POLITICAL ISLAM
AND EUROPEAN FOREIGN POLICY
PERSPECTIVES FROM MUSLIM DEMOCRATS
OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

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Cover photograph:
Supporters of the Democratic Forces Front (DFF)
attend a demonstration in Rabat, 06/09/2007 (Reuters).

CONTENTS

1. POLITICAL ISLAM AND THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

MICHAEL EMERSON AND RICHARD YOUNGS

Since 2001 and the international events that ensued the nature of the relationship between the West and political Islam has become a defining issue for foreign policy. In recent years a considerable amount of research and analysis has been undertaken on the issue of political Islam. This has helped to correct some of the simplistic and alarmist assumptions previously held in the West about the nature of Islamist values and intentions. Parallel to this, the European Union (EU) has developed a number of policy initiatives primarily the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) that in principle commit to dialogue and deeper engagement all (non-violent) political actors and civil society organisations within Arab countries. Yet many analysts and policy-makers now complain of a certain atrophy in both conceptual debate and policy development. It has been established that political Islam is a changing landscape, deeply affected by a range of circumstances, but debate often seems to have stuck on the simplistic question of 'are Islamists democratic?' Many independent analysts have nevertheless advocated engagement with Islamists, but the actual rapprochement between Western governments and Islamist organisations remains limited.

Despite the centrality of debate over this issue, it is striking that detailed information is still scarce on Islamists' perspectives on European foreign policy initiatives. Our project has sought to rectify this.[1]

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[1] The project has been a joint venture of CEPS, Brussels, with the Fundacion para las Relaciones Internationales y el Dialogo Exterior (FRIDE), Madrid, and the

1.1   Debating Political Islam

Intellectual work on and debate over political Islam has mushroomed since 2001. This has amply demonstrated how Islam is a fluid and internally diverse phenomenon. It has become almost universally accepted that Islam's more radical forms and frequent questioning of democratic norms should be understood as reflective of a prevailing context, and not unchanging Islamic textual tenet or principle. The focus of enquiry needs therefore to be more practical, with a view to understanding more about Islamist parties' policy goals and aspirations.

For example, support for democratic norms has recently been stressed, even by those Islamist organisations often assumed to be towards the less moderate end of the spectrum.[2] Also, it has been argued that illiberalism among Islamists is more prominent in the social rather than the political sphere.[3]

One summary of the current situation asserts that Islamist organisations have gradually dropped their outright antipathy to 'Western' norms of democracy since the 1990s. On the other hand, a series of ambiguities has emerged as tensions surface between their role as religious organisations and as aspirant political players.[4] These ambiguities relate to issues such as:

- Law: the relationship between the sharia and law-making by elected parliaments, for example on matters of family code and law;
- Violence: rejected by political organisations, but with more questionable positions taken by loosely-linked networks;
- Individual rights in relation to the good of the community;
- Women's personal status issues;
- Respect for religious minorities.

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[2] Interview with Nadia Yassine, of Justice and Charity, in Morocco, in ARB 4/6, July 2006

[3] Olivier Roy (1994), "The Failure of Political Islam", London: IB Tauris, p. 195.

[4] N. Brown, A. Hamzawy, M. Ottaway (2006), 'Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring the Gray Zones', Carnegie Working Papers 67, March.

Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 especially, Western commentators have claimed that their perspectives on Islam have shifted. Increasingly, broader recognition has emerged of the extent to which contemporary trends in Islam have been determined by prevailing political contexts. Leaders, ministers and senior diplomats have repeatedly rejected the notion that Islam should be conceived as a monolithic assault against Western values. Western analysts and policy-makers claim that non-democratic interpretations of Islam are misplaced distortions. External actors, it is implied, can help release Islam's democratic potential. Analysts, Western diplomats, donors, funding organisations and international institutions assert a belief that Islam can be a positive mobilising force for democracy, social justice and stability in the Middle East.[5]

These viewpoints challenge dramatic scenarios of anti-Western fundamentalist forces taking power, and instead advocate engaging with moderate Islamist parties and organisations that are currently enjoying a rise in popular support. There is a need for coherent and integrated policies to deal with all non-violent political forces in these countries, rather than creating unnecessary resentment by, for example, condemning individual arrests of liberal figures while remaining silent in the face of numerous arrests of Islamists. Given the more pragmatic approach recently adopted by many of the moderate Islamist movements, many argue that this is a propitious time to take advantage of the latter's relative openness towards engaging Western countries by reaching out to them and establishing strategic links. It is also being proposed that Western actors need to engage further in less politicised areas at the grassroots level.

Certain analysts have been critical of some of these assumptions, however. Central to one of the most influential theses on political Islam is the contention that the moderate and democratic platforms espoused by Islamist parties reflect deep internal contradictions. Islam, it is argued, has been weakened by a division between the moderates of the pious middle classes, on the one hand, and the frustrated young urban poor, on the other. For the latter, Islam continues to be a vehicle of protest, but one that has failed to develop any comprehensive political alternative. Taking into account underlying class structures, Islam has strengthened because the ambiguities of its message enabled quite different sectors of society to sign

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[5] One example is François Burgat (2003), "Face to Face with Political Islam", London: IB Tauris.

up to its cause. Regimes have exploited these internal tensions, often enticing and co-opting the middle classes through limited reform, and compounding the growing tension with poorer and more radicalised sectors. In short, the newly pro-democratic strands of the Islamist middle classes have not taken the poor with them on their journey towards more Western liberal norms, and are set to lose ground as a result.[6]

In a similar vein, another expert rejects what is now the prevailing wisdom that the West should engage with Islamists on the presumption that a moderate and liberal form of Islam can thus be moulded. It is profoundly mistaken, he laments, to engage with the religion on the assumption that Islam provides the foundation of political identity. Reflecting the impact of social differences, the very fact that Islamic modernists tend to be from the elite provokes a backlash amongst poorer communities. Islam has become popular because it has been able to organise itself through the mosque in a way unavailable to secular parties; international actors need to redress this imbalance, it is argued, rather than engage with Islam, thinking this is the solution.[7]

These debates clearly pose difficult challenges for the EU.[8] They raise the question of where, within this spectrum of views on political Islam, might or should European strategy fall?

1.2   What Role for Europe?

So far, when work has focused on Islamists' positions on international relations, the focus has been very strongly on their views towards the United States and US foreign policy. Understanding of Islamists' perspectives on and aims towards specific areas of European policy remains limited. The core aim of our book is to strengthen this understanding. In theory, the EU has a comprehensive and firmly established framework through which to pursue a more systematic engagement with political Islamists, namely the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (or Barcelona Process) complemented by the Neighbourhood

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[6] Giles Kepel (2003), *Jihad: On the Trail of Political Islam.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002; and by the same author, *Bad Moon Rising: A Chronicle of the Middle East Today*. London: Saqi, p. 17.

[7] Daniel Brumberg, 'Islam is not the Solution (or the Problem)', *The Washington Quarterly* 29/1: 97-116

[8] Fred Halliday, *100 Myths about the Middle East*, London: Saqi, 2006.

Policy. Yet it is acknowledged that so far these policies have only had a marginal relevance to, and impact upon, trends in political Islam.

In recent years, European foreign policy speeches and documents have been replete with commitments to strengthen engagement with Islamist organisations both within and outside Europe. At a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Luxembourg in 2005, considerable attention focused on the EU's commitment to develop engagement with a wider range of civil society organisations in the Arab world, including 'faith based groups'. Engagement with Islamists is a central plank of the 'Alliance of Civilisations' originally conceived by Spanish prime minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, now a joint Hispano-Turkish sponsored initiative being developed under UN auspices.[9] The former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, recently advocated a foreign policy based on distinguishing 'Reactionary Islam' from 'Moderate, Mainstream Islam', and attempting to draw the latter away from the former.[10] A common view is that the EU has 'conceptualised radical Islam in less absolute terms' than the US.[11]

In practice, caution has predominated in the approaches of external actors. Despite frequent assertions of a commitment to engage with moderate Islamists, Western governments have in fact remained reluctant to offer such groups support. Many talking shops have been convened on 'Islam and democracy' and 'cultural understanding' between Islam and the West. However, Western governments have declined to provide concrete backing for moderate Islamists engaged in pro-democracy campaigning. Dialogue with Islamists has been low key and private, carried out mainly at the discretion of individual Western ambassadors. While Islamists' control of many professional syndicates offers the possibility for engagement on relatively non-political issues, donors have distanced themselves from this area of civil society as it has become 'Islam-ised'. In sum, despite shifts in the agendas of Islamist networks and in the way these are perceived by Western powers, the international dimension remains an equivocal factor in the prospects for realising Islam's democratic potential. The British Foreign Office has a unit devoted to political Islam, but when faced with

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[9] Speech by the President of the government, Don José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, at the summit of the League of Arab States, Argel, 22 March 2005.

[10] Tony Blair, Speech to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council, 1 August 2006.

[11] Wyn Rees and Richard Aldrich, "Contending Cultures of counterterrorism: transatlantic divergence or convergence?", *International Affairs* 81/5, 2005: 905.

objections from regime leaders it has advanced with extreme caution.[12] The German government has been one of the most forward-looking in pursuing new dialogue with Islamist organisations, with a new unit at the foreign ministry created specifically for this purpose.

Contacts with Hamas and Hezbollah have of course been most sensitive, and are currently at the forefront of political attention, following the August 2006 war in Lebanon between Hezbollah and Israel, and over the issue of the national unity government in Palestine to include Hamas. One expert is critical of the basic premise of European policy: he argues that it is not appropriate to think in terms of Hamas being pressed to move from resistance movement to political party, as such movements shift between these two types of action, and are still responsible for ending violence when they decide the context is right. He laments that, as a result, in Europe "we choose to talk to fewer and fewer" Islamist groups.[13] He insists that EU officials never thought their policy of not talking to Hamas would work, but that they "felt trapped".[14]

1.3 Aims of our Project and Book

Against this background, the purpose of our project has been to collect and present detailed information on:

- The engagement pursued to date between the EU and Islamist movements in the southern Mediterranean
- The opinions of key Islamist-oriented thinkers and activists towards the specifics of European policy in the Arab world, focusing on a number of central questions:-
    - If Islamists were to win a greater share of power, what view would they take of possible changes in the constitution and political reform?

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[12] In the UK high-profile press coverage was given to Foreign Office documents revealing internal deliberations over a new diplomatic engagement with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt; a recommended strategy to increase the frequency of contacts with MB parliamentarians, but this ceased after the Egyptian government complained. Martin Bright *When Progressives Treat with Reactionaries: The British State's Flirtation with radical Islamism* (London, Policy Exchange, 2006), p. 12, p. 18, p.43 and p. 49

[13] Alistair Crooke, *Leaning on Hamas?,* IPG 3/2006: 162.

[14] Alistair Crooke, *Talking to Hamas,* Prospect, June 2006.

- If Islamists were to win a greater share of power would they support a deepening of current cooperation with the EU?
- What views do they hold on the economic and trade liberalisation measures being pursued by the EU with their Mediterranean partner states?
- Are there elements to the Islamists' economic agenda that could conflict with European policy proposals and interests?
- What do they seek, if anything, from Europe in terms of human rights protection?
- Would Islamists support cooperation with Europe on counter-terrorism and illegal migration?
- Are Islamists any less hostile to European involvement in matters of social change than to US involvement?

The objective has thus been to compile a book that is informative on what Islamists themselves are saying and thinking about Europe.

We have specifically not set out to offer an academic analysis of the nature of Islam, or to add to growing literature on political Islam in general. The case studies provide a brief overview of trends in the domestic political situation in each respective country. Their primary purpose, however, has been to cover in detail Islamists' perspectives on the European Union and its foreign policy.

In terms of research methodology, each case study was heavily based on semi-structured interviews with representatives of Islamist groups, as well as on the review of material produced by these organisations. To maximise comparability across case studies, research should be guided by a common questionnaire, set out in Annex A below (in English), and as adapted in Annex B (in Arabic) by one of the authors for his field work.

The case studies devote most space to the main Islamist party in each country, but also include some coverage of other Islamist organisations. While seeking a common structure across chapters, we have been mindful of the need for variation, given the wide range of situations, between Islamists that are now parties of power (the AKP in Turkey, Hamas in Palestine), to those that are in government/parliament but with minority positions, to those that are active but repressed (Egypt), and those that have had to flee abroad (Syria, Tunisia). The interviewers and authors of the country case studies were (with one exception) nationals of these countries, and the interviews were conducted in the Arabic or Turkish languages. It was intended to have such case studies for all the Mediterranean Arab states and Turkey. However, in two cases, for Palestine and Jordan, the

studies solicited were not forthcoming.

The main political parties interviewed were as follows:

o in **Morocco**, Samir Amghar interviewed the Party of Justice and Development (PJD), and the Association for Justice and Charity (JC);

o in **Algeria**, Amel Boubekeur interviewed the Movement of Society for Peace (MSP), and the Movement for National Reform (MNR);

o for **Tunisia**, Salah Eddine Jorshi interviewed the Renaissance Movement, which operates mainly in exile in Europe;

o in **Egypt**, Emad El-Din Shahin interviewed the Muslim Brothers and the Wasat party;

o in **Lebanon**, Talal Atrissi interviewed Hezbollah;

o for **Syria**, Salam Kawakibi interviewed the Muslim Brothers, which can operate only in exile in Europe;

o in **Turkey**, Senem Aydin and Ruşen Çakır interviewed the Justice and Devlopment Party (AKP) and the Felicity Party (SP).

Part A of this book consists of these seven case studies.

Part B consists of evaluations and overviews by Western authors. The omissions from the case-studies were partly compensated through the chapter by Nathalie Tocci, evaluating Western policies towards Hamas (alongside Hezbollah). The final chapter, by Robert Springborg, brings together the common threads and differences in the case studies, and concludes with recommendations for the European policy-maker.

Our focus in this volume is in large measure on the less radical part of the Islamist spectrum. Our case studies examine most closely those Islamist parties generally tolerated by regimes, and which, in a small number of cases (Algeria, Lebanon) have participated in government, although in the two cases (Syria and Tunisia) the research by necessity relied on political actors in exile, given their prohibition from the national political arena. We are aware that this does not provide a comprehensive picture, and leaves for a further, complementary project, the issue of Islamist groups espousing far more confrontational tactics with the West.

Within these parameters, our broad aim was to 'give the word' to key actors within Islamist parties and organisations, through fieldwork carried out (in all but one case) by nationals of each of the countries covered.

As editors we considered it important for our authors to report the views of Islamist parties without intervening judgements on our part over

whether these perspectives could be contested or not. We are thus not necessarily in agreement with the views presented in the volume. Indeed, some of the perceptions of the EU and of European policies suggest that on certain matters, Islamists' understandings of Europe are as distorted as Europeans' understanding of political Islam.

Conclusions

While some of the opinions reported are unsurprising, others are more revealing either for their nuances, or for the strength and unity of views among analysts from this heterogeneous group of countries of Muslim faith and culture. Our summary of the main findings – (see Robert Springborg's chapter for a much more refined account) – are as follows:

(1) Islamists in general expressed positive views of European democracy, suggesting that the latter played a useful role as a reference point for their own aims. The aspect of EU democracy that was seen in the most positive light was the guarantee of freedom of association – the democratic freedom most pertinent to many Islamists' immediate concerns. However, even here there was a balance of positive and negative perceptions: some gave greatest weight to the fact that Islamists enjoyed more freedom to organise in Europe than in their countries; but others saw this as overshadowed by what was judged to be a deepening Islamophobia in Europe.

(2) If Islamists almost universally spoke of Europe as providing a positive reference point for political rights, their views were strongly negative in respect of liberal civil rights. The elements of the 'European model' most strongly rejected by our interviewees were moral laxity; the decline of spirituality; permissive homosexual rights; a certain conception of women's rights, and the lack of 'social justice' judged to be prevalent in European societies. Many of our interlocutors saw these aspects of European societies as inseparable from democracy as a political system – even as they insisted that their commitment to the latter was steadfast.

(3) Indeed, many Islamists manifestly seek European support for democratic opening for tactical reasons, without this diluting an outlook they described as essentially 'anti-Western'.

(4) It emerges from our interviews that the most serious damage to Europe's image amongst Islamists in the countries considered derives from the EU's perceived unwillingness to support democratic reform in the region. European governments are still broadly seen as thinking that their own systems of democracy are 'not appropriate' for Arabs. This is viewed

being as patronising and one of the most potent breeders of contempt for the European Union. Most of our interviewees felt that, despite so much rhetoric to the contrary, European policy had not become more supportive of democracy and human rights in their countries in recent years. European governments are still seen as offering unconditional support for autocratic regimes and thus being 'anti-Islam'. Some of our interlocutors tended to view such efforts as did exist to promote democracy as representing unacceptable neo-colonial self-interest. But, more often, there was frustration that the EU had not been more critical and assertive in its actions towards Middle Eastern regimes. This question clearly touched a raw nerve, when at times both these positions were expressed by the same interviewee.

(5) Our interviews amply corroborated the well-known position that the EU's credibility has suffered major damage through its suspension of aid to the Hamas-led government in Palestine and, to a lesser extent, through its procrastination over Turkey's quest for accession. In response to our questions about the EU's policies towards democracy promotion, this Hamas episode was the issue most quickly and forcefully raised.

(6) There was a clear (but in our view questionable) correlation made between EU member states' foreign policies and how democratic they were judged to be by the Islamists in our case studies. The UK was seen as the least democratic and the least respectful of democratic norms because of its involvement in Iraq. Curiously, while Islamists called for more EU pressure against their authoritarian regimes, they claimed to feel warmest towards the most status-quo oriented powers such as France and Spain, seemingly on the basis of the positions these countries took over Iraq.

(7) The level of awareness of the more specific instruments of EU policy was extremely low. Our interviewees admitted to having a limited awareness of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, and even less of the Neighbourhood Policy. They blamed the EU for this, pointing out that the latter had connived with their partner governments in the region in excluding Islamists from these initiatives. With 'no place for Islamists' in either the EMP or ENP, these policies were criticised as initiatives designed to contain rather than engage with Islam.

(8) Overall, Islamists admitted that their own thinking on possible engagement and cooperation with Europe had so far not been a priority issue. We asked our authors to focus only on Islamists' views on EU policies, rather than on general political trends in the Middle East and North Africa. If this is not seen in some of the chapters, it was because our

interviewees had 'little to say' on European influence and little awareness of EU initiatives.

(9) Those Islamists that had given thought to this matter were adamant that they did not wish to be singled out for special treatment by the EU, but included within dialogue and initiatives on a 'normal' basis alongside other political actors. Sensitivities were evident in discussing the hypothesis that engagement with Islamists might suddenly become a priority for Europe; such engagement could be taken as a self-interested manoeuvre in Europe's own interests.

(10) On economic policy, while several Islamists admitted that their own approach needed to be worked through more fully, most of our interviewees insisted that Islamists would be more supportive of economic liberalisation towards European markets than current regimes had so far been, notably as a move to achieve less corrupt economic governance.

(11) Our interviews mostly supported the view that compared to the US, Europe enjoys a more favourable reputation. But there were some important exceptions here. Morocco in particular emerges as a case where Islamists have welcomed a new engagement with and backing from the US (government and more especially academic and non-governmental organisations), and are far more critical of European policies that ignore them.

(12) The case studies draw attention to the crucial point that the EU's interactions with the countries of its Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and Neighbourhood Policy can no longer be seen only through the prism of conventional foreign policy. European democracy is part of the context within which Islamist parties aim for democratic change in their own societies. Because of the presence in Europe of substantial diasporas as well as influential political activists in exile, European democracy is not only a reference point, but also an instrument for the pursuit of their democratic aspirations. Europe-based Islamist associations, and not only dissidents in exile, are increasingly acting as conduits for the dissemination of democratic norms across trans-Mediterranean party structures.

Finally, our own conclusions as editors are that it is now time for the European Union, its institutions and member states, to undertake an explicit review of its current policies of virtual neglect of this broad grouping of 'Muslim democrat' parties. The evidence seems to be mounting that this is no longer a policy of 'benign neglect'. On the contrary, it may lead to the reinforcement of anti-democratic regimes, and radical Islamism. We would advocate a broad inclusion of Muslim

democrats in EU initiatives aiming at the reform of governance and the development of civil society, without extending to them any singular, exclusive or unsolicited privileges.

PART A

CASE STUDIES IN POLITICAL ISLAM

2. MOROCCO

SAMIR AMGHAR

Islamist parties in Morocco have seen an ideological transformation from a radical − even violent − political doctrine to a more pragmatic and progressive strategy in recent years. This chapter seeks to show how the internal ideological evolution of Moroccan Islam and the international context have made collaboration with Europe and the US possible. The key Islamist players on the Moroccan political stage are the Party of Justice and Development and the Association for Justice and Charity, both of which have shown a desire to increase cooperation with Europe. But this, they claim, has not been reciprocated by the EU.

Nearly twenty years ago, to talk about political Islam in the Maghreb was to talk exclusively about its Algerian and Tunisian variants. At the time, it seemed unlikely that Islamism could emerge in Morocco, where Moroccan observers and political figures alike were firmly convinced that the King's political function *(Amir al Muminin - Commander of the Faithful)* protected the country from this ideology. That all changed at the beginning of the 1990s, when Islamism burst upon the Moroccan political scene. Despite concerns among European Union (EU) and Moroccan political figures, the development of Islamism has upset neither the country's political balance nor the monarchy's relations with Europe.

2.1 The Evolution of Moroccan Islamism

The Islamist movement in Morocco is far from homogenous.[15] Pluralistic by nature, Moroccan Islamism can be divided between two groups: the Party

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[15] Malika Zeghal (2005), "Les Islamistes marocains, le défi à la monarchie", Paris: La Découverte.

of Justice and Development (*Hizbo alaadalati wa atanmia*, or PJD in its French acronym) under the direction of Saad Eddine Othmani, and Justice and Charity (*al 'Adl wal 'Ihsan*, JC), led by Sheik Abdessalam Yassine.

In political terms and by virtue of its clandestine organisation, JC must be considered as the other most important Islamist group. After a long history of tension between Yassine and Hassan II, stretching back to the 1970s, in 1988 the former established JC as a new organisation. In 1989, Yassine was freed from prison but members of his group were often arrested by the police. In January 1990, the association was officially outlawed. Upon the death of Hassan II, the new King Mohammed VI changed strategy with regards to the movement and ended surveillance of Yassine. Since then, the movement has consistently demanded legalisation.

In contrast, the PJD was formed from the fusion of a large number of small moderate Islamist organisations and monarchist insiders. Under the name of the Constitutional and Democratic Popular Movement (MPDC) this coalition competed in the 1997 legislative elections and entered Parliament for the first time after winning nine seats. In 1998, the party changed its name to become the Party of Justice and Development. During the 2002 legislative elections, the PJD won 42 out of 295 seats, becoming one of the country's main political forces. In 2004, Saad Eddine Othmani became the party's secretary general.

The PJD represents what might be described as 'legitimised Islam' or 'state Islam'. In contrast with JC, it does not call into question the Moroccan kingdom's political foundations. The party is pro-monarchist and does not endorse a revolutionary rhetoric of social change aimed at creating an Islamic state. On the contrary, it holds that state and society are not to be Islamicised because Morocco is already a Muslim country. It nevertheless insists on the principle of defending Moroccan society's Islamic identity through legislative and institutional means when that identity is threatened. This involves a basic discourse of probity founded on respect for religious morality. From this point of view, the PJD has acted as a party-pressure group, mobilising when needed all those within Moroccan society and the Moroccan administration who believe that the country's Islamic identity is under threat. The PJD frequently condemns all proposed measures that would diminish the Muslim character of the state or the monarchy. The PJD's religious discourse is close to that of the *Waqfs* Ministry (Ministry of Religious Affairs). Its detractors hold that it is manipulated by the monarchy as a bulwark against Islamic terrorism and

non-official Islam more generally. The party has recently moved from critical support for the government to 'constructive opposition'. This strategy allows it to both satisfy the party's radical wing and pursue a policy of integration by means of political alliances. PJD criticisms of the government thus aim at gaining a certain popularity among the impoverished segment of the middle class, but without jeopardising more complex state alliance strategies on issues related to the defence of the country's Islamic identity.[16]

In Parliament, PJD politicians now downplay religious themes and questions related to religious faith in favour of more political and secular matters. Moreover, they have adapted their political programme to the government's public policies. It is difficult to precisely define the party's political programme; it is characterised by inconsistency. Political pragmatism takes precedence over the clear definition of a recognisable ideology. The party's political programme does not result from a homogenous way of thinking founded upon a fundamental theory developed by party leaders and intellectuals. Its positions are sufficiently flexible to allow the party to endorse various government policies when necessary, and at the same time to criticise other government positions in order to appear as a platform for protest among militants.

Organised as a political party, the PJD's structure is nevertheless tied to a religious association, the Movement for Unity and Reform (MUR), which brings together 200 different groups. Although the party denies any organic relationship with this federation of religious associations, most PJD leaders are members of the MUR, holding various functions, depending upon the structure to which they belong. There is a division of labour between the MUR and the PJD: while the latter adheres to its pro-monarchist position, the MUR is more critical of the authorities and remains in contact with its base through religious and pastoral associational work.

JC differs significantly from the PJD in terms of its ideology and its relationship with the monarchy. JC is highly critical of the monarchy and resolutely affirms the necessity of adopting a republican form of government. The movement does not hesitate to openly criticise Mohammed VI, calling for the construction of an Islamic republic that

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[16] "Two Countries: Who is Using Whom in Egypt and Morocco?", *The Economist*, 16 December 2004.

would respect democratic values and human rights. According to Nadia Yassine, the daughter of JC's founder, "the monarchy is not made for Morocco", "the Constitution deserves to be thrown upon the garbage heap of history", and "all signs indicate that the monarchy will soon collapse".[17] The organisation places itself outside the system. Organised around the figure of its charismatic leader, the movement's open conflict with the regime makes it the most virulent opponent of the monarchy in Morocco. While the PJD develops its non-confrontational relations with the King, the JC is in permanent conflict with the authorities and has on several occasions been subjected to repression. "We are the object of very strong police pressure in Morocco because we are critical of the system",[18] states Nadia Yassine. Yet, while it openly opposes the monarchy, the JC nevertheless condemns political assassination and armed violence. Instead of indirect action, the JC prefers recourse to legalistic and pacifist action (demonstrations, petitions, and so forth); its members have disowned the violent tactics deployed in the 1970s and 1980s. The JC is tolerated but closely watched. It does have its own press. Invoking Sufism, the organisation proclaims a desire to Islamicise society non-violently through education. It is active in the charitable domain and owes much of its influence to its social activism. While the PJD separated its political and religious wings, religious activities and political activism coexist within the JC.

For the PJD, support for democracy in part results from a desire to appear respectable in a context in which Islamism was considered an unreliable partner. For the JC, locked in conflict with the monarchy, supporting democracy represents a means of showing opposition to the regime. While both organisations have thus come to support democracy for tactical reasons, this positioning has arguably pushed party members to internalise a positive belief in democracy as the most legitimate political system. It is for this reason that JC and PJD members go to such lengths to define the contours of 'an Islamic democracy' and Islam's intrinsically democratic dimension. Nadia Yassine regularly asserts Islam's democratic character, claiming that the Prophet himself governed according to the principle of popular sovereignty.

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[17] Interview with Nadia Yassine, Courbevoie, 20 June 2006.

[18] Ibid.

2.2   Moroccan Islamists and European Democracy

More than merely rhetorically supporting the democratic norms that prevail in Europe, Moroccan Islamists have increasingly become participants in the European political arena. At the end of the 1990s, Sheik Yassine's JC movement began viewing Europe as a land of exile and political expression. Realising that the spread of their ideology was limited and even blocked by the monarchy, JC decided to 'export' their movement beyond national frontiers. This took place through the creation of an association whose subsidiaries are found both in Europe and the US: the Muslim Participation and Spirituality (MPS) association. The creation of this movement was the result of the activism of political refugees who had fled political repression in their countries of origin, as well as political engagement on the part of students undertaking advanced degree programmes in the early 1990s. Expressing itself from outside the country on the Moroccan situation and hoping thereby to put pressure on the monarchy, the MPS seeks to profit from its presence in Europe to gain legal status for the Moroccan JC, as well as guarantees concerning democracy and human rights. For the Islamists of the JC, having a foothold in Europe is part of a strategy to ensure that their country is not their only site of political engagement.

By becoming a force of opposition in Europe to the Moroccan regime, the JC-MPS movement appeared *mutadis mutandis* to be an agent for democratisation. The French and Belgian branches of the MPS regularly organised demonstrations denouncing the political situation in Morocco. The MPS' chief of public relations in France, Abderrahman Makhlouf, affirms that "no one talks about the catastrophic political context in Morocco. With the means at our disposal, we have sought to alert French public opinion to the very poor situation in which the movement of Sheik Yassine finds itself in Morocco".[19] It is in the same spirit that Nadia Yassine regularly visits France in order to denounce the political situation in her country and the repression to which her movement is subjected. Thus, on 17 June 2006, the 'New Europe-Morocco Friendship', an association close to Sheik Yassine's Islamist movement, denounced the political repression of the movement on the part of the Moroccan government by organising a conference in Brussels hosted by the Sheik's daughter, on the theme 'Human Rights Flouted in Morocco'.

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[19] Interview with Abderrahman Makhlouf, Paris, 8 June 2006.

With repression of the Justice and Charity continuing a month later, Nadia Yassine launched a tour around Europe to denounce police oppression. At one of her appearances in France, she declared, "The conditions for political and democratic participation in Morocco are not present. How are people to vote and choose their leaders when an important segment of the population is illiterate? In these circumstances, talk of free elections is a joke. There's a lock on the political game and elections are nothing more than a farce". Despite a structure that is presented as autonomous, the MPS continues to be directed by Sheik Yassine's daughter and to give voice to his party's ideology, particularly via conferences concerning Islamic banking and modernity (democracy, secularism, women's rights). French-language Muslim internet sites such as *Saphirnews*[20] and *Oumma.com*, which are read by many young Muslims in Europe, also advocate the party's positions. In a statement posted on *Oumma.com*, Nadia Yassine asserts:

> Contrary to other countries like Spain, Belgium and even the United States, France barely respects the human rights of which it is so proud, especially where we are concerned. In practice, human rights only go one way and are chosen and applied according to the standards of Western political correctness. France is so close to the Moroccan monarchy that it has forgotten its strongest and most essential principles! I believe that France will pull itself together and prove to the world that all oppressed people can count on it now and forever.

Moroccan movements in Europe have integrated into the available political framework, by means of councils such as the French Council of the Muslim Faith (*Conseil Français du Culte Musulman*, CFCM), the presence of *imams* in local mosques, or into the Islamic associative landscape. The JC thus decided to pursue its policy of criticising the Moroccan regime within the MPS, not by addressing the question of the monarchy's illegitimacy, but rather in the area of human rights and public liberties. In 2006, PSM supporters living in Belgium and France created the Alliance for Freedom and Dignity (AFD), an association responsible for promoting and defending democracy and human rights in Muslim countries (and

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[20] Interview with Nadia Yassine, "La meilleure façon d'avançer se trouve dans la résistance pacifique" [Peaceful resistance is the best way forward], Saphirnews (available at http://www.saphirnews.com).

particularly Morocco) by organising various demonstrations and conferences.

While Sheik Yassine's movement uses Europe as a political platform (something it cannot do so freely in Morocco), for the PJD maintaining a presence in Europe is more a question of electoral strategy. Nearly three million Moroccans (or nearly 10% of the total Moroccan population) live abroad, most of them in Europe (France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain and Italy). The PJD regards these immigrants and their dual-nationality children as a not insignificant electoral reservoir, capable of being mobilised in the course of campaigns. In April 2006 the PJD organised a 'European electoral campaign' aimed at their compatriots living in Europe, in the hope of winning their votes in the 2007 elections. As a militant of the Islamist party living in France suggested: "With legislative elections approaching, it is normal that we should organise official meetings and informal gatherings in order to inform Moroccan immigrants about our social project and our programme. The aim is to found an electoral base in Europe".[21]

Given the electoral strength of Moroccan nationals living abroad, the PJD has even recently exerted pressure to ensure better representation in elections. Thus, together with other political groups, in 2006 it signed a communiqué condemning "government backsliding with regards to the organisation of elections among Moroccans living abroad".

In addition to pressing for change in Morocco within European democracy, the PJD and JC have also increasingly taken a stand in support of representing the Muslims of Europe via numerous Islamic structures. Indeed, these parties are not present as such in Europe but are rather to be found enmeshed in the European Islamic landscape in the form of cultural and/or religious associations, which have either been created as associative structures *ex nihilo* or integrated into already existing organisations.

Numerous high-ranking members of the National Federation of French Muslims *(Fédération Nationale des Musulmans de France*, FNMF)[22] are

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[21] Interview with G. Tariq, Saint Denis, 31 May 2006.

[22] According to its directors, the FNMF, created in 1985, brought together nearly 500 associations. Considered close to Morocco, it is a member of the French Muslim Council (CFCM), which was created by the French Minister of the Interior. The CFCM brings together religious structures representative of the French Islamic

members and supporters of the PJD, following the example of Anouar Kbibech, President of the Regional Council of the Muslim Faith (CRCM) for Ile-de-France East (*Conseil Régional du Culte Musulman-Ile-de-France Est)*, the regional branch of the French Council of the Muslim Faith (*Conseil Français du Culte Musulman*, CFCM). The CRCM-Ile-de France East was responsible for the creation of a new Muslim movement, the Rally of Muslims in France (*Rassemblement des Musulmans de France*, RMF) that held its first meetings in Paris in June 2006 and brought together around 200 mosque and associative leaders. According to the President of the CRCM Ile-de-France East, this initiative aspires to be "complementary to and not in competition with the French Muslim Council".[23]

Founded more recently than the FNMF, Muslim Participation and Spirituality (*Participation et spiritualité musulmane*, PSM)[24] identifies with the Moroccan Sufist and Islamist Justice and Charity movement founded in Morocco by Abdessalam Yassine. This association constitutes the JC's European arm (principally in France, Belgium but also Canada). Set up by Moroccan students who came to Europe to study in the early 1990s, it has grown considerably since the year 2000 and is today one of the most active Islamic associations in Europe.

Conceived as structures to defend the interests of Muslims in Europe, these organisations propose an Islam that allows one to be a good, engaged Muslim without questioning integration into European society. The Islam advocated by these structures does not claim to break from European social and political values and, according to the leaders of these associations, the Muslim religion itself constitutes a means for self-affirmation within European society. These movements make a point of publicly advocating

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landscape. Its purpose is to serve as an interface between public authorities and French Muslims and to collectively manage questions related to religious practice.

[23] Interview with Anouar Kbibech, Paris, 9 June 2006.

