s political landscape. These new forces include segments of the ‘loyal’ opposition, which was invented under the 1991 National Charter, which accorded 6 minor political parties entry into parliament via a quota system.

Although this *pro forma* for inclusiveness has not as yet ‘democratised’ domestic politics, it has nonetheless ‘pluralised’ parliament and the municipal councils. The ruling party, however, the Democratic Constitutional Rally (DCR – French acronym RCD), still reigns supreme, controlling labour, education and the media, the ‘loyal’ opposition, and policing the universities, communication, and all forms of organisation. In fact, Tunisia has the least diverse media in the Arab world, although its media barons must bear part of the blame for practising excessive self-censorship. The privately-owned press lacks the moral

and professional courage to do anything other than reprint or follow the 'official transcript'. The Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights (TLDHR – French acronym LTDH) is under siege at the time of writing this report, and the regime has got into the habit of meddling in the running of 'dissident' civil society associations, often creating and sponsoring rival factions within these associations who are then legally assisted to take control as the legitimate board of representatives for the profession. Similar situations prevail in a number of other civil society associations such as the Lawyers' Association.

The simple old two-way rivalry between the regime and the Islamists is no longer an option. Higher rates of literacy, the revolution in Arab satellite television, the global 'democratic diffusion', and the tenacity of the policed opposition have galvanised many forces who are struggling for democratic change within Tunisia into democratic activism. They include women represented by the proactive movement Les Femmes Démocrates, and many dissident members who initially worked legally from within the loyal opposition such as Mohamed Mo'ada, Nejjib Chebbi, Hama Hammami, Judge Mokhtar Yahiaoui, Radia Nasraoui. The latter three led a hunger strike that coincided with the UN World Information Summit held in Tunis in late 2005, and eventually formed the so-called '18 October Movement', an ad hoc body to advance demands including a general amnesty for prisoners of conscience, political inclusiveness for the opposition at home and abroad, and new laws governing political parties and the media.

If and when the NP is allowed back into Tunisia, it would be only one of many challengers for political power, but it would be a serious contender and, in free and fair elections, it would be assured parliamentary representation. Hostility to the NP from leftist forces has ceased, but a segment of the liberal and DCR constituency, including women, would not vote for the NP for fear that they would overturn 50 years of 'partnership', which has been made possible by the country's advanced legislation in favour of women.

### **The ideology of the NP**

The NP's thinking can be summed up in its transformation from a movement that hardly questioned the discourse of Muslim Brotherhood-type Islamism at all to one that has been relatively 'rationalised' and 'liberalised'. The early philosophy that Sheik Ghannoushi and his companion, Abdelfattah Mouro, founded in 1979, was focussed on building the 'individual' as a prerequisite to the wider and deeper 'renaissance' of 'Muslim Society'. There was nothing 'political' about the nature of the project initiated by the two founding leaders of the NP, but the context within which the idea of an 'Islamic Group' was incubated was very much loaded with politics in the form of the Bourguibist project, which sought to model Tunisian culture, identity and modernity on the French example. This whole project of 'wholesale westernisation' (better known as '*taghrib*' in Islamist parlance) formed the backdrop against which Tunisian Islamism emerged.

The Islamist scene was not too diverse in the 1970s in Tunisia. The Tahrir Party (or Hizb al-Tahrir) had some mediocre presence; so did a violent faction under the name of Tala'i' al-Fida' al-Islami (Islamic Martyrs Legion), which was accused in the 1970s of preparing a putsch against the Bourguiba regime (for which Bourguiba imprisoned but



later pardoned most of its members). The key project, which began in 1971 as a voluntary association for the 'preservation and teaching of the Koran' and the building of the individual Muslim, metamorphosed in the late 1970s into another voluntary association which was more politically ambitious. The 'Islamic Group' (al-Jama'á al-Islamiyya) was designed to replicate the experience of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Tunisia. Like all MB organisations, its political content was geared towards the return to a healthier state of Islam that would allow for the following:

- a Muslim individual whose identity and culture correspond with Islamic teachings
- a Muslim society that abides by *sharia* law
- resistance to westernisers and westernisation

The MB-inspired project naturally rejected the western model of separating politics and religion, although this was a point of contention within the early nucleus of Islamist activists. In particular, there was conflict between advocates of 'acculturation' (limiting religion-based activism to cultural and educational activities) and 'politicisation' (taking the role of Islam in politics to be a given).

The group split, with Ghannoushi and Mouro pushing the latter process much further with the founding in 1981 of the ITM, and then the NP in 1989. Hamida al-Nayfar, Ziyad Krishan and Salah al-Din al-Jorshi opted for the former process of acculturation. In other words, whereas the first group, led by Ghannoushi and Mouro, saw thought and praxis to be inextricably linked, al-Nayfar and his group stressed thought, fearing that praxis (or politicisation) carried unnecessary risks. In a way, the subsequent history of the NP's consolidation and contestation of power proved al-Nayfar and his group right.