[24] The PSM is distinguished by the originality of its doctrinal origins. Borrowing its modes of mobilisation from political Islam, it also identifies with Sufism. The PSM's success is due to the fact that it serves as a refuge for members without demanding exclusive membership. The doctrine of the UOIF, for its part, belongs more or less to the same line of thought as that of the Muslim Brotherhood. It encourages them to hold political positions at the local level and to participate in various citizens' rights associations, without asking them to refer to the movement in the course of their public activities.

respect for European political standards around such values as citizenship and seek to promote an Islam that takes account of Western social realities. In this respect, they are attempting to establish an 'Islamic citizenship' and present themselves as the privileged interlocutors of local and national public figures in relation to such diverse questions as religious activities, racism and the problem of juvenile delinquency in the *banlieues*. While the first generations of Muslim immigrants preferred to organise themselves around projects related to the construction and management of mosques, a number of their children, most of whom were born and educated in Europe, are finding a means of fully realising themselves as practising and engaged Muslims in this ideology, without repudiating successful economic and social integration. The PSM has thus actively mobilised in France against the legal project to forbid wearing religious symbols at school by participating in the 'a school for all' collective. This permitted the emergence of an original coalition of Muslim and secular associations.

As a third strand to their policies, Moroccan Islamists have sought dialogue with political and academic bodies within Europe. In this way, they can present their often little-known programmes outside their country, while appearing within Morocco as central political actors with access to networks and international support. A trip to Spain to meet several political leaders between 26 March and 1 April 2005 was among the PJD's recent initiatives. Five members of the party's General Secretariat, including secretary general Saaddine Othmani, were received by the vice-president of Spain's Socialist Party and the Popular Party. This delegation also met with the President of the Spanish Parliament, representatives of the Association of Moroccan Workers and Immigrants in Spain (AMWIS), the President of the Spanish Employers' Union, José Maria Cuevas, and the President of the Spanish Confederation of Business Organisations.

This visit was part of a programme established by the General Secretariat of the party to visit several European capitals in the run up to the 2007 legislative elections in Morocco. As part of this programme, on 6-12 April the PJD delegation also visited Paris where it met with several representatives of France's main political parties. Among them were a representative of the Union for a Popular Movement (*Union pour un Mouvement Populaire,* UMP), François Bayrou; the President of the centre Union for French Democracy (*Union pour la Démocratie Française*, UDF), Jean-Pierre Chevènement; and Gérard Chenel, the Socialist Party's (*Parti*

Socialiste, PS) representative in charge of Mediterranean affairs. Here, too, the delegation's meetings with political parties were accompanied by a strategy targeting Muslim communities in France.[25]

While the PJD's external relations efforts target European institutional and political groups, the non-legalised JC is forced to focus on alternative political networks and intellectual forums. Nadia Yassine participates in a series of forums and meetings organised by such anti-globalisation movements as the IV European Social Front held in Athens from on 4-7 May 2006, and the first congress of Islamic feminism held in Barcelona on 27-29 October 2005. Positioning oneself as a 'thinker' or 'university academic' is a means by which figures without official recognition can make their voices heard by their respective states and thus by EU member states. Nadia Yassine also often participates in university conferences where she is invited to express her views as an intellectual on the state of Islamic political thought today, as she did in May 2003 during the VI International Congress of the Mediterranean Studies Association in Budapest, in June 2004 at San Sebastian and again the same year in Amsterdam on the initiative of the '*Al Bayt al arabi*' institution.

2.3 The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and European Neighbourhood Policy

While Moroccan Islamists claim to support democratic rule and show an admiration for Europe in this regard, there is a desire to distinguish between being pro-democracy and being pro-Western. Both the PJD and JC maintain that there is no necessary relation between the two. The Islamists regularly denounce Western cultural and political imperialism towards their country, claiming that democratisation is only a pretext for Europe and the US to Westernise (and thus de-Islamicise) Moroccan society. They assert that Moroccan society itself possesses the cultural resources necessary to become a democratic society and that these are to be drawn from Islamic sources. This is why Moroccan Islamists also desire to distance themselves from Western influence and schools of thought (the

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[25] It is to be noted that PJD members can also operate in Europe without advertising their political colours and prefer inter-cultural dialogue, on the model Women's Rights in the Maghreb conference held at the Paris Institut du Monde Arabe in November 2003, in which the PJD's Mme Benkhaldoun took part.

philosophy of the Enlightenment, for example). The same refusal to borrow Western political culture is extended to minority rights, where these rights are said to have a non-Western, Islamic origin. During a 2004 conference in Paris organised by a French Muslim association, Nadia Yassine argued that the Prophet himself protected religious minorities and that, in consequence, "it is useless to turn to Western political culture in this area".

Apart from this refusal to borrow Western models, Moroccan Islamists denounce what they see as the selective and opportunistic manner in which Europe applies democratic principles. Europe does not require that its authoritarian allies practise democracy. Moreover, they believe that Europe opposes elections when Islamists are brought to power. As a PJD leader who lives in France stated, 'On the one hand, Europe suspects us of having an ambivalent relationship with democracy, but when we win in elections, they oppose our victory, as happened with Hamas in Palestine. In such a context, how are we supposed to value democracy and desire that the democratic process develops in the Arab world?'[26] These anti-Western criticisms, however, do not at all represent a desire to break with Europe. On the contrary, in the mind of the Islamists, collaborating with the West is a political necessity: their aim is to appear as respectable agents of change.

Crucially, the views of the PJD and JC on European foreign policy initiatives in Morocco are not strongly favourable. Despite the importance of EU aid to Morocco, European policies have yet to conceive of a place for the Islamists in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP). Also, they have not considered their possible integration in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The failure to integrate Moroccan Islamists into the EMP/ENP contrasts with the American policy of establishing relations with these political actors. Since the 11 September attacks, the US regards Moroccan Islamists as reliable partners capable of playing a driving role in the democratisation process and as a bulwark against Islamic terrorism. Europe, by contrast, has always been reluctant to include North African Islamists in their partnership and neighbourhood policies, which are very strongly marked by security preoccupations. In a context of Islamic terrorism, EU relations with southern countries have been driven by a concern to preserve political stability. This has led Europe to support Arab regimes threatened by the rise of Islamic terrorism, even when those regimes are authoritarian. The EU views the Islamist movements of the

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[26] Interview with Rachid B., Paris, 5 July 2006.

region above all from the perspective of security concerns, considering them as having equivocal relations with terrorism. Strongly influenced by the spectre of Algerian Islamism, it has refused to accept North African Islamists as reliable partners in dialogue, judging that these groups advocate the creation of an Islamic state opposed to democratic principles. This security-based perspective also prevents the EU from considering these parties as political partners and has thereby led it to exclude all civil society NGOs with an Islamic identity from the structures of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The result has been an over-representation of secular and pro-government associations as well as relative indifference on the part of the Islamists towards the EMP.

Moroccan Islamists regret the absence of supportive EU policies and denounce Europe's slowness in addressing the Islamist phenomenon. "The Europeans still see Islamism as a phenomenon synonymous with instability and conflict", one PJD member lamented. "Yet Islamism is plural and part of the Islamist trend has changed and evolved. This latter has long accepted Western political values and the need for dialogue with Europe".[27] Given the importance it occupies on the Moroccan political scene, the Islamists say that they would willingly respond to any overture on the part of the European Union. "Europe has still not understood that we represent a majority of Moroccans and, by consequence, Morocco",[28] bemoans one Justice and Charity militant. "If Europe wishes to engage in dialogue with Morocco and encourage political pluralism here, it has to speak with us rather than denounce us as dangerous terrorists. We are better positioned than anyone else in Morocco to encourage the emergence of a genuine democracy".[29]

Given the expressed desire of the PJD and JC to establish relations with the EU, they deplore the lack of policies seeking dialogue with Islamic parties within the European Union.[30] Moroccan Islamists, for their part,

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[27] Interview with G. Tariq, op. cit.

[28] Interview with L. Karim, Brussels, 28 June 2006.

[29] Ibid.

[30] As regards the actors and programmes possibly engaged in the Algerian-Moroccan zone, one finds the European Council, its committees (COREPER, COPS) and programmes (Crisis Management, Human Rights and Democratisation), the European Commission delegations in Algeria and Morocco, European

have been particularly critical vis-à-vis the policies pursued within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, condemning what they see as Europe's desire to impose its own values through cooperation programmes, especially concerning women's rights.[31] Another criticism made by the Islamists of European policy is that instead of attempting to give lessons to Muslim civil societies, Europe should address respect and defence of the rights of Muslim Europeans.

Some links exist on an ad hoc basis with Moroccan Islamists through projects run by a number of individual EU member states. The resulting initiatives are thus those of individual member states rather than of the European Union as a whole. Instead of being coordinated, there is a divergence between the policies of the various EU member states.

Although they have received very little media attention, initiatives such as the convention of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC)[32] on the fight against international terrorism signed at Ouagadougou on 1 July 1999, as well as the exchanges that have taken place since then between the OIC and the EU, are examples of how the Islamic factor has found some place in discussions between the EU and its neighbours.

Despite several attempts at rapprochement and the growing interest shown by the European Union in the question of political Islam, these initiatives remain informal and do not take place within an institutionalised structure. Within the foreign ministries of certain member states such as the UK and Spain, however, there are discussion and reflection groups devoted to Islamic parties. These initiatives have yet to be translated into concrete measures within EU institutions, as evidenced during the November 2005 'Barcelona +10' summit, the absence of new tools and actors for tackling

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Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the action plans drawn up for each country (the one for Algeria will soon appear) and finally the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), to which both Algeria and Morocco belong.

[31] Ammor, Fouad (2005), "Morocco's Perspectives towards the EMP", in Haizam Amirah Fernández and Richard Youngs (eds), *The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Assessing the First Decade*, Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE) and the Real Instituto Elcano de Estudios Internacionales y Estratégicos, Madrid.

[32] The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) was founded in 1970 and includes 55 member states. Its seat is at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

political questions (particularly that of democratisation) with southern states has confirmed a pro-regime focus on the fight against terrorism.

As already stated, Moroccan Islamists compare the EU approach unfavourably in this regard with the US policy of deepening engagement. When a part of the Moroccan political class, strongly supported by the government's left wing, called for the PJD to be dissolved in the aftermath of the 16 May 2003 attacks in Casablanca, American Ambassador Margaret Tutweiler intervened with the support of her administration to prevent this from happening. Moroccan Islamists complained of European silence on this issue. American diplomats have come regularly to consult the Islamists on Morocco's political situation.[33]

While the Islamists congratulate American policy towards them and recognise the courage of American authorities in this area, they express their regret that the European Union does not have a similar policy. As a result, the EU has an image problem within Islamist parties while the US is increasingly seen in a positive light, despite criticism of its Arab policy. As a JC militant explained, 'The US has scored points in this area and caught up with Europe. If the US didn't support Israel and wasn't at war in Iraq, American policy towards Muslim countries would be excellent'.[34]

The US has also forged relations with the clandestine JC organisation. American officials thus recently defended Nadia Yassine when Moroccan authorities sought to punish her for her vitriolic remarks against the monarchy. She has also been invited to speak at conferences held at a number of American universities, such as the University of California, Berkeley and Harvard University, among others.

Conclusion

The EU's support for the Moroccan regime and its eschewal of significant engagement with Moroccan Islamists ensures that the PJD and JC remain critical of the ENP and EMP. Soberingly, these groups complain that the EU has fallen well behind the US in terms of engagement with Morocco's Islamists. Significantly, the PJD and JC have become more active within

[33] "Stratégie: Bush drague nos islamistes", ("Strategy: Bush flirts with our Islamists" - our translation) *Tel Quel*, No. 177, 21 May 2005.

[34] Interview with T. Jamel, Paris, 15 June 2006.

European democracies than the EU has in recognising them as democratic actors within Morocco. This imbalance is especially marked in the case of the JC movement.

The integration of Islamists into some of the processes of the EMP/ENP would allow these policies to have a better impact on the ground, since the Islamists represent a significant sector of public opinion and enjoy popular support. This would help the EU and its various cooperation programmes to reduce anti-European sentiment over questions of democratisation and to catch up with the US in this area. By including them in these European dynamics, the Islamists would be in some ways prodded to clarify their still ambiguous positions regarding democracy and human rights. Multiplying interlocutors in the framework of the ENP and EMP would force the Moroccan regime to take greater account of EU recommendations concerning democracy and the economy. This policy will only be possible if the EU clearly defines its action lines towards the question of Islamist politics in the Arab world, while also multiplying its political exchanges, not only with the Islamists, but with all Moroccan political actors, particularly those representing civil society.

Faced with the absence of opportunities for dialogue at the level of the European Union, Moroccan Islamists have increasingly turned towards the US, which has observed a policy of consulting Islamist parties in the past five years. But the EU could nevertheless make a profound difference and play a distinctive role. The privileged position that it occupies among leaders of Southern states, as well as the tools that are at its disposal for engaging civil societies in the EMP/ENP, might facilitate the establishment of a triangular diplomacy between the EU, state leaders and Islamist parties. This would give new momentum to the theme of democratisation, today entirely subordinated to security preoccupations.

3. ALGERIA

AMEL BOUBEKEUR

Introduction

The recent legislative elections of May 2007 in Algeria showed how complex the evolution of Islamist parties is in this country and how crucial an understanding of these mechanisms has become for Europe. Since the civil war of the 1990s, Islamist parties have experienced increased political participation. Drawing on interviews with various Algerian Islamist actors, this chapter analyses how Islamist parties are building a new relationship with democratic mechanisms in Europe. These developments mean that a reconsideration of the EU's democracy promotion policies is now necessary.

Algerian Islamist movements are some of the most heterogeneous in the Arab world, illustrated by Islamist parties' different strategies towards the state, civil society and external partners such as the European Union (EU). This chapter will focus more specifically on the two major Islamist political parties in Algeria, the Movement of Society for Peace (*Harakat al Moujtama' As-Silm,* MSP; formerly called Hamas) and the Movement for National Reform (*Harakat al-Islah al Watani* or *el-Islah*, MNR). After having been founded clandestinely in the 1970s, these parties became components of the official Algerian opposition in the 1990s. This 'officialising' of some Islamist movements by the Algerian government occurred after the failure of revolutionary Islamist strategies, in particular those of the Islamic Salvation Front (*al-Jabhat al-Islamiyya lil-Inqad,* FIS) banned by the Algerian regime in 1992.[35] The MSP and MNR have adapted their ideology to the

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[35] On the question of the failure of political Islam to impose an Islamic state on the regime, see, among others, Roy (1992) and Kepel (2000). For a description of the

daily concerns of civil society, moving away from their previous revolutionary posture. This evolution demonstrates how Islamism as a social movement has become one of the most important forces for change in the region, having spread to different sectors such as trade unions, women's associations, young people and students, and even business networks.

By reporting on the views of Algerian Islamists towards European Union policies, this chapter underlines the need to understand the far-reaching and complex dynamics of change within Islamism.[36] The views of Algerian Islamists reveal that the challenge of including Islamist movements in Euro-Mediterranean relations is not only related to the need for the EU to rethink its relations with specific political actors, but also to the EU's capacity to propose a democratisation programme that is more credible for Arab civil society as a whole.

3.1 The Evolution of the MSP and the MNR

The MSP was created in 1990. The history of the MSP is closely linked to that of its founder, Mahfoudh Nahnah. Born in 1938, this teacher of Arabic started his preaching activities at the end of the 1970s and was an opponent of President Houari Boumedienne's regime. In 1977, he carried out sabotage operations by demolishing electricity pylons and was sentenced to 15 years in prison. Pardoned by the next President, Chadli Bendjedid, Nahnah was then reported by various sources to have made a commitment to the security services to be less extreme in his preaching. He is also said to have promised to abstain from any association with Islamist groups which were critical of the authorities.

Following the youth riots in Algiers in October 1988, Nahnah was asked by Ali Benhadj, a young preacher, to take part in setting up the FIS. He refused and instead decided to create his own association – Guidance and Reform (*Al-Irshad wa-l-Islah)*. This association was seen as a non-political organisation for religious education, preaching and charity work that was largely financed by the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), with which Nahnah sympathised ideologically. In 1990, the association became a

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dynamics of the evolution of Islamist parties, see, among others, Dale Eickelman and Piscatori (1996); Beinin & Stork (eds) (1997); Hafez (2003) and Wiktorowicz (ed.) (2004).

[36] Ismail (2001).

political party under the name of Movement for an Islamic Society (*Harakat li-Mujtama' Islami,* MSI; later Hamas*).* Its political activities were complemented by important social actions ranging from employment to helping families, assisting widows and the poor, as well as providing access to medical care.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, Hamas has focused on cooperating with the state. Nahnah supported the government's decision to interrupt the electoral process of 1992 (Hamas received only 5.3% of the votes during the legislative elections of 1991). During the 1990s the party condemned terrorist violence by the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS, the armed-wing of the FIS) as well as the repressive policies of the Algerian security services. This intermediary position cost Hamas the lives of nearly 50 senior party members, who were killed by terrorist acts.

In 1995, Nahnah was invited by the Algerian regime to re-launch the democratic process and decided to take part in elections (especially the presidential ones), highlighting his strategy of participation in the official political process. He put himself forward as a candidate in the 1995 presidential elections and officially won 25% of the votes, coming second to the Algerian army's candidate, Liamine Zeroual. In 1997, following a law on political parties that banned any ideological use of Islam, Hamas became the Movement of Society for Peace (MSP). It then switched its slogan from '*Islam is the solution*' to '*Peace is the solution*'. In the 1997 legislative elections, the MSP officially secured nearly 7% of the votes in parliament and 69 seats, becoming a significant political party in the country. But the Algerian state did not give the MSP the opportunity to run in the 1999 presidential elections.

Thus, since 1997, the MSP has been part of different government coalitions and is today a member of the Presidential Alliance, comprised of the MSP, the Algerian National Front (*Jabhat at-Tahrir al-Watani,* FLN) and the National Democratic Rally (*at-Tajammu' al-Watani ad-Dimuqrati,* RND). But this policy of participatory strategies had negative consequences for the MSP as in the 2002 legislative elections it only won 7% of the votes and 38 seats, half the number of seats that it had in 1997. Mahfoud Nahnah died in 2003 and was replaced as party leader by Aboujerra Soltani. Since 2002, the MSP has held five ministerial portfolios – Mustapha Benbada, as Small and Medium-sized Businesses Minister; El Hachemi Djaaboub, as Industry Minister; Smaïl Mimoun, as Fisheries Minister; Amar Ghoul, as Minister of

Public Works; and Aboujerra Soltani, as Minister of State without portfolio.[37]

The MNR was created in 1999 by Abdallah Djaballah. Born in 1956, Djaballah was among the first activists on Algerian campuses to begin spreading Islamism in its political form. After having studied Islamic sciences in Saudi Arabia in the 1970s,[38] Djaballah returned to Algeria where he presided over an Islamist association called *Al Jama'a al-Islamiyya* (the Islamic group). In 1990 he founded his own party – the Islamic Renaissance Movement (*Harakat an-Nahdha al-Islamiyya* or *an-Nahda*). Even though close to the political perspectives of the FIS, Djaballah refused to be associated with its creation. Djaballah's successive parties incorporated a large number of former FIS activists and voters after the latter's prohibition in 1992.

With *an-Nahda*, Djaballah won 34 seats during the legislative elections of 1997, becoming the fourth largest power in parliament. In 1998 he had to face the hostility of a large number of *an-Nahda*'s activists who decided to expel him, following his refusal to be co-opted by the Algerian government. It was at this point that he created the MNR. Just before founding the MNR, Djaballah had run for the presidential elections of 1999 as a free candidate, but decided with all the other opposition actors to withdraw from the electoral process before the vote. In the 2002 legislative elections, the MNR became the third most powerful political force and the leader of the Islamist parties with 43 seats. Djaballah was again a candidate in the 2004 presidential elections, finishing third with 5% of the votes.[39]

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[37] For a more complete list of MSP officials and their programme, see the MSP website (in Arabic), http://www.hmsalgeria.net/.

[38] Willis (1998).

[39] This article was written and edited before the Algerian legislative elections of May 2007. The MNR underwent much turmoil during these elections. In fact, in February 2007 the Algerian Prime Minister Abdelaziz Belkhadem refused the participation of the MNR in these elections on the technical grounds that they had not held a party congress before the closing of the lists. Djaballah argued that this was a deliberate ploy, since requests by his party to hold a congress had been systematically refused by the government. This implicit refusal by the government to see Djaballah take part in the elections is also echoed by complaints within the dissident wing of the MNR, led by Mohamed Boulahya. Numerous MNR militants denied Abdallah Djaballah the right to stand in the 2007 elections, arguing that his mandate as president ended in 2004 and had not been renewed by elections within

In sum, from their beginnings as clandestine organisations with a revolutionary discourse, the MSP and MNR have transformed themselves into conservative pillars of Algerian society and the state. With a pro-nationalist stance, they are highly sensitive to the value given to the Islamic part of Algerian identity regarding the state and its institutions. They present themselves as defenders of the national Islamic characteristics of the country. They now insist that Algeria is already Islamic, toning down their demands for an Islamic state. A former MSP member of parliament for the region of Béjaïa argues: 'Algeria is a Muslim country; the call for prayer can be heard, Ramadan is observed, women increasingly wear the veil, so talking about the Islamicisation of society when the country is already a Muslim country is a false problem'.

State co-optation has led to a greater professionalisation of these parties, around the notion of *musharaka* (partnership).[40] They see themselves as embarking upon a practical apprenticeship of more day-to-day management and less revolutionary policy issues. The MNR supposedly represents the opposition to the more co-opted MSP, but aligns itself with the government when Islamic national identity is challenged, especially when political exchanges with the West occur. One MSP politician explains:

> We are currently in the presidential coalition, which means that we are no longer in the opposition. However, we are not exercising power as the two other parties (RND and FLN). We were obliged to take part in the democracy-building process because the context

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the party. Djaballah therefore lost the presidency of his party to Mohamed Boulahya in April 2007. Finding himself excluded from the party he founded, as in 1998 with his En-Nahda party, Djaballah called for a boycott of the 2007 elections while promising to return to the political scene soon at the head of a new party he would create. We should remember that Djaballah succeeded in making the MNR the second most powerful political force after the elections in 2002. The legislatives of May 2007 recorded a historically low level of participation at 36.51 %. The absence of Djaballah from the electoral race benefited the Islamic MSP party with 52 seats. The other traditional parties remain in power with 136 seats for the FLN and 61 seats for the RND. The new MNR led by Mohamed Boulahya has only secured 3 seats. The Algerian assembly numbers a total of 389 MPs.

[40] Hamladji (2002).

was specific, but we always express our differences when we have to. We enjoy this independence.[41]

The MNR leader insists:

I am just positioning myself as an official Algerian party. When I am discussing EuroMed issues, I am doing it as an Algerian party, looking at issues which concern Algeria as a nation. They call us Islamists, but this is not a dialogue among religions that I am trying to manage! For me Islam is a complete system with its faith, economic, social, legal and political aspects. But I am doing it above all as an Algerian.[42]

The MNR has created alliances with clearly non-religious parties such as the Rally for Culture and Democracy (*at-Tajammu' min 'ajl at-taqafah wad-Dimuqratiyya*, RCD) and the Worker's Party (*Hizb al-'Ummal*, PT), which it then considered to be the only true opposition parties (apart from itself), after having said previously that secular parties were anti-constitutional – Islam being the religion of the Algerian state.

One impact of this party professionalisation has been the weakening of ties with the grassroots. The two parties have lost their influence on the ground as Islamic associations. With their support for the state's national reconciliation initiative[43] they also under-estimated the size of the anti-state Islamist electorate, thought to be around four million people. Faced with this increasingly middle class profile, many former activists are turning to Salafism.[44]

So, while the MSP and MNR have succeeded politically by accepting co-optation, many of their supporters still vote for them in protest at Western policies and state authoritarianism. The parties run political education programmes that the activists cannot find elsewhere. They also organise meetings to comment on current news. Activists and supporters also see in these parties a socialising element which allows them to find a

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[41] Abdelkrim Dahmene, Foreign Relations representative of the MSP.

[42] Interview with Abdallah Djabellah, former leader of the MNR.

[43] The national reconciliation charter was proposed by President Bouteflika in order to pardon crimes committed during the Algerian civil war.

[44] 'Youridoun moughadarat al-bilad wa bad' safha jadda: Shabab Jazairiyoun tarakou al-silah ila al-Ouslah wa Khaybat al-Amal', Al-Hayat, 23 May 2000 - (They want to leave the country and move on: young Algerians are giving up weapons in solitude and despair).

network of solidarity among members, helping them to get married, to set up businesses (via investment vehicles known as *tontines*) or to find accommodation. The parties also often benefit from the vote of activists from other banned Islamist parties, as was the case with some of the FIS votes going to the MNR in 2002.

The process of professionalisation also obliged the MSP and the MNR to rethink the 'grey zones'[45] of their policies with regards to democracy. How do you continue to be opponents and set yourself apart as Islamists, while at the same time playing the inclusion card? Instead of adopting a politically Islamist programme, these parties prefer to present themselves as defenders of Islamic virtue and morals. The MSP continues to be vague on the rights of religious minorities. It also took issue with the government decision to remove the teaching of the Koran from the baccalaureate. In 2004 the MNR proposed the law forbidding alcohol imports, and also opposed the revision of the Algerian family code, which aimed at giving more independence to women in family affairs:

> Our party is the target of those who want to impose an imported project of society to Algeria and who want the Westernisation of the nation. Our project of society is democratic. Islam and nationalism are its two main pillars.[46]

This focus on morals is designed to win popularity among the masses, without frustrating strategies of alliance-building with the state. Thus, Menasra, the MSP's second in command, explained that the party agrees with the RND when it comes to the economy because it advocates the opening of markets. Its differences with the FLN have more to do with religion and freedoms. The MNR often allies with extreme left-wing parties in order to denounce election fraud, the privatisation of national resources, or to defend the independence of lawyers and labour union rights. The political programmes of the MNR[47] and the MSP are imprecise, often supporting government policies while distinguishing themselves as 'Islamic'. As professional and legalised parties, both organisations are re-thinking their place not only in their national context, but also in relation to

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[45] Brown et al. (2006).

[46] An activist from the MNR.

[47] For a general view of the MNR programme, see http://www.elislah.net/ (in Arabic).

external actors such as the EU. They have increased contacts in Europe, where they often send representatives to present their programmes, carry out interfaith dialogue and participate in discussions on Arab reform.

3.2 Activities with European Muslims

Algerian Islamists express strong interest in political action linked in one way or another to Europe. Their own presence in Europe is partly due to the fact that the scope for political action has been so limited within Algeria. After the interruption of the electoral process in 1992, many Islamist leaders, activists and supporters left the country and settled down in France, the UK, Germany and Belgium. In France, exiled members of the FIS created the Algerian Brotherhood of France (FAF).

Their political struggle could be pursued via transnational opposition, representing a deterritorialisation[48] of Islamist activity from Algeria to Europe. Islamist movements used available political structures in Europe (through Islamic councils, the presence of imams in the local mosques, and by joining Islamic associations that already existed in Europe). Some former FIS activists became members of the Union of Islamic Organisations of France (*Union des Organisations Islamiques de France,* UOIF),[49] the main federation of Islamic associations in the country, and a pillar of the French Council of Muslim Faith (*Conseil Français du Culte Musulman,* CFCM), which was created in 2003 with the support of the then

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[48] Olivier Roy (2002).

[49] Committed to a strategy of using associations at national and European level, the UOIF became a major player in the re-Islamicisation of young European Muslims by proposing a range of social services (school support, psychological and legal help for families, among others) and religious services. It is part of a supranational structure whose headquarters is the UK-based Union des Organisation Islamiques en Europe (UOIE), led by a Briton of Iraqi origin, Ahmed al-Rawi. The UOIF manages around 30 mosques throughout France, including in Bordeaux (800 seats) and Lille (1,200 seats). Every spring, it organises an annual event in France, the Congress of Bourget, bringing together huge crowds of participants from all over Europe. Mahfoud Nahnah, the founder of the MSP used to give a lecture there every year. Currently, it is MSP President Aboujerra Soltani who speaks on behalf of the movement. In 2006, his speech was about the 'Ethics of Dialogue'. Also, numerous imams who operate in French mosques are linked to the MSP and the MNR.

Minister of the Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, to represent the interests of Muslims in France.

Europe represented a land of exile for some Algerian Islamists, but also an opportunity to use European Islamic structures to defend Muslim minority rights. In the 1990s, Algerian Islamists decided to use associative frameworks rather than political parties for their activities on Islamic issues. These associations aimed at controlling the activities of a new type of activist – young Muslims born in Europe – and led campaigns to integrate Muslims into the European political and social landscape, calling on them to join electoral lists and vote.[50]

The UOIF started off with an Islamist heritage but gradually shifted its activities to the defence and integration of Muslims in Europe. Founded in 1983 by a group of Tunisian and other Middle Eastern political refugees and Islamist students, the UOIF was destined to become the host organisation of exiled Islamists. Linked to the international Muslim Brotherhood, the UOIF initially had a strong Islamist tradition and had little interest in action in the host country. Towards the end of the 1980s, it changed direction, convinced of the relevance of and need for being active in France and Europe. The UOIF took up the cause of the young veiled students who were excluded from schools in 1989, organising demonstrations and alerting the media. It also tried to ban the publication in French of the *Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie. More recently, it called on members of the Muslim community to mobilise through petitions, demonstrations and boycotts to bring an end to Islamophobic representations of the prophet Mohammad during the recent cartoon affair. Some MSP activists and supporters, such as Okacha Ben Ahmed, Secretary General of the UOIF, and Fethi Belabdelli, former president of the UOIF student section, known as the Muslim Students of France (EMF), were among the senior officials of the UOIF. With Algerian roots, they were active in Algeria through the General Free Students' Union (UGEL), which had close ties to the MSP, before moving to France to pursue their higher education. When they arrived in France, they continued their activism in the EMF, present in twenty French universities. They then joined the management structures of the UOIF. Islamist parties were not present as

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[50] Amel Boubekeur, (2007, forthcoming).

such in Europe, preferring to work with cultural associations, either creating new associations, or joining existing organisations.

Undermining the extent to which Algerian Islamist parties view Europe as a normative model, they are now mobilising from their home countries to defend European Muslims. During the 33rd session of foreign ministers of member countries of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in 2006, Aboujerra Soltani proposed setting up a mechanism to fight the Islamophobia he claims is rife in the West:

> Its aim is to bring Islamic states to pass laws to fight this phenomenon and work towards adopting a UN resolution to protect Islam and its symbols. The Algerian proposal calls for the creation of an Islamic fund to support efforts to combat Islamophobia in Western countries and to promote the values of dialogue and tolerance between cultures, religions and civilisations. It also puts the emphasis on the need for Islamic countries to impose economic boycotts against countries that encourage Islamophobia. The proposal sets out a series of measures – mobilisation of Muslim NGOs working in Europe and stepping up cooperation with the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It also advocates closer dialogue with political parties, decision-makers and NGOs to influence the content of school programmes that circulate a 'distorted image' of Islam passed from generation to generation.[51]

With more than a million Algerian nationals living in Europe, mainly in France, the MSP and MNR see these immigrants and their dual-nationality children as a significant pool of voters that can be mobilised during election campaigns. These parties' election campaigns are therefore also targeted at their compatriots living in Europe. In the words of an official from the MSP network in France:

> There is a quota share of parliamentary seats reserved for Algerians in France. The authorities organise elections in the consulates to elect these MPs. So, in the MSP we target our campaign in France at Algerian nationals by distributing leaflets or organising little meetings. The aim is to woo the immigrant voters. We engage in politics here in France to win the elections; we try to

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[51] Abdelkamel (2006).

have a network within the Algerian community in Europe. We also have a party representative in each consulate.

In the case of the MSP, the idea is also to maintain the feeling of national belonging amongst Algerian nationals and to carry out a cultural development policy between the two countries. According to an MSP official:

> The MSP's policy on immigration is to act as a bridge between the immigrants and their country of origin. We also want to take part in bringing France and Algeria closer together. Personally, I've tried to twin two towns – one Algerian and the other French – we have had meetings with French and Algerian doctors, researchers, etc. Having a network is really our first objective. All moderate Muslims in France and Algeria vote for us even if they are not members because they recognise themselves in our discourse. Now with the beurs [second-generation North Africans living in France], it is true that it doesn't really work for all Algerian parties. They are much more interested in French politics. We prefer that they take an interest in France but if they can do both that's good.

During the 1997 presidential elections, the MSP candidate Mahfoud Nahnah came first in the Algerian consulates of Strasbourg, Nice and Grenoble, well ahead of the candidate winning the presidential elections, Liamine Zeroual. Although dissolved since 1992, the FIS is also trying to influence the votes of Algerians abroad. Rabah Kébir, head of the FIS executive delegation, who took refuge in Germany for a long time, called on Algerians to vote for Abdellaliz Bouteflika during the 2002 presidential elections. He also invited the different Islamists living in Europe to come to Algerian consulates abroad to benefit from a law on civil concord, promulgated in 2000, whose aim was to grant amnesty to those responsible for crimes during the civil war. In short, Algerian Islamists' views on what Europe should do are partly related to their own differing degrees of embeddedness within European policies.

3.3   The Failure of Europe as a Democratic Model

The bitterness over Algeria's civil conflict in the 1990s and the fact that European governments largely supported the military regime's harsh tactics against Islamists have ensured that Algerian Islamists have a particularly critical perspective on EU policies. Unsurprisingly, the common view is that the EU actively collaborated in the repression of Algerian Islamists' democratic rights. Significantly, this legacy from the

1990s can still be seen in Algerian Islamists' views towards more recent EU initiatives. Interviews reveal that Algerian Islamists are particularly critical of new democracy promotion policies pursued under the EMP, decrying Europe's supposed determination to impose its own values through its cooperation programmes. Another frequent reproach by Islamists is that Europe should work to ensure respect for the rights of Muslims in Europe rather than try to influence the orientations of Muslim civil societies in the Arab world.[52]

The EU's refusal to recognise the democratic electoral victory of Hamas in the Palestinian Occupied Territories has further undermined the credibility of EU discourse on democratisation amongst Algeria's Islamists. Today, a number of Islamist party leaders and activists are considering the possibility of an 'Islamic democracy', that is, a democratic system inspired in large measure by the European democratic model and Islam, but with a distinctive set of beliefs independent of Europe's 'whims'.[53] During the interviews carried out for this chapter, the majority of Islamist players declared that they did not reject the possibility of becoming more democratic '*thanks to Europe*' and its support, but not '*like Europe*'. What they dispute is the necessity of conforming to European demands and of acting in response to the democratisation programmes proposed by Europe – from which they are invariably excluded, but often by their own choice. Algerian Islamists also oppose what they judge to be Europe's security objectives for promoting democracy. They believe this leads to a form of democracy promotion geared towards European allies' stability, energy interests, counter-terrorism and the condition of amenability on Israeli-Palestinian issues. All this is seen as being to the detriment of high-quality, genuine democracy, with its implications for freedom of expression, civil society, opposition parties and access of the masses to the political sphere).

The US and Europe are both criticised for wanting a democratisation of their own choosing, realising that the democratisation dynamics they have long been advocating will not necessarily produce the political result they are seeking for the stability of their dealings in the region.[54]

> I was at this [European] conference and they were wondering how
> to have a more efficient democratisation process in the region.

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[52] Interviews with several members of various Islamist parties and structures.

[53] Sayyid (1997).

[54] Causse III (2005).

Honestly, I was sceptical about their proposals as I saw how they support the undemocratic aspects of our governments, or with regards to their unfairness towards the Palestinian occupation or the Hamas victory! For these reasons I always prefer to talk about the need for a dialogue with the EU than for genuine cooperation.[55]

The EU's disregard for cases of torture and abusive detention of Islamist activists, the exclusion of trade unions dominated by Islamists from Euro-Mediterranean networks, and the intercultural aspect given to inter-religious dialogue have also given credence to Algerian Islamists' perception that the EU seeks to export a profoundly secular European conception of democracy, leaving very little room for the expression of religious identities.

The West was living in darkness while we had Andalusia, *Al Qarawiyine* [an Islamic university in Morocco]. They began to learn about justice, citizenship or even the relationship between people and the state when we had all this for 1,000 years! Why are they silent on the legacy of the 'South' in today's Europe? What about St Augustine? What about Constantine I? Islam is *dine wa daoula* [religion and state affairs]. We cannot have religious beliefs [*aqid*a] without a law *[sharia]*. This is also the way Europe has been built, between faith and jurisdiction, and now they are going through a major identity crisis. I want them to talk about Islam from an Islamic perspective, not only from their own conception. I do not talk about democracy because it is already in my Islamic culture. Democratising a religious party *[hizb dini]* sounds strange to me! Thinking in terms of 'Islamism versus democratisation' is the sign that the West refuses to understand my conception of governance, politics etc.[56]

Accordingly, the democratisation initiatives promoted by the EU seem no longer to inspire confidence among Algerian Islamists, who have difficulty in identifying with these. A reflection in the EU on Islamic political and social values could help dissipate Muslim countries' "impression of cultural imperialism"[57] in Europe's attempts to promote

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[55] Interview with Abdelkrim Dahmene.

[56] Interview with Abdallah Djabellah.

[57] Gillespie & Youngs (2003).

democracy in the region. Europe should in this sense be open to "an Islamic ethic of democracy".[58] Europe has not considered drawing on resources from within the Islamic heritage in support of democracy and human rights such as the concept of *shura* (fair consultation in a policy-making process), respect for law, the central role of moral values such as equality and social justice. It is here that Algeria's Islamists feel that their basic beliefs and political orientations remain poorly understood by European governments:

> OK, we are heirs of the Islamist tendency. But today we are inspired by the European Christian democrat experience. Islamist is a highly pejorative term for Europe. Our movements are not well understood. I understand myself as a Muslim democrat. Our specific Islamic values are indeed universal. I even think that we can be a model for Europe's transforming identity.[59]

> Talking about Islamism is the sign of Europe's ignorance. I have the right to refuse this imported distinction between secular parties considered democratic and so-called religious parties which should be democratised. Islamic political thought does not differentiate between Islamic parties and non-Islamic ones. The West is able to develop democratic tools such as parties, institutions and parliaments, and I can adopt and use these tools. But it doesn't mean that I am going to give up my Islamic culture and its philosophy in order to imitate imperialist and rogue states which call themselves democracies![60]

Including elements of Islamic philosophy in the arguments in favour of democracy does not, however, mean locking this issue into an Islamic framework. Europe should, in this view, avoid reducing democratisation in the South to a sort of intercultural dialogue between the two parties, legitimating therein the use of political norms different from those applying to political players in the North. It is precisely the argument of an 'Islamic cultural specificity' that has enabled the authoritarianism of certain Islamist actors and Arab states to monopolise Islam as a resource, and to crack down on all attempts at opposition and change. Paying heed to the

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[58] Tibi (2005).

[59] Interview with Aboujerra Soltani, leader of the Movement of Society for Peace (MSP).

[60] Interview with Abdallah Djabellah.

requests of civil societies and what they are trying to build, and thus ensuring their representation in institutions in these countries, will consequently be more effective than the North's current obsession with the question of 'Arab reform', without, moreover, managing to identify the reformers. It would also be illusory and superficial to consider the Islamists as the new 'miracle' political protagonists of the region, after the EU had erred in treating them for so long as the "untouchables of the democracy assistance world".[61]

3.4   Areas of Potential Collaboration with Europe

For the MSP much more than the MNR, the new challenge is about developing networks outside Algeria via meetings, conferences and seminars where diplomats, politicians, senior civil servants and Islamist party officials meet. By developing relations of this kind, party representatives can present their often poorly-known programme to the outside world – while gaining standing within Algeria as central political actors able to muster international networks and support. However, it should be underlined that Islamists in Algeria are not doing it as well as their Moroccan neighbours. This isolation is partly due to the Algerian civil war of the 1990s. Following these events, a party such as the MNR does not seem to attract a renewed interest among European policy-makers. The MNR's marginalisation acted clearly to the benefit of the active external work of the MSP, which appears as more moderate to the West and enjoys assets that the MNR lacks, such as multilingual activists.

> I am not asking for anything. I don't ask people who stigmatise me. I had exchanges with the EU in the 1990s but since the national crisis is over and we don't appear as dangerous for their democracy anymore, I feel that they don't want to learn about what so-called Islamist parties really are. They only want to discuss with parties that have renounced their Islamic identity.[62]

In the 2004 MRN programme for the presidential elections,[63] there is coverage of the North African region, Africa, the Islamic 'area' and the

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[61] Youngs (2004).

[62] Abdellah Djabellah, op. cit.

[63] Harakat al-Islah al Watani, al-Barnamaj al-Siyasi (MNR Political programme), 2004.

Arab region in the chapter devoted to external relations policies. But the MNR does not deal with Europe or even with the West as such. It is only under the terms of 'international organisations' and the 'worldwide space' that a partnership with Europe is suggested. "Encouraging the culture of dialogue and positive reciprocity"; "Rejecting nuclear proliferation and preserving peace and security in the Mediterranean region", and "Encouraging economic and scientific exchanges" are for the MNR examples of possible areas of collaboration with the EU.

Alongside Muslim communities present in Europe, there is an effort to establish a political dialogue with EU member states both at a structural (party, policy, trade union) level and an intellectual or semi-political (think tanks, foundations, universities, among others) level.

> We do have formal exchanges with ambassadors from EU member states in Algeria. Encounters outside Algeria are mainly done through our parliamentary roles and do not allow us to build direct relationships. Exchanges at an institutional level are still complicated but other structures are more yielding such as European political parties, European think tanks or foundations. With these structures we have exchanges on the issue of reform and not only on the Islamist issue. The European Union should better understand why it is not successful in achieving reform in the Arab world and increasing its dialogue with the whole civil society. In any case, we are looking for any type of partner in terms of dialogue. Cooperation issues will depend on the interests of each other.[64]

Conclusions

The official entry of Algeria's Islamist parties into politics has had two results: deradicalisation and professionalisation. Having dropped their revolutionary trappings and become committed to the political management of the daily problems of their voters, these parties could well participate in cooperation programmes, from which the EU should, in the opinion of a large part of Arab civil societies, no longer exclude them. There is no need to envisage new programmes specifically created for Islamist actors and their organisations but simply to encourage their inclusion in existing ones.

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[64] Aboujerra Soltani, op. cit.

Since Algeria has a long history of cooperation with Europe, the interest of its Islamist parties in the policies of the EU is relatively strong, compared to elsewhere in the Middle East. Nevertheless, European policies towards the region are still not well-known by Algerian Islamists. The EU, especially via its delegations in the countries concerned, could increase the visibility of its main policies (EMP, ENP) in associating grassroots activists and Islamic civil society associations with training activities on Europe. The emphasis should be placed on the political nature of Islamist actors and their parties, rather than religious or intercultural themes. Members of these parties need to acquire specific skills and align their experience with international political practices. Exchanges of experience between Maghreb Islamist parties and European foundations and political parties could be promoted both by member states at a national level and by the EU as part of Euro-Mediterranean exchanges (notably via the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly).

The broad issue of democratisation should also leave room for joint work on specific points where the institutions can address social issues, such as the so-called 'grey areas' of high importance to the Islamist parties – women's rights, religious minorities, morals in public life, among others. The message from Algeria's Islamists is that engaging with their parties in operational programmes would help counter the feeling that the EU only proposes a Euro-centred democratisation that does not meet the expectations of local communities.[65]

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[65] For a full comparative analysis between Algerian and Moroccan Islamist parties and their links with the EU see: Boubekeur & Amghar (2006).

4. TUNISIA

SALAH EDDINE JORSHI

Introduction

Political Islam has been harshly repressed in Tunisia and many of its most significant figures have long been based in Europe. This gives the debates over the relationship between European and political Islam particular salience in the Tunisian case. This chapter finds a notable diversity of views among Tunisian Islamists on the questions explored by this book. One point of commonality is the strong criticism from all Islamist leaders of the EU's failure to pressure the Bin Ali regime for democratic reforms. Tunisian Islamists are keen for cooperation with the EU, although admit to lacking ideas on how to take this forward. But before such cooperation takes place, they seek a tougher European line towards the Tunisian regime.

This chapter is based on material obtained from interviews with members of Islamist organisations, including the Renaissance Movement leader Sheikh Rachid al-Gannushi (based in London); the Movement's official spokesman Amer El-Arid (based in Paris); Sayed Al-Farajani, who still considers himself a leader in the Movement despite quitting the actual leadership; and Morsel Al-Kousseiby, who now lives in Germany after resigning from the Movement.

4.1 The evolution of Political Islam in Tunisia

Tunisia gained independence in 1956, after its new President, Al Habib Bourguiba, had led the National Movement for more than twenty years. His view of progress and of the West was totally different from that of his contemporary in Egypt, Abdul Nasser. The Tunisian historian, Hicham Jaitt, has said of Bourguiba: "[He] was dazzled by Europe, and particularly by France, and considers that Arabism is drowned in irrational traditions and that the Arab Union is a demagogical idea".

Indeed, upon taking power and establishing the nation state, Bourguiba took several unexpected positions, far removed from Islamic tradition. For example, Tunisia became the second Islamic country after Turkey to make the taking of a second wife a crime punishable by prison. Women can only be divorced after a judicial judgement that guarantees their financial and familial rights, and girls cannot be married unless they give their explicit consent before witnesses. Bourguiba further surprised the traditional milieu with his decision to reform the education system, ending the dominance of Al-Zaytouna teaching, which had been the central focus of economic, social and religious life in Tunisia for centuries. Religion, including the mosques, imams, fatwas and Islamic education, was placed under the control of the government. Bourguiba was so confident that he called upon the Tunisian people to stop fasting during Ramadan, and to advance economic development as "the greatest jihad", after ending French colonisation, which he described as the "lesser jihad".

However, since the 1970s, Tunisia has witnessed the foundation of several Islamic movements. The Renaissance Movement (*al Nahda*, originally called the Islamic Orientation Movement) was always considered as the main political Islamic actor. The movement started in the early 1970s among a group of preachers. It gradually changed into a political movement that defended Islam, decrying "ideological and moral corruption".

According to its texts the Movement aims, among other things, at renewing Islamic thought on the basis of unchangeable Islamic principles, helping the nation to restore her legal right to self-determination without foreign hegemony, re-establishing economic life on a more humane basis and distributing wealth equitably. It also hopes to re-establish Islam as a civilised entity at the international, Arab, Maghrebi, and local levels, and to save mankind from psychological alienation, social exclusion and international domination.

Not unlike analogous movements, the Tunisian Renaissance Movement began by opposing the West and 'Europeanism', i.e.: the policy of taking Europe as an example of progress to be followed. This was a main cause of its political and cultural conflict with the Bourguiba regime. However, once the Renaissance Movement had modified its political and theoretical positions, with a relative openness to the liberal system and a denial of the complete contradiction between Islam and democracy, its leaders started to look differently at Europe.

A second tendency is the Islamic Liberation Party, a branch of an international organisation founded in Jerusalem in 1953 by the Muslim Brothers dissident preacher Takieddine Nabhania. In 1973 it established its first cells in Tunisia. The party believes in "radical, global and irreversible change" in the Islamic world. It aims at "reanimating Islamic life by establishing the Caliph state. This cannot be achieved without "toppling the systems deemed to be extensions of the Western imperialistic domination of the Muslim countries". Its activists have been prosecuted repeatedly – in 1983, 1986, 1990 and 2006 - for seeking to overthrow the regime, for belonging to the Liberation Party, or for trying to recruit military personnel.

Tunisia also has an apolitical missionary group, based on that founded by Sheikh Mohammad Elias in India. It is distinct from the other Islamic movements in avoiding political affairs, and pursuing as a unique goal the correction of the individual, encouraging Muslims to perform their prayers and calling for a simple way of life. The group became widely known in Tunisia in the early 1970s, and attracted mainly middle-class, educated followers. Nonetheless some of its leaders were prosecuted on grounds that they were calling for an Islamic state and the rule of sharia law.

As is well-known, the regime of President Ben Ali weakened the phenomenon of political Islam to such an extent that, during the 1990s, some thought it had become a thing of the past. However, no sooner had the new millennium begun than the phenomenon started to re-emerge.

4.2 Tunisian Islam and European democracy

At the time of the Renaissance Movement's foundation, Islamists in Tunisia used to prefer the term "deliberation" in order to confirm the "privacy of their political thought". But today "democracy" has become an integral part of the political lexicon of the Renaissance Movement, although it still uses the term 'deliberation' as well.

Democracy, according to Ali El-Arid, means the adoption of honest, periodical elections, the acceptance of the right of the majority to rule and the commitment to respect the rights of minorities and individuals in expressing criticisms and in the defence of their opinions. Morsel Al-Kousseiby agrees, and his views are based on his own experience. Having experienced life in Europe for a decade and half, "we look with respect and

appreciation to the European democratic pattern and consider it as an experience worthy of study and contemplation by the Arab political elites".

Hamadi Al-Jibali, having been released a few months ago after more than 16 years in jail, thinks that the European model is the most suitable, albeit with some dissimilarities. For him, the democracy concept stands for the "sovereignty of the people in a community based on justice, freedom and equality between individuals and groups". For instance, the European model provides "a real plurality of parties of different social, political and intellectual orientations, where we can find the most right-wing and the most left-wing, the proletarian and the capitalist, the rich and the poor, the liberalist and the conservative; which is a diversity that makes the concept of democracy a reality". As for Amer El-Arid, the most important point in the democratic system is its ability to prevent violent conflicts over authority, and to set the principles for the peaceful coexistence of concurrent powers as well as a durable foundation based on citizenship.

Nevertheless, some divergences emerge in the attitudes of the Movement's members concerning the 'European democratic pattern'. Ziad Al-Dolatli looks at the ethical dimension in Western democratic regimes, considering that "Western democracy has made liberalism and secularism its basic conditions, which has good and bad impacts". Sayed Al-Farajani observes that European democratic patterns are not the same: "There are significant differences between the democracies promoted by the Europeans of the Mediterranean and the Scandinavian countries and Britain".

As is generally known, Islamists vehemently refuse to import all that is related to Western political and social regulations, principles and ideas. When they want to reject any theory or system, they declare it "goods imported from the West". Radical Islamists, such as the Salafi movement, consider democracy a form of infidelity and polytheism, as they believe it replaces the command of God with the command of the people and the nation. These ideas were adopted early in the history of the Islamic orientation, when its leadership followed the thinking of Sayed Qutb. Today, similar thinking has reappeared in Tunisia along with the surprising spread of the Salafi movement. The partisans of the Islamic Liberation Party also reject the idea of taking the European democratic model as a political reference for Islamic communities. The party sees an available substitute in the reanimation of the Islamic Khalifa (Caliph).

In light of these developments, it is remarkable that while regimes in the Arab world are resorting to cultural and religious 'privacy' in order to avoid democratic political reforms, some of the leaders and cadres of the Renaissance Movement, such as Ziad Dolatli, consider democracy as an example of mechanisms, institutions and principles that are worthy of adoption. Amer El-Arid declares that the European democratic model corresponds to the aspirations of the Islamic and Arab communities to achieve a democratic advance, protect civil liberties and ensure overall development.

Many Islamists think that democracy is a product of the European and Western environment, and thus, a flower that cannot be planted in Islamic Arab soil. The cadres of the Renaissance Movement are trying to prove otherwise, but with obvious divergences. Ali El-Arid thinks that democracy is "valid for different environments, without disrupting their essence". Even when he speaks about the complicated relation between democracy and religion in the European context, he declares that "if some Western democracies set themselves against religion and religiousness, this is due to historical conflict with the church". Denying any opposition between Islam and the democratic system, Al-Jibali considers the Islamic system to be founded on components of democratic life such as the freedom of belief, opinion and the rule of people themselves on the basis of deliberation, free agreement and the separation of power and independence.

Al-Jibali's standpoint matches that of the Renaissance Movement chief, Rashid al-Gannushi, who also legitimises "the adoption of the European democracy model", provided that this serves Islamic values and does not replace them. In this context, al-Gannushi distinguishes between the reformists who have Islamic tendencies and the secularists that he considers to be the leaders of westernisation.

Morsel Al-Kousseiby meanwhile considers that "it's fundamental for Islamic and Arab societies to learn from these experiences, since they belong to the entirety of humanity and can't be considered a strange culture or imported goods from overseas". However, he supports a standpoint that seeks harmony between democracy and privacy: "It's possible to inquire about some cultural specificities for Islamic societies while applying the European democratic model, by respecting the ideologies, values and ideals of our Islamic societies".

Thus, the essential obsession haunting most Islamists is how to avoid a contradiction between the requirements of a democratic system based on liberty and Islamic beliefs and principles based on minimum precepts and holiness. Sayed Al-Farajani points to "the attachment of every European state belonging to the European Union to its identity, language and culture" which is "a good example of the respect of each country's particularities". Moreover, the European democratic model has been "consolidated by the European court and constitution and by the laws that guarantee the rights of minorities".

When the Renaissance Movement's cadres were asked to compare American and European democracy, most promptly took the side of European democratic systems. Al-Jibali noticed that the American and European examples are based on "the same value reference and intellectual system with the difference in time and experience in favour of Europe as it is the source of Western civilisation and its guardian". As for the dissimilarity between the two examples, it resides "in the style and means". On this sensitive point, he declared without hesitation that "the European example surpasses the American one concerning the freedom available to the different political parties and intellectual and cultural schools". He pointed to the narrowness of the American political arena around its two main poles.

Ziad Al-Dolatli focused, in his criticisms of the American democratic example, on the absence of a social dimension, because, according to his point of view, "it shows the ugliest aspects of Western liberalism, where power and money prevail, while European democracy is more moderate in regard to its social dimension and political systems". Ali El-Arid shares the same point of view. Al-Farajani also says American democracy "does not give too much importance to the social coverage of more than sixty million Americans who live below the poverty line". "Even though the American example is composed of immigrants, racial diversity and freedom of opinion, the negative effects of pressure groups and informational and financial power on America's democracy are more conspicuous than those of the European example".

4.3   The Vices of European Democracy

While the Renaissance Movement cadres adopt democracy as a mechanism and set of values, they also criticise it. They attach importance to the moral factor as a standard of measurement of "the other aspect of democracy".

For Dolatli, non-compliance with moral standards and the separation of religion from policy are some of its problems. He gave as an example the moral crisis that Western democracy is going through after invading Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the attack against Lebanon. Moreover, in the name of this democracy, the West has "allowed homosexual marriage and sexual liberty, prevented the wearing of headscarves in France, deprived the Palestinian people of their rights and taken sides completely with the Zionists".

Al-Gannushi supports this position. He believes materialist philosophy and secular thought are at the root of the problem. People are no longer human beings, but 'things' and social communication networks in the great democratic cities are destroyed after they have been changed into "huge cement blocks that lack sociable people". These people "suffer a terrible solitude after the foundation of family is replaced with a foundation of economic production". Al-Gannushi also considers that the corrosion of the family, and of moral and mental values indicate an intensified crisis. He pointed out that "in the mere demographic trend, the West is set to become extinct, since reproduction designates hope and trust in the future as well as trust in the partner. These are all spiritual elements that are disappearing where instincts such as the sexual drive are moving outside the moral and spiritual circle, putting an end to marriage, childbearing, motherhood, fatherhood… and legitimising everything, even what's called "new forms of family". This process, which is approved of by some European democracies, is described by al-Gannushi as the "democratic degradation" of the world of values in favour of world of material benefits and production. The deterioration of these values is, he says, accelerating as secularisation spreads.

Turning to the international arena, al-Gannushi says that Western democracies were initially established on a structural defect - the idea of the nation state - which has served to involve the more mature democracies in destructive colonial wars and the extermination of peoples and civilisations. The most recent of these are the moral scandals caused by the American army and its allies through its use of secret and public jails to incarcerate innocent people. Besides, he says, "Western democracies support the worst regimes in the world, at the expense of those peoples' ambitions to win liberty and democracy, when it suits their interests".

Ali El-Arid added a slightly different nuance, stating: "If the Western democracies produced problems such as family break-up, drug problems

and addiction… these negative factors are also present in dictatorial countries, and in poor as well as rich ones".

Al-Kousseiby also disagrees with al-Gannushi, defending the Western democratic model, which remains standard. In his view it is difficult to identify direct and negative results. However, he considers that the "the defence of the minorities' ideologies and their religious rights need to be developed beyond the Christian cultural cadre, with a universal vision overlooking colour, sex, ideology or place of origin". In order to achieve this he proposes "official recognition of other ideologies as part of multicultural and multi-ethnic societies, which all seek to live in brotherhood with the European citizenship and in a comprehensive humanitarian harmony".

The European Union position regarding Turkey's candidacy for membership is one of the most disappointing issues for Islamists, with Al-Jibali citing "double standards". The opposition to Turkey, despite its progress in the domains of liberties and human rights, "confirms that the European Union is a Christian association that doesn't accept peoples who are Muslims in their majority".

4.4 Views on European Integration

When Islamists talk about the European Union, they usually compare it to the unsuccessful projects of the Arab Union. Al- Gannushi thinks that some of the advantages of the European Union's foundation are "the acceptance of the principle of gradual progression, the long-suffering policy and the moving of its members as one unit at different speeds. This is seen as high rationalisation, contrary to the Arab Union's experiences of starting with total integration, but collapsing very soon in the face of challenges". Thus, he shows an admiration for this model: "Perhaps, the European Union is the first one, following the regime of the Islamic Khalifa, to bring together under its command this great number of races, languages and religions in a magnificent free-wheeling union". "The supremacy of the European Court's authority over local courts is among the advantages of the Union, as well as its economic policy concerning the solidarity of the economies of the most powerful countries with those of the less powerful ones, which first helped Spain and Portugal, and today helps the countries of Eastern Europe".

The weak points of the Union, according to al-Gannushi, are "the delay in the creation of the European constitution" and "the double standards in

dealing with applications to accede to the Union. Ten members were smoothly admitted in one go, even when some were outside the European continent, such as Cyprus and Malta, while obstacles are still blocking the application of Turkey". He also argued that the European parliament's authority is restricted, especially when it requests that EU governments encourage democratic transformation in the Southern Mediterranean countries, and cease to support authoritarian regimes.

El-Arid points to "the formation of a common international European political identity". As for the negative points, he considers that the support the Union provided to the non-democratic regimes in the region is due to "the exaggerated privilege of interests and the fear of the alleged Islamic risk". Al-Farajani generally agrees with El-Arid. However, he took a positive standpoint in declaring that the European Union "represents a cultural, scientific and economic power and enjoys a political regime characterised by lots of advantages from which we must profit in order to develop our educational, political and economic systems". He affirmed that the respect for human rights, which is the cornerstone in the Union's policy "represents a good reference to be followed, and the inclusion of Article 2, concerning respect for human rights, stipulated in the partnership agreement signed between Tunisia and the European Union is very important for us as Islamists".

Al-Kousseiby places at the top of the list of positive aspects of European policies "the respect for law and the independent judiciary, the equality between the politician and the rest of citizens during prosecution, as well as the great importance of political studies and research in shaping interior and foreign policy orientation". As for the weak points, he points to "the role of money in pressuring electoral competition, which may prejudice the selection of representatives of communities and European countries".

4.5   Muslim Diasporas

The Islamic movement's interest in the Muslim diasporas in Europe and the US dates back to the 1970s and 1980s. Some, such as Sheikh Rachid al-Gannushi, count on them because he thinks that the Islamic presence in the West constitutes "an opportunity to develop its thoughts in an advanced civilised frame, from which it acquires a huge experience and knowledge that it needs". These Muslim minorities in the West "may get the chance, in alliance with liberal local powers, to impact on the politics of these countries, in particular to put an end to authoritarian powers, and establish

new relations with the Islamic world based on mutual respect, equitable interests, support for liberation and democratic transformation".

This was al-Gannushi's standpoint in 2000. However, since the September 11 attacks, the Tunisian Islamists and others believe that Muslim minorities in Europe are going through a crisis. Ziad Al-Dolatli says they "suffer from different levels and forms of oppression". He expects "the situation to explode at some point in the future if the Europeans do not become aware of the seriousness of the problem, not only in their parliament in Strasbourg, but also in their extremely racist media". He pointed to the issue of headscarves in France and to the concern of municipal councils in Denmark over Muslims buying houses. Therefore, he explained, the Danish newspapers seek to limit this, for fear of the cultural effects on the Danish community. According to Ziad Al-Dolatli "the current campaigns aim at isolating the Muslim minorities in Europe, blockading them and making them resort to violent acts in order to displace them. This does not serve the West's interests, but on the contrary stirs up the clash of civilisations".

Al-Jibali has a more positive attitude: "I frankly say, without shyness or hesitation, that the Muslim minorities in Europe and the West, in spite of the September 11 attacks, are unfortunately entitled to more rights than they are in their homes". Yet, "in spite of the good efforts and positive attitudes of many parties in the European civil community, the Muslim minorities are increasingly suffering on different levels". Al-Jibali was more forthright: "The minorities are partially responsible for the transgressions, the reactions and the negative image in the West's mind towards Islam and Muslims". Amer El-Arid agrees, underlining that "some Muslim behaviour nourishes racist trends and gives them justification before their citizens". In addition, "the declarations of the Pope do not consolidate the fundamentals of cohabitation and communication between religions and civilisations".

Al-Farajani also avoided generalisations, and confirmed that the Muslim minorities in Europe "enjoy lots of rights guaranteed by the law". But he noticed that their situations "vary from one European country to another". He considered that Muslims in Austria, Sweden and Britain for instance, enjoy more rights than they do in France, Germany, Greece, Denmark, Malta and Portugal", and that "Muslim minorities do not enjoy their rights entirely as provided for by international law, European Union law and the World Charter of Human rights". Kousseiby added another factor: "A language of discourse full of suspicion in times of criminal crises

and terrorist attacks, which may occur in any region". The rights of Muslim minorities "still need to be protected by the constitutional and legal texts and a new spirit free from feelings of hate".

It is thanks to whom that the Muslim minorities in Europe have achieved the advantages they now enjoy? Sheikh al-Gannushi says "the recent Islamic presence in Europe has become prosperous through secularism – which is one of its good features – and not through a Christianity that has refused multiplicity alongside its rationalism. However al-Gannushi wonders: "Has the situation of Muslim minorities in Europe been remedied and settled on the basis of citizenship? This is not yet clear. In spite of the dissolution of the churches' authority – consciously or unconsciously - the West is still somehow filled with traits dating back to the Middle Ages and to the colonisation wars. There are groups opposing Islam such as the extreme left wing and the powerful Zionist lobby. The guardians of the Christian and Jewish religions have done nothing to recognise Islam as a religion, as Christianity did with Judaism".

On the political level, according to al-Gannushi, Western politicians "have not been aware of the transformations occurring in Western communities which made Islam, for the first time, one of the components of Western society. Thus, the Western policy-maker should take this fact into consideration in each decision taken with respect to the Islamic world, in the same way as s/he does regarding Israel. Tony Blair still refuses to admit that the policies adopted towards Iraq, Palestine and Afghanistan are the main reason for the increase of extremist tendencies and terrorism among the Islamic youth in Britain". Nevertheless, al-Gannushi admits that "Western democracy is recognising diversity and citizenship rights, and carrying out a wide normalisation process through new generations born in the West". He appealed to Europeans to proceed with "positive discrimination" in favour of minorities, and "make the Islamic presence useful".

4.6   European Union Foreign Policy: Between Rhetoric and Reality

The Palestine issue and support for non-democratic regimes in the Arab world constitute two basic focuses for the evaluation of the Union's policies.

Ziad Al-Dolatli focused on the attitude of Europe towards the Israeli-Arab conflict, and its partiality, according to him, towards the Israeli side. In particular he highlighted the decision to suspend aid to the Palestinian

people after the election of the Hamas government. A second example relates to "the support for Arab rulers despite their injustices and despotism". For him, these two examples give an impression that "the main European objective in its policy towards its neighbours is to dominate the capacities and fortunes of Arabs, and invade their markets with overwhelming competition". Al-Gannushi questioned the credibility of European policy: "Is there a united European foreign policy independent from the United States and Israel?" He answers: "This is not evident, although Solana takes action everywhere". He also adds that "it is much more realistic to recognise what Donald Rumsfeld called "old Europe" versus "new Europe", or the Europe dependent on the US, led by Britain, and the new democracies. There is also another Europe led by France and Germany. Al-Gannushi accuses Europe today "of participating in the crime of overthrowing the elected government of Hamas in favour of a substitute, which Europe knows very well is corrupt, and is dependent on American-Zionist policy".

Concerning the Union's declaration that it backs democracy in the Arab and Islamic world, al-Gannushi considers that "in fact, this lacks credibility". Yet, he thinks that "the American attitude can be deemed as better or less negative, at least at the level of discourse, as the US has exerted greater pressure on authoritarian regimes, albeit with unsuccessful results due to Zionist interference and the war on terrorism". Consequently, according to him, "Europe is more indulgent and partial towards authoritarian regimes". As, for example, in the Tunisian case, where "Europe concluded a partnership agreement with a state in the South at a time when it was severely oppressive, according to European human rights organisations. In fact, democracy did not play any role in this issue. It was nothing but a game of self-interest, including the strategic security interest in exterminating Islamists, even if this is achieved at the expense of human rights and democracy".

Al-Gannushi seems to be equally conclusive regarding this matter. In fact, he did not note any good points in Europe's record. He says: "If we search into the history of European foreign policy, there is no page regarding morals, enlightenment or democracy... Moreover, some of their newspapers support our concerns and disclose the vicious alliance between our dictatorial governments and their democratic regimes, which indicates a gap in the elites' representation and that of their peoples". He pointed to opinion polls conducted by the European Union asking which countries

constituted the most dangerous threats to world peace: the answers were Israel and the USA.

In contrast, Mr. Arid has a more moderate standpoint. He noted that Europe's position concerning the Palestinian issue is "more balanced and less partial than that of America". Yet, he thinks that the Union's policy in this respect is hesitant and ineffective for it has feelings of guilt over expelling and killing the Jews during World War II. He wishes that the European Union would break off its relations with the regimes he considers to be despotic, yet he does not want to be misunderstood as "supporting interference in national affairs". Democratisation "shall be nationalistic and non-compulsory, and the interior problems must be resolved nationally". As for the function of friendly ties, it resides in "encouraging democracy, condemning violations and injustice, respecting the sovereignty and the independence of the nation, and enhancing economic development and social justice".

Ali El-Arid tried to highlight positive interaction in "the association agreement between Tunisia and the European union, in spite of the disequilibrium between them". Eighty percent of exports and imports are exchanged with the Union, in addition to half a million immigrants, not to mention the fact that the tourists who visit Tunisia are mostly European. Tunisia has "got grants, loans and some facilities in order to establish foreign companies, make investments and develop agriculture. The EU looks at the South as nothing more than a market to which it exports its goods and from which it imports its wealth. It also considers it as a security threat because it borders poor countries which are overpopulated, overloaded with debt and governed by authoritarian regimes. Therefore, the Union fears immigration, the instability and the terrorism it expects". El-Arid understands the transformation in the Union's policy as replacing partnership agreements with "a more strict policy dealing with each country on a case-by-case basis under the Neighbourhood Policy". But he believes that the success of the new policy depends on two conditions; changing the security/commercial orientation and considering the Southern states as true partners.

Hamadi Al-Jibali seemed more realistic in considering that the European Union has made the right decision, at least theoretically, by establishing a global partnership with its neighbours and determining terms and priorities. However, he wondered: "What is our role in this perfect agreement"? Al-Farajani thinks that Europe "has failed until now to

set up a permanent and strong common foreign policy, based on the powers of its member states". Although he supports the policy of partnership, he has many reservations about some of its contents. He criticises, in particular, the Tunisian regime for "rushing to sign a partnership agreement unbalanced towards the Tunisian economy separately and without the knowledge of the Maghreb Union". He wondered: "How could Tunisia open its markets to European industrial products, while Europe closes its market to Tunisian agriculture, which represents the most vital sector in employing great numbers of Tunisian manpower? Europe excessively promotes its own rural products, and does not abide by the free market rules that symbolise its system of economic liberalism". He added: "We call for the re-examination of the partnership agreement so that it becomes more conducive to a rural renaissance, which might eliminate unemployment and poverty in order to effectively tackle the problem of illicit immigration to Europe".

As for Amer El-Arid, he praised the Neighbourhood Policy stating that "it is unavoidable due to the geographic situation, the importance of history and common interests". "We are for a partnership policy grounded in mutual respect, the exchange of benefits, the promotion of human principles, dialogue and the exchange of cultures among civilisations".

4.7   The Perception of Europe as defending Moderate Islamists

When we asked al-Gannushi, as a political refugee resident in Britain, about the European Union's defence of Islamists' political rights, he replied immediately: "For me, there are no defects in the Union states' policy regarding Islamist refugees, except in enacting laws against terrorism". He added: "In general, the policy of Union member states regarding Islamist refugees is helpful, as they resisted requests from Arab dictatorships that wanted to prevent their Islamist opponents from taking refuge in these states, even when these requests were repeated during the crucial period following the events of September 11". He added: "They failed to achieve their aim to have all Islamists put on terrorist lists and delivered to their countries of origin. Moreover, many of those Tunisians have been able to attain passports and nationalities from the states in which they took refuge. Some of their family members have achieved high academic qualifications, or joined the labour market, while others have kept on struggling for their cause in their homelands". He also commended the European Union countries for distinguishing between Islamic groups advocating violence and peaceful Islamic opposition parties. "They have not accepted the files

fabricated by the security services of their home countries, although some security services are cooperating with their Tunisian counterparts in accusing the Renaissance Movement of terrorism". He is glad that his Movement was not included on any of the terrorism lists in European countries, or in the wider world, except in Tunisia.