The NP was dealt a number of blows. 'Confrontation' with the regime was costly, as the full gamut of legal and police resources available to the regime was deployed by Bourguiba and his successor; many lost their lives under torture, especially after 1987, and thousands have lost their homes and legal travel documentation, which means that they have in effect lost their Tunisian citizenship. The early cautious approach by Ghannoushi and other leaders, which sought to avoid confrontation with the authorities, was unwittingly undermined because elements within the NP Islamist leadership lacked the political skill to either foresee or avoid confrontation.

To an extent, this particular failure of political Islam seems to repeat itself elsewhere in the Maghreb, where the state never hesitates to use coercion to exclude Islamists (e.g. Algeria in the 1980s and 1990s, Libya since the 1990s, Mauritania until 2005, and to an extent Morocco, where Islamists are selectively co-opted). Rushing into politics by replicating the progression of MB movements in countries like Egypt, Sudan, and Jordan does not suit the Maghreb context, in which Islamist movements are fairly new and politically unskilled.

The movement tended to abandon caution in the mid-1980s; the ITM came out of 'hiding' in a press conference (1985), in which the organisation declared its guiding policies and publicised the names of its 'hidden' leadership (which also included Salah Karkar, Fadel al-Baladi, Hammadi al-Jabali, Sadek Shouro, and Ali al-Arid). This bold move, which marked the ITM's 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary, provoked the regime into further oppression of the group,

and 1985-1987 saw the movement, society and the state plunged into crisis. The movement was tried for acts of violence (bombings) against tourist targets, which led to the trial and imprisonment of Ghannoushi, amongst others. To this day the full story of who committed the bombings has not been fully and transparently recorded or documented by either accuser or defendant, i.e. the state or the Islamists. However, the record must be set straight on the fact that many of the movement's leadership condemned the acts of violence. If 'unruly' elements from within the Islamist movement in Tunisia were guilty of them, they were acting without orders from the leadership, or at least not the entire phalanx of leaders.

Ben Ali's arrival on the chaotic political scene was timely and much needed as it was necessary for the country to somehow 'decompress'. Ben Ali gently 'deposed' the country's 'monarchical president' (president for life) in November 1987, and six months later he released Ghannoushi, amongst other Islamists, from prison. The gesture proved popular with the public at large and gave the Islamist movement a false sense of security. Ben Ali might have used the gesture purely as a way to buy time to consolidate his grip on power, but either way Ghannoushi was caught unprepared and made the mistake of hastily expressing confidence in the new president. The endorsement worked in Ben Ali's favour, undermining Ghannoushi's political judgment, and once again the Islamists were politically out-smarted.

While in every sense an equal to Hassan al-Turabi of Sudan, the famous Islamist seminal ideologue, in terms of discourse and thought, Ghannoushi lacked Turabi's political cunning and organisational skills. In fact, the NP's history is littered with 'amateurish' politics. It proved itself in university campuses and high schools, but in the arena of high state politics it remains 'infantile' and inexperienced, and it lacks the political capital of Islamism in e.g. Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Sudan, Morocco or Algeria. Tunisian Islamism has yet to master how to manoeuvre politically in the face of a formidable state machine that stops at nothing to monopolise power. Perhaps it needs to take a leaf out of the book of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, or the Islamic Action Front in Jordan.

The NP's second transformation began in European exile. The short period of banishment to Sudan provided a much-needed 'breathing space'. Whatever mentoring al-Turabi provided has yet to bear any visible fruits years later in terms of bringing to an end the NP's prolonged time in the political wilderness in a state of permanent exile. With a disillusioned membership scattered around the EU, the question of how the NP can reimpose itself as a direct contender for power in Tunisia continues to baffle it. Only history will tell whether the policy of self-imposed exile that some of the leadership rushed into has been at all useful, but it is tempting to argue that the absence of the NP left the political field open for a predatory state to rule unopposed, and it could be said that Ben Ali did not stop the Islamist exodus because he knew that it served him well and that he would be much better off without the NP in Tunisia. Exile as a tactic has been converted into political capital by only a very small number of opposition movements, e.g. the Sudanese Islamists, but in the Tunisian case it has been disastrous. The NP is without a power base inside its homeland, or at least without an electorally 'measurable' constituency, even if it insists that it has never lost its following.

Its remarkable championing of ‘western’ liberal principles unashamedly marks the progression in the NP’s thought in the EU, and notions like ‘freedom’, ‘democracy’, ‘competition’, ‘alternation of power’, ‘multi-partyism’ and ‘inter-faith dialogue’ are all part of its political vocabulary. What the NP lost at home in terms of a domestic constituency, it has gained internationally in terms of respect for and reference to its ideas concerning how to advance the Islamist project much further in the realm of ideas.

### **Implications of Ghannoushi’s thinking**

Ghannoushi’s thought is in a way ‘globalised’, in the same fashion as the ideas of the intellectual mentors that influenced his thinking, from Hasan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb and Abul Ala Mawdudi to Hassan al-Turabi, were propagated widely in the Muslim world. For instance, Hizb al-Wasat (originally a faction that came out of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood) takes Ghannoushi as a guide and an Islamic thinker worthy of imitation on the question of ‘democratic government’, the ‘inclusiveness of women’, ‘non-violent political participation’ and ‘public freedom’ in an Islamic state.