However, Hamadi Al-Jibali, who has just been released from prison, regretted that the European Union did not defend the political rights of Islamists. He judged that the Union member states have different policies on this. He believes that the Mediterranean European states, which have a historical relationship with Tunisia, "were those inside the Union that defended the dictatorial regimes most, and that tried to deprive the moderate Islamic movements of their legal right to exist as political parties with popular support". At the same time he recognised that some other European states adopted "more moderate and pragmatic positions for the sake of their principles and interests".

4.8   European Efforts to support Democracy in the Region

When the Tunisian opposition parties are asked about their evaluation of the European Union's efforts to support democracy in the Southern Mediterranean states, they often reply negatively, most notably in the context of the repression and exclusion that have been experienced in recent times. Al-Gannushi replied briefly that Union countries supported despotism. Ziad Al-Dolatli traces this to the fact that Europe "deals with the Arab World as if it is the coloniser and the owner of the truth, considering the Western model as the only one to be followed to achieve development". Therefore, "Europe is supporting corruption and despotism to preserve its material interests and making alliances with those who adopt its model of civilisation, despite the failure of all cultural invasion attempts". Amer El-Arid was less severe in his criticism, saying: "Europe supports democracy and has wide experience in this respect. But unfortunately, many dictatorial Arab regimes depend on European support, but can stick to their policies anyway as the European countries need them". Al-Jabali invites Europe "to be coherent with its principles and slogans, such as the protection of liberties and human rights". Al-Kousseiby could not find anything positive in European policy, because it is governed by a strict dualism: "It backs democracy at home, yet beyond its frontiers it gives priority to its economic and cultural interests, particularly in the Islamic and Arab regions".

Al-Farajani considered that "the European Union's problem is that democracy and human rights are not always compatible with its interests… yet it does not realise that the principles of democracy and human rights represent the essence of its interests, because the instability in the Islamic and Arab world is due to despotism, injustice and corruption".

According to al-Gannushi, Islamists feel that Europe has a definite influence in the region, but "in the wrong way". He gave many examples. The first is often reiterated by Islamists, and is related to the 1990s Algerian crisis. "If Europe had not backed up those who crushed the ballot boxes with their tanks in 1992, Algeria would not have passed through the misery it still suffers".

A second example concerns Tunisia, where he condemned Europe for backing the regime of President Ben Ali in the 1990s and agreeing to make a partnership agreement with it. Al-Gannushi said that the democracy and human rights crisis in Tunisia would not have persisted and worsened if Europe had not supported this regime.

In the third example, he cited the "continuous support of Europe for Israel". He said that Europe played the primary role in planting this tumour in the core of Islam and then developing it before conferring its guardianship to the United States.

Amer El-Arid meanwhile acknowledged that European Union policy has an influential impact on the evolution of the Islamic Arab states, but "we request that Europe abide by its slogans and principles". Al-Farajani affirms the contrary, that the Union's policy has only limited influence on the region, "thanks to the fact it has strengthened its historical relationships with economically corrupt governments and political despots, as well with the elites". Al-Kousseiby agrees with the idea that the Union is weak, due to "the absence of political will in determining its objectives, as well as the slyness and the ability of the Islamic world's regimes to resort to the foreign sophism, forgery and the tricky political marketing".

4.9   Cooperation with Europe

The leaders of the Renaissance Movement adhere to the principle of cooperation with Europe, but Amer El-Arid considers it as "swinging between hope and fact, and between principles and interests". "On the one hand we, like many liberal powers in Europe, think that this cooperation is unavoidable and should benefit the region's peoples; on the other hand

despotic governments use this cooperation in order to guarantee their continuity at the expense of the will of their citizens".

Al-Kousseiby is optimistic about future relations between Europe and the Islamic world. In fact, he believes that this future will be promising even though "it is impeded by many obstacles and difficulties, due to the repressive regimes which see it as a political and financial cash cow whose milk must always flow even by sneaky and tricky means".

As for the potential for cooperation between both parties, the Renaissance Movement's cadres fail to propose clear and practical plans. Al-Gannushi considered that there are numerous areas for cooperation, the most important of which would be the protection of the common Mediterranean environment, "the womb that embraces all of us". But he insisted on first of all asking Europe to recognise Islam and to "stop excluding it and interpreting it as it likes". He also added that "it is disappointing to find people in America who call for the recognition of an Islamic world governed by Islamic moderate movements, even though they are dominated by Zionist lobbies, while Europe, which is closer to us, is more inflexible towards Islamic movements, even the most moderate, such as the Moroccan Party for Justice and Development, the Renaissance Movement and the Muslim Brothers.

Amer El-Arid tried to be both practical and strict. He defined four essential and possible fields of cooperation: managing dialogue and removing all elements of hate and violence; supporting aspirations for reform, development, education and scientific research; establishing clear political relations; and encouraging the principles of cohabitation, tolerance and the prevention of violence.

For Al-Kousseiby cooperation can "enclose all life's aspects and activities". Yet it seems he gives priority to avoiding "prejudgments and confusion provoked by the ignorance of other civilisations and the fabrications of some authoritarian governments or some of their extremist or corrupted wings".

Sayed Al-Farajani believes that cooperation may include all fields, including "security and defence". In this respect, he said: "We refuse to be the tool used to threaten the security of Europe, or a crossroads for drugs or clandestine immigration; we refuse to be a power of hostility in the name of Islam against Europe or Christianity, Judaism or the non-religious philosophies of Europe".

Al-Farajani supported Amer El-Arid's proposals, while formulating his own as follows: "Our Movement and the European Union should agree to: establish official political relations, activate Article 2 of the partnership agreement between Europe and Tunisia; realise a dialogue in all domains; establish a centre for Islamic and European studies and research, in which Islamic and European academic researchers interact and aid cooperation between the European Union and the Islamic Movement; and determine a common view on how to tackle the problems of terrorism, clandestine immigration to Europe, despotism and the Tunisian development process.

Conclusions

Throwing the ball into the European court, Hamadi Al-Jibali affirmed the Renaissance Movement's deep interest in opening a debate with Europe, considering that any cooperation process "necessitates an honest will for cooperation, a mutual trust and sincerity for the benefit of both parties". Al-Jibali meanwhile refuses to be forced to choose between "a special relationship with Europe and belonging to the civilisation of Arabism, Islam and Africa". Al-Jibali agrees with those who nominate Tunisia as "a link and a bridge extended between the two banks of the Mediterranean and two deep-rooted civilisations".

Our interviews reveal that the Renaissance Movement leadership and a large number of independent Islamists are ready to cooperate with the European Union and its different bodies. However, the Renaissance Movement is mainly interested in being recognised by Europeans as a legitimate party in the Tunisian arena. The Movement appreciates the protection and asylum granted to some of its members, yet asks Europe to exert pressure on the Tunisian government to release its prisoners and recognise it legally as an opposition party.

Throughout these conversations it becomes apparent that the Renaissance Movement does not have a substitute for the current government policies on relations with the European Union. This does not mean that there is no discord between the two parties. In essence the Movement would generally be in favour of a market economy without restricting its openness to Europe. The potential modifications or changes that the Renaissance Movement might undertake in the constitutional, legal and social domains are still ambiguous to politicians, researchers, and observers.

While awaiting the latest developments and reactions from within the Tunisian arena, an increasing number of the Renaissance Movement leaders have declared that they still work towards achieving democracy. Moreover, any cooperation between the European Union and Tunisian Islamists, who believe in the importance of this relationship, will greatly affect future developments.

5. POLITICAL ISLAM IN EGYPT

EMAD EL-DIN SHAHIN

Introduction

Drawing on results from a survey among members of the Muslim Brothers and the Wasat Party, this chapter looks at changes in Egyptian political Islam and examines the views of mainstream Islamists of the European Union policies and initiatives in the Mediterranean. The discussion focuses on the Muslim Brothers, the country's main opposition force, and the Wasat Party, as purporting to represent an evolving Islamic centrist orientation. Despite their seemingly different orientations, the commonalities between the two groups regarding their views of the EU far outweigh their differences. Their shared Islamic frame of reference and a perceived inconsistency of EU policies in the region largely explain this similarity.

5.1 Changes in Egyptian political Islam

The landscape of political Islam in Egypt has changed dramatically over the past decade and a half. Since the mid-1990s, the country's mainstream Islamic movement, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB, or Muslim Brothers), has undergone a significant transformation; an Islamist centrist party, *Hizb al-Wasat*, has emerged and for the past ten years has been struggling to acquire official recognition; and the country's radical movements, especially the *Jama`a Islamiya*, have reassessed some of their tactics.

The Muslim Brotherhood is the oldest grass-roots Islamist movement of the twentieth century (established in 1928) and perceives itself as "the mother of all centrist Islamist movements". It is an activist movement with a comprehensive reform message, combining multi-dimensional spheres that give the movement reasonable space for manoeuvre, even when it is severely constrained by the Egyptian regime. The movement is a

synthesised version of earlier reform movements (such as *Salafi* reformism and Islamic modernism) and can claim to be the heir of 'reformist Islam'.[66] It has adopted a gradualist bottom-up approach to change that seeks to re-socialise society along Islamic lines: the individual, family, society, and then the state. The Brotherhood is also one of the most institutionalised movements in Egypt. Its structure has survived the lifetime of its founder, Hassan Al-Banna (1906-49), despite suffering repeated phases of brutal regime repression. All this has generated a particular political orientation that is characterised by caution, gradualism, slow adaptation, and fear of experimentation and failure. In the movement's view, failure will not simply reflect on the leadership of the group at a particular moment, but on the entire movement. It could even affect the fortunes of political Islam as an alternative to post-independence and foreign-inspired secular models. Therefore, preserving the survival and structural coherence of the movement has always been a top priority. It is an objective that has for long has dominated the Brotherhood's political calculations and levels of interaction in the political process, and enabled the movement to exhibit a pragmatic attitude whenever the circumstances warrant it.

In recent years, the Muslim Brotherhood has revised its political strategies and policy orientations. To many observers, it seems as if it has made a clear and deliberate departure from its traditionally cautious approach. During the 1970s and early 1980s, the Muslim Brothers rejected the idea of getting directly involved in the political process, participating in the parliament, or taking part in the trade unions. Their attention was mainly focused on rebuilding the organisation's structures and avoiding confrontations with the regime that might have provoked repression of the movement. By the mid-1980s, they gradually began to participate in parliamentary elections in alliance with other political parties like the Wafd Party in 1984 and the Labour Party in 1987. They also contested elections in the trade unions and succeeded in gaining control over many of the latter during the 1990s. After 2000, the Muslim Brothers adopted an increasingly assertive strategy in their relationship with the regime and took on a pragmatic reform agenda. This change became more marked in early 2005, when the Muslim Brotherhood insisted on reasserting their presence in the

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[66] The author refers here to the orientation of the movement's founder, Hassan al-Banna. For the reformist meaning of Salafiya, see Shahin (1995).

political process, defied regime bans on their demonstrations and even threatened 'civil disobedience'. They also cooperated with other political forces that did not share their ideological perspectives and jointly formed reform-oriented fronts.

All these developments emerge from a long history of major revisions, introduced gradually since the mid-1990s. These revisions were clearly reflected in the movement's documents in 1994, its electoral programme of 1995, its Reform Initiative of 2004, and its electoral programme of 2005. They are also reflected in a seemingly consistent vision among the movement's leadership of reform and the means by which to achieve this reform. In essence, the documents and statements reassert a commitment to the civic nature of political authority, notwithstanding their adherence to the principles of the sharia and respect for the basic values and instruments of democracy; respect for public freedoms; acceptance of pluralism; transfer of power through 'clean' and free elections; sovereignty of the people; separation of power; rejecting the use of violence and adopting gradual and legal means to achieve reform; acceptance of citizenship as the basis for rights and responsibilities for Muslims and non-Muslims; and support of human rights, including those of women and the Copts.[67]

The changes could be ascribed to developments within the movement itself and in the Egyptian political process in general. By the end of the 1980s, the Muslim Brothers were able to rebuild their structures and better position themselves to engage in the political process and interact with other political actors. A relatively young generation of Islamists with different political experiences and a more proactive political culture joined the movement and gradually managed to influence its orientations. In 1995 the Muslim Brotherhood experienced a split within its ranks, which underscored the need for change. Several young members, later to form the Wasat Party, broke away in protest at the movement's lack of ideological clarity and rigid leadership style. The ascendancy of Mahdi Akef as the General Guide in 2004 also contributed to changes in the movement's

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[67] See the complete text of the Muslim Brothers Reform Initiative, 3 March 2004. For a critical discussion of the level of the Brotherhood's commitment to these issues, see Brown et al. (2006).

strategies and orientations. Akef does not shy away from politics and is known to side with the views of the movement's younger generation.

By the end of the 1990s, the MB had concluded that its policy of trying to accommodate the regime's restrictions and absorb its repression was not having the desired placatory effect, as the regime systematically continued to crack down on the movement and its active leadership and members. Within the larger political arena, Egypt was also changing. The regime's legitimacy and popularity was eroding. To contain increasing popular dissatisfaction with its performance and stagnation, it began to allow some political opening that generated pro-reform movements and new political actors. As the largest organised political force, the Muslim Brothers had to adapt quickly to this changing environment to safeguard their influence from newly emerging pro-reform groups (like *Kifaya* and others). The Brothers' adoption of a reformist agenda and a more pragmatic strategy paid off, as they emerged after the parliamentary elections of 2005 as the largest opposition force, capturing 20% of parliamentary seats. The Brothers' remarkable performance was a result of long years of reasserting their presence at the public level, their direct engagement with the people, an appealing and pragmatic reform agenda, and their willingness to confront the regime and pay the price of their defiance.

At the same time, the MB had to contend with a new rival, in the form of the Wasat Party. Some observers suggest that if Wasat policies were combined with MB structures the century-old quest for a programmatic mainstream Islamic modernism could be resolved. The Brotherhood certainly has the numbers and discipline, while the Wasat has a centrist vision and a young leadership, but without a wide following. The origins of the Wasat date back to the mid-1990s, when a group of young members of the Muslim Brotherhood split because of differences in orientations and in protest at internal organisational rigidity within the movement. They formed a party and applied for a licence three times, in 1996, 1998 and 2004, to the regime-dominated Party Formation Committee. Each time, the party's request was denied. The founders pursued their case through the judicial channels, which have also repeatedly denied them recognition; the reason given was that the party's programme was not sufficiently distinguishable from those of already existing political parties.

In fact, the Wasat's programme does present a new orientation. It is a civic political party with an Islamic reference that attempts to appeal to broad segments of the Egyptian population. The party makes a clear

distinction between politics and religious proselytising (*da`wa*). It presents Islam as a cultural framework that can assimilate the religious aspirations of Muslim Egyptians and the natural cultural affiliations of the country's Copts. In fact, several founding members of the party were Copts. According to its programme, the party's vision of Islam is based on three fundamental pillars: citizenship that provides equal rights for Muslims and non-Muslims; the right of all citizens to assume all public positions; and coexistence with other cultures on the basis of respect for cultural specificities, justice and equality, interdependence and mutual interests. The Wasat has reconfirmed its unequivocal commitment to peaceful and legal change and to the fundamental democratic principles of: sovereignty of the people; separation of powers; transfer of power; citizenship; freedom of belief; political and intellectual pluralism; full equality between men and women; freedom of expression; and respect for human rights. The Wasat also seeks to implement the principles of the sharia through democratic means, through a selective and modernist process that, while achieving the objective of the sharia, would lead to the development and progress of society.[68]

5.2   The Islamists and the European Union

In order to ascertain the views of the Muslim Brothers and the Wasat Party on European Union policies, questionnaires were sent to 20 members in Cairo between September and October 2006, including the leadership of the two movements and a number of rank and file members. The questionnaire, in Arabic, appears in annex B of this book. Members of the Muslim Brothers consulted included: Deputy General Guide Muhammad Habib; members of the Guidance Bureau Abd al-Moneim Abul-Foutouh, Mahmud Ghozlan and Muhammad Sami; member of the Press Syndicate Board Ali Abd al-Fattah; Ibrahim Houdaiby, a Western-educated and active member; and a member of the Political Office who wished to remain anonymous.[69] Members of the Wasat Party included Abul-`Ula Madi,

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[68] The Wasat Programme, available at http://www.alwasatparty.com.

[69] It is regrettable that Isam al-Iryan, an articulate leading Muslim Brothers member who participated in discussions with European ambassadors in 2003, could not be interviewed, as he was detained in May 2006.

representative of the founders; and leading members Amr Farid and Hossam Khalaf.[70]

5.3   Europe's democratic model

There is a diversity of opinion amongst Egyptian Islamists regarding the West and Europe as democratic models, but it is still possible to discern common elements. Recently, many leading Islamists have explicitly declared their commitment to democracy, but they frequently distinguish between democracy as a system of values and democracy as a policy-instrument. Most Islamists have no problem with the latter; the issue is with some of the values on which the Western model of democracy rests.

On the one hand, there seems to be agreement on recognising European democracy as a model, but one that is particularly for Europeans. There is also a feeling that the democratic values in this model are often contradicted by European practice and policies in the region. Muhammad Habib, Deputy General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, views Europe as representing a model of democracy which "is particular to European societies only. This model is often disregarded when Europe interacts with the Arab and Islamic worlds". It is driven by "the interests of European states that do not object to supporting repressive regimes and do not accept the outcomes of democracy [in the region]". For Abd al-Moneim Abul-Foutouh, member of the Guidance Bureau, "Europe presents a model of democracy from a Western perspective". He also identifies a number of positive elements in this model: "the freedom of expression is guaranteed, in general. Human rights are respected. There is also a genuine respect for the opinion and will of the people. In most cases, the people elect the government they want to represent them. And they can hold that government accountable". Muhammad Sami, also member of the Guidance Bureau, agrees, "Yes, for its own citizens in their respective countries. As for us and for our Arab and Islamic causes, it does not represent a reference; their model has no democracy or justice for us". Ibrahim el-Houdaiby, a Western-educated active member, views Europe as presenting a certain model of democracy:

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[70] Translation of written replies to the questionnaire carried out by the author, except for Ibrahim Houdaiby's, who preferred to give his feedback entirely in English.

In the sense that the people do choose who rules in free, fair, and democratic elections. These elected governments are, for the most part, accountable to the people who elected them. Furthermore, there is a general respect for human rights, at least within the Union, and there are real, pro-democracy movements that work to overcome the problems of democracy. Yet, most important is that the EU has one of the most significant benefits of democracy which is the self-reforming system that allows those who see real problems with the system to change it from within. Nonetheless, the EU is not the only model of democracy, as there are different models in the world. As the Middle East takes other steps towards democracy there could be more models. It is important to understand that the real tenets of democracy are accountability and answerability. That is: a democracy is real when it is governing on behalf of the country's people, according to an agenda they accept, and is accountable to and removable by these people.

Some views are more qualified. In the words of Mahmud Ghozlan, member of the Guidance Bureau, Europe "does not present a model of democracy for me". Similarly, Ali Abd al-Fattah, member of the Press Syndicate Board, qualifies his answer by saying that "Europe does not present an *ideal* model for democracy".[71]

Wasat views of Europe as a democratic model were largely positive. Abul-`Ula Madi, representative of the Wasat founders, responded with an unqualified, "Yes"; Amr Farid, "Yes, with some reservations"; and Hossam Khalaf, "Yes, with regards to the electoral system and the transfer of power".

5.4   Reservations about Europe's democratic model

All Islamists expressed some reservations about the European model of democracy, especially the relationship between the latter and Islamic precepts, as well as to some European policies that violate democratic practices. For Abul-Foutouh, "the West is preoccupied with material issues. Its democracy looks at the human being as a material entity. It overlooks the spiritual aspects that are there and cannot be denied". He also expresses reservations about the state-money-media nexus,

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[71] Emphasis in original.

[T]he exploitation of the government and economic institutions of the media to influence public opinion in a specific direction. As was the case in Britain during the war on Iraq, when they convinced the public of the weapons of mass destruction issue and that Iraq represented a danger to world security and stability (…) In some cases, this democracy is marred by issues such as discrimination against some segments of society, despite the fact that this contradicts the democratic principles that stand against discrimination.

Ghozlan is more explicit about the philosophical differences between the European and Islamic models. For him,

[U]ltimate sovereignty in Western democracy belongs to the people, and that gives them the right to legislate anyway they want, regardless of what is considered from a *shar`i* point of view as *halal* (licit) or *haram* (illicit), or even if it contradicted moral principles, such as not to commit adultery, homosexuality, alcohol, and gambling (…) All these are deplorable issues, but still are considered legal in the West.

Habib explained that "The EU places freedom before justice. We try to balance the two. We want to strike a balance between the rights of the individual and the rights of society". Most of the interviewees pointed to issues where Islamists and the EU differ on human rights, such as female inheritance, the rights of homosexuals and sexual freedom. Ghozlan opines that,

[O]ur vision of human rights is based on Islam which, centuries before Europe knew human rights, has approved these rights in the most perfect way and to the largest extent. Whereas Islam approved the rights of the individual, it did not consider them as absolute. It balanced between those rights and the rights of the society. Europe's vision of human rights, on the other hand, is based on the philosophy of individualism which takes the side of individual interest over society's interest.

Egyptian Islamists also invariably think that European democracy is compromised by the nature of some EU external policies. Ghozlan, for instance, refers to certain European policies that for him contradict democracy:

Its [European] unjust policies towards popular resistance movements, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, and categorises them as terrorist movements, in a clear contradiction to international

law double standards. While the West supports the Zionist entity and overlooks its possession of nuclear weapons and avoids a confrontation with North Korea, it besieges Iran for trying to develop a nuclear programme for peaceful purposes, and not nuclear weapons. [It] supports dictatorial systems in the Arab world, while besieging the government of Hamas, which has been democratically elected, in order to bring it down (…) Western democracy works for the dominance of one people over others or the control over the markets, or the seizure of land, or the monopoly over the oil resources. For all this, it wages wars, spills blood under false pretexts. The best evidence for that is what is happening in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Lebanon, and the sanctions that the Congress and the House of Commons issue to punish certain states.

Similarly, Muhammad Sami's reservations focus on policies. Europe lacks a normative influence "because of the double standard through which Europe addresses our just causes in Palestine, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Jordan and others. Europe stands with the aggressor and does not defend the wronged. It wrongly takes the side of Israel. It does not seriously advocate human rights". The latter point is shared by the member of the Political Office who points to the "discrimination against Muslims in European countries". According to Houdaiby:

The intellectual and philosophical pillars of democracy… are not the same in the EU and the Middle East…. For instance, democracy in the West in general, or at least as I regard it, is a problem-solving mechanism that aims at resolving the problems between different individuals in society by guiding them to form alliances based on interests, and then to compete for power to protect or pursue their interests. This creates an interest-based society where people pursue the interests of their ethnic, religious, economic or social groups rather than the interests and well-being of the society as a whole. Democracy, or 'Shura' in the Islamic philosophy, is not merely a problem-solving mechanism that is used to prevent conflicts within society. Rather, it is an ethic that consultation should take place before taking any decision. Therefore, the mindset of the voter is different, as he seeks the well-being of the 'umma' at large, even if that runs against his own personal interests or objectives. This means that votes going to different groups is not due to differences in interest, but due to different understandings of what best serves the interests of the

society as a whole….[and]… there is a balance between the interests of the individual and the society'.

5.5   Comparing Europe and the United States

Egyptian Islamists perceived there to be major differences between the European and American models of democracy. They invariably favoured the European model, mainly because of the influence of money and the media over American democracy. Habib saw the major differences as lying in "the use of money, corporate politics, and the media. All play a major role in American democracy. Furthermore, the average American is not politicised in general". Abul-Foutouh considers "the American model, in general, to be very pragmatic and more materialistic than the European model". Despite the fact that Ghozlan saw "no difference between the two models with regards to their philosophical basis", he claims that

> [T]he difference I see is the greater influence of money and media in the American model. This is clearly perceived in the impact of lobbies that finance election campaigns, the policies followed by the administration, and especially the fact that the American people are not politically aware.

Houdaiby makes a rather detailed comparison between the two models of democracy:

> The US model of democracy is inefficient, and maybe designed to be so. It is a model in which the checks and balances within the system, as well as the relationship between the federal government and the state governments, prevent any government from making any acute change in policy… The US President does not need to have the approval of the people in many cases… He is not elected directly by the people in many ways, and can hardly be removed by the people, or even their representatives in Congress. Most of the systems in the EU … tend to be more representative. People directly elected the government… Different governments, in such systems, can implement significantly different policies if they enjoy enough public support to come to power with a fundamentally different agenda, as has happened in Italy and Spain lately. This is partially because of the differences in party systems in the US and the EU. In the US, there are no clear cut differences between the ideologies of Democrats and Republicans on most issues.…In the EU, the situation is different as there are different political parties with clear differences in agendas and

priorities. Most of these political parties have well-developed ideological and philosophical frameworks within which they move, but they continue to uphold their principles. In the US, political parties tend to be more pragmatic, and care less about ideology.

Most interviewees clearly favoured the European model. Ali Abd al-Fattah, characterises the European model as "less unfair and less discriminatory than the American model. The unfair characteristics of the American model appear clearly in Iraq, Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, and the unequivocal support for the Zionist entity".

All the Wasat members articulated preference for the European model. For Madi, "the European model is more pluralistic and more profound than the American model". Amr Farid explained that, "the European model is more credible than the American one. It is not based on excessive fundraising during election time, as is the case in the US for example". As for Khalaf, he sees the European model to be, "based on a more cultured people than that of the US".

5.6   Muslim minority rights within Europe

The interviews carried out with Egyptian Islamists revealed that concern has grown over what is perceived to be discrimination in at least some member states against Muslim minorities. Habib asserted that on this issue "each European state is different. However, there is clear racism in dealing with certain issues as in the case of France and Britain". Ghozlan, on the other hand, attested to clear violations of Muslim rights throughout Europe,

> [I]t is clear that they are treated in a discriminatory way not only when it relates to their political, social, and economic rights, but also as they are widely exposed to securitisation and detentions merely on suspicions. Above all, there is suppression of their religious rights as they ban Muslim women and girls from wearing the veil and dismiss them from their jobs and schools, and attack their beliefs.

The issue of the veil evokes immediate criticism. Muhammad Sami contends that, "Europe does not tolerate seeing a veil on the head of a Muslim girl in public schools". For him this is an indication that "Europe's democracy lags behind [in terms of] Muslims' rights". Abd al-Fattah also

does not consider Muslims in Europe to enjoy equal or full rights. "Their conditions run contrary to the principles of human rights", he asserts.

Abul-Foutouh expressed some degree of optimism: "The West and democracy have adopted citizenship as the basis for rights and responsibilities. Therefore, the crisis of minorities, Muslims or non-Muslims, should presumably dissipate. What is happening otherwise is the result of [mistaken] practices". Madi makes clear distinctions between European countries on this issue. "There are differences in the positions of European countries with regards to the rights of Muslim minorities. The United Kingdom is better than the Netherlands. Germany has not recognised Islam as a religion until now". On the other hand, another Wasat member, Farid, links certain European policies to racism. "Racism continues to dominate European policies. This is evident through the rights of Muslim minorities in Europe (Germany, France), and the countries that have a high percentage of Muslims. It is also clear in the way Europe handles the Turkish case and its application to join the EU". Khalaf shifts the focus to the Muslims themselves. "There are rights that might be threatened, but I am not sure whether this is because the Muslims are reluctant to request them or because they cannot request them".

5.7 Islamists and EU policies in the Mediterranean: Where is the EU?

It is strikingly evident that the majority of Islamists have no strong awareness of EU policies and initiatives in the Mediterranean. The following reasons were emphasised by different Islamists for their lacking a clear idea of the EU's Mediterranean policy:

- The EU's policy itself is not clear or transparent;
- the EU does not have a strong enough political presence or an influential role in the region;
- the diversity and inconsistency of European policy towards the Mediterranean;
- there have been no tangible results or benefits from the 10-year old Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP);
- EU interests to regain its lost power in the region undermine enthusiasm for Europe;

- the dependence of European policy on the US's agenda, even if this agenda is against the people's preferences, the examples of Iraq, Palestine, and Lebanon being good cases in point;

- the EU's association of Islam and the Islamists with terrorism and extremism;

- Europe's position towards the Muslim minorities in their countries and neighbouring states;

- the EU has so far thought little of the Islamists: they claim to stand for democracy while excluding the Islamists.

A general complaint was that Islamists had not taken an interest in EU policy because of what they judged to be a lack of vision on the part of the EU towards Islamists. A common line was: 'When they make up their mind that they want to include us, perhaps we can crystallise our views of Europe'.

Additional reasons attribute this unclear vision to the conditions of the Islamists themselves. One respondent listed the problems as,

> [T]he Islamists are not a monolithic entity; they are not yet in a position to make decisions and formulate concrete polices; there is a scarcity of intellectuals and strategists among the Islamists; weak institutionalisation within the Islamic movements; failure to include this issue on the agenda of priorities; and the regime's ban on the Islamists having contacts with the outside.

Egyptian Islamists admit that they have little idea of the details of specific EU policies. They show negligible understanding of or interest in the details of the Association Agreements or the way in which the EMP is being supplemented by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Commenting on the main features of EU policies in general, Habib thinks that "the European Union seeks to have its special policies with the Arab and Islamic worlds, but the lack of transparency and its susceptibility to US policy constitute an obstacle to the [promotion] of solid and correct relations". Abul-Foutouh contends that "as a member of the MB and as a political activist, I do not know much of the policies of the EU. This is because of the authoritarian regime in Egypt that attempts to prevent contacts between the national forces in Egypt and any outside parties in order to circumvent any cooperation between the two. They also try continuously to prevent outside parties from having a direct knowledge of us, so that the regime can be the only source for the image that Europeans have of these national forces". Ghozlan considers the main feature of EU

policy to be its "dependency on US policy, and lack of independence in its decisions". Abd al-Fattah thinks that "EU policy has exercised a marginal role in the Palestinian problem and a marginal role in Lebanon and Algeria". Houdaiby also criticises EU policy for its lack of autonomy from the US:

> EU presence and policy in the region has hardly been autonomous from that of the US. Therefore, there has been only a minimal need to study it. Nonetheless, and since the war on Iraq, the EU has been more outspoken in its refusal to blindly adopt US policies in the region. It started formulating its own agenda, based on its own interests, and not those of the US. I still do not think that the EU's policy in the region is fully developed. This is because the EU has not yet fully developed internally, and therefore has not been able to synchronise the foreign policies of its members. Also, the EU has neither identified clearly its interests and strategic alliances in the region, nor has it fully developed political stances on different issues. This is because the EU is not yet well acquainted with the major political and social players in the region and does not yet fully understand the internal dynamics of its societies.

From Wasat, Madi believes that "Europe tries to play an important role in the region, but the US restricts and limits this role, despite the importance of the region for Europe as a neighbourhood, interests, and source for migration". Farid considers the European Union to be "very sympathetic towards Israel; dependent in most cases (especially the large European states) on US policy". It is also characterised by "racism towards Arab and Muslim minorities, even with their neighbours, such as Turkey, and ambitions regarding Arab natural resources". Khalaf realises that EU policy "focuses on economic cooperation, which in the end produces a greater benefit for the EU because of the economic under-development of the Middle East".

The perception is strong that the EU is essentially divided. For Abul-Foutouh, "we cannot talk about a consistent EU policy. Britain's position is different from France's. Germany sometimes differs from both". He considers this to be a weakness.

> There is a trend currently underway trying to formulate its positions and policies away from the influence of the US. This is very important. Some EU politicians are beginning to realise that they are closer to the Middle East than to the US, because of history and culture… The problem I still cannot understand is the

slow pace of this move inside Europe. I cannot understand why many European states have not objected to US policies. I cannot understand it when our regimes follow US policies, because they are corrupt, repressive, authoritarian, and weak systems. They largely depend on the US. Some European states fear steering away from US policies, even if this runs against the interests of their people.

Habib considers "the willingness of some European countries to stand up for Arab rights" as a strong point in EU policy. Ghozlan identifies the weak points in EU policy in "following US polices; the unjust stands towards the causes of Muslims in Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan, and Iran; hostility towards a real democracy in Palestine; their support of dictatorships in the Arab world; and their harmful position towards Islam and Muslim minorities in Europe". Sami feels that some EU states "are expressing a willingness to defy US pressures, but the weak point is that they submit to secular extremists that agitate against Muslims in Europe". The member of the Political Office sees a number of strong points: "availability of financial support; stability of these programmes and clarity of their objectives; and good experience of the Europeans about the region". For him, the weak points are: "internal competition among the members over the Middle East region; competition with the US; and weak political stability in the region". For Abd al-Fattah, the strong points of European policies are: "dialogue with various partners; not giving in to the idea of a uni-polar system". The weakest point for him is the "EU's submission in the end to US policies".

Madi regards European policy as "more supportive than the American one of the issues of human rights, freedoms, and democracy". Its weakness, however, is that it exhibits "some degree of dependence on the policies of the US, especially in the Middle East, taking the side of Israel in its policies in most cases". Farid thinks that European policy "does not believe in cultural dialogue, but in exporting European culture" and that "the points of strength show only in individual cases, such as Spain's withdrawal of troops from Iraq, but does not come as a consistent collective policy as expected from a union". Khalaf believes that European policy "respects public opinion inside, except for the United Kingdom". Its weakness is the "submission to the agenda of the US in some cases as a result of US pressures and not out of persuasion".

Despite their reservations about EU policy, Egyptian Islamists view clear distinctions between the policies of the EU and the US. They see US

policy as seeking domination and control, exhibiting a high propensity for the use of force and not respecting international law. The European Union's policy is – they perceive – more understanding of the conditions and needs of the region and pays more attention to human rights and political freedoms. However, for some Islamists the lines that demarcate the two policies are sometimes blurred and narrow. Habib maintains that, "at least EU policies do not exhibit hegemonic practices and attempts to dominate the world such as those of the US". For Ghozlan, "The US seeks to build a universal empire in this century. It uses its striking military power – disregarding the freedoms, lives, and properties of the people. The EU's policy is based on relinquishing the idea of a universal empire of the 19th and 20th centuries". The member of the Political Office considers EU policy to be "more understanding of the conditions and needs of the region. It is more calm [peaceful]". Houdaiby believes that the "US no longer cares about international law and pursues its illegal interests causing so much global violence, while the EU still tends to abide by international law".

Madi also makes a distinction between EU and US policies. He sees "room for difference and manoeuvrability regarding some issues such as Palestine, Iraq, and Iran's nuclear issue". The EU pays "more attention to the issues of freedom and human rights". Farid thinks that these differences have narrowed over the past two decades. "There were differences during the 1980s and 1990s, but now there seem to be similarities after the collapse of the Soviet Union. At present, the EU's policies follow those of the US in most cases – except in some manoeuvres that Russia undertakes for material gains and not out of support for the Arab states". Khalaf considers that "US policies are based on total domination in the name of its interests and those of Israel. For European countries, their main concern is perhaps economic interests, not total domination".

5.8   How Europe can support democracy

Egyptian Islamists are clear that they are not looking for preferential engagement from the EU, but rather that European governments act in a way that is more consistent and faithful to their commitment to defend democratic values. Abul-Foutouh believes that the EU should begin to "put some pressure on regimes to stop their repression and to start respecting the human rights of the Islamists and the national opposition". Ghozlan asserts that the "Islamists are not expecting much from the EU in terms of support of their political rights. All they hope for is that Europe stops

supporting the despotic regimes in the Arab and Muslim worlds". The member of the Political Office believes that "the EU can defend the political rights of Islamists as individuals and give the regimes incentives to adopt democracy and respect human rights". Houdaiby does not expect the European Union to do anything specific for the Islamists, he claims however that "it could serve its strategic interests in the region by promoting real democracy. That means that the EU should stop supporting the tyrannical, authoritarian, corrupt regimes in the region politically and economically, and pressure them to move towards democracy regardless of the outcome. It is important to understand that Islamists do not live in isolated islands in their societies, but they are living, integral parts of these societies. The only way to defend their political rights is to defend the political rights of the societies [as a whole]". Abd al-Fattah thinks it would be useful if "the EU supported the cases of public liberties and the detainees; the cases of freedom of opinion, expression, and association; and the freedom to form political parties".

Wasat members also see a possible role for the EU within the larger framework of promoting democracy in Egypt. Madi thinks that the EU could "push the issue of freedoms, human rights, democratic transformation, and independence of the judiciary for all citizens and not only the Islamists". For Farid, the EU's policy towards the Islamists needs to be reconsidered: "Not to deal with them as terrorists, as the Euro-American media portrays them; not to pressure them to fail as they did with Hamas, but to allow them the opportunity to govern; and to respect the international conventions and the resolutions of the UN Security Council, especially regarding the Palestinian issue". Khalaf thinks that the EU can do more to "encourage the integration of the Islamists into the political process".

At present, Egyptian Islamists perceive that the EU continues to prop up authoritarian regimes in the region, and only supports democracy in principle where it does not threaten to bring Islamists to power. At the forefront of their minds are the concrete cases where the EU stood against democracy (Algeria and the election of Hamas) and Europe's silence towards the frequently fraudulent elections in the region. Abul-Foutouh slightly qualifies his critique of the EU, "*Until now* it still supports authoritarian regimes, but certainly not as much as the US does. *But so far*

we cannot say that it supports democracy".[72] Houdaiby laments the EU's inability to devise a clear strategy regarding democracy in the region: "It is clear that the EU has not yet formulated a well-developed vision and strategy for dealing with the dynamic political situation in the Middle East. Therefore, it seems the EU has decided to take the easy way, and follow the American strategy of supporting tyrannical regimes, and allowing only minimal margins of freedom that hardly allow for the people's will to be manifested".

5.9   Collaboration with Europe?

Islamists acknowledge the lack of any meaningful levels of cooperation so far between their organisations and the European Union. At most, Egyptian Islamists have occasionally participated as individuals in workshops or conferences on democracy and inter-faith or cultural dialogues with independent European counterparts, but not with the EU as such. They have no links in their social welfare activities to any EU programmes and initiatives in the country. In principle, they welcomed the prospect of greater collaboration, but insisted that this should take place on the basis of equality, transparency and respect for independence and cultural specificities. Abul-Foutouh asserted that, "As Muslim Brothers we reconfirm our rejection of receiving financial assistance (…) However, we do not object to cooperation as long as it takes place with transparency and clarity and on the basis of the existence of common interests for our country and for the Union".

Reconfirming their rejection of the possibility of receiving direct (financial) assistance or grants, the Muslim Brothers and the Wasat suggest many areas that could be ripe for cooperation, including:

- assistance; educational and cultural areas;

- media and tourism; support for non-governmental organisations and civil society institutions;

- industrial cooperation; trade and industry, research and professional training;

- vocational movement; the transfer of experience of democratic transitions and ways to build serious and effective parties;

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[72] Emphasis in original.

- commercial cooperation; and

- transferring experience of successful administrative systems.

Asked whether an Islamist-oriented government in Egypt would be likely to close off trade and investment to and from the EU, members of the MB and Wasat rejected this possibility. Abul-Foutouh insisted, "On the contrary, we will seek to open new channels for trade with everyone. The problem is that the Egyptian regime deals with the West as a follower, an approach that we reject. We cooperate and interact on the basis of equality". For Abul-Foutouh, equal trade relationships should be based on fair terms of trade and a fair market price. Ghozlan explains that "there is no need for more caution as long as investments achieve the interests of both sides'. Sami also agreed, "….. Free interaction with all is the essence, within the framework of mutual respect". From Wasat, Khalaf specified, "we encourage [more trade and investment] as long as it is in the interests of our country and is not based on domination and monopoly".

Conclusions

At the level of declaratory policy, the EU seems to realise the importance of engaging with moderate Islamists in Egypt, and in the region as a whole, for obvious reasons. Political Islam is one of the realities of the region and will not dissipate in the near future. It might even play an increasingly influential role in future years. The Islamists are major political actors in the political process of their respective countries, as demonstrated by the performance of the Muslim Brothers in the 2005 parliamentary elections and by their strong social presence in Egypt. The Muslim Brothers are potentially a major factor for the political stability of the country, especially given the looming succession crisis in Egypt. The EU's declared policy of democracy promotion in the region and respect for human rights as a means of achieving stability cannot be credible unless the EU supports the integration of the Islamists into the political process. Excluding and not recognising mainstream Islamists discredits democracy policy and will not promote stability.

Over the past decade and half, the Muslim Brotherhood has experienced a remarkable change in its orientation, discourse, and strategies. It seems to be gradually moving towards a mainstream orientation, yet is clearly Islamic in outlook. Both the Brotherhood and the Wasat adhere to Islamic frameworks as the main source for their policy orientations. However, they have been trying to create a platform that

could appeal to a wider audience, by committing themselves to: a reform agenda that is shared by the main pro-reform actors; the civic nature of authority; citizenship as the basis of equal rights and responsibilities, democratic principles and practices, pluralism, the legal means for bringing about change and the transfer of power. The leadership of the Muslim Brothers is aware of the domestic, regional, and international constraints surrounding them, to the extent of admitting publicly that their possible coming to power at present would not be in the interests of Egypt.[73] Before the parliamentary elections of 2005 were over, Khayrat al-Shatir, the second Deputy to the General Guide, tried to allay Western fears, urging the West that there was, "No need to be afraid of us".[74] Other leading members conveyed a similar message.[75] Reassurances were also given to the Copts and secular elites. Of course, the Islamists will remain the 'usual suspects'. In other words, their 'intentions' and commitment to democracy and reform will always be questionable to some. But perhaps this issue has already gone beyond intentions. The Brothers' new orientation has been included in the movement's main documents and reiterated in its leadership's public discourses. Through direct engagement, among other measures, the level of this commitment can be discerned.

In their views of the EU and its policies and initiatives in the region, it is clear that the MB and Wasat formulate these views on the basis of their Islamic framework and in response to their experience of EU policies on the ground. At the theoretical level, they acknowledge the different philosophical and moral basis behind the European model of democracy and they disapprove of some of its aspects. Yet, they are willing to accept it as reflecting Europe's particular historical and political evolution. Nevertheless, they clearly view this model as containing many positive aspects and they readily express preference for the European model compared to that of the US. The Islamists, in turn, expect the EU to look at their Islamic model as reflecting a particular historical and cultural experience and to coexist with it as a different model. At the level of policy, several issues stand out: the EU's position towards Israel and the Palestinian conflict; EU policy towards the freely-elected government of

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[73] See Abul-Foutouh and al-Moneim (2005).

[74] Al-Shatir (2005).

[75] See Habib (2005).

Hamas; the situation in Iraq; the EU's continued support for autocratic regimes; and the rights of Muslim minorities in Europe. Almost all of these issues, regardless of Islamists or political Islam, need to be addressed at some point if the EU and the US want to ensure stability in the region. Despite the criticisms, the leadership of both the Muslim Brothers and the Wasat are still hopeful for better cooperation with the EU, at almost all levels, and expect this cooperation to increase if they come to power. To what extent are these expressed wishes genuine? This question is significant enough for the EU to take its declaratory policy a step further and engage with the Islamists at practical levels.

6. POLITICAL ISLAM IN LEBANON

TALAL ATRISSI

Introduction

Lebanon hosts one of the Middle East's most high profile Islamist parties: Hezbollah – and one with a uniquely complex set of international relations. This chapter reports that Hezbollah's criticisms of European policies have intensified recently. In particular, the party has expressed anger at what it sees as the EU's unconditional support for the Siniora government, against Hezbollah's efforts to ensure a fairer distribution of democratic power between Lebanon's religious communities. Europe does not figure highly in Hezbollah's calculations, compared to the US, Syria and Iran. The possible exception here is France, which Hezbollah criticises for having become too anti-Syrian since the assassination of Rafik Hariri. There is still some residual good-will towards the EU, but a true partnership based on democratic principles is seen by Hezbollah as being dependent on certain dramatic changes in European strategy first.

6.1   Hezbollah's ideological evolution

Political Islam was unknown in Lebanon until the end of the 1970s. Previously, Islamic organisations and associations of the Sunni majority undertook primarily religious and educational missions, just like their brethren in other parts of the Arab world. These groups had no direct impact on Lebanese political life. Hezbollah only emerged after three phases of Shiite political development.

Shiites were socially, politically, and economically marginalised from the creation of greater Lebanon in 1923 through to the 1960s. During this period, illiteracy was widespread and underdevelopment commonplace in southern Lebanon and the Bekaa region (where most Shiites lived). Seasonal agriculture was the main source of employment in the South;

other jobs were only available in the urban suburbs. Emigration to the Gulf, Africa and Australia became rampant. Remittances from relatives were the principle source of income to help build houses or schools, buy land or pay for a child's education. Shiites felt that they were treated unequally at the political level compared to the other main religious groups in Lebanon - Sunni Muslims and Maronite Christians. Shiites, particularly in southern Lebanon, felt increasingly insecure following the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 because Israel deported large numbers of Palestinians from Israel to Lebanon. Israel used the presence of Palestinian combatants in southern Lebanon as justification for repeated military strikes. The Lebanese army was unable to protect the Shiites from such attacks. The Lebanese Army likewise could not prevent the Palestinians from carrying out military operations in/from southern Lebanon. By the late 1960s, the majority of Shiite youths and many members of the educated elite had joined Marxist, nationalist, communist and radical organisations to protest against the poor economic and social conditions facing Shiites.

The emergence of a Shiite religious personality in the guise of Imam Moussa Sadr in the 1960s marked the beginning of a second phase of Shiite political development. Imam Moussa established schools and training centres, and urged successive governments to focus their development efforts on the traditionally underdeveloped regions where the majority of Shiites lived. He also founded a Lebanese resistance movement (Amal) to defend the South against Israeli attacks. Sadr called for Christian-Islamic coexistence, arguing for the abolition of political confessionalism (wherein political and administrative offices were divided between religious communities based on an agreed upon framework). Imam Sadr opposed the civil war that broke out in 1975 and made every effort to stop it until he was kidnapped after visiting Libya in 1978. During the civil war, almost one thousand Shiites were killed while many others were forced to leave the eastern sections of Beirut where they had lived. Some of the displaced Shiites returned to their villages in the South or the Bekaa, but the majority settled in the southern suburbs of Beirut. This neighbourhood subsequently became Hezbollah's headquarters.

The third phase of Shiite political development began with the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. This was the first revolution with an Islamic religious identity in recent history, and marked the first time that Shiites had overthrown a regime firmly allied to the US. It was understandable that Shiites in Lebanon and other regions were drawn to a new Iranian regime that shared their religious heritage. Then, in 1982, Israel

invaded Lebanon, reaching Beirut. Southern Lebanon, with its mainly Shiite inhabitants, was under occupation. Iran encouraged Shiite Islamic groups to fight Israel by giving them money, weapons and training. After three years of resistance, these groups were unified, and later named Hezbollah.

The birth of Hezbollah, however, was also driven by other developments in Lebanese society, such as increased remittance payments from abroad, rising education rates, and the increasing popularity of Amal. After 1979, the political-psychological mindset of Lebanese Shiites changed. Feelings of isolation, marginalisation and inferiority were replaced by a newfound power and a strong desire for political equality. In 2000, Hezbollah contributed to Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon and as a result, Hezbollah's status and reputation as a regional power in the Arab world increased. The rise of Hezbollah as an Islamic party also contributed to the waning popularity of other ideologically-motivated parties within Lebanon.[1]

To understand the evolution of Hezbollah's political doctrine, one must begin by analysing its 1985 'open letter' (or constitutive statement). In that letter, Hezbollah publicly announced its existence and described its identity, which was internationally-focused rather than strictly domestic. It emphasised that Hezbollah was "not locked in as an organised party of Lebanon … [but is] a nation connected to Muslims all over the world by a deep political and ideological link which is Islam, [that] face[s] the problems that Muslims in Afghanistan, Iraq and Philippines are going through according to a basic sharia obligation".[2]

Hezbollah refused to participate in or deal with the Lebanese government, which was not based on religious principles or sharia law. Hezbollah wanted to alter the government radically, which it considered beyond reform. The group asserted that "[t]hose who do not rule according to the laws of God are the tyrants". Yet it also refused formal opposition to the Lebanese government because by doing so it feared being co-opted.

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[1] Sheikh Naim Qassem, Hezbollah: the methodology, the experience, and the future, Al Hadi edition, Beirut, 2002, p.115-117.

[2] Hassan Fadlallah, The open letter: the other option, Al Hadi edition, Beirut, 1988.

Hezbollah viewed the international forces (UNIFIL I) deployed along the Israel-Lebanon borders as cohorts of the "Zionist invasion forces".[3]

After 1990, Hezbollah´s political ideology began to mature, progressively renouncing positions previously affirmed in its 'open letter' in favour of a more pragmatic and moderate political platform.[4] Hezbollah's Secretary General, Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, explains that:

> Before 1985, there was no chance to join in political activity. All the focus was on the resistance. The party's leadership had no chance to discuss many political issues".[5] After 1990, Hezbollah started its political activity, becoming an open movement. In fact, it is a normal evolution after what we initiated years ago.[6]

Not only had Lebanon changed, but with it the way Hezbollah viewed itself;

> Hezbollah is in the political opposition that puts forward a programme and seeks, by the available means, away from violence and in the framework of unquestionable matters, to maintain civil peace and the common living in order to reform and develop this regime.[7]

Other changes in Lebanon´s political and geographic landscape also contributed to Hezbollah´s movement towards greater pragmatism and moderation. The 1989 Taëf agreement, reached after the end of the Lebanese civil war, greatly bolstered the central authority of the Lebanese government as well its key institutions. By virtue of this Agreement, all Lebanese militias were dissolved and disarmed except for Hezbollah in southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah's political ideology stabilised after Sayed Abbass Moussawi was elected Secretary General in 1991. Even after Moussawi´s

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[3] Declarations of Hezbollah's spokesman, Ibrahim Al Amin, in Al 'Amal newspaper, 26 March 1986; "Al 'Alam" magazine, 3 May 1986; and "Al Afkar" magazine, 7 April 1986.

[4] Interview with Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, in Al Liwa'a newspaper, 15 November 1997.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

death in February 1992 (due to an Israeli helicopter strike), Hezbollah claimed that it remained committed to a policy of openness. After extensive and heated discussions between its members, it agreed to participate in the 1992 parliamentary elections. As Hezbollah's membership grew, it branched out and began to participate in municipal elections and elections for student groups, unions, and professional organisations. Hezbollah began to establish Islamic organisations and associations for doctors, engineers, and other professionals. The term 'Lebanonisation' is used to signify this progressive transformation of Hezbollah from a group that initially sought to establish an Islamic Republic in Lebanon to a political party actively participating in Lebanese political life.

Hezbollah ran in the May 2005 elections in alliance with the Future Movement (Sunni), the Progressive Socialist Party (Druze) and the Amal movement (Shiite). This alliance soon fractured in response to an array of differences, leading to Hezbollah's exit from government. Hezbollah's demands for a blocking (1/3) minority in government (i.e., 8 rather than 5 ministers in the 24 member Cabinet) and for a national unity government that included Michel Aoun were both denied by the Siniora government. Hezbollah objected to the Siniora government's international alliances and the growing pressure on Syria.

Hezbollah then reached a political understanding with the Free Patriotic Movement, a secular Christian party. This alliance formed the basis of Hezbollah´s present opposition to the Lebanese government. Hezbollah was willing to support the nomination of a Maronite leader as a presidential candidate.

Since the crisis of 2006 subsided, Hezbollah has maintained its call for a national unity government and maintained its sit-in in down-town Beirut. During the military engagement between the Lebanese army and Fath al-Islam (a radical Islamist group influenced by al-Qaeda) in the Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp in northern Lebanon in May 2007, Hezbollah declared its support for the Lebanese army. But it also warned against attacking Palestinian civilians in the camp and against Lebanon becoming an arena of struggle in which the Lebanese fight al-Qaeda on behalf of the US.

Hezbollah believes in *Wilayat al-Faqih*, the "guardianship of the jurist", the basis of the theocratic regime in Iran. But Hezbollah's leaders no longer announce that "Hezbollah is the Islamic revolution in Lebanon" or that "Hezbollah represents Iran in Lebanon and Lebanon in Iran".

Ayatollah Khomeini's photo is no longer present on the first page of Hezbollah's newspapers and bulletins. Crucially, Hezbollah's much-documented resistance has turned more into a Lebanese than a pan-Islamic role.

Hezbollah has proclaimed a commitment to democratic principles and has increasingly pressed for reform to Lebanon's confessional democracy, in order that Shiites gain equal political power and representation as Sunnis and Christians. Hassan Nasrallah criticised al Qaeda leaders when they accused those who participated in elections in Palestine and other Arab countries of being infidels, saying: "Who dares to say that those who participate in elections are infidels?"

6.2   Relations with Iran, Syria and the United States

While we are concerned here with Hezbollah's relations with the European Union, it is important to appreciate how these relations are themselves mediated through the organisation's relations with the three key states of Iran, Syria and the US.

Hezbollah was founded as an Iranian-backed resistance movement against the Israeli occupation of Lebanon in 1982. However, the relationship between Hezbollah and Iran transcends mere financial, military and political support; it is a relationship that fuses politics with religion and respects the *Fakih*, the supreme authority in Iran. Hezbollah openly expresses gratitude towards Iran for its support to Lebanon and the Resistance. Hezbollah sought a formal alliance with Iran (and Syria) after the adoption of UN Resolution 1559, the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon in mid-2005, and increasing US and French involvement in Lebanese domestic affairs.

Hezbollah's relationship with Syria differs from that with Iran. While it is ideologically and politically connected to Iran, it has a strictly political relationship with Syria, which directly controlled Lebanese policy and security from 1978 until 2005. The alliance with Syria is deemed by Hezbollah to be a strategic alliance against Israel. Hezbollah is not concerned by the secular nature of the regime in Damascus. Moreover, following the Iranian revolution, Iran and Syria have forged a strategic alliance that serves as a unique channel through which Iran can funnel support to Hezbollah.

After Syria took control of the internal political situation in Lebanon, it provided important political cover and security for Hezbollah in its armed resistance against Israel. No Lebanese politicians opposed Hezbollah while Syria occupied Lebanon. This helps explain why Hezbollah felt it necessary to prioritise more engagement in democratic politics after Syrian troops withdrew.

Hezbollah's criticism of the US has, if anything, increased recently. Party officials believe that the US respects democracy, liberty, equality, human rights, the rule of law and sovereignty only inside the US, not in foreign policy towards the Middle East.[8] Hezbollah criticises the American support of Israel, and accuses Washington of supporting Israeli attacks against Lebanon and interfering in Lebanese domestic politics. The US has included Hezbollah on its list of Foreign Terrorist Organisations (FTOs), which is why Hezbollah refuses to meet with American officials or diplomats.

Sheikh Qassem advocates dialogue with the West, invoking a belief in Islam that calls for rational and peaceful dialogue to "argue with them in a way that is better".[9] He asserts that dialogue is:

> [A] long, complex and slow process, but it is always required. It is advantageous to dialogue with a great number of sections in the Western communities; besides, dialogue prevents the clash between civilisations, and the US contributes to the creation of this clash in order to impose its standpoints and interests.[10]

Hezbollah's vision has changed since its open letter of 1985 where it considered the US, Britain and France as enemies, and the "arrogant West" as a singular, evil entity.[11] In his speech on 8 March 2005, after the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, the withdrawal of Syrian forces, and the huge demonstrations in Beirut, Sayed Nasrallah made more of a distinction between the US and France. He attacked the US, calling upon it to stop interfering in Lebanese domestic affairs. As for France, he

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[8] Sheikh Naim Qassem, 2002, op. cit., p. 355.

[9] Sourat An-Nahl, verse 125.

[10] Sheikh Naim Qassem, 2002, op. cit., p.367-168.

[11] Statement by Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, 27 March 1992, mentioned by Amal Saad Gharib.

called upon it to look at the hundreds of thousands of demonstrators gathered that day in a spirit of democracy.

6.3   Hezbollah's views of Europe

Hezbollah does not explicitly criticise the policy of the European Union at the official level, but does criticise Europe for its dependence on American policy, and its double standards on human rights issues.

In Hezbollah's eyes, Europe joined the American way of approaching the war against terrorism following the attacks of 11 September 2001. The concern within Hezbollah is that some European governments have, in the wake of 9/11, increasingly conflated terrorism and legitimate armed resistance, colouring attitudes towards Hezbollah in response to an event with which the latter had no connection.[12] Hezbollah is also increasingly critical of European policy towards Palestine. While Europe refuses to condemn the daily Israeli attacks on Palestinian civilians, it condemns any counter-attack by the Palestinians or the Lebanese against Israel. Here, Europe is no different from the US. Some European attitudes differ from the American ones, yet such differences are seen as modest by Hezbollah representatives.[13] Even at the level of the Middle East peace process (not endorsed by Hezbollah), Europe has been content to play a marginal role without advancing any autonomous initiative.[14]

On the other hand, one of Hezbollah's leaders[15] clearly distinguishes between American and European roles on the world stage. He believes that Europe's power greatly diminished in the last two decades due to exclusive US global domination. The British and French have however attempted to carve out a role for themselves in the Middle East; France has chosen a different role to that of the US, while Britain has chosen to follow US policy. As for the other European countries, they do not have an effective voice in the Middle East, yet their embassies continue to communicate and meet with Hezbollah officials.

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[12] Exclusive interview with one of the information chiefs in Hezbollah on December 20, 2006.

[13] Same interview with one of the information chiefs.

[14] Same interview.

[15] Exclusive interview on 29/11/2006.

One Hezbollah official interviewed by the author declared that official relations between Hezbollah and European embassies improved after 1996. Such contacts were not limited to visits, meetings and exchanges of ideas only, but rather amounted to actual cooperation. Many European ambassadors, including those from the UK and France, met with Hezbollah's Secretary General. Many official delegations from numerous European countries visited Lebanon to meet with Hezbollah.

Relations with Europe deteriorated in 2005 and 2006, however, as most of Europe, and in particular France, openly sided with the anti-Syrian camp in Lebanon. Sheikh Naim Qassem believes that Europe's role in the Middle East helps to reduce American global hegemony. However, he is not overly optimistic about European policy in the region because it continually fails to support even the most basic of human rights in Palestine and other countries.

Hezbollah´s leaders share a common view of Europe as dependent on the US and defined by double standards. To support their views, Hezbollah´s leaders point to the July 2006 war between Israel and Lebanon, where Europe adopted the same position as the US concerning the war – that of supporting Israel and claiming that Hezbollah was responsible for the war, while not condemning the massacres perpetrated against innocent civilians, including the use by Israel of cluster bombs. Moreover, Europe's support for the government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora mirrors that of the US.

One of Hezbollah's leaders expresses anger that Europe supported the demonstrations of what was dubbed the "cedar revolution" but now refuses to back Hezbollah's democratic and peaceful protests and strikes against Fouad Siniora's government. Europe supports the government and stands against the Hezbollah-led opposition, which is seeking a more balanced democracy. Indeed, the demonstrations led by Hezbollah were condemned by Europe. This leader in Hezbollah wonders:

> What's the difference between the demonstrations held in 2005 and those in 2006? Does the free demonstration depend on the objective? How can we explain the support of the demonstration in one case as democratic, and oppose it in another case as a threat to democracy?

Europe also opposes Hamas in Palestine. Although that Islamic movement came to power via free and democratic elections, Europe and the US opposed the election results. Their intention was to bring down the

Hamas government by blockading it economically and politically. The Hezbollah leader cited above also mentions Algeria as another case where the US and Europe turned against the Islamists when they were poised to take power democratically. Instead of allowing the Islamists to govern, the Europeans pushed Algeria into a blood bath that lasted for over ten years.

To Hezbollah, European democracy is not an example to be followed, given Europe´s failure to respect democracy in the Middle East. It believes that Europe never conducted a serious dialogue with the Islamic world, instead maintaining its belief in the superiority of its culture (given its more progressive views on family and women's rights). For this leader in Hezbollah, the protection of democracy is not just an empty slogan, as many leaders think. In fact, it is a serious commitment shared with international institutions. Europe must stop supporting autocratic regimes that forbid Islamists from participating in elections or forming political parties, and truly promote democracy, whatever its outcome.

A leader of a Hezbollah student organisation confirms that this party is not opposed to every country in the Western world. He cites as proof how:

> [W]e changed our attitudes towards France after it changed its policies towards Lebanon. We were against President François Mitterrand who gave orders to send French soldiers to Lebanon to back up Amin Gemayel's regime with which we were in discord in 1983. On the other hand, we supported Jacques Chirac's policy which had a more balanced vision towards what's happening in Lebanon, and towards the French role compared with the American hegemony over the region.

He further clarified that:

> [T]oday, we are again in discord with Jacques Chirac's policy after it turned, as we think, from a balanced policy to a partial one favouring one of the parties in conflict in Lebanon, which means that our position is not constant or aggressive against the West. Yet, it changes according to the changes in Western policies themselves. On the other hand, we do not mind that our students travel to Western states to pursue their studies or that they enrol in the American university in Beirut. We also offer outstanding students scholarships and subventions.

Regarding Muslim minorities in Europe, Hezbollah opposes decisions by some countries to prohibit girls from wearing headscarves. However, it does not support resorting to violence to protest against such

decisions. It does not want Muslims in Europe to become an isolated and closed community. Hezbollah urges them to respect the laws of the societies in which they live. It does not want European Muslim communities to resort to terrorist acts under any pretext. It likewise encourages European governments to respect the religious privacy of these minorities and not to provoke them through offensive or anti-Muslim statements.

Hezbollah does not oppose the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, in principle. It does not oppose establishing political, economic or commercial relationships with Europeans that may dilute American power; indeed, Hezbollah prefers establishing relationships with Europe over the US. More than anything, Hezbollah is disappointed that Europe does not adhere to its most fundamental values, such as democracy and human rights, in its policy towards the Middle East.

Hezbollah's dual role as a political party that accepts Lebanese democracy and as an armed resistance group that refuses to disarm evidently causes difficulties in its relationship with Europe. If these two roles could be considered separately, whereby only the former is relevant for Europe's Neighbourhood Policy while the latter remains a strictly domestic issue, Hezbollah is prepared to reach a political understanding with Europe in many areas.

Hezbollah has maintained its 'special view' towards France. It still does not go as far in criticising France as it does in berating the British and Americans. Even after the law was passed forbidding girls from wearing headscarves in French schools and after Hezbollah's Al Manar channel was banned from broadcasting in France, the party was tempered in its critique of the French government. Despite the concern over the change in French policy in recent years, Hezbollah has not rejected French mediation events or the donor conferences organised in Paris.

This flexibility toward France is due to the fact that France does not treat Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation. During president Chirac's term in office, France did not support proposals from some member states to include Hezbollah on the European list of terrorist organisations.

As soon as France advanced an initiative for dialogue between the Lebanese political parties on July 14 and 15, 2007 in the suburbs of Paris at the beginning of President Sarkozy's term in office, Hezbollah declared its approval without criticising France's role or the initiative itself. Indeed, the French envoy Jean Claude Cousseran visited the head of Hezbollah's office

of international relations on 5 July 2007 as a preparatory step for the meeting. Party officials warned that blocking the French initiative could simply drag Paris back to 'the American camp.'

It is also worth signalling the change in the French president's attitude towards Hezbollah. Before he took office, Sarkozy used to consider Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation. Indeed, he emphasised this point of view when he received the families of Israeli soldiers detained in Lebanon on 9 July 2007. Yet, French diplomacy was obliged to retract fast because Hezbollah declared that it would not participate in the French-sponsored dialogue between the Lebanese parties. The Elysée spokesman, David Martinon, declared: "Hezbollah is not included on the European list of terrorist organisations, and France is not willing to put it on". He added: "Hezbollah is a key player in Lebanon and one of the basic components in the national dialogue, and Sarkozy wants it in the Lebanese parliamentary democratic game".

Conclusions

Hezbollah's experience differs from that of other Islamic movements. It started as a secret, armed resistance movement against Israeli occupation in 1982, but subsequently transformed itself into an active participant Lebanon's multi-religious democratic political system. Hezbollah insists that its activity within Lebanon since the end of civil war in 1989 has been moderate in practice. Hezbollah supports the political reform of the Lebanese government. It participates in union, municipal and parliamentary elections and accepts the election results because they are fair. Hezbollah also forms alliances with non-Islamic parties, including Christian, secular, and Marxist groups. It calls for peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims in Lebanon, and supports 'consensual democracy,' founded upon a mutual understanding between religious groups that the majority will not oppress the minority. Moreover, Hezbollah has never perpetrated any political assassination against Lebanese politicians; it is not analogous to al Qaeda in this respect. Hezbollah does not even consider itself a member of the global conflict between Islam and the West. It became a leading party in Lebanon only after it succeeded in defeating occupying forces. It has never been accused of corruption and did not participate in the Lebanese civil war.

Hezbollah expects Europe to play a more effective role in the Middle East and to be more independent from the US. It criticises Europe's double

standards, such as its support for certain political protests but opposition to similar, Hezbollah-led demonstrations. Communications have never been interrupted between Hezbollah and European representatives. Hezbollah does not object to a partnership with Europe, provided it is based on respect for mutual interests. But it stresses that EU policy must change significantly before this can be realised.

7. POLITICAL ISLAM IN SYRIA

SALAM KAWAKIBI

Introduction

This chapter observes how the trends, tendencies and central figures of political Islam in Syria have positioned themselves with regard to relations with Europe, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and European Neighbourhood Policy. Interviews were conducted with a range of individuals representative of different currents of thought, including both independent and more government-linked figures. The majority of those interviewed live in Syria and preferred to remain anonymous. However, certain quotations come from political texts published abroad. Compared to some other countries studied in this volume, a complicating factor with Syria is that the only variant of political Islam to be found within this country is the one sanctioned by political authorities. The only comparable case in the Arab world is that of Tunisia. No party, no organisation and no individual within the country can claim to be both a representative of political Islam and independent.

7.1 The evolution of Syrian political Islam

When Bachar al-Assad became Head of State on 17 July 2000, reformers' hopes were high. The President's own team put forward a policy of development and modernisation which, at first, sought to introduce simple economic liberalisation following the Chinese model of reform. This was a failure, however, and in a second stage the same team turned to administrative reform, drawing on the expertise of the French *Ecole Nationale d'Administration* and of the *Conseil de l'Etat.* A committee of technocrats and economists close to power proposed a programme of economic reform. Though the programme recognised the close links between the different fields which were to be reformed – economic,

administrative and political – it prioritised the economic aspects, emphasising that political reform could always follow later.

The summer of 2000 saw the beginning of the so-called 'Damascus Spring'. Reformers issued a declaration demanding greater freedoms of association. The state-controlled media were quick to criticise these demands for reform, accusing activists of 'spying' on behalf of Western ambassadors. Debating forums were established in Damascus and other large towns. A new declaration was published, signed this time by 99 intellectuals, demanding the release of all political prisoners, freedom of speech and an end to the state of emergency.

More than 600 political prisoners were released on 17 October 2000. New private press publications appeared. Similarly, the authorities allowed parties participating in the *Front National Progressiste* to publish and distribute their own newspapers. At the same time, the *Association Syrienne des Droits de l'Homme* was founded and the *Comités de Défense des Droits de l'Homme* were re-established. Though their activities remained under heavy surveillance, they were not prohibited.

The opponents of reform felt threatened by the agitation of civil society and the resonance of its actions and positions within the wider public. They were especially scared by the sympathy which the young President and his close associates seemed to have for the legitimate demands of civil society. From February 2001 onwards, this led to a series of meetings in large towns, organised by the regional Baath party committees. Opposing them was a heterogeneous group of conservatives, including the military and security autocracy, and a business class which owed its creation to economic and political emergency measures backed by institutional corruption. The retaliation of the authorities was brutal. The 'Damascus Spring' found its days shortened and its ambitions in tatters, with the detention of activists beginning in March 2001. The activists of the emerging civil society did not disarm, however. Despite the obstacles, they stuck to their cause, backed by their ever-growing credibility.

Against this political background, Syria was also caught up in the general trend witnessed across the Middle East of a rise in religious practice and 're-Islamisation' of both the private and public space. The Islamist question and its political implications for Syria have become especially prominent since the fall of Baghdad, and the suspected participation of Syrian 'mujahideens' in the urban violence engulfing Iraq.

Syrian conservatism has its roots in the traditions both of the country and of the region as a whole. However, ever since the modern state was created and with it a socio-political system drawing on diverse Western ideologies, Syria has moved towards secular reform with interpretations that were able to influence a particularly religious society. Consequently, one saw in the political sphere both the creation of secular parties and the development of a 'purified' spirituality – independent of this political sphere. The political and cultural changes of the 1940s and 1950s took place outside though they never sought to undermine religion itself.

These developments allowed for the creation of a national platform which brought together secularists and conservatives. Despite the authoritarian nature of the political system, progressive and liberal ideologies had a profound influence on society during the 1960s and 1970s. The development of all kinds of literary and artistic productions during this period, free from almost any religious censorship, was not coincidental. At this time political Islam in Syria was incarnated in the Muslim Brotherhood which, in the 1950s, sat in the country's democratically elected parliament – a rare occurrence in the history of modern-day Syria. However, violent clashes ended this 'cohabitation' and the Muslim Brotherhood became the sworn enemy of the political authorities. The violent confrontations between them and the authorities reached their climax with a law making mere membership of the group an offence punishable by death. As a result the authorities won this particular trial of strength at great cost, and those sympathetic to political Islam scattered themselves into exile in the West or in other Arab countries.