To an extent Ghannoushi’s intellectual pragmatism and maturity have led him to shun the notion of an ‘Islamic state’, which he has never referred to in his discourse. For Ghannoushi, an ‘Islamic state’ would be a long-term progression from a ‘democratic Muslim society whose sovereignty is legally and democratically mediated.’ The divisibility of ‘Godly sovereignty’ and ‘popular sovereignty’ is easily accommodated in Ghannoushi’s discourse, making society, or the *umma* (community), the repository of all sovereignty that does not cancel out religious obligations to notions of justice, good rule, equality before the law, and the primacy of an Islamic identity based on self-determination. Ghannoushi has no illusions about the viability of an Islamic state or the return to an Islamic Caliphate or ‘Islamicate’. He champions democracy as a rational choice, and sees concepts like *shura* (consultation), *ijma’* (consensus), *‘adl wa-musawat* (justice and equality), and *ta’addudiyya* (pluralism) as overlapping with western institutions such as elections, parliaments, legal rule and political pluralism.

Thus Ghannoushi is among the pioneering ideologues of Islamist leaders who express acceptance of a democratic community in which space is shared with (Godless) communists. For him, Islamists have no right to reject what the populace choose through the ballot. By reworking his thought within a democratic framework, Ghannoushi has given expression and shape to a new brand of political Islam that does not fear political competition, multi-partyism or power sharing. In so doing, he has reframed his whole understanding of the Arabo-Islamic project within a dialogical framework that takes the ‘western’ heritage to be the collective heritage of all humanity, as is that of Islam. From this perspective, progression is adopting ideas and institutions through which Muslims can advance without apologising for westernism, imperialism or Zionism. In other words, the utility of the western model that reformist forebears deemed compatible with Islam must be integrated into Muslim political practice.

Ghannoushi, like 19<sup>th</sup> century reformers such as Khair al-Din and Egypt’s Rifa’at al-Tahtawi, who found plenty of good in western systems, insists that the Islamic principle of

'public utility' promotes learning from the 'good' available in non-Muslim thought that can benefit the Islamic community. Thus Ghannoushi sees no 'good' in the misuse of notions like *Jihad* (martial struggle) against fellow Muslims or non-Muslims, but he does this without ever tiring of stressing the rights of Palestinians and Iraqis to self-determination. He unequivocally condemns 9/11 and al-Qaida's tactics and leaders, the spiral of Muslim-against-Muslim violence in places such as Saudi Arabia, and all acts of violence including suicide bombing within the EU (e.g. the Madrid and London bombings).

Ghannoushi naturally holds views on women that may not be palatable to non-Muslims. He stands for a visible Muslim woman with rights to political, economic and social inclusiveness. Textually, he adheres to Koranic injunctions which, in the area of inheritance, accord females only half of the male share. Islamic law is yet to innovate in this area, and this position is almost universal, with very few exceptions such as Iran. What must be noted in favour of Ghannoushi is his contribution to the International Muslim Brotherhood Movement, which in 1994 approved a motion for equal political rights for Muslim women. Only in one arena are women to be excluded: the presidency. So according to this reasoning a Muslim woman can be a prime minister but not a head of state. In relation to Tunisia, Ghannoushi has spoken out against torture and the exclusion of women on political grounds (for being related to Islamists in some instances). In particular, he opposes Law 108, which bans the headscarf. This has resulted in discrimination against women in the public sphere, with jobs being denied to veiled women, which has the effect of forcing many to do away with the veil for the sake of employment. The regime is perhaps too paranoid about the headscarf, tending to equate its return to Tunisia's society as a 'vote of confidence' in the NP's political direction, but millions of women wear the headscarf in secular states in the EU without restriction (although the issue of the *niqab* [affixed face veil] seems to meet with increasing opposition, also from many Muslims living within the EU). The Personal Status Code (1956 – amended a number of times) is an important acquisition for Tunisian women. The NP does not hold a coherent view of this piece of legislation, which accords Tunisian women fully deserved rights, some of which upset many Islamists' religious beliefs. However, Ghannoushi has never advocated its abolition, and if he did he would alienate a large segment of the country's female population. The question of what action Islamists would take vis-à-vis the Personal Status Code if they were in power is very much a hypothetical one.

The matrix of ideas that has durably informed the Islamic movement as a whole in Tunisia has three strands:

1. Tunisian religiosity shaped by Sufi traditions, the Malikite school of jurisprudence (which gives women greater visibility than other schools), and literalism in terms of exegesis. This is changing with increasing literacy and the syncretism facilitated today by greater contact with other modern trends of Muslim thought (via travel, Islamic satellite television programmes, and the work of Islamic evangelical preachers such as the Egyptian Amr Khalid, amongst others).
2. A Salafi MB-brand of religiosity predicated on the organic nature of Islam as combining religion, politics, economics, etc. The idea, for instance, of 'Godly rulership'

or *hakimiyya* (as developed by Sayyid Qutb) is part and parcel of this strand. To an extent, *takfiri* tendencies and the misuse of *Jihad* against fellow Muslims or Muslim regimes derived from this strand. This strand of Islamic thought has only temporarily touched the Tunisian Islamist scene.