However, when it later became apparent that both Marxist and Arab nationalist ideologies had failed, the 'palace strategists' sought to re-appropriate religion and manipulate it to its own ends. This plan did not take into account the failed and bloody efforts of other authoritarian regimes that sought to manipulate Islam as a bulwark against a 'red revolution', as in the case of Anwar Sadat in Egypt. The Syrian authorities began to introduce religious vocabulary into political discourse and socio-cultural activities. The state's implication in this religious resurgence was helped by 'reformed' former Muslim Brothers. The building of places of worship peaked in the 1980s and 1990s with the creation of well-controlled religious training schools. The aim was to achieve a monopoly of influence over a population that was becoming increasingly conservative.

Secularism began to take a back seat with the re-Islamisation of society and culture, as indicated by the high percentage of women wearing the veil, the dissemination of religious texts that increasingly filled library shelves, the Islamisation of higher education, especially in the human sciences, and the almost mechanical reframing of all scientific, social and cultural phenomena within religious frames of reference.

Notwithstanding these trends, intellectuals such as Burhan Ghalioun[91] do not believe that Islamists would dominate the political system if democratic reform were forthcoming. Such a scenario is only likely "if Islamic-Arabic public opinion were by nature violent", a notion he rejects. This might happen as a result only of a specific conjunction of social, economic and political conditions. Michel Kilo[92] agrees with this analysis and remarks that, with the exception of a small minority, Syrian Muslims do not favour violence and would be able to participate in a future democracy.

However, one still observes a strong revival of assertive practices of faith. Syria has experienced a somewhat violent escalation of religious expression in both the cultural and social spheres. This has led Syrian Christians to fear for their rights, long protected by an enforced secularism and strong central power. Nor does the current Iraqi experience help the situation, taking place so close to Syria. The state, despite its symbolic strength and theoretical monopoly over the tools to influence public opinion, is for some the big absentee. In practice new religious authorities have begun to wield the most influence over public opinion.

The evidence suggests that the regime is looking for legitimacy in letting these developments evolve. The danger would be if the authorities lost control of the phenomenon they have been trying to harness. Priests are under surveillance, but small mosques escape this. Some Islamic classes for women have become brainwashing sessions, notably pushing for the wearing of the veil. In a cafe in Aleppo, a leaflet was handed out saying, *"Become Muslim and you will have peace"*. Increasingly, restaurants advise at the entrance that *"we do not sell alcoholic beverages"*. During the Ramadan of 2004 a judge sentenced a Syrian man for smoking in front of his shop during the fast. That was a new development, since failure to respect the

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[91] Professor of Political Sociology at the Université Paris 3.

[92] Syrian writer detained in prison since May 2006.

fast in public places had previously been universally tolerated. Artistic production has also been affected, and intellectuals increasingly witness state censorship authorities adopting and enforcing commands made by religious leaders.

While Islamists' rhetoric often cites human rights as being the casualty of a repressive system, they highlight only those aspects which help their cause. Their positions are in some respects hesitant, rejecting other rights, especially in the social and cultural domains. The defenders of human rights do not exclude the possibility that they themselves could become the victims of political Islam if the latter gained power. However, such a premonition does not stop them from considering Islamic rights to be in all cases indistinguishable from the rights of other political tendencies.

Islamists' rhetoric changes according to the circumstances. They consider themselves to be the most active on the issue of human rights, for example. Haythal al-Maleh, President of the Syrian Organisation for Human Rights for many years, and a lawyer and former political prisoner, was associated with Islamic movements. He is considered by militants, activists and opponents to be a person of great humanity. However, that did not stop him, at a meeting in Berlin in 2003,[93] from stating that he considered the death sentence as prescribed in the Koran to be acceptable, that homosexuals are sick, and that Islam grants women all the rights they need.

In short, Islamists consider themselves to be best placed to speak about, defend and promote human rights, but often speak of the danger of introducing certain values. They consider these values to be Trojan Horses that will destroy traditional conservative society. It is true that over time their position changes, but one must be aware of their selective conception of human rights, a conception that is shared by others.

7.2 The Muslim Brotherhood

Founded in the 1920s, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) soon became active in the cultural and social spheres. However, it did not participate in the political fight against French proxy rule. After independence in 1946, its role was a discreet one, despite the democratic nature of the government.

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[93] Organised in his honour by Amnesty International, October 2003.

From the 1950s the MB began to work within the framework of the constitution, supporting free elections and the democratic transfer of power.

Although the Muslim Brotherhood was repressed under the United Arab Republic with Egypt (1958-61), there were no major clashes with the state. Tensions rose however following the *coup d'état* of 1963, during which the Baath party took power. In 1964 clashes took place around the Sultan mosque in Hama, and were followed by dozens of arrests. In 1967 the MB organised demonstrations, following the publication of an article in an army journal that it considered to be blasphemous. At the beginning of 1973, the Brothers also showed their discontent with the newly-published constitution which made no reference to Islam; following this wave of unrest, a reference was duly introduced.

It was only at the beginning of 1979 that events turned violent, with the assassination of intellectuals and figures of authority, especially those belonging to the Alawite community. The ensuing repression was brutal with widespread imprisonment and hundreds of killings. It was then that the effort to eradicate the MB began. An armed conflict was to last for three years, leading hundreds of members into self-imposed exile. While the law of 1980 making membership of the Muslim Brotherhood a crime subject to capital punishment has not been repealed, in 1993 and again in 2001 there were amnesties for prisoners sympathising with the Muslim Brotherhood, such that today there are few political prisoners in this category.

Within Syria itself the Muslim Brotherhood has ceased to exist as an organisation. However it exists in exile, led from London by Ali Sadr al-Din Bayanoumi. In May 2001, the Muslim Brotherhood in exile announced their "national charter for political action", in which they rejected violence and called for the upholding of human rights. They saluted the modern state with its institutions, rule of law and separation of powers. They made reference to pluralism – political, ethnic and religious. According to the same document civil society was to play an important role in upholding democracy. The Muslim Brotherhood signed the *Déclaration de Damas pour le changement démocratique* and formed, with the former Vice-President Abdulhalim Khaddam,[94] the *Front de l'Action National*.

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[94] Minister for Foreign Affairs before becoming Vice-President of the Republic, a post he held until 2003. Both he and his family were implicated in high-level

The 'independent'[95] deputy Mohammad Habach,[96] who has Islamic leanings, does not see the need to create an Islamic Party. However, "if the day comes when Syria is a genuine democracy, I do not see what the danger is of having an Islamic State".[97] Paradoxically the *Muslim Brotherhood* – the only religious party in Syria[98] and, at that, illegal[99] – declares that it does not ask for the creation of a religious authority, but only of a civil authority that respects both plurality and change.

7.3   The Islamists and European democracy

The Muslim Brotherhood 'guide' for Syria recently declared that, "we reject foreign intervention, but we don't reject having contacts, whether direct or indirect, with the outside world. Since the publication of our programme, we have had lots of contact with European countries (...). What I regret is the fact that foreign pressure on Damascus sometimes neglects human rights: Europe even signed a cooperation treaty with Syria despite the fact that its jails are full (...). Arab regimes describe us as barbarians, but the majority of Islamic movements are seeking modernity. The persistence of some countries in not entering into dialogue with us will serve to strengthen the extremists who consider us to be atheists and put us in the same bag as Westerners".[100]

This is a résumé of the Muslim Brotherhood's position in relation to opening up towards the West in general and Europe in particular. Though not the only example, and not necessarily even the best reference, Europe serves as an effective model for the democratic hopes of many Syrians. The

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corruption scandals. He was also one of the most dogged opponents of the democratisation of Syrian political life.

[95] Since 1990 independent deputies have sat in the Syrian parliament but they are always linked, in one way or another, to the authorities.

[96] Director of Damascus' Centre for Islamic Studies.

[97] See www.syria-news.com from 16 June 2006.

[98] Another party that has begun to preoccupy the security services, Parti du Liberalisme Islamiste, is a dissident faction of the Muslim Brotherhood.

[99] Law No. 49 of 1980 stipulates that membership of the MB is subject to capital punishment.

[100] Ali Sadr al-Din Bayanoumi, the guide of the Muslim Brotherhood for Syria in an interview with the French newspaper Libération, 20 May 2006.

reasons for this are many: the quality of democracy that prevails in most countries of the European Union; the obligation placed on candidates to improve their democracy before applying for membership; the secularism that accommodates differences of all kinds; the freedom of expression enjoyed by European citizens. Europe is seen by Islamists as a reference point for democracy, even though "we know that a price will have to be paid [by Europe in distancing itself from the regime in power], but it's a good investment in the medium and long term". [101] The changing of power at the highest levels in Europe is often signalled admiringly by Islamists when talking of the European experience.

On the other hand, this does not stop Islamists from criticising what they consider to be Europe's moral laxity (homosexuality, sexual liberty...). Moreover, Europe's engagement with democratic reform in the Arab world is questioned. A large section of the public, both secular and Muslim, limits the role of Europe in the region to the simple one of backing authoritarian regimes. The same public perceives that Europe's main aim is to force the regimes to become more politically and economically dependent on the West. This fear strips references to European democracy of all popularity, and leads to rejection. It also creates within the public, especially those with Islamic leanings, a negative view of their fellow citizens who do hold such ideas. It is even possible for these to be considered as 'traitors'.[102]

As a result, maintaining relations with European non-governmental organisations is more attractive to the Islamists. They find that Europe, in spite of its colonial past, has been able to develop non-governmental action that is genuinely independent from state interference. On the other hand they reject any collaboration with the US, be it with the government or with NGOs. The reason for this is, according to them, "its continuing colonialism and its blind support for the Israeli occupation".[103] Exchanges with Europe are encouraged and the Islamists "must make the most of this privilege by making real friends and allies by accepting their visions of democracy".[104]

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[101] Journalist and writer with Islamic leanings.

[102] Fortunately this only happens to a minority, but it does happen.

[103] Moderate Islamic intellectual.

[104] Idem.

A distinction is made, therefore, between the behaviour of European governments on the one hand, and that of the NGOs and European research centres on the other. With regards to the question of democracy, one contact speaks of a German politician who underlined the extremely democratic nature of Hamas' election in Palestine in January 2005. Yet his country, i.e. Germany, refuses to recognise this democratically elected government. An observation often repeated in conversations with Islamic-leaning intellectuals and with politicians and political activists is that, "European governments do not respect the will of the Palestine people, contrary to what they pretend".

Unfortunately, a growing number of Syrians, amongst them some Islamists, consider Europe's image to have changed as a result of some of its actions. Examples include its perceived refusal to let in Turkey essentially, it is judged, because it is not Christian; its refusal to recognise and support an Islamic government in Palestine despite it having been democratically elected; and its lack of commitment to defending democratic values in Syria. This has led a leading left-wing intellectual and democrat to claim that,

> [I]t is not only authoritarian regimes who point to the Muslim threat so as to protect their own power, but also the Western powers who look to avoid exerting too much effective pressure so as not to impose or inspire democracy. To their minds, the big danger is that of leaving the stage free for radical Islamic politics.

Notwithstanding this, views on European democracy compare favourably with those on American democracy. With American intervention in the region in its current state, few intellectuals have the courage to welcome the principles upon which the US has built itself. At this level, any comparison inevitably turns in favour of Europe. However, Europe too is seen to have its failings and its blind conformity in following the US on issues as sensitive as the fight against terrorism, for example, or the right to resistance, which draws considerable criticism.

Conservative Islamists think in terms of a stereotype that links Western democracy to the loss of moral values. For the extremists, such democracy has but one objective: "the dismantling of the societies and people who adopt it". It is not, then, a system involving pluralism, alternating governments and the separation of powers. This impression has been spread within extremist circles and to change it would require huge efforts. The authoritarian regime propagates this false idea either directly

or indirectly, so as to strengthen itself against demands for democratic reform.

7.4   Muslim minorities in Europe

Syrian Islamists have no single interpretation of the situation of Muslim minorities in Europe. The most open, enlightened and moderate go so far as to believe that Europe offers a free and hopeful environment for the development of Islam. At the other end of the scale, radicals believe that as long as Muslims are not granted the right, by the countries in which they live, to practise their religion exactly as they wish to then they are 'persecuted'. Between these two poles, all sorts of intermediary positions exist. While for a number of Muslims the issue of Muslim minorities in Europe is of legitimate concern, it cannot be isolated from their individual positions with regards to democracy. In general, the more democratic are more understanding, though they might not be entirely approving of certain measures imposed in Europe; the less democratic are more critical. Syrian authorities exploit the imperfect situation of the minorities in Europe, using this as a pretext to reject democracy at home.

Views depend mainly on the scientific, cultural and social awareness of the individual Islamist figure being interviewed. It should be noted that a large part of the elite with Islamic leanings was educated in Europe, especially in Germany, France and the UK. This elite is steeped in Western values, without necessarily having adopted them; they know how to exploit them for their own purposes. For that reason, the way in which the Muslim situation in Europe is assessed varies. Any judgement is often based on concrete issues, such as the banning of the Muslim veil in schools or discrimination in the labour market.

Similarly, the question of the integration of Muslims into European society, especially after 11 September 2001, has become an important issue for a minority of the Islamic elite. There is a body of analytical writing that examines reactions to this integration, and assesses its impact on European Muslims. These studies denounce both the generalised incrimination of a whole community and the way in which different concepts are confused: Islam, Islamism, Islamist, fundamentalist, integrationist and terrorist.

For some, Muslims in Europe are citizens like any other. They enjoy the same rights as everyone else and should be content, given that their country of origin would not grant them these rights. For others, Muslims in Europe are second or even third class citizens. They compare the treatment

of Muslims with that of the Jewish community and find a large divide between the two: "Our beliefs are not respected as much as Jewish ones" is a common refrain. However, only extremists make violent calls for "revenge". These views may not be immediately evident, but become recognisable as soon as the tone of the conversation becomes heated: "in any case, the number of believers in their house is rising and sooner or later we will have our revenge and the position in society we deserve".

7.5   Europe's foreign policy

In general terms, the Islamists interpret European foreign policy in the Mediterranean in the same way as other Syrians. Some, reacting as Arab nationalists would, denounce any intervention as neo-colonialist or with the term 'crusade'. But more generally they have difficulty understanding Europe's interest in the region. One interlocutor explains this as characteristic of Islamist thought, which distances its followers from international politics. They pay greater attention to domestic politics and its compatibility with the ways of Islam. When they speak of European policy in the Mediterranean, they point first and foremost to the case of the Palestinian elections.

With regards to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership two currents of thought exist. The first, which is the more dominant, rejects the partnership outright if it does not go hand in hand with political change in Syria at the highest level. This view holds that the Barcelona Process simply supports and even profits from corruption within the Syrian regime. As such, any partnership formed in the current climate will aggravate still more this deplorable institutional situation. The partnership must, in the opinion of Islamists, impose conditions demanding a fundamental reform of the mechanisms of power, a state of law and of good governance. "That has to be the basis of any partnership if it is to be a stable relationship supported by the population".

A second view, prevailing especially among those with less education and access to information, sees all rapprochement with the West as being part of a neo-colonialist strategy, seeking to "rob the country of its experts, of its riches and to stop the growth of Islam in the region". Paradoxically, this extreme view is shared by certain members of the Baath party who are in power.

For Syrian public opinion in general, including the Islamists, European policy in the Mediterranean basin represents a counter-weight

capable of balancing unfair and biased American policy in the Israeli-Arab conflict. However, the partnership is for most Syrians, and especially for the Islamists, a peripheral subject, while the image of Europe's colonial heritage is still important for some. There is also a distinction between the positions adopted by different European countries – those of France and the UK for example. Islamists interviewed for this chapter evoked common traits such as the hesitation, instability and apprehension of European foreign policy in the Middle East. They remarked on the danger of such shortcomings and of their possible repercussions within Europe. "Social unrest will affect Europe if we do not resolve the economic, social and political problems in our own region", concludes a moderate Islamist. He attributes the region's problems to the "despotic and corrupt" regimes supported by Western policy, and to the West's "blind" support for Israel, which in turn causes unrest in the Muslim communities across Europe. Some see Europe as the "source of all our ills", having been responsible for the creation of the state of Israel.

A problem often raised is that Europe deals only with those in power, not with the people. Europeans "believe that these regimes are immortal and that they have to deal with them. They avoid change in the region for fear of the unknown". Europe must "change its policies and again try what it managed to do well in Eastern Europe. Their Arab neighbours cannot continue to be poor and repressed, while receiving aid which does nothing to change their sad reality".

For Islamists residing in Syria, "the Europeans should and must use the means at their disposal to put pressure on regimes by first unifying their policies in the region and by then supporting opposition movements and not just Islamist ones". European participation in reconstructing the region's civil society is much sought after by activist of all kinds. Amongst these the Islamists are particularly enthusiastic.

For certain extremists, or those known in Syrian local jargon as 'obscurantists', all that comes from the West is nothing but a manifestation of the 'devil' and must be cursed. Europe upholds atheist regimes with the aim of destroying the "Muslim nation's moral references". Such views are not widely held, at least openly. However, the political authorities often promote this same worldview. In this way authoritarian regimes stress that all that the West seeks to export, in the field of law as well as others, is in reality nothing more than a neo-colonialist effort seeking to destroy Arab countries' culture and spread discord between the components within

those societies. Thus, one witnesses an alignment between the 'obscurantists' and the political authorities when it comes to debate about reforming society and the political system.

On the other hand, a cooperative attitude can be detected amongst those of the movement who live in exile. Years spent in the West have been an enriching process, giving their views a democratic dimension. Interviewees consulted for this chapter emphasise the importance of Syria having close economic relations with Europe after power has eventually changed hands. This does not mean that "our movement will necessarily be in power, but that at least we will be recognised as an independent political entity on Syria's political scene". The Islamists would adopt more or less the same system of economic liberalism, in the Western sense of the term, as Turkey. As a result, any rapprochement with Europe, at least on an economic level, would be warmly welcomed by them. As their ideological conception of the economy is close to capitalism, they would be able to deal with European investors and companies without hindrance. As it is, they believe that "we would be better placed to establish transparent and legal economic relations than those corrupt regimes, who close the borders in order to create a parallel economy of which they are the principal beneficiaries".

Conclusions

Studying Islamic movements in the Arab countries seems, for both local and foreign researchers, to be richly rewarding. But in some countries this area of research is still a minefield. Syria is one of them. For example, in considering the inspiration, motivation and policies of political Islam, one can hardly make comparisons between such countries as Morocco and Syria.

Syrian society exhibits a simple indifference towards the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership or the European Neighbourhood Policy. This is explained by the difficulties of everyday life, the economic crisis, day-to-day needs and the strict control exercised over political life. But in addition it is important to emphasise the informational gap due to the lack of any form of communication policy, either by the European institutions or their representatives in Syria. As regards the Partnership, the local press, which expresses the official view, often mentions it; the Neighbourhood policy is completely absent from public debate. When questioning even senior members of Syria's politically engaged class, this author had to explain in

very basic terms what the European Neighbourhood Policy actually consisted of.

For Islamist intellectuals, Europe is relevant only through its policies in Palestine and Iraq, and its treatment of its Muslim minorities in Europe. The Partnership becomes a significant subject only when dealing with the economic liberalisation that it promotes, or the human rights issues raised. There is a lot of enthusiasm with regards to the economic side, but a lot of doubt, to say the very least, when it comes to the question of whether the EU is really serious about the promotion of democracy.

8. POLITICAL ISLAM IN TURKEY

SENEM AYDIN AND RUŞEN ÇAKIR

Introduction

Turkey differs from the Arab states studied in the CEPS–FRIDE Political Islam project in not only having a European Union membership prospect, but also in the fact that a broadly Islamist-oriented party has been in office since 2002. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) still enjoys the primary support of pro-Islamic constituencies in Turkish society and its orientation towards the EU has not changed since its assumption of power. An overwhelming majority in the party still sees the EU as the primary anchor of Turkish democracy and modernisation, despite the perceived limitations of cooperation on issues relating to the reform of Turkish secularism. Yet the growing mistrust towards the EU due to perceived discrimination and EU double standards is beginning to cloud positive views within the party. Decreasing levels of support for EU membership in Turkey society and the fact that explicitly Euro-sceptic positions are now coming from both the left and the right of the political spectrum, suggest that the sustainability of the pro-European discourse within the party could be difficult to maintain in the long run.

8.1 The AKP's evolution

When the Islamist Welfare Party won power in Turkey's 1995 elections, it conspicuously invoked political Islam and took a clear stand against the EU and NATO, advocating instead an Islamic common market and an Islamic NATO. It adopted anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli language, and tried to forge closer links with Iran, Libya and Syria. Such policies and discourse alienated the secular political elite, the military and the public to the extent that in 1997 the National Security Council moved to ease the Welfare Party

out of government, in what has become known as Turkey's 'post-modern coup'.

The Welfare Party's parliamentary group joined a short-lived Virtue Party (FP), only to be closed down by the Constitutional Court in 2001 for being the 'centre of anti-secular activities'. The former Mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, together with the reformists of the Welfare Party, then formed the AKP and immediately disassociated themselves from the old leadership and ideology. The party came to power in the 2002 elections, obtaining 34% of the votes. The AKP elite labelled themselves 'conservative democrats', placed a strong emphasis on democracy and human rights, advocated EU membership, supported globalisation and eschewed 'anti-Western' discourse.

There were a number of reasons for this shift in discourse and policy. The opposition of important segments of civil society and the increasing resentment of the military during the Welfare Party's coalition government were crucial. The post-modern coup initiated a 'learning process' among political Islamists, with the latter realising that a party not respecting secularism "would have no chance of sustained and effective participation in the Turkish political system given its constitutional boundaries".[105] They also realised that they needed the West and democracy to build a broader front against the centres of radical secularism in the judiciary, at high levels of the state bureaucracy, in the mainstream media and especially the military. Within this framework, the EU began to be regarded as a natural ally in efforts to decrease the power of the military and to achieve a system of democratic governance, within which Islamic social and political forces would be regarded as legitimate players.[106]

Disassociation from the anti-Western discourse went hand in hand with the complete abandonment of the anti-globalisation discourse. Turkey's 2001 financial crisis had fully eliminated any possibility of

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[105] See Ziya Öniş, "The Political Economy of Turkey's AKP", in M. Hakan Yavuz (ed.) (2006), The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, p. 212.

[106] See İhsan D. Dağı, "The Justice and Development Party: Identity, Politics, and Human Rights Discourse in the Search for Security and Legitimacy", in M. Hakan Yavuz (ed.) (2006), The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

upholding an anti-Western and anti-globalisation discourse when the country had to adhere to a strict International Monetary Fund programme and was in desperate need of foreign investment. Furthermore, the previous Welfare Party experience had also shown that a broad-based, cross-class alliance was essential for the party to attract the broader electoral base required for it to classify itself as a mass party. This alliance, which encompassed "the more dynamic and prosperous segments of society that were benefiting from the globalisation process in material terms as well as the more disadvantaged and underprivileged segments of society", meant that the party could neither afford to adopt an anti-globalisation discourse nor become engaged in constant fights with the secular centre.[107]

The AKP is not a monolithic or homogenous party. It should rather be understood more as a coalition of different factions. This was best seen in the incident where, despite the efforts of Prime Minister Erdoğan, 99 AKP MPs in the Turkish parliament voted against the deployment of US troops in south-eastern Turkey for the invasion of Iraq. Indeed, as many as five factions can be identified within the party. The core of the party and the overwhelming majority of its parliamentarians consist of individuals who were affiliated with the National Outlook Movement (NOM – the Islamist grouping that emerged in response to the 1960 military coup) in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan. Key figures such as Prime Minister Erdoğan, President of the National Assembly Bülent Arınç and the Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül, are among those who come from the NOM movement. The second largest faction within the party consists of those who joined the AKP from the ranks of conventional centre-right parties – mainly the Motherland Party (ANAP) and the True Path Party. The other three factions that occupy a smaller space within the party involve Islamists from various sects who had joined the Welfare Party in the 1980s and 1990s, and moved into the AKP ranks after a gradual liberalisation of their views. These include Mr Erdoğan's close associates from the Istanbul municipality, some of whom were technocrats not affiliated with the NOM, and some former bureaucrats, such as former Foreign Minister Yaşar Yakış, who had previously served under centre-right governments.

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[107] See Öniş (2006), op. cit.

The AKP elite rejects formal reference to Islam or to the notion of their being 'Muslim democrats', as often suggested in Europe.[108] Their preferred label of 'conservative democracy' remains vague, however. It is less of an ideology, and more of "an organic synthesis" that claims to "give voice to the Turkish people's values and to bridge the gap between the state and the people".[109] Hence the party in fact "assumes the presence of a set of shared social values, but also claims full knowledge of society's needs and desires", a view that, according to some analysts, is open to "authoritarian expansion as the party assumes it can exercise collective reasoning on behalf of the public without making its rationale clear to those whom it is governing".[110] The attempt to criminalise adultery during the adoption of the new Penal Code in 2005 on grounds of such shared 'social values' is an example. How such values are defined, justified and selected remains (for some, dangerously) ambivalent.

Ambivalence also remains on how to approach modernity. The party's ideological manifesto, as described in their publication *Conservative Democracy*, highlights that "it is necessary to accept modernity to its full extent…nevertheless its philosophical foundations…should be first differentiated from their misconceived practices and descriptions, [and only then] must be mixed with local values".[111] This stance implies that modernity and tradition are not perceived to be in conflict. But the question of "whether and how modernity's philosophical foundations can be adopted selectively" remains unanswered.[112]

Such ambivalence is also present in the party's line on the public role of Islam.[113] The AKP has implemented significant democratic reform,

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[108] The concept of 'conservative democracy' is explicitly dealt with in the AKP's ideological manifesto by Yalçın Akdoğan, Muhafazakar Demokrasi [Conservative Democracy], AK Parti, Ankara, 2004.

[109] See Sultan Tepe, "A Pro-Islamic Party? Promises and Limits of Turkey's Justice and Development Party", in M. Hakan Yavuz (ed.) (2006), The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

[110] See Tepe (2006), op. cit., pp. 121-22.

[111] See Akdoğan (2004), op. cit., p. 20, cited in Tepe (2006) supra, p. 122.

[112] See Tepe (2006), op. cit., p. 122.

[113] Ibid., see the discussion on pp. 123-32.

primarily in the fields of the fight against torture; the strengthening of civilian control over the military; the reinforcement of human rights; and the protection of minorities, freedom of expression, assembly and association. But the public role of Islam, a long-disputed cause of tension in Turkish politics, has not been addressed. One of the most prominent issues in relation to the public role of Islam concerns the headscarf ban. A Council of State decision in 1984 and, more recently, a 1997 Constitutional Court decision, prohibit the use of headscarves in all public institutions, including schools and universities. Mr Erdoğan introduced two proposals to partially reverse the ban, both of which were successfully blocked by the secularist elite. Some scholars argue that the party dropped this issue without encouraging open debates aimed at reaching a societal consensus on the matter.[114] Likewise, the government's proposal to increase religious vocational schools' access to higher education was rejected by the president and then dropped instead of being amended and re-submitted. On both occasions the party had attempted to address issues of concern to its core constituency, but had retreated when its proposals were resisted by the Kemalist elite – only to blame the failure on insufficient civil society activity to pressure traditional state institutions, despite the fact that the party allows very little civil society activity in its own policy-making.[115] In short, the AKP has not resolved the problematic relationship between Islam and Turkish secularism.

In foreign policy, the AKP government has been willing to take risks and challenge Turkey's traditional preference for preserving the status quo.[116] This characteristic has been seen in the government's strong commitment to the EU, despite the setbacks, but more importantly, in its new approach to the Cyprus conflict, wherein a "win-win approach" – in Mr Erdoğan's words – was adopted in support of the Annan Plan. This change in Turkey's Cyprus policy illustrates a 'civilianisation' of Turkish foreign policy, to which the government contributed through reforms to strengthen civilian control over the military. Parliament's decision not to allow US troops through Turkey during the Iraq war and the decision not

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[114] Ibid., pp. 127-33.

[115] Ibid., p. 127.

[116] See Kemal Kirişçi, Turkey's Foreign Policy in Turbulent Times, EU-ISS Chaillot Paper No. 92, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris, September 2006, pp. 49-52.

to intervene militarily in northern Iraq were also signs of the shift in Turkish foreign policy from a Hobbesian realism to a slightly more Kantian approach that espouses diplomacy, negotiation and other civilian instruments such as economic and multilateral cooperation.[117] This new approach was also adopted towards the Arab world, with which relations have significantly improved under the AKP government. Relations with the West have been viewed as complementary to, rather than a substitute for, relations with the Islamic world. In the context of the 'zero-problems with neighbours' policy of the government, relations with both Greece and Syria have considerably improved.[118] Both Prime Minister Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Gül have highlighted on various occasions that Israel has the right to exist and that violence against it is unacceptable, and have conveyed this message to Hamas representative Khaled Mashal, whom they agreed to receive after the Palestinian elections. The Turkish government has also started to play a much more active role in the Organisation for Islamic Countries (OIC), as part of the importance it places on multilateral settings for foreign policy-making. In the OIC, it has conveyed the message of the need for democratisation in the Arab world, embodied in the Istanbul Declaration adopted at the OIC Summit in June 2004.

8.2 The AKP and the EU

The EU's Copenhagen political criteria mirrored the AKP's own strategy of political survival through the attainment of a wider democratic sphere of activity within Turkey, and hence relations with the EU have become a central theme of the party's agenda. In order to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of Europe held within the party, interviews with AKP members of parliament and party policy advisers were conducted in September 2006.[119]

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[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid.

[119] The interviews were conducted solely for the purposes of this research project and 12 persons were interviewed for this study. The interviews were conducted in a face-to-face format in Ankara and in Istanbul. All of the interviewees agreed to be quoted, subject to anonymity.

All of the interviewees stated that they do not regard Turkey's political reform process as sufficient or complete. Freedom of speech, civilian control over the military, the headscarf ban, more decentralisation and reinforcement of local governance, and the quality of democratic governance, were the most commonly cited areas where further and far-reaching reform was deemed necessary. Again, while aspiring to a faster and more extensive process of reform in principle, the difficulty of attaining rapid reform in the Turkish context was often highlighted. The slow changes in mentality among the population and bureaucracy were considered a major reason behind the difficulties experienced, especially with implementation. As articulated by one MP:

> We need further decentralisation and localisation in all areas except for foreign policy, defence and education; this is the ideal democratic model. … However, this is impossible for Turkey in the next five to ten years. The social, cultural and educational levels of the public are not ready to support such a model and the situation in Iraq is not making it any easier. So this is indeed the ideal among the party's decision-makers, but there are restrictions that are keeping us back… As for the reforms that we have already undertaken in the field of democracy and human rights, more could be done, especially regarding freedom of expression. Nevertheless, a mental transformation is needed, especially among the judiciary and the police force for proper implementation. Whatever the law is, you can always find a judge to try Hrant Dink.[120] We can only overcome this through education. We need a new generation for the implementation and the sustainability of these reforms.

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[120] A case was filed against a famous non-governmental organisation activist and journalist, Hrant Dink, on the basis of an article he wrote on the need for Armenians in Armenia and the diaspora to make peace with their identity by refusing to view the Turks as their eternal Others. The complaint was made by the Lawyers' Association and was brought to court by a public prosecutor on the basis of Article 301. Dink was given a suspended six-month prison sentence in total disregard of the expert testimony that the article had been 'misinterpreted' and Dink appealed to the High Court. The head prosecutor of the High Court called for an annulment of the case on grounds of procedure and substance. Dink's case was referred to the High Court and his sentence was eventually reiterated.

A prominent policy adviser within the party also highlighted similar points, stating:

> The problem is with implementation. You cannot change an established way of thinking and behaving that has been entrenched for 40-50 years overnight… There is also the problem that some aspects of the process are not shared fully by all the relevant actors. Think of our bill on public administration reform, which was a very necessary law to strengthen local governments and was vetoed by the President. We should be able to achieve decentralisation without threatening the unitary nature of the state; that should be possible. The Ottoman Empire could have kept a few more territories if it delegated more power to local administrations. The same goes for civilian–military relations. It has to be internalised by all the relevant parties for genuine change to take root, but that is going to take an awful lot of time.

The role of the EU is strongly acknowledged in the progress made in the areas of democratisation and human rights. The EU is not just seen as a political entity to be joined, but largely as a 'democratic model'. This argument comes with qualifications, however. First, all of the party elites interviewed emphasised that democratisation was already among the primary aims of the party from the start of their political journey and that the EU has been more of an anchor in attaining further democracy in the country. As put by a party MP:

> We felt from the very beginning the desperate need for democratisation in the country and that was one of our main starting points. I view the EU as an anchor in that process…an anchor that can help all segments of Turkish society live in peace. There will not be any grounds for radicalisation, both ethnic and religious, with the EU anchor firmly in place. The EU project will also decrease the impact of politics on society by promoting good governance. The Turkish people will then expect policy-making from the politicians rather than daily demands that are the outcome of inefficient and corrupt governance.

A party policy adviser expressed thoughts along the same line, stating:

> As a party, we wish to see a more democratic Turkey, but we have to face the fact that our internal dynamics are not sufficient enough to achieve this. The EU compensates for insufficient internal dynamism… I am not saying that there are no problems with democracy in Europe. Look at how the French Armenians are

> exploiting French democracy, against the interests of France. But you cannot turn your back on it just because it has its problems. The democracy in Europe is still the best model today.

Another MP provided further details as to how the EU's process coincided with the agenda of the party:

> February 28 has shown us that there are some things that Turkey cannot achieve on her own. I am not talking about Turkey becoming a Sharia state. What I am talking about is an environment where you can teach your child as much about religion as you want, where my wife can wear whatever she likes and where I will not be punished because of my religious beliefs. We realised that the prominence of individual rights within the EU can actually help us in decreasing the weight of the institutions in the Turkish political system and hence achieve the minimum in sustaining our lifestyles.

Second, the EU is not viewed as possessing one single model of democracy that the country can take as a point of reference. Several different democratic practices on diverse issues are acknowledged to exist in Europe. As a policy adviser in the party held:

> There is not a single model of democracy in Europe. It is the fundamental principles that matter the most to us, and those are embodied in the Copenhagen political criteria and they are not exclusive to Europe, they are universal principles. There are vast differences between the way in which democracies are institutionalised and function in Europe. Just look at the way in which religion–state relations are regulated. On the one hand, you have a country like France, and on the other hand you have a country like Greece, which can be classified as an almost theocratic state. Turkey can benefit from different practices in different member states, depending on its own needs.

Regarding the more specific democratic practices that Turkey can adopt from Europe, two issues are prioritised, namely minority rights and religious freedoms (more specifically, the public role of religion) – the two unresolved tensions of Turkish politics. In the case of minority rights, the French model is considered to be more suitable for Turkey, whereas in the field of religious freedoms, the UK model prevails.

Third, while these perceptions are dominant among the majority of the party elite, this does not mean that problems with European democracies are overlooked. It should be noted that alternative yet

minority discourses that do not hold Europe as a democratic model exist. As an MP who explicitly claims to be a Euro-sceptic argued:

> Europe is not a democratic model for Turkey. Europe is the by-product of ruthless wars, the EU itself is a product of Europe's ruthlessness. It has all been about how three big and three small member states control each other. I have in mind a democracy that is more replete with virtue and empathy. I find Europe to be too 'worldly'. …It is true that reforms are easier to sell to the public when the EU is there, it triggers the learning process in society and the technical requirements that it introduces can improve living standards, but that is all. I don't share the view that it is a community of consistent values.

The same MP also expressed critical thoughts on the rights of Muslim minorities within Europe, "It is true that Muslims benefit from generous rights in most member states. However, these rights are not considered natural by birth, with their philosophical foundations. They give them rights because they have to and this is where the problem lies".

Another MP who had reservations about Europe as a normative reference for democratic aspirations also expressed his doubts regarding the state of Muslim minority rights in Europe: "Europe's experience with minorities only goes back 50 years. It has very little experience on this issue. This is why Muslim minorities are experiencing serious problems in Europe. Europe does not know how to deal with people from different cultures, whereas we have a 1,000 year history of living in a multicultural environment".

It is not only the more Euro-sceptic elite who are critical of Muslim minority rights in Europe. Other more pro-European elites also perceive problems with the way in which Muslim minorities are treated in Europe. Still, they often distinguish between different country practices, viewing some models – the British, the Dutch and the Scandinavian – more favourably than they do others, such as that of the French. It is believed that in terms of the rights granted to Muslims, even the most restricted country, France, where there is no headscarf ban in universities, is a far more advanced case than Turkey. In the words of a political adviser:

> Countries have different practices in Muslim minority rights. On the one hand, you have the Dutch model, and on the other hand, you have the French model. They are all having problems, especially with racism and xenophobia, but overall, I don't see a huge problem here. There are around 6,000 mosques in Germany,

there is no headscarf ban anywhere in Europe and they can all practise their religion as they please.

An MP voiced similar opinions, stating:

Problems with Muslim minority rights exist in some, but not in all European countries. Look at Holland. There are 264 mosques that the Turks go to, there is no headscarf ban, and there are no problems with religious education. The Moroccans for example have their own separate mosques. However, you also have more problematic cases like France. Recently, some problems began to emerge in Germany since they want to restrict education in the mother tongue. So these problems don't always have something to do with Islam, but they can also be about language. But I still don't see a huge problem there.

There were other party officials who sought to provide a more detailed account of the problems regarding Muslim minority rights in Europe, for example one who stated:

I think the issue has a psychological, institutional and an economic dimension. At the psychological level, the prevailing notion of Euro-centrism and the feeling of uniqueness among some in Europe have prevented Europe from being a melting pot like the United States. At the institutional level, you need strong institutional mechanisms to integrate these people, to give them proper religious education to prevent radicalism, to teach them the language of the host country and to preserve the cultures of the minority groups. You cannot achieve these via things like language tests. At the economic level, you need to make sure that these people have a chance to move beyond their ghettos. That of course requires strong political commitment. Immigration policies also require close relations with the countries of origin. For example, our relations with Germany are in a much better state now than they used to be.

The issue of Muslim minority rights in Europe is often related to the debate over the differences and similarities between the EU and US models of democracy. Such comparison is made in two related spheres. One concerns democratic practices within Europe and the US, whereas the second relates to the use of the notion of democracy in foreign policy, specifically in the southern neighbourhood. Regarding democratic practices within the two, despite acknowledging the prevailing notion of 'security' and the curbing of freedoms in the US in the post-11 September period, the

US model is still viewed more favourably in the context of minority rights, religious freedoms and the application of secularism in the country. As one party official argued:

> National identity is very strong in Europe, unlike in the US. Being German comes from birth; it is very difficult to acquire it later. If you do not speak good French, you cannot be a Frenchman. Britain has a rooted past based on traditions. It is easier to integrate in the US, to move up in the system. An immigrant can become a foreign minister in the US whereas this would be very difficult in the case of Europe.

According to an MP:

> [O]n the issue of religion, the Anglo-Saxons have encountered Islam in more peaceful circumstances. So especially until 11 September, there has been less prejudice towards Islam in the US. Continental Europe in particular has fought Islam for centuries in its history and so their attitude towards Islam is more hostile than the Americans. Religion is a more distinguishing feature in Europe than it is in the US.

Similarly, another MP expressed the following sentiments:

> It is true that the US experienced a serious turning point in its democracy after 11 September. It has entered a phase of paranoia on security and terrorism. However, as for the upper limits of democracy, the margins always were and still are wider in the US than in Europe since the regime still has a lot of confidence in itself. The democratic system still works better in America. Just look at secularism and religious freedoms in the US and you will appreciate how wide the margins really are.

These statements are also in line with the findings of other scholars who argue that AKP officials feel closer to the US model, which is referred to as a kind of "passive secularism", wherein "the state is neutral towards various religions, but allows the public visibility of religion", as opposed to practices in countries such as France, where "the state favours a secular worldview in the public sphere and aims to confine religion to the private sphere", also referred to as "assertive secularism".[121]

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[121] See Ahmet T. Kuru, "Reinterpretation of Secularism in Turkey: The Case of the Justice and Development Party", in M. Hakan Yavuz (ed.), The Emergence of a

The instance in which American democracy is most criticised is the way in which US foreign policy practices are not challenged sufficiently in the domestic sphere. As a party official underlined:

There are two sides to America. It is doing rather well on the inside, but its foreign policy practices make us question the democratic practice inside the country. In Europe, public opinion and civil society are able to constrain governments. Aznar lost the elections in Spain because of his stance on the war in Iraq. Blair has been put in a difficult position in the UK, but this does not go for the US.

A related argument is put forward by another party MP, "One thing about US democracy is that brain-washing of the public is much easier there than it is in Europe. In that sense, I see a deeper understanding of democracy among the European publics".

Some party officials have been highly critical of the way in which the notion of democracy is upheld in both European and American foreign policies, while others have emphasised that they find Europe to be more genuine in its efforts to promote democracy in its neighbourhood. The remarks of a prominent foreign policy adviser are exemplary of those who criticise the notion of democracy in both European and American foreign policy approaches:

One can argue that the EU is more principled and genuine than instrumental when it comes to democratisation in its candidate countries. However when it comes to other countries, Europe behaves very pragmatically. Look at the way in which they supported the military coup in Algeria for example, or look at their policies in the southern neighbourhood. The use of democracy in US foreign policy can also be considered fully instrumental, even more so than in Europe since you cannot be a candidate to join the US. For the US, democracy is an instrument that is disguised as a principle. You only need to look at the reactions of the US to the elections held in Iraq, Egypt and Palestine last year. Palestinian elections were the fairest; participation was very low in Iraq and there were population displacements; the opposition was not even given a chance in Egypt. Elections in Iraq were found much more

New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2006, p. 137.

successful and legitimate, the results in Egypt were considered legitimate, but the results of the Palestinian elections were not even considered legitimate. So the US only approaches democracy from the perspective of its own foreign policy interests and this goes pretty much for Europe as well.

An MP making a similar argument stated, "I think both the EU and the US lack sincerity in their foreign policy approaches. For them it is all about how democracy can be instrumentalised for their own interest. They do not have any problems with authoritarianism in Jordan, Egypt or Saudi Arabia, but they are pushing for democracy in other countries".

Yet, this dual critique is not shared by all in the party. An equal number of interviewees consider EU foreign policy and its emphasis on democratisation as more sincere, although they question its effectiveness in practice. As one MP stated:

> EU foreign policy is much softer and relies more on diplomacy and gradual change. The US tries to bring democracy through force, not through dialogue and participation of all the parties concerned. The EU expects countries to reform themselves from within and lays down the rules for that. The US forces you to apply the rules that it has set. Until 2002, Turkey was completely under the orbit of the US and its democracy has not exactly benefited from it; in fact, just the opposite.

Another party official expressed similar thoughts:

> I find EU foreign policy to be more genuine than that of the US. The problem with the EU is that there are many different member states with diverse interests preventing it from having a strong common foreign policy. There are those that are closer to the US and those that are at the other end of the spectrum. [*sic*] How can you expect them to formulate a coherent and effective foreign policy like that?

A discussion about EU and US foreign policy approaches revealed that the party elite has a high level of awareness of EU policy in the Mediterranean, and although EU efforts in the region are viewed more favourably in comparison with those of the US they are still criticised. The criticism is mainly on the grounds that the EU's primary concern is to secure its own interests in the region and that it does not allow for equal, sufficient and effective participation of the relevant parties in the southern neighbourhood. In the words of a party official:

The ENP is in principle a good policy. Now that the Union has new members, the relations between its members in the periphery and the new neighbours have become more important than ever. You need to establish stronger and institutionalised cooperation mechanisms in the neighbourhood. The EU cannot pull its weight in the Mediterranean since it cannot escape from its pragmatic outlook on the region. It only cares about Tunisia and Morocco so that further instability does not lead to mass immigration into Europe. So I believe that keeping the region under a certain degree of control is more important for the Union than actually democratising it. This makes it very difficult for long-term principles to take root. This is not very different from what the EU is doing in the eastern neighbourhood. For example, it does not question what is happening between Armenia and Azerbaijan. You see an important amount of selectivity there.

Another party official criticised the policy on the basis that the relationship between the EU and the neighbourhood countries is not one of equal partners: "I think the EU policy in the Mediterranean has the potential to be successful, but the EU has to stop viewing its Mediterranean policy as a one-sided favour rather than a constructive dialogue. The policy needs to reach a position where the two parties stand on equal grounds. I do not think that it has come to that stage yet".

8.3   Cooperation and conflict

There are four main areas that AKP party officials hold to be the main spheres of cooperation with the EU, namely the strengthening of democracy and human rights (some explicitly mention the further civilianisation of Turkish politics), economic relations, good governance through the adoption of the EU *acquis,* and foreign and security policy (including energy issues).

It is believed that "not only can the EU help Turkey in further democratisation but Turkey can also help the EU in spreading democracy in its neighbourhood", as one official put it. In terms of economic relations, the levels of trade and investments between the EU and Turkey are often cited as the primary indicators of how the two economies are intertwined and how further investment in particular would be beneficial for the Turkish economy. Regarding foreign and security policy, the 'interdependence' of the two sides is a recurrent theme, although the EU is

often found to be 'under-utilising' the potential for collaboration with Turkey in this area. According to a party official:

> Foreign policy issues that are not primary to Europe are of crucial importance to us, like Northern Iraq and Nagorno-Karabakh. The Turkish foreign policy agenda coincides with the UN's agenda. Turkey has more foreign policy responsibilities and concerns than the EU. As long as the EU does not feel the same degree of importance in the same areas, effective harmonisation and cooperation will be difficult to achieve. There is a significant degree of cooperation and consultation mechanisms…when it comes to domestic policy. We need equally strong consultation and cooperation mechanisms in foreign policy matters. The EU has turned to Turkey on problems with Iran; Turkey's policy in the Iraq war and in Lebanon was in line with the EU; consultations were made on Palestine; but these need to be strengthened and better institutionalised.

Conflictual areas can be classified under two main headings. One concerns the headscarf ban, which is viewed by an overwhelming majority of party officials as a human rights problem that is overlooked by the EU. The other conflictual area relates to the perception that the EU is applying a policy of double standards to Turkey.

Concerning the headscarf ban, on 29 June 2004, in the case of *Leyla Şahin v. Turkey*, the European Court of Human Rights decided that the Turkish state had not violated the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms by expelling Leyla Şahin from university because of her headscarf. The interviews conducted for this paper confirm that this decision has led to a significant degree of disappointment with Europe within the AKP, although it would be wrong to state that it has substantially reversed the party's overall pro-EU orientation. It can be argued that the case led to a reassessment among certain segments of the party as to how far Europe could contribute to changes in Turkish secularism. The fact that EU reports only focus on the rights of Alevis and the non-Muslim minorities while keeping silent about the situation of the Sunni majority is also a factor that has helped strengthen this opinion. As a parliamentarian highlighted:

> I am very sensitive on the headscarf issue. Europe is liberal about the rights of everyone, but very cruel when it comes to one of the most important issues. They do not see this as a human rights issue. This has created a serious break of morale for us and led to

disappointment with the EU. We feel really alone in an essential area of cooperation. Some in Europe understand, some do not. I do not know how we can ever put the message across.

Another MP expressed similar sentiments:

What really bothers me about the silence of the EU on the headscarf ban is the fact that nowhere in Europe is there a stricter ban than the one in Turkey, not even in France. For a pious woman, the headscarf is not the symbol of oppression but of liberation; this is what they do not understand… What is even worse is the fact that when the issue is the headscarf or the religious freedoms of the Sunni majority, the EU sides with the Turkish military. The Turkish military then cleans its hands of the issue and leaves it to the EU, knowing that they can be just as strict.

Although these criticisms seem to reflect the stance of the majority in the party, there are also the voices of others in the margin who do not see this as a conflictual issue in relations with the EU. As one parliamentarian argued:

I do not think that the headscarf issue in Turkey has anything to do with the EU. True, Europe has its own issues with the headscarf, but I do not think that the EU should interfere in how Turkey deals with this issue. This is something that we ourselves have to resolve, through societal consensus; the EU does not have enough knowledge or experience of Turkish customs, traditions or religion to intervene in this matter.

In the second area of conflict, namely the perception of EU double standards and discrimination, concerns seem to be even more profound and unanimously shared. It also needs to be noted that these concerns overlap almost entirely with those of the secularist establishment about the EU. Such perceptions of double standards are invoked in relation to various issues. EU policy in Cyprus is chief among them. All of our interviewees berated EU policy in Cyprus as a blatant act of discrimination against Turkey. As one policy adviser argued, "the constant rewarding of Greek Cypriots after the referendum has led to cleavages within the party". Another issue in which discrimination is inferred relates to minority rights, particularly regarding the rights of the Kurdish minority. The example of the French model often arises as the most suitable for Turkey in this respect. It is also very commonly held that the EU overlooks its own minority problems such as the situation of the Turkish/Muslim minority in

Greece while it is applying pressure on Turkey. The issue of minority rights is often brought up together with the Armenian genocide debate. This issue is influenced by the fact that the European Parliament's Eurlings report in its draft format asked for recognition of the Armenian genocide as an official criterion for Turkey's accession. In the words of one MP, "You cannot possibly force this population to endorse a crime that it has not committed. This is a problem with the EU's own collective sub-conscious, trying to spread its own guilty conscious onto others".

Another issue that elicits the discrimination argument involves the clause that allows permanent derogations in the EU's negotiating framework with Turkey. As one party official underlined:

> The EU is saying that they need to allow for permanent derogations to ease the concerns of their public. They are also saying that it is our duty to win the hearts and minds of European citizens. Why was this argument never made for any other candidate country? I really believe that the EU is not being fair to Turkey.

Such double standards are very often held to be the symptomatic surface of the EU's unwillingness to have a Muslim country 'in the club'. As the same party official remarks, "The main perception in the party is one of being discriminated against by the EU because we come from a different cultural and religious background. The EU cannot be explicit about this, so instead they are trying to make us give up on the way by asking for requirements not asked from other candidates".

8.4 Islamists outside the AKP

The AKP is not the only party in the Turkish political landscape that has a pro-Islamic orientation. The party that it split from – now functioning under the name of the Saadet [Felicity] Party (SP) – tries to appeal to a core Islamist constituency from further to the right of the political spectrum and a more explicitly Islamic outlook. The SP only managed to win 2.5% of the votes in the 2002 elections and hence it is not represented in parliament.[122] Nevertheless, it can still be considered a challenger to the AKP's core constituency who may be alienated from the party because of its reluctance to act on issues regarding the public role of Islam. In this respect, the party

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[122] There is a 10% electoral threshold for representation in the Turkish parliament.

programme states, "The artificial impediments in education that are against human rights and the principles of belief will be abolished, the practices that prevent the graduates of religious schools to enter the faculty of their choice will be lifted. Human rights and democracy courses and courses on religion and ethics will be compulsory in schools".

The party has also returned to its 1970s slogan of 'ethics and morality first', which was not present in the discourse of its predecessor party in the 1980s and 1990s:

> Ethics and morality are our flags. History has witnessed that nations who stick to their moral and ethical values have established big civilisations whereas those that deviated from them have lost their power… For that reason, we believe that the strengthening of our ethics is compulsory for a healthy community.

The SP also adopts an anti-Western outlook with a discourse that is once again reminiscent of the 1970s National Salvation Party. It is explicitly against the US and is strongly opposed to accession to the EU. Europe is viewed as a 'Christian club' that a country of Muslim people should not seek to join. As the head of the party, Recai Kutan, has recently stated:

> Is there any other party in Anatolia that supports opposition to the US other than us? No. There is only the Felicity Party that represents the National Outlook. The obsession with the European Union has destroyed them [the AKP]. They keep on saying 'we will never let Turkey join, not in a thousand years'. When will Turkey join the EU then? Only when religious people die and those young generations [of Turks] who are able to convert are fully grown up. Only then Turkey will be accepted in the European Union, which is a Christian club.[123]

The incompatibility of Western values with Islam is also often invoked together with claims that instead of pressing for EU membership, Turkey should look more towards the East. According to Mr Kutan, "full membership of the EU means compromising independence and surrendering to Western culture and civilisation", whereas Turkey should

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[123] See the Milli Gazete, 12 June 2005.

be "leading the Islamic world to create a more just world order".[124] Europe and Islam are often placed in binary opposition to each other where Islam is looked upon as the biggest enemy of Europe today. It is observed that such SP discourse usually intensifies in the immediate aftermath of key events such as the visit by Pope Benedict XVI to Turkey and the Danish cartoons crisis. Immediately following the latter episode, the party's Vice President, Lütfü Esengün, argued that "this event has revealed once again Europe's true face as an enemy of the East and Islam with its media, governments, courts and civil society institutions…this comes from history. Animosity towards Islam is in the genes of the West…Europe displays its hatred and vengeance…at every available opportunity".[125]

It is very often claimed that Western civilisation, of which Europe is held to be an essential component, is unjust and consists of double standards. In the words of the party's vice chairman, "The main source of the problems that we are suffering today lies in modern Western values. In this sense we are facing a civilisational crisis… The values of the Western world can no longer sustain this world".[126]

The SP is not only opposed to closer relations with Europe solely on cultural and civilisational grounds, but also on the basis of the extreme nationalist stance that Europe's ultimate aim is to divide and partition the country. The two arguments are often combined in expressing oppositional views to Europe: "The concessions given to Europe threaten the country's unity, enslave the Turkish economy and corrupt our moral values"[127] and "Europe's aim is to have a disintegrating and Christianised Turkey".[128]

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[124] See the speech of SP Chairman Recai Kutan as reported in Milli Gazete, 5 November 2006.

[125] See the article "İslam düşmanlığı batının genlerine işlemiştir" on the SP website, 8 February 2006 (http://www.sp.org.tr/haber.asp?list=6&haber=918).

[126] See the speech of SP Vice President Numan Kurtuluş, delivered at the Confederation of Civil Servants' Union (Memur-Sen), published on the SP website 24 November 2006 (http://www.sp.org.tr/haber.asp?list=2&haber=1208).

[127] See the speech of SP Vice President Temel Karamollaoğlu, delivered at the Party Press Conference at the SP Headquarters, published on the SP website 10 November 2006 (http://www.sp.org.tr/haber.asp?list=2&haber=1175).

[128] See the speech of the President of Anatolian Youth Association İlyas Tongus, delivered at the Regional Education Seminar of the Anatolian Youth Association,

The 'hostile' Europe that the SP discourse constructs is not a model of democracy and human rights, but one of a ruthless entity that turns a blind eye to developments in the southern neighbourhood:

> Those Europeans who teach us human rights lessons are themselves human rights violators. Hundreds of thousands of people are being slaughtered only because of their beliefs in Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon. This is the Western conception of human rights; their civilisation upholds blood, tears and sheer force…the AKP is talking of attaining EU standards. Europe is not a civilisation; who are you taking as a model?[129]

Turkey's Hezbollah party is a marginal force; based in south-east Turkey, it is a militant Islamist Sunni group unrelated to the Lebanon-based Shi'ite Hezbollah, with a history of violent struggle with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The Turkish Hezbollah is not a strong political force; rather it has managed to survive by virtue of its social roots. It is the part of the Islamist spectrum most clearly at odds with the EU. Indeed, the main preoccupation of the Turkish Hezbollah is now related to European countries' clampdown on (what are deemed to be) terrorist groups, rather than its opposition to the Turkish state. Hezbollah claims that it has renounced violence, but serious doubts remain over the compatibility of its ideology with the democratic values pursued by the government in cooperation with the EU. There is no strong evidence to suggest that the ultimate goal of jihad has been dropped from the Hezbollah agenda. Although a marginal force, Hezbollah still competes with Kurdish nationalism for the allegiances of people in the south-east, presenting a potential threat of further instability in a region that already requires far-reaching reforms on the road to EU accession.

Conclusions

An overwhelming majority of AKP members view the EU as the primary anchor of Turkish democracy and modernisation, despite the perceived

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published on the SP website 12 December 2006 (retrieved from http://www.sp.org.tr/haber.asp?list=1&haber=1233).

[129] See the speech of İlyas Tongus, delivered at the Anatolian Youth Association, Karaman Branch, published on the SP website 17 October 2006 (retrieved from http://www.sp.org.tr/haber.asp?list=2&haber=1157).

limitations of cooperation on issues relating to the reform of Turkish secularism. Yet growing mistrust towards the EU as a result of inferred discrimination and double-standard practices by the EU has a serious potential to reverse these perceptions within the party. This concern also links to arguments over the emergence of a Turkish model for other Muslim countries. Turkey is indeed a case in which an Islamic legacy has not prevented democratic reform and it is being watched closely by some of the political movements in the Arab world, thanks also to Turkey's improving relations with its southern neighbours. Nevertheless, the EU accession process, which has played a crucial role in triggering change, remains uncertain and Turkey still has not come to terms with issues arising from the politics of Islamic identity that lie at the heart of the debates over Islam and democracy. On top of this, the Turkish experience with secularism, however problematic, has also played a unique and powerful role in shaping the opinions of Islamists in the country, making it very difficult to emulate Turkey's reform process elsewhere in the Muslim world. Hence, rather than being a "model", one can at best see Turkey as "an example from which lessons can be drawn",[130] hoping that it will, in the meantime, stay on course for full democratisation and EU accession.

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[26] See Kirişçi (2006), op. cit., p. 102.

PART B

EVALUATIONS

9. THE IMPACT OF WESTERN POLICIES TOWARDS HAMAS AND HEZBOLLAH: WHAT WENT WRONG?

NATHALIE TOCCI

Introduction

International policies and in particular EU and US policies towards Hamas and Hezbollah have had multiple and interlocking effects in the last two years. Most visibly, Western policies have impacted upon the two movements themselves, on the domestic governance systems in Palestine and Lebanon, and on the relations between Hamas and Hezbollah and their respective domestic political rivals. In turn, they have also had an impact on the conflicts between Israel and Palestine/Lebanon, and on the mediating roles of the international community. The balance sheet is far from positive. Paradoxically, western policies have often hampered the quest for international peace, democracy and good governance, as well as inter- and intra-state reconciliation. This chapter offers a comparative analysis of the impact of Western policies on three principal domestic and international dimensions of the Middle Eastern conundrum:

- o the transformation and popularity of Hamas and Hezbollah,
- o Lebanese and Palestinian governance and
- o intra-Lebanese and Palestinian reconciliation.

9.1 The impact on the transformation and popularity of Hamas and Hezbollah

Western policies have not succeeded in their intention to weaken Hamas and Hezbollah, but have on the contrary have entrenched their popular legitimacy. Both Hamas and Hezbollah are mass political movements with

large-scale and growing popular bases, a fact that western policies seem to have willingly ignored.

Hezbollah first emerged as a highly ideological/religious and internationalist resistance movement.[131] The party was established in the context of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, which hit Lebanon's south – densely populated by Shiites. In articulating its resistance identity, Hezbollah opted for an ideological, internationalist and revolutionary outlook, taking as its inspiration the Iranian revolution, which over the years was consolidated through Iranian finance and training. Hezbollah's resistance identity persisted after the 1989 Taef accords, when it retained separate militias in the south, which ultimately contributed to Israel's withdraw from Lebanon in 2000.

Yet beyond resistance, Hezbollah gradually also developed into a Lebanese political force. While its 1985 'open letter' placed primary emphasis on Hezbollah's international rather than Lebanese character and rejected participation in Lebanon's institutions, Hezbollah's identity progressively changed with and after its participation in the 1992 elections. This entailed a growing focus on Lebanese rather than international problems. Hence, Hezbollah refocused its attention exclusively on Israel's continuing occupation of the Sheba farms post-2000 rather than of Palestinian territories. It also entailed a growing acceptance of the specificities of the Lebanese political system and in particular its confessional nature, which it had hitherto opposed. In turn, Hezbollah renounced any aspiration to enforce Islamic law in Lebanon and accepted that Lebanon could only be governed through a delicate inter-confessional balance.

This transformation in the nature and strategy of Hezbollah was determined above all by changing Middle Eastern politics and power balances. Just as the Iranian revolution and its success in overthrowing the Shah had inspired Hezbollah's early internationalist and revolutionary outlook, the death of Khomeini coupled with the post-cold war and post-Gulf war reconfiguration of the Middle East induced Hezbollah to redirect its attention to Lebanon. At the same time, Israel's occupation of Lebanon until 2000, its ongoing occupation of the Sheba farms and its war in

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[131] Talal Atrissi (2007), Hezbollah and Political Islam in Lebanon, CEPS Working Document, forthcoming, CEPS, Brussels.

Lebanon in the summer of 2006 continued to feed Hezbollah's resistance identity, even while it was abandoning its revolutionary character. Finally, the 2003 war in Iraq, the 2005 assassination of Refik Hariri and the ensuing Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon have all strengthened the rationale for Hezbollah's tightening ties with Iran and Syria – political, financial and, in the case of Iran, ideological. Western policies do not appear to have had a discernible direct role in these developments, beyond naturally influencing the wider Middle Eastern spectrum.

In contrast to Hezbollah, Hamas has transformed itself into a resistance movement, rather than being born as one. Hamas emerged in the 1980s as a social movement conducting charity-based social work, and only later developed into a militant group in the 1990s. Like Hezbollah, by the turn of the century, Hamas also shifted into the domestic political arena, entailing its growing co-option into Palestinian political dynamics. Moving away from its rejection of both the PLO[132] and the PA, Hamas has participated in municipal elections since 2004, in the 2006 parliamentary elections and in the ensuing PA governments. It has also officially requested to be included in the PLO since the March 2005 Cairo Declaration. Hamas' co-option into the Palestinian political system has led to an incremental change in its political strategy. Its participation in the PLC (Palestinian Legislative Council) and the PA since 2006 meant that its outright rejection of the Oslo accords (by which the PA was legally founded) was no longer tenable. Likewise, its claims to enter the PLO, whose 1988 Charter endorsed a two-state solution, meant that its categorical non-recognition of the State of Israel became more nuanced. This gradual co-option into the Palestinian political system is by no means irreversible. Far more than Fateh, which particularly during Arafat's era was highly centralised, Hamas, like Hezbollah, has a diversified leadership. There are several currents within Hamas pushing the movement in different directions. These can be roughly sub-divided between currents closer to the Muslim Brotherhood, currents that are more pragmatic and technocratic in nature, and currents that are more prone to confrontation and violence. In other words, Hamas' transformation is the product of the movement's changing internal balances.

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[132] See for example Hamas' condemnation of the PLO's secular nature in Article 27 of its Charter.

The reasons for Hamas' transformation lie first and foremost in domestic Palestinian politics. Hamas' entry into the domestic political arena is the product of domestic political calculations, i.e. its growing popularity due to the failure of the Oslo process and Fateh's failures in governance and the peace process with Israel.[133] As in the case of Hezbollah, Western policies played no role in inducing Hamas' transformation into a mass domestic political force. Western policies did not even influence noticeably the progressive shift in Hamas' political strategy, and in particular its growing implicit acceptance of a two-state solution, which was consolidated with the February 2007 Mecca agreement. According to all interlocutors in the region, the principal reasons for these shifts lie in Hamas' decision to enter the PA and the PLO, and Hamas' awareness of the necessity to compromise with Fateh in order to do so.

If Western policies have had any impact on either Hamas or Hezbollah and their respective roles in Palestinian and Lebanese societies, they have been, in this author's view, counterproductive. The US, in particular, and to a lesser extent the EU, have opted for a strategy of hard negative conditionality towards both movements, i.e. the threat of inflicting punishment (such as sanctions) or withdrawing benefits (such as aid or diplomatic contacts) unless certain conditions are met. Hezbollah is included in the US terrorist list, while Hamas is considered a terrorist organisation by both the EU and the US. In addition, since Hamas entered the PLC and the PA, both the US and the EU in the context of the Quartet have insisted on three 'principles' (see below), which evolved into becoming de facto conditions for their having contacts with the Hamas government, and the delivery of aid to this government.[134]

In view of the inclusion of Hamas on the EU and US terrorist lists, some form of conditionality was necessary. Most evidently, for normal diplomatic contacts to take place, Hamas would have to be removed from the terrorist lists and to do so it would have to demonstrate its disavowal of terrorism. Yet the US and the EU, and in turn the rest of the Quartet, went much further, a mere five days after the Palestinian elections. On 30

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[133] Interview with expert involved in Hamas' electoral campaign, Birzeit, May 2007.

[134] On the evolution of this policy, see Alvaro de Soto (2007), End of Mission Report, May 2007, reprinted in The Guardian, 14 June, pp. 17-19 (http://www.guardian.co.uk/frontpage/story/0,,2101676,00.html).

January 2006, the Quartet announced that only if Hamas i) renounced violence, ii) accepted previous agreements and iii) recognised Israel (or according to some, Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state), would the Quartet deal with the PA government.

With the exception of the conditionality on violence, these political conditions are legally dubious, a fact whose seriousness is magnified by the participation of the UN in the Quartet. The conditionality on Israel's recognition has no legal grounding in so far as only states and not political parties can recognise other states (at most the PLO as the internationally recognised representative of the Palestinian people can do this, of which Hamas is not yet part). Furthermore, as Palestinians promptly note, the peace process between Israel and other Arab states has never been made conditional upon the Arab world's recognition of Israel or its right to exist. Yet this demand was placed on the PA, leaving unanswered the key question of on which borders should Israel be recognised, not to mention the fact that the PLO's recognition of Israel in 1988 hardly brought with it tangible gains for the Palestinians. Moreover, little attention was paid to the fact that the same conditions had been flouted by Israel over the years. The international community has in fact repeatedly condemned Israel for its disproportionate use of force harming Palestinian civilians and its violation of international law and previously signed agreements. Regarding the acceptance of previous agreements in particular, it was Sharon's government in March 2001 – and not the PA – that first claimed it would only 'respect' rather than 'accept' previous agreements, adding to this that its respect would be conditional on the conduct of the other side.[135]

Predictably Hamas, the Hamas-only and the ensuing National Unity Government (NUG) did not fully endorse the three conditions. While refraining from the use of suicide attacks against Israel since the 2005 Cairo Declaration, Hamas and the NUG – on the basis of Article 3 of the May 2006 prisoners' document – did not renounce the use of violent resistance. Neither did Hamas nor the PA 'accept' previous agreements, but rather agreed to 'respect' them at Mecca. While Khaled Meshal has repeatedly declared that "[i]t is true that in reality there will be an entity or state called

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[135] Akiva Eldar (2007), "The Syrian secret Sharon did not reveal to Olmert", Haaretz, 20 March.

Israel on the rest of Palestinian land",[136] the Hamas leader has also stated that "[t]he agreement reached at Mecca does not mean recognition of the Israeli entity".[137] In response, the US, the EU, and surprisingly also the UN boycotted the PA, and the EU and the US withheld assistance to it.[138]

In punishing Hamas and Hezbollah, the Bush administration seems to have aimed at weakening or defeating the two movements. Others, principally in Europe, hoped to induce their 'moderation' or 'cooptation'. Both aims have failed, and their failure appears rooted in the lack of understanding of the two movements and their roles in their respective societies. Aiming to defeat Hezbollah or Hamas through violence, sanctions and boycotts misses the key political reality that – unlike global jihadist groups – both are mass nationalist movements, which are by now deeply engrained in Lebanese and Palestinian societies. As such they cannot be eradicated through targeted negative international policies.

Western policies have failed to weaken these two movements. On the contrary, by supporting Israel, undermining democratic processes, and imposing sanctions on a democratically elected government and a population under occupation, Western policies have discredited their legitimacy and enhanced the resistance images of Hamas and Hezbollah in the region. Hezbollah's resistance to Israel, unstopped for 34 days by the international community (and indeed encouraged by some quarters in Washington), or Hamas' persistence in government despite international sanctions and Israel's attacks and imprisonments, have at the very least left the domestic popularities of these two movements untarnished. In fact, these policies have most likely raised support for the two movements.[139] In the case of Hamas, it is also important to note that amongst the most harshly hit by Western sanctions have been PA employees, the vast majority of whom are Fateh supporters.

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[136] Orly Halpern (2007), "Experts question wisdom of boycotting Hamas", Forward, 9 February.

[137] "Behind the headlines: Hamas-Fateh agreement does not meet requirements of the international community", BBC Arabic Service, 16 February.

[138] For a critical assessment of the UN's approach see Alvaro de Soto (2007), op. cit.

[139] Interview by the author with an independent member of the PLC, Jerusalem, May 2007.

Finally, while both Hamas and Hezbollah have become increasingly co-opted into their respective political systems, this has occurred in spite of rather than because of Western policies. Indeed, especially in the case of Palestine, far from inducing Hamas to accept the Quartet's conditions, Western policies could re-empower currents within Hamas that are more prone to violence and refuse engagement with Israel. Hamas' take-over of Gaza suggests that these developments may well already be happening. As the honeymoon of the NUG came to an end in May-June 2007, in view of persistent international boycotts and stalemate on the reunification of the security apparatuses, the more extreme fringes within Hamas (largely unrepresented in the NUG and thus not having a stake in it) routed the PA's security apparatus in Gaza after violent fighting in mid-June 2006.

9.2   The impact on Lebanese and Palestinian governance

Western policies towards Hamas and Hezbollah have also had a problematic impact on the evolution of democracy and governance in Palestine and Lebanon.

In the case of Palestine, both the US and the EU have repeatedly called for democracy and good governance, and indeed the Bush administration made the reform of the Arafat-led PA a *sine qua non* for the resumption of the peace process in 2001-02. Beyond declarations, the EU in particular has supported democracy and good governance in Palestine in several ways. In 2001-05, it carefully conditioned its budgetary assistance to reforms in the fiscal, judicial, executive and administrative domains of the PA, and it provided financial and technical support for elections and technical reforms.