3. 'Rationalisation of the religious experience', which re-thinks Islam through reference to the medieval example of rationalist re-readings of the Islamic canons, including the Koran, and the reformist heritage of the *nahda* (renaissance) ideas of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The 'Islamic Group' of the 1970s, as well as the NP, all featured these trends to varying degrees. By nature, Islamic movements are generally 'factionalised', as this goes with the territory when religion is adopted as a cultural, intellectual or political vocation. Religion lends itself to both variable interpretations as well as argumentation, often pitting 'rationalists' against 'literalists', and 'democrats' against 'putsch-ists'. Disputations have never been absent from the NP, or the ITM and Islamic Group before it. But what is certain is that the EU as a base has more or less given the NP an opportunity to re-think political Islam in a way that sits well with what existed in the Iberian Peninsula when the Moorish enrichment of intellect did not fear difference but rather, like the Averroes, turned difference into a resource for the creation of an enlightened Islamic discourse. Ghannoushi's brand of Islamic thought suffers from only one handicap – the test of statecraft: theoretical propositions remain academic in the absence of the practical translation of ideas into practice. Nonetheless, the democratic content of his thought is rare in an Islamic scene in which *Jihad* rather than democracy seems to be the rule, not the exception.

### NP activities in exile

From exile in Paris and London the NP has been turned into a marginal force. Whatever moral weight it carries in its resolute defence of political rights of all Tunisians, it is not sufficient to be reckoned with in Tunis or any EU capitals. The failure of the NP resides in its political strategies, which have reduced it to amateurish movements confined to 'virtual reality'. It struggles first and foremost via the pen rather than the sword, to use the cliché. Propaganda remains its main *modus operandi*, publishing the electronic newsletter 'Tunis News', which has a wide readership across the EU and, to a lesser extent, some Arab states. In particular, the wide publicity it gives to human rights violations and the publication of press releases and statements by the opposition, including leftist and liberal, keeps up the moral pressure on the regime.

Their political practice does reflect positive aspects and employs tools that are relevant to political struggle such as:

1. *Reconciliatory ethics*: aimed at extending bridges of communication and collective action with oppositional forces in the diaspora and at home. This is aimed primarily at solidarity networks for confronting the powerful regime in Tunis. The NP is on good terms with all oppositional forces. It had good ties with exiled leaders (such as the former prime minister Mohamed M'zali, before he returned to Tunis a few

years ago from his exile in France; and Dr Moncef Marzouki, the veteran human rights activist who, before his return to Tunis in September 2006, led the Council of Freedoms from exile). In late 2005 the NP's full support for the hunger strike led by Chebbi and Hammami in Tunis was a turning point in relations with the leftist opposition. Hammami, once a morbid foe of the Islamists, issued a public letter to his movement after the hunger strike declaring his acceptance of the NP as partners in the overall political struggle for freedom in Tunisia.

2. *Symbolic ethics*: evidenced in symbolic moral gestures of solidarity to draw attention and sympathy to the question of freedom in Tunisia. This has been conducted through many hunger strikes led by Ghannoushi himself, either in support of similar action taken by the opposition in Tunis or NP members' initiatives designed to highlight the plight of individuals whose family members or relatives have suffered grievances (e.g. torture, imprisonment, withdrawal of travel documents by the authorities, etc.).
3. *Communicative actions*: networking with EU MPs for the purpose of advertising the 'hidden' problems of freedom in Tunisia. The NP has a number of good relationships with MPs in a number of EU states who stand for better human rights in the Arab world at large. NP leaders, especially Ghannoushi, are permanent spokespersons for their cause in the print media and frequent guest interviewees on Arab satellite television programmes (e.g. al-Jazeera, al-Arabiyya, etc.).
4. *Actions in solidarity*: fund-raising for the benefit of political refugees abroad and victims of regime oppression at home. The NP feels responsible for the plight of its members, many of whom have been in exile for nearly 20 years, and the movement has been resourceful in procuring funds for aiding the needy amongst them. The bulk of this aid has been used to help members settle and, where possible, acquire a trade, education or be joined by family members from home. Help has in the past also been provided in lodging asylum applications and defending members across the EU against extradition.

The NP is not involved in international terrorism, but inevitably, as the movement went through a fragmented period before it regrouped in the EU, a small number of members became permanently 'disjointed', choosing different paths of Islamist activism in Afghanistan and other parts of the 'warring' Muslim world. The NP rightly insists that none of its current members are involved in violent action anywhere in the EU or elsewhere in the world.

### **Current state of affairs**

The Islamist movement was 'invented' and subsequently mobilised under different phases and intellectual currents to counter secular-nationalism and its hostility to Islam and its attempt, as claimed by the NP, to deface Tunisian identity and dilute its Muslim and Arab character. Political Islam has been all but eradicated from Tunisia itself, but this was done at a high price: a record of systematic oppression that seems to have been emboldened by the events of 9/11.

At the time of writing, evidence suggests that the Islamist movement poses no security threat to state or society in Tunisia, nor does it pose any threat to security within the EU. The Tunisian Islamist movement is a pacifist movement (opposed to all forms of violence in domestic politics) which accounts, albeit only partly, for the political stability in Tunisia. There are no echoes in Tunisia of the Algerian or Egyptian violence and counter-violence between state and society. The NP was terminated as a contender for power inside Tunisia by exclusionary and draconian measures, but the pacifist nature of the movement forbade confrontation and retaliation. In fact, the movement went through a period when pressure from its victimised membership was pushing for retaliatory action against the regime, but Ghannoushi rejected this: Tunisian blood was not to be spilled for the sake of political power. Morally, this is a triumph for which the movement must be credited. Intellectually, the movement boasts another triumph: liberalisation of thought; a brand of 'Islamic liberalism' that can be ascribed to Ghannoushi.

The movement suffers from isolation in the political wilderness, in permanent exile, which decreases its potential to challenge for power and political credibility, although there are claims that a young NP generation is mainly active in university campuses under the banner of *mustaqillun* (independents). Nonetheless, the NP does not stand a chance of contesting power in the near future, much less governing in Tunisia, and it is impossible to see it ever being so within the lifetime of its leader Sheik Ghannoushi. Nothing in politics is ever assured or fixed, but as things stand right now, the scenario of the NP partaking in Tunisian politics in the near future remains only a remote possibility.

For now, the NP seems to be living in exile, serving those in exile. Even if it is allowed to return the NP will have to face the reality of a fiercely competitive political landscape populated by new groups and organisations, many of whom have a claim to legitimacy by dint of their struggle from within the homeland. The NP's credibility rests on its past activism, the high price it has paid in terms of internment and exile, and its refusal to make deals. Nonetheless, the kind of interlocutors that render politics the art of the possible seem to be absent from the NP.

The regime is not blameless in all of this; its intransigence is part of the problem. In his July 2005 speech marking the 48<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the republic, Ben Ali clearly stated his refusal to accept the Islamists back into Tunisia, thus closing all doors to national reconciliation. The constitution bans the formation of political parties on the basis of religion.

On the other hand, the state in Tunisia has registered a number of achievements – socially, economically and politically – and the country's stability is rare in a volatile region. Economically, despite being the only non-hydrocarbon state in the region, Tunisia has maintained an average 5% annual growth for the past 10 years, and its efforts to upgrade are encouraging. The state's insistence on providing a social safety net for the protection of the needy seems to yield some form of 'sustainable development'.

Politically, Tunisia enjoys ever-increasing degrees of inclusiveness in polity and economy; some form of 'loyal' opposition exists in parliament; and periodic elections are maintained. More recently, a second parliamentary chamber has been created to provide



more input from society in the policy-making process, and the release in 2006 of hundreds of political prisoners, including Islamists, was a commendable gesture by the authorities. The state has a sophisticated elite of technocrats who run the economy and development very efficiently. All of these are worthy realisations by any standard.

However, political singularity has not been decreased. The state controls every process, every resource and every avenue of mobilisation, organisation and the distribution of values, power, and economic benefits. Contestation is not free, participation is not wide, and coercion is still widely used. The constitutional amendments that extended the presidency to more than two terms are questionable. Ben Ali rejected the principle of 'presidency for life' in 1987 and moved on to change the constitution accordingly, but in 2004 he overturned his own positive amendments.

The political party landscape has not yet reached the standard required to propel the country into substantive democratisation. So far, multi-partyism in Tunisia has been for the most part nothing more than window dressing. The parties are themselves to blame for elitism, a lack of political direction and purpose, a lack of resources, dependence on the state for funding, and limited support because they are concentrated in the main urban centres, and there have been instances of corruption and internal competition and squabbles over leadership issues and policies. In fact, none of the opposition political parties inspire confidence. Besides the Islamists, the real potential for forming formidable rival sources of power resides in the voluntary and professional associations (e.g. the lawyers' association) and those groups active on the human rights front (e.g. Marzouki's Freedoms Council, the besieged and original Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights, and the 'shackled' labour movement). What remains to be seen is whether the future will see a 'liberal' faction emerge in the ruling party – the DCR. Some DCR figures like the incumbent prime minister, Mohamed Ghannouchi, have the professionalism and statesmanship to steer the country away from the current excessive singularity and quasi 'personality cult' that has been built around the president.

### **What the EU should do**

The EU faces a mammoth task in 'selling' or promoting democracy to Tunisia, and there is no easy way of doing so. The EU has the means at its disposal to work with the Tunisian authorities for an ordered and substantive democracy, the promotion of human rights, and a continuously meaningful partnership. Under the terms of the 1995 Barcelona Process, and the more recent Neighbourhood Policy principles, both the EU and Tunisia have commitments to aid one another and cooperate in the acquisition of higher standards of democratic governance. The following propositions may help crystallise an action plan for the EU:

First, the EU should encourage the Tunisian authorities to regulate the status of exiled Tunisians, whose rights to travel documents or safe entry into Tunisia must be restored un-conditionally. Thousands of these have committed no serious crimes except for being members of an organisation – the NP – that has been declared illegal by the regime in Tunis.

Second, the EU should conduct a fact-finding mission on the state of human rights in Tunisia. The purpose must not be to 'judge', so much as to make recommendations to the Tunisian authorities of how to stop violations, including the re-training of the security forces through special EU-led workshops (legal issues and principles, ethical and professional standards, etc.). Any EU future fact-finding mission must have access to prisons and prisoners of conscience, including those released in 2006. The EU must press the Tunisian authorities to outlaw torture and bring guilty individuals to justice after the imposition of the ban.

Third, the EU should conduct a fact-finding mission on the state of political parties and civil society. The purpose here would be to evaluate the strengths and limitations of the country's reform process. To this end, the mission must insist upon and establish unobstructed dialogue with representatives of civil society, trade unions, political parties, the judiciary and members of parliament. The opposition in the EU must be included in this fact-finding mission. No 'stick' needs to be waved at the Tunisian authorities, but the promotion of a 'carrot' policy is important in this regard. Tunisia needs the EU and is well aware that certain standards of reform must be maintained for the country to continue to enjoy 'special status' on many fronts, including aid. What must be kept in mind is that political Islam is not about to vanish simply because the state declares it 'illegal' or outlaws it. To sideline 'moderate' Islam is to err in the long term, because people with Islamist tendencies will find themselves 'flirting' with more extreme brands of political Islam. Already in Tunisia there is a growing trend among disillusioned youths to join the Salafi movement, which ranges from the *madakhila* to the more violent *salafiyya-jihadiyya*, which is close to al-Qaida. The state may be in denial of this fact, but this trend is taking root within Tunisia and could worsen unless some 'Islamist' safety valve is allowed to benefit those advocating religious political discourse and practice. The state can regulate the accommodation of political Islam in the political process. Exclusion is not a long-term solution.

Fourth, the EU should encourage a healing process: a 'truth and reconciliation'-style process to minimise or prevent conflict, divisiveness and the departure from Tunisia of thousands of would-be migrants to the EU. There is a form of 'exodus mentality' in the country, with hundreds of thousands of young people and university graduates intent on finding 'greener pastures' in the EU. A substantive liberalisation would persuade many of these to stay at home and create opportunities in their homeland. Political exclusion is one of the chief causes of emigration. This process could be a medium for the rehabilitation of many exiled Islamists and other dissidents. Those convicted of crimes must face fair trials instead of indefinite banishment in the EU or elsewhere, and those who have been banished for holding opposing ideologies or politics must be given at least the choice of a safe return to their homeland.

The EU is morally obliged to assist in this regard without being patronising or punitive. All that is needed is the will to act without delay. The question of succession is already on the minds of Tunisians and non-Tunisians alike, as rumours of Ben Ali's prostate cancer problem has travelled widely. If this is true then the urgency to act now is even more pressing.

The president has no adult sons to pass the presidency on to, even if he so desired (his only son, Mohamed, is less than 2 years old), but the question is whether the temptation to forge a dynasty can be resisted. Madame Leila Ben Ali is proactive and visible in the charity field (e.g. BASMA association) and with women (e.g. National Women's Association), but what is not so clear is whether the country's 'First Lady' harbours any political ambitions to inherit the mantle of leadership from President Ben Ali. Besides having the experience of 'mastering' politics behind the scenes for 19 years, she has acquired tertiary degrees in law.

For now, what stands between Tunisia and the promise of *Jumhuriyyat al-Ghad* (the republic of tomorrow as enshrined in the electoral manifesto of President Ben Ali) is whether the state, society, dissidents, secularists, feminists and Islamists can come together in a creative, pluralist and 'consociational' synergy to democratise Tunisia. Perhaps more than ever before the state and opposition must re-think the terms of political citizenship in a more inclusive and 'accommodationist' fashion. Ben Ali can crown his presidency with a 'Charter for Democratic Transition' for substantive and reconciliatory democratisation, and he and the opposition could and should work jointly to this end by refocusing their energy more on building confidence and democracy rather than power-grabbing. This challenge remains the litmus test in the years ahead for all those who have an interest in the viability of a democratic republic in Tunisia.

## Islamism dialogue: Framework of Analysis

### Introduction

#### *Motivation for the exercise*

Western policy-makers continue to display an inability to effectively analyse the vast array of views held by the various Islamist organisations, groups and movements. The exercise is motivated by the belief that engaging with political Islamist movements can promote democratic reform and reduce the radicalisation of both the movements concerned and other militant tendencies within Muslim societies. Additionally, engaging with Islamist currents of public opinion in Muslim societies would enable the western world to demonstrate that it is serious about promoting democratic reform in an impartial, non-partisan spirit, irrespective of the ideology of the opposition.

#### *Question*

In which Muslim countries are there identifiable non-violent and non-revolutionary Islamist groups, and under what circumstances could they be engaged in meaningful dialogue with the western world/ EU?

### Framework for analysis

#### *Finding Islamists*

The following analytical framework has been used to structure the study of each country. The focus is on Islamist parties and movements, and for the purposes of this study Islamism is defined as the “active assertion and promotion of beliefs, prescriptions, laws, or policies that are held to be Islamic in character.” (International Crisis Group definition).

The ideal partner for European engagement would have the following attributes:

1. Islamist – fitting the Crisis Group definition used above and having a ‘political agenda’, meaning that they focus on changing the state in some way, not just providing moral guidance for society.
2. Opposition – the party is not forming the current government, nor is it part of a government coalition, in the country being studied.

3. Domestic – the party's policies are aimed at changing the current nation-state, not creating a pan-Islamic state in the model of the Caliphate.
4. Non-violent – the party is not involved in terrorist activities or any other type of violence.
5. Non-revolutionary – groups should accept the basic concepts of political pluralism, democracy and human rights, even if these ideas are couched in an Islamic discourse very different to that used in Europe.

Clearly it is unlikely that there will be parties in the Muslim world that conform perfectly to this ideal type, but the five classification sections provide a framework for considering how close to, or far from, this ideal model the major Islamist groups and parties in countries being analysed are.

### **Context and scenarios**

An analysis should be made of the context of the Islamist movement's activities within the country in question. Therefore, the following questions should be asked:

#### *1. Political relevance of the Islamists*

- What is the size and political importance of the group? How does it primarily gain support? What is the relation of the group to other political movements, Islamist groups (including those that use violence), state religious institutions, and the *ulama* in general? Is the group involved in social disputes or ethnic or religious conflicts, and how does this dynamic influence the political relevance of the group?
- In what circumstances is the group under consideration likely to gain more support? What kind of events or changes in the politics of the country might contribute to the growth of the movement?
- Should the political importance of the group grow significantly, what kind of scenarios would be likely in terms of:
  1. stability and peace
  2. regime reactions
  3. relations with the EU and the US

#### *2. Islamists within the political system*

- What is the position of the group within the political system? Does it act within the constitutional framework? How does the regime relate to the group? Do significant human rights violations take place against members of Islamist parties or movements?
- In which circumstances could the group gain more power within the political system? What would be the prospects for the group in situations ranging from gradual democratic reform to revolution?

- If the Islamist group(s) in question gained more political power or a ruling position within the government of the respective country, what future scenarios would be likely with regards to:
  1. the stability of the state
  2. the political system and constitution
  3. relations with the EU and the US

### 3. *Islamists, liberal democracy and international norms*

- Based on the groups' stated ideology, speeches and actions, what are the groups' positions on key issues of concern to western actors? How could these positions change and in which circumstances? Consider scenarios in which groups are both in opposition and in power.
  1. Liberal democracy, acceptance of pluralism and competition for power.
  2. Human rights, acceptance of non-Islamist political parties and positions, freedom of religion, rights for ethnic minorities and women.
  3. International norms, respect for international law and treaty obligations, including signed peace treaties with Israel.
  4. Political correctness and hate speech, stated positions towards different religions, foreigners and foreign governments.

### 4. *Western / EU engagement with Islamists*

- What kind of advantages or disadvantages could be expected from such an engagement? What would be the likely outcomes of such an engagement for:
  1. the Islamist groups; their support bases, ideologies, political positions, and relations to the regime and international actors
  2. regimes; policies concerning Islamist groups, democratisation, and the EU and its member states
  3. EU relations with the respective regimes; diplomatic, security and economic relations and the promotion of democracy and stability within the states

## **Considerations of possible western/ EU engagement**

- Is any direct engagement with this party or movement possible? In what ways and levels could engagement take place?
- Are there any possibilities for indirectly supporting, from the outside, the inclusion of moderate Islamists within the political system, or promoting dialogue between moderate Islamists and the regime?
- What is the likely regime reaction to outside agents engaging with the Islamist group? What would be the implications for diplomatic, security, political, economic or social relations with the state in the short, medium and long term? What kind of advantages could be expected from such engagement?

## List of Abbreviations

ABIM	Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia / Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (Malaysia)
AIS	Armée Islamique du Salut / Islamic Salvation Army (Algeria)
AL	Awami League (Bangladesh)
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party / Bangladesh Jatiotabadi Dôl (Bangladesh)
BTF	Bangladesh Tariqat Federation (Bangladesh)
DCR	Democratic Constitutional Rally / Rassemblement constitutionnel démocratique (Tunisia)
DDII	Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia / Indonesian Islamic Predication Council (Indonesia)
DRS	Département du renseignement et de la sécurité / Department of Information and Safety (Algeria)
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Pakistan)
FFS	Front des Forces Socialistes / Socialist Forces Front (Algeria)
FIS	Front Islamique du Salut / Islamic Salvation Front (Algeria)
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale / National Liberation Front (Algeria)
GIA	Groupes Islamiques Armés / Armed Islamic Groups (Algeria)
GSPC	Groupe Salafiste pour la Predication et le Combat / Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (Algeria)
HCCNOP	The Higher Committee for the Coordination of National Opposition Parties (Jordan)
HCE	Haut Comité d'État / High Committee of State (Algeria)
HT	Hizb ut-Tahrir / Party of Liberation (Bangladesh)
HTB	Hizb ut-Tahrir Bangladesh / Bangladesh Party of Liberation (Bangladesh)
HujiB	Harkatul Jihad Bangladesh / Bangladesh Movement of Jihad (Bangladesh)
IAF	Islamic Action Front / Jabhat al-'Amal al-Islami (Jordan)
ICCS	Islamic Center Charity Society (Jordan)
ICM	Islamic Constitution Movement (Bangladesh)
ICS	Islami Chattra Shibir / Islamic Students Camp (Bangladesh)



IJT	Islami Jamiat Tulaba / Islamic Assembly of Students (Pakistan)
INC	Indian National Congress (Pakistan)
IOJ	Islami Oikyo Jote / United Islamic Front (Bangladesh)
IRC	Islamic Representative Council (Malaysia)
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence (Pakistan)
ITM	Islamic Tendency Movement / Mouvement de la Tendence Islamique (Tunisia)
JI	Jama'at-i-Islami / Islamic Assembly (Bangladesh, Pakistan)
JMB	Jaamatul Mujahideen Bangladesh / Bangladesh Assembly of Holy Warriors (Bangladesh)
JMJB	Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh / Awakened Muslim Masses of Bangladesh (Bangladesh)
JP	Jatiya Party / National Party (Bangladesh)
JUH	Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Hind / Party of the scholars of India (Pakistan)
JUI	Jamiat-Ulama-i-Islam / Assembly of Islamic Clergy (Pakistan)
JUP	Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Pakistan / Assembly of Pakistani Clergy (Pakistan)
KN	Khatme Nabuwat / The End of Prophecy (Bangladesh)
LADDH	Ligue Algérienne de défense des droits de l'Homme / Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights (Algeria)
MB	Muslim Brotherhood / Ikhwan Muslimin (Indonesia, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan)
MDA	Mouvement pour la démocratie en Algérie / Movement for Democracy in Algeria (Algeria)
MDPC	Mouvement Démocratique Populaire Constitutionnel / Democratic and Constitutional Popular Movement (Morocco)
MEDA	Mediterranean Development Assistance Programme (Morocco)
ML	Muslim League (Pakistan)
MMA	Muttahida Mahaz-i-Ammal / Combined Action Forum (Pakistan)
MNI	Mouvement de la Nahda Islamique / Movement for National Renaissance / Al-Islah (Algeria)
MSP	Mouvement de la société pour la paix / Movement for a Peaceful Society (Algeria)
NDSP	Neo-Destour Socialist Party / Néo-Destour (Tunisia)
NP	Al-Nahdah Party / Renaissance Party (Tunisia)
NU	Nahdlatul Ulama / The Awakening of the Clergy (Indonesia)
NWFP	North-West Frontier Province (Pakistan)
PAN	Partai Amanat Nasional / National Mandate Party (Indonesia)
PAS	Parti Islam Semalaysia / Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (Malaysia)
PBB	Partai Bulan Bintang / Crescent Moon and Star Party (Indonesia)

PJD	Parti de Justice et de Développement / Hizb 'Ahdala wa'l-Tanmiyya / Justice and Development Party (Morocco)
PKS	Partai Keadilan Sejahtera / Prosperous Justice Party (Indonesia)
(P)ML	(Pakistan) Muslim League
PNA	Pakistan National Alliance
PPP	Partai Persatuan Pembangunan / United Development Party (Indonesia)
PPP	Pakistan People's Party (Pakistan)
PT	Parti du Travail / Workers Party (Algeria)
RND	Rassemblement national pour la démocratie / National Rally for Democracy (Algeria)
SDM	Socialist Democrats' Movement / Mouvement des Démocrates Socialistes (Tunisia)
SM	Sécurité Militaire / Military Security (Algeria)
SNAPAP	Le Syndicat national autonome des personnels de l'administration publique / The National Independent Union of Public Administration Personnel (Algeria)
TLDHR	Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights / Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'homme (Tunisia)
TWGU	Tunisian Workers' General Union / Union Général Tunisienne du Travail (Tunisia)
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation / Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersath (Malaysia)
UNFP	Union Nationale des Forces Populaires / National Union of Popular Forces (Morocco)
USFP	Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires / Socialist Union of Popular Forces (Morocco)