Yet subsequent policies towards Hamas since 2006, by trumping all other aims, have undercut the West's own professed aims in Palestine. Hamas' electoral victory presented the international community with critical challenges and opportunities. First, Hamas' participation in elections offered the opportunity to overcome a major anomaly in Palestinian political life: the existence of an increasingly popular mass movement operating outside the legal confines and control of the Palestinian political system, and carrying out acts of violence, including

war crimes, in its struggle against Israel.[140] Including Hamas in the legal Palestinian political system could have opened the prospect for a much-needed Palestinian re-think of their national liberation strategy within the confines of the law. This all the more so given that Hamas itself, far from expecting a landslide electoral victory and not quite knowing how to handle governance, had invited Fateh to join a coalition government in January 2006. Second, Hamas' victory presented the opportunity for a healthy transition of power in Palestine, a critical transition in view of the symbiosis between the PA and the PLO's political class, represented principally by Fateh and constituted predominantly by returnees from Tunis.[141] This transition not only offered the scope for greater democracy and better governance, but it could also have provided the necessary stimulus for the rejuvenation of Fateh. Related to this, this transition of power could have added momentum to the reform of PA institutions. Capitalising on Fateh's ill-governance, Hamas' 14-page 'Change and Reform' electoral platform, and its clean-hands reputation in the governance of municipalities, could have provided an additional push in the reform efforts supported by the West.

Unfortunately, however, none of this occurred. Following Hamas' rejection of the Quartet's principles, the West boycotted the PA government, withheld aid to it, and the international community froze international bank transactions in Palestine in view of the US Congress'

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[140] During the second intifada, Hamas was associated with a wave of suicide attacks against Israel, which have been defined by the international community and international NGOs as war crimes. The last suicide attack carried out by Hamas was on 18 January 2005, at the Gush Khatif checkpoint. At the March 2005 Cairo Declaration, Hamas accepted a tahadia, or lull in violence. While stopping suicide attacks, Hamas has nevertheless engaged in shooting and rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip into Israel, particularly since the summer of 2006. By contrast, the last suicide attack carried out by the al-Aqsa Martyrs brigades, affiliated to Fateh, together with Islamic Jihad, was carried out on 29 January 2007 in Eilat.

[141] In this respect it is interesting to note that Hamas' political class is considerably younger than that of the PLO/Fateh, and it is constituted predominantly by Palestinians indigenous to the OTs. On this see Benoit Challand (2007), "Il 67 e la trasformazione del baricentro palestinese: potere e confine sociali e politici", paper presented at SESAMO, Sei Giorni e Quarant'Anni, 12 May 2007, Florence.

Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act.[142] In addition, Israel, in violation of previous agreements and international law, has withheld Palestinian tax revenues since January 2006 (approximately $50 million per month amounting to one-third of the PA's monthly revenues), it has repeatedly arrested dozens of Hamas ministers and parliamentarians, and it has restricted their movements both between the West Bank and Gaza and within the West Bank and Jerusalem. In addition, the PA government has also been boycotted from the inside. In view of the symbiotic relationship between Fateh and the PA, the new government took office in a hostile internal environment in which the vast majority of public employees were affiliated with Fateh. This culminated in the 4-month strike by public sector employees in the fall of 2006, which paralysed the crumbling PA. In other words, Western sanctions, coupled with Israel's policies and internal power politics, made Western pleas for democracy and good governance in Palestine appear only as a stunning illustration of the notorious double standards.

But not only have Western policies contributed to a paralysis of the PA, the resumption of assistance since June 2006 has contributed to a reversal of the few steps forward made in Palestinian governance in 2002-05. In early 2006, international and Israeli policies were pushing Palestine to a dangerous humanitarian and economic brink, setting off alarm bells from UN agencies, the World Bank and international NGOs.[143] In response, at the EU's instigation, the Quartet agreed on a Temporary International Mechanism (TIM): a mechanism through which funds would be channelled to the Occupied Territories (OTs) while bypassing the PA with the exception of the presidency. The TIM indeed pulled the OTs back from the brink, providing social allowances (rather than full salaries) to almost 90% of non-security public sector employees and emergency assistance and food aid for approximately 73,000 low-income households. It also provided direct financial and material support to the health, education, water and

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[142] http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h109-4681

[143] See, for example, the Office of the Special Envoy for Disengagement (2006), Periodic Report, April; UN (2006), Assessment of the Future Humanitarian Risks in the Occupied Palestinian territory, April; or Oxfam (2007) "Poverty in Palestine: The human cost of the financial boycott", Briefing Note, April (http://www.oxfam.org/en/files/bn070413_palestinian_aid_boycott.pdf/download).

social sectors, channelled though international agencies and NGOs, as well as funds to pay fuel bills (principally to Israeli providers) after Israel's destruction of the power-plant in Gaza. The TIM, coupled with the growing need for humanitarian assistance, led to a critical rise in Western assistance to the OTs. Between 2006 and 2007, in the words of UN envoy de Soto, "Europeans have spent more money in boycotting the PA than what they previously spent in supporting it".[144] Indeed EU aid to the OTs (including member states) rose by 30% in one year, totalling €700 million in early 2007.

While preventing a much-dreaded humanitarian catastrophe, the sanctions regime and the ensuing TIM had catastrophic effects on Palestinian governance. In terms of civilian rule, the OTs increasingly resembled a semi-international protectorate, in which Palestinian institutions function predominantly as a skeleton allowing the international community to deliver aid to the population under occupation.[145] This has had several detrimental effects. First, the PA no longer remotely resembles a state-in-the making. As such, the PA is largely absolved from any responsibility towards its public regarding both governance and internal security. In this respect, a recent declaration by Khaled Meshal is revealing: "we are determined to make sure that the recent internal fighting, which appalled our people and dismayed their supporters around the world, becomes history. *We firmly believe that it would have never happened had it not been for foreign intervention and the brutal sanctions imposed on our people by Israel and its allies*".[146] Indeed, despite Hamas' non-delivery on its 'Change and Reform' platform and the spiralling security situation on the ground, Palestinians have by and large not held Hamas responsible.[147]

Second, the sanctions and the TIM have reversed the few steps forward made in PA governance reform in previous years. The bypassing of official institutions with the exception of the presidency has led to a re-

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[144] Quoted in Alvaro de Soto (2007) op.cit, p.31.

[145] The principal difference between the OTs and an international protectorate, lies in the fact that while the occupying power has (quite willingly) delegated its civilian obligations to the international community, it retains full control over security-related rights and obligations in both Gaza and the West Bank.

[146] Khaled Meshal (2007) 'Our unity can now pave the way for peace and justice' The Guardian, 13 February.

[147] Interviews with Palestinian analysts, Jerusalem and Ramallah, May 2007.

centralisation of powers in Abbas' hands. This situation drew much criticism from the West during Arafat's rule. It has also generated an increasingly unaccountable and opaque management of the available PA funds. It is revealing that when Salam Fayyad, former Finance Minister under Ahmed Qureia's governments, was re-nominated minister under the 2007 NUG, he set out to repeat the fiscal reforms he had implemented three years earlier.[148] Finally, the TIM and its focus on humanitarian rather than development assistance has generated a dangerous culture of dependence in the OTs. Whereas for example in 2005 only 16% of EU aid to Palestine constituted humanitarian assistance, this rose to 56% by the end of 2006.[149]

Finally, Western policies have contributed to Gaza's dangerous slide into chaos and lawlessness. Beyond the boycott of the PA, the EU and US have not held Israel accountable to its legal obligations, including the delivery of tax revenues, the easing on restrictions on movement and its implementation of the November 2005 Movement and Access Agreement. Admittedly, the EU has repeatedly called upon Israel to deliver,[150] yet neither the EU nor the US has followed up its words with action. The EU has also not objected to carrying out its border monitoring mission at Rafah according to Israel's decisions (thus accepting the border crossing to be closed over 40% of the time, and permanently so since the end of the NUG in June 2007). The ensuing absence of effective Palestinian government and Israel's hold over the Gaza Strip have created fertile ground for criminal mafia-style gangs and al-Qaeda-like cells to operate in Gaza's open-air prison.[151] Beyond threatening Gazans (e.g. the bombs planted in Gaza's internet cafés) and international staff (such as the kidnapping of BBC journalist Alan Johnston), the growth of criminal gangs and Islamist cells also poses a threat to Hamas. The emergence of small Islamist groups cages Hamas in. On the one hand, having been co-opted into the PA, extremist

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[148] Chris Patten (2007), "Time to judge Palestine on its results", Financial Times, 13 March, Opinion.

[149] Steven Erlanger (2007), "Aid to Palestinians Rose despite Embargo", New York Times, 21 March.

[150] EU General Affairs and External Relations Council (2007), Conclusions on Middle East Peace Process, 23 April, Luxembourg, 2796th Meeting, paragraph 6.

[151] On Israel's continued control over the Gaza Strip following disengagement, see Gisha (2007), "Disengaged Occupiers: The Legal Status of Gaza", January.

militant groups appeal to disaffected and radicalised segments of Hamas' constituency. On the other hand, Hamas is further delegitimised by the international community by being associated with these al-Qaeda-like groups by the West. It is notable that in a May 2007 statement, the Quartet jointly condemned in the same sentence "Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza".[152] Since the end of street fighting in Gaza and Hamas' take-over of the Strip in June 2007, the internal security situation has improved. In particular, Hamas' executive force succeeded in liberating BBC journalist Alan Jonhston, captured by the jihadist group Jund al-Islam, linked to the Dagamush clan in the Strip. Yet while law and order may have improved, it is unlikely that Hamas can restore governance, let alone development, in Gaza without a reversal of Western and Israeli policies towards Hamas. Since June 2007, the Rafah crossing has remained closed, entry access for humanitarian assistance remains limited and salaries to Hamas affiliated public employees remain unpaid.[153]

Turning to Lebanon, the EU in particular has placed much emphasis on democratic and governance reforms. Especially since Lebanon was included in the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2003 and the EU published an ENP Action Plan for Lebanon in 2007, the Commission has carefully spelled out in agreement with the Lebanese government a wide array of reform priorities across different policy fields. The Action Plan includes priorities in the fields of democracy (e.g. reform of the electoral law), human rights and the rule of law (e.g. the adoption of a human rights strategy) and institution-building (e.g. security sector reform). To support these nationally-agreed reform priorities, the Union has declared its willingness to offer Lebanon a "stake in the single market", enhanced political cooperation and dialogue and support in legislative approximation aimed at reducing trade barriers. Most significantly, at the January 2007 donor conference for Lebanon, the EU pledged $520 million, France a further $650 million and the US $1 billion in assistance.[154] In addition, the European Investment Bank has committed €960 million in

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[152] Office of the Spokesman (2007), Joint Statement of the Quartet, Potsdam, Germany, 30 May.

[153] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (2007), Gaza Humanitarian Situation Report, 28 June-5 July.

[154] "Donors in aid boost for Lebanon", BBC News, 25 January 2007.

loans. EU funds have been earmarked for political and economic reforms, economic recovery, reconstruction, infrastructure rehabilitation, de-mining and assistance to Palestinian refugees.

In presenting these reform priorities and the policy and financial instruments to support them, the West, and in particular the EU, has repeatedly underlined the need for a national and inter-confessional understanding and agreement. The Commission stated that "[o]nly if the reform process is backed by a national pact, encompassing all political forces as well as religious and ethnic groups, and thereby overcoming political rivalry, vested interests and clientelism, will it have a chance of actually being implemented".[155] Indeed this appeared to be the case when, after the 2005 Lebanese parliamentary elections, an inter-confessional governing coalition was established between the Future Movement (Sunni), the Progressive Socialist Party (Druze) as well as the two Shiite parties, Amal and Hezbollah. It was during this period that negotiations between the EU and Lebanon on the Action Plan were carried out. Although the Action Plan was agreed in January 2007, it largely responded to the Government of Lebanon's Ministerial Declaration of July 2005, a declaration made at a time when Hezbollah was represented in the Lebanese cabinet and parliament. Negotiations on the Action Plan were in fact carried out before May 2006, that is, before Hezbollah's walk-out from the government in November that year. EU officials involved in the negotiations have privately noted Hezbollah's constructive attitude in these talks.[156]

Notwithstanding the Western appreciation of the need for a national pact, at no time did EU actors or the US express reservations regarding Hezbollah's exit from government and its formation of an opposition front with Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement in the fall of 2006. More worryingly, no action has been taken by the West to resolve the Lebanese impasse following the demonstrations and strikes organised by the 8 March opposition front in December 2006, the ensuing freeze in regular parliamentary activity and the ongoing political tensions and violence.

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[155] European Commission (2007), "European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, Lebanese Republic, Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013", and "National Indicative Programme 2007-2010", p. 11.

[156] Interview with Commission official, November 2006, Brussels.

The weakening of Lebanon's governance due to the domestic stalemate between Fuad Siniora's government and the Hezbollah-Aoun opposition front has been exposed and imperilled further by the confrontation with Fateh-al Islam in Nahr al-Bared and Jund-al Sham in Ain al-Helwa in May-June 2007. Similar to the situation in the Gaza Strip, Lebanon's pockets of lawlessness and widespread poverty (notably in Palestinian refugee camps) have provided fertile ground for small al-Qaeda-like cells to establish themselves and threaten both the Lebanese government and the Hezbollah-led opposition, as well as the Lebanese state as a whole. The external dimension in this last tragic twist in Lebanese politics is difficult to assess. Some argue that Fateh al-Islam has been financed by Syria to counter the Siniora government. Others suggest that these Salafi groups are close to the Future Front and have been supported by Saudi Arabia and thus indirectly by the West as a means to expose the weakness of the Lebanese army and empower UNIFIL to disarm these groups and Hezbollah and to control the border with Syria (through which Iranian financial and material support to Hezbollah is provided).[157] The truth in these and other allegations is difficult to ascertain, and possibly both may be partly true. The only conclusion that can be drawn from these explanations is that whether Syrian and/or Saudi/American, the external dimension of the current violence in Lebanon is highly likely, and it is dangerously weakening the fragile Lebanese state.

9.3 Impact on intra-Lebanese and Palestinian reconciliation

The most worrying impact of Western policies towards Hamas and Hezbollah is the polarising effect they have had on intra-Palestinian and intra-Lebanese politics, polarisation that has led to tension and standstill in Lebanon and pushed the Gaza Strip into a bloody civil war and political separation from the West Bank.

Despite its Islamist identity and evident appeal to the Shiite community, Hezbollah has traditionally opposed Lebanon's confessional

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[157] See Seymour Hersh (2007), "The Redirection: Is the Administration's new policy benefitting our enemies in the war on terrorism?", The New Yorker, 5 March; Jim Quilty (2007), "Winter of Lebanon's Discontents", MERIP, 26 January. See also Jim Quilty (2007), "The Collateral damage of Lebanese Sovereignty", MERIP, 18 June (www.merip.org).

system, which maintains a careful balance of power between confessional communities in government, parliament and civic administration. It accuses the system of fostering corruption and undemocratic practices and hindering modernisation and reform.[158] Hezbollah often declares that its neighbour Israel – a confessional state – is its starkest reminder of why of a mono-confessional system should be avoided.[159] Indeed, following the 2005 assassination of Refik Harari, Hezbollah's leader Sayyid Nasrallah was among the first Lebanese actors to call for the resolution of the crisis through inter-confessional dialogue and elections. In the elections and government that followed, Hezbollah entered a cross-confessional government with the Future Movement, the Druze Socialist Party and the Shiite Amal. When Amal and Hezbollah left government, the ensuing cleavages between government and opposition continued to be cross-confessional, with the Shiite parties allying with Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement. Furthermore, beyond Hezbollah's demands for a blocking (1/3) minority in government (i.e. 8 rather than 5 ministers in the 24 member Cabinet), amongst the official reasons for the walk-out was Hezbollah's demand for a national unity government that included Aoun, a demand which the Future Front refused to concede. The cross-cutting confessional split in Lebanese politics notwithstanding, the current political situation is highly polarised between the 14 March (government) and the 8 March (opposition) fronts, representing two political coalitions.

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[158] Confessionalism is a system of government that distributes political and institutional power proportionally among religious communities. Posts in government and seats in the legislature are apportioned amongst different groups according to the relative demographic composition of those groups in society. Proponents of confessionalism cite the confessional system as an effective way to secure the peaceful co-existence of diverse religious and ethnic communities by empowering each according to its 'weight'. Critics instead point out that such a system may actually deepen conflict between ethnic groups. They argue that whichever group holds the most political power may use government to favour itself at the expense of other groups, or even to oppress rival groups. Also, as demographics change, the positions and power held by a particular group may no longer appropriately reflect the size of that group. For more on Lebonon's confessional system, see Julia Cooucair (2006), Lebanon: Finding a Path from Deadlock to Democracy, Carnegie Paper No. 64, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C., pp. 4-6.

[159] Interviews with Hezbollah representative, Beirut, June 2007.

In principle, the West and the EU in particular supports the reconciliation between Lebanese forces, as stated, inter alia, in UNSC resolutions 1559 (2004), 1701 and 1680 (2006). More specifically, EU High Representative Javier Solana has called upon "the different leaders of the different forces [to] work together for all that supposes progress", while Commissioner for External Relations and the ENP Benita Ferrero Walder has advocated a "pro-Lebanon consensus" amongst Lebanon's political class, free from external interference by great powers.[160]

But alas, Western policies have exacerbated this polarisation and the ensuing stalemate in governance. Beyond the disagreements on domestic power-sharing, representation and Hezbollah's disarmament, the political split between the two fronts largely reflects their different views regarding Lebanon's international alliances. The Future Front instead accuses Hezbollah of accepting Syrian and Iranian meddling in Lebanese affairs and thus hindering Lebanon's much-sought sovereignty and independence. Hezbollah instead accuses the Future Front of acting as a Western stooge and tacitly accepting Israel's 2006 attack as a means to achieving Hezbollah's disarmament. It also resents the American and French support for Siniora's anti-Syrian coalition, and the one-sided approval by the Western media to the February-March 2005 demonstrations (dubbing these a 'cedar revolution'), in contrast to their relative silence over the 2006 Hezbollah strikes and demonstrations. Indeed, amongst the triggers for Hezbollah's government walk-out was the controversy over the UN Security Council resolution establishing an international tribunal for Hariri's assassination and Hezbollah's resentment towards Siniora for not having appropriately discussed the draft within the government.

This resentment grew in view of Hezbollah's reservations about the broad powers for criminal prosecution the UN draft entrusted to the international community, resulting, in Hezbollah's view, in a crucial limitation of Lebanese sovereignty and a legally sanctioned forum to prosecute Syria. Moreover, by passing the resolution under Chapter 7 of

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[160] Press statement of Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the CFSP in Beirut, 16 July 2006, S203/06; Statement by Benita Ferrero Walder, Commissioner for External Relations and the ENP (2006), "Lebanon – Breaking the Impasse", 16 December (http://www.dellbn.cec.eu.int/en/whatsnew/06/dec06.htm).

the UN Charter, Hezbollah is concerned that the powers entrusted to the international community would ultimately empower the West to forcefully disarm Hezbollah itself. This is a prospect that Hezbollah believes the Future Front is actually pushing for in view of its disappointed reaction to UNIFIL's limited mandate under Chapter 6.[161] Prominent government leaders such as Walid Jumblatt (Socialist Progressive Party) have in fact openly called for a revision of UNIFIL's mandate to 'implement' the provisions of the Taef accords and thus Hezbollah's disarmament. Finally, Western aid to post-war Lebanon has also fuelled cleavages between government and opposition in view of the government's refusal to share Western funds with Hezbollah in order to reconstruct the devastated south, inducing Hezbollah to rely on Iranian funds to undertake these tasks, thus exacerbating the intra-Lebanese political divide.

In the case of Palestine, polarisation took far graver proportions, culminating in the slide towards civil war between Hamas and Fateh. The principal actors in this confrontation are concentrated in the security sector, and indeed a major source of division lies precisely in the control of the security services. The roots of this conflict lie in the 1990s, when Fateh's Mohammed Dahlan and Jibril Rajoub, heads of the Preventive Security Forces in Gaza and the West Bank, respectively, undertook a series of arrests of Hamas militants in view of the wave of suicide attacks that followed the 1996 Hebron massacre.

This latent conflict came to the fore after Hamas' 2006 electoral victory, when Fateh – in shock over its electoral defeat – refused to devolve power to the new government as well as to participate in a coalition with Hamas, fearing this would reinforce and legitimise Hamas further. In particular, despite the fact that reforms in the 2002-05 period had partly shifted control of the Palestinian security forces from the presidency to the Interior Ministry, Fateh refused to devolve security competences to the Hamas-controlled Interior Ministry. In turn, Hamas established its own security apparatus, linked to its militant wing, the Iz'a din el Qassam (the Executive Forces), and pitching these against Abbas' presidential guard led by Dahlan and linked to Fateh's al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. More generally, key elements in Fateh set out to make the Hamas government fall in order

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[161] Amal Saad Ghorayeb (2007), "In their own words: Hezbollah's strategy in the current confrontation", Carnegie Policy Outlook, January.

to return to power without having to compromise with it. In May-June 2006, President Abbas engaged in a series of ploys, including the call for a referendum on the 'prisoners' document' and early elections in order to alter Hamas' policies with respect to the conflict.[162] In the autumn, (predominantly Fateh-affiliated) PA employees went on a four-month strike, which, together with international sanctions, paralysed the Hamas-led PA.

This is not to say that the two fronts were inevitably set for confrontation. There are important forces within each faction that supported reconciliation, as evidenced by Abbas' support in 2005 for Hamas' participation in elections, Hamas' invitation to Fateh to join a coalition government in January 2006, and above all the two factions' acceptance of the February 2007 Mecca agreement and the ensuing formation of the NUG. The latter was represented principally by Fateh (with six ministers, including the deputy prime minister) and Hamas (with nine ministers, including the prime minister) as well as by independent representatives nominated by either one faction (e.g. Fateh nominated the Foreign Minister – Ziad Abu Amr) or another (e.g. Hamas nominated the Interior Minister – Hani al-Kawasmeh). There were strong forces pushing for the Mecca accord. First and foremost was the impending threat of intra-Palestinian violence and civil war in Gaza, which in December 2006-January 2007 had claimed over 100 lives.[163] According to one analyst, rather than national unity, the Mecca accord offered the scope for 'national salvation'.[164] Both factions in fact realised that internal violence would completely discredit them vis-à-vis their constituencies.[165] Hamas in particular appreciated the fact that it could not counter the rising lawlessness and extremism in Gaza without a strong and united Palestinian security force. It also realised that unless it reached a compromise with Fateh, it would be unable to govern. Fateh instead seemed to appreciate that regaining power by force was not an option. Second, both factions

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[162] Interview with UN representative, Jerusalem, May 2007.

[163] This was the principal factor raised by all interviewees across the political spectrum in Jerusalem and Ramallah, May 2007.

[164] Interview in Jerusalem, May 2007.

[165] Interviews with Fateh, Hamas and independent representatives in Jerusalem and Ramallah, May 2007.

were receptive to Saudi Arabia's role and influence. Fateh saw this as a means to revive the Arab peace initiative and not appear as a Western puppet in the eyes of its electorate, while at the same time compromising with Hamas without losing face with the US. Hamas saw the Saudi role as a means to gain legitimacy and standing in the Arab world.

Interestingly, not a single interlocutor attributed the sanctions regime with having a direct impact on the incentives of the two factions to reach a national unity government. At most, some argued that sanctions contributed indirectly and in extremely costly ways to this outcome. By weakening Hamas' capability, the sanctions – it is argued – contributed to a (bloody) balance of power between Hamas and Fateh, whereby a disgruntled and unmotivated Fateh would not completely 'lose' to Hamas, given that the latter was being weakened by external forces. This balance of power meant that the internal conflict could not be resolved through confrontation, but would require compromise. Yet in contrast to arguments suggesting that sanctions weakened Hamas into a compromise, one should note that it was Fateh and not Hamas that refused to form a coalition government a year earlier.

The general view thus seems to be that a national compromise was reached in Mecca thanks to Saudi mediation in spite of rather than due to Western policies. Yet, the reaction of the West would be pivotal in determining the fate of the newborn government. All interlocutors made two principal points. First and most intuitively, the government could only survive if it was allowed to function. In order for this to happen in a non-state, aid-dependent and occupation-ridden situation, Western aid would have to resume and Israel would have to fulfil its legal obligations by delivering Palestinian tax money, easing restrictions on movement and releasing imprisoned Palestinian law-makers and ministers. Second and most challengingly, Palestinian security forces, effectively operating as militias for either one faction or the other, would have to be reunited, in order to foster reconciliation between the factions and allow the PA to restore law and order. Third, the government would have to show its electorate it could deliver some, even if marginal, successes in its relations with Israel, such as, for example, a prisoner exchange.

None of this happened. Europeans, including the Commission and several member states, initially showed cautious relief and optimism following the formation of the NUG. Indeed the Mecca accord and the NUG could have provided the much-sought route to escape the bind the

Quartet 'conditions' had imposed upon them, and out of which they attempted to extricate themselves through the TIM. But the tune from Washington remained unchanged, as the US (and Israel) soon made clear that the Mecca agreement and the ensuing NUG fell short of meeting the Quartet principles.[166] With the exception of non-EU states such as Norway or Switzerland, which indeed opened formal contacts with Hamas, Europe followed Washington, muting its initial support for the NUG and retaining its boycott and aid block on the PA. The Union only marginally deviated from Washington's stance by establishing contact with non-Hamas ministries.[167] Taking the cue from this line, the Commission reactivated its technical assistance to the Palestinian Ministry of Finance under the leadership of Salam Fayyad in June 2007. The EU's policy reversal was thus marginal as well as ill-thought out. In the event that the NUG worked cohesively, the EU's choice of dealing exclusively with non-Hamas members would be purely abstract, in so far as each and every member of the government would represent the NUG as a whole. In the event that the NUG failed, as turned out to be the case, the EU's choice of one-sided contact and assistance would create further divisions between Fateh and Hamas.

More gravely, Israel continued withholding taxes to the PA, with the exception of $100 million allegedly delivered by Israel to the presidential guard (Fateh).[168] It also maintained movement restrictions and arrested further Hamas parliamentarians and ministers in the West Bank. Finally, the US continued to provide military assistance and training to Fateh militias.[169] Since Hamas' electoral victory, strong currents in the US have been fomenting confrontation between the two factions, hoping to see

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[166] Donald Macintyre (2007), "Israel at loggerheads with allies on boycott of Palestinian coalition", The Independent, 18 March.

[167] Adam Entous (2007), "Britain to talk with non-Hamas ministers", Reuters, 16 March.

[168] Adam Entous and H. Tamimi (2007), "Palestinian Abbas forces amassing arms", Reuters, 28 January.

[169] See Alastair Crooke (2007,) "Our second biggest mistake in the Middle East", London Review of Books, 5 July.

Fateh's return to power through a hard coup if need be.[170] In early 2007, the US delivered \$60 million in training and non-lethal weapons to the presidential guard and the newly founded National Security Council under Dahlan's leadership. This had the effect of removing any incentives to unify the security forces under the PA Interior Ministry.[171]

All was set for a new round of confrontations in May-June 2007. Over the course of a few weeks, Interior Minister Hani al-Kawasmeh resigned following Abbas' refusal to unite the security forces, hundreds of US-trained forces loyal to Mohammed Dahlan entered the Gaza Strip from Egypt, unprecedented street fighting and political violence re-erupted and Hamas violently took control of the security forces in the Strip. The violence culminated in mid-June 2007 with Hamas' 'victory' in Gaza, the flight of Fateh militants (including Mohammed Dahlan, Rashid Abu Shabak and Samir Mashharawi) to either the West Bank or Egypt, and Abbas' dissolution of the NUG and nomination of a non-Hamas government in the West Bank under the premiership of Salam Fayyad. In response, the West, far from reversing its strategy, has reinforced it. It has immediately stated its willingness to work with the (unelected) Fayyad government in the West Bank and resumed aid and assistance to it. Israel has also declared its willingness of devolve approximately \$300-400 million of withheld PA tax money to the West Bank government.[172] In Gaza instead the West appears intent on defeating Hamas through a tightened boycott and isolation on the Strip.

The future evolution of the OTs is difficult to predict. What can be safely concluded is that, unintentionally or not, Western policies have contributed to this tragic outcome, having de facto fomented civil war and triggered a political, aside from the physical, separation between the West

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[170] "Elliot Abrams' uncivil war", Conflict Forum, 7 January 2007 (http://conflictsforum.org/2007/elliot-abrams-uncivil-war/).

[171] "Abbas faces showdown as outlawed Hamas force increases", Sunday Herald, 7 January 2007.

[172] Adam Entous (2007), "US, Israel plan to ease sanctions to boost Abbas", Reuters, 15 June.

Bank and the Gaza Strip.[173] With this last tragic twist in events, the moribund two-state solution appears to have reached its final death-bed.

Conclusions

The international community, and in particular the policies of the US and the EU, have not achieved their intended results of weakening or 'moderating' either Hamas or Hezbollah. On the contrary, they have contributed to the stalemate in governance in Lebanon and the lawlessness and lack of governance in Palestine. Western policies have also fuelled polarisation and confrontation within both Palestine and Lebanon, leading most dramatically to a civil war in Gaza, the ensuing political split between the West Bank and Gaza, and with it the disappearance of any realistic prospect for a 'two-state solution'. In addition, Western sanctions and boycotts have complicated further the prospects for Arab-Israeli peace. The West has de facto inserted preconditions into the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. In conflict situations, it is normally the international community that engages in diplomatic acrobatics and at times exerts hard-nosed pressure to ensure that conflict parties abandon preconditions and similar delaying tactics for their engagement in negotiations. This has indeed been the case in the Middle East since 2000, when Israel insisted on a set of preconditions for its reengagement with the Palestinians. Through its 'principles', this role has now been taken over by the Quartet. Israel's ongoing preconditions and its illegal withholding of Palestinian revenues are simply presented as acts of compliance with Quartet's policies.

In doing so, the EU in particular has effectively out-manoeuvred itself from having effective influence on the two conflicts. This is because its influence principally derives from its disbursal of financial assistance contingent upon the recipient's compliance with specified conditions and rules. In Lebanon, while assistance is disbursed and Hezbollah has not been subject to sanctions and boycotts, aid is not being made contingent on efforts at national reconciliation between the two fronts, without which effective reconstruction and reform cannot be easily achieved. The sheer

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[173] Helene Cooper (2007), "White House seems ready to let Hamas seize Gaza", New York Times, 15 June. See also Karma Nabulsi (2007), "The People of Palestine must finally be allowed to determine their own fate", The Guardian, comment, 18 June

amount of European assistance to the war-torn country could, however, if carefully conditioned, prove to be a critical incentive to achieve national reconciliation, reform and, in due course, Hezbollah's disarmament.

In Palestine, the withholding of aid and the institutionalisation of the TIM have diminished the EU's influence on the day-to-day development of Palestinian institutions and policies, entrenched its dependence on aid and undermined the reform process in the PA. The ensuing resumption of aid to the unelected Fateh government in the West Bank and continued boycott of the Hamas government in Gaza have entrenched the political separation between the West Bank and Gaza, while confirming in the eyes of the public the West's lack of respect for democratic standards. If instead EU aid had been deployed on the basis of legally and politically sound conditions, it could have greatly contributed to inducing reconciliation between the factions, the development of a more coherent Palestinian national strategy and the establishment of good governance, prior to the establishment of a Palestinian state.

These results are far-removed from the EU's policy intentions and objectives in the Middle East. The sentiment expressed by a US envoy to the Quartet who privately declared that he "like[d] this violence", referring to the quasi-civil war in Gaza in early 2007, is certainly not shared by the vast majority of the public in the EU.[174] Most EU policy-makers closely involved in Middle Eastern affairs are also ready to recognise in private that the Union has often operated against its declared interests in the Middle East. The reason for this is largely rooted in the reality that, when decisions ultimately have to be taken, the EU is highly reluctant to break ranks with the US. The same goes for the Quartet as a whole, which in de Soto's words acts more as a "Group of Friends of the US" than as a mediating forum for the Middle East.[175] This has dramatically reduced the EU's room for manoeuvre, confining it to working on the margins of US-dictated policies. There are voices within several member states that are

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[174] As reported by de Soto (2007, op. cit., p .21): "a week before the Mecca agreement in February 2007, the US envoy declared twice in an envoys meeting in Washington how much "I like this violence", referring to the near-civil war that was erupting in Gaza in which civilians were being regularly killed and injured, because "it means that other Palestinians are resisting Hamas".

[175] Quoted in Alvaro de Soto (2007, op.cit, p. 24).

agitating for the Union to give greater priority to its Middle Eastern interests alongside its transatlantic priorities. It is only if these voices can acquire greater weight within the EU that policy suggestions and indeed policy reversals can be contemplated and elaborated upon.

10. POLITICAL ISLAM AND EUROPE VIEWS FROM THE ARAB MEDITERRANEAN STATES AND TURKEY

ROBERT SPRINGBORG

Introduction

The social, political and even economic power of moderate Middle East Islamists has been growing for a generation or so, but the phenomenon was not given the attention it deserved by outside observers and policy-makers until the impressive recent electoral performances by Arab Islamists in Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco and, most recently, Bahrain. Earlier accomplishments at the polls by the Islamic Action Front in Jordan in 1989 and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey in 2002, although signalling the importance of political Islam, did not establish its status as the pre-eminent oppositional political force in the region. Now that status cannot be disputed. As a result, the question of how to deal with Islamists who reject violence, embrace democracy and outperform their competitors at the polls has become a central concern not only of incumbent Middle East elites, but of interested foreign actors as well.

For the European Union (EU) and its member states, the US and the governments of other member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the present political configuration in most Middle East and North African (MENA) countries presents a well-known and fundamental dilemma. On the one hand, they are uncomfortable both with the authoritarianism of most incumbents and with much of the content of Islamists' beliefs and policy preferences. On the other hand, they are comfortable with the semi-secular policies of most incumbents and with moderate Islamists' apparent embrace of democratic processes. Hence the question these foreign governments confront is how

to square the circle in their dealings with MENA countries, ruled over by authoritarians with (at least, nominally) acceptable policies but unacceptable methods and challenged by Islamists whose democratic methods are acceptable but many of whose policy preferences sometimes seem to be inimical to Western interests and beliefs. The purpose of this volume has been to begin to explore ways in which this dilemma might best be resolved.

Because relatively little is known about the attitudes and opinions of moderate Islamists and because most have yet to establish track records in government, this investigation has focussed on them, leaving aside questions concerning the beliefs and behaviour of the semi-secular incumbent MENA elites and, for that matter, of Western political elites as well. Recognising then that this is a first step in seeking information to address the dilemmas posed to Western governments by authoritarian incumbents and apparently democratic Islamist challengers, it nevertheless provides a useful introduction to understanding the relevant views of moderate Islamists. This information can in turn assist in evaluating the costs and benefits to concerned parties in the West of entering into dialogue with Muslim democrats; in understanding how such a dialogue might best be structured; and in anticipating realistic expectations of any dialogue that might occur.

In order to accomplish these objectives the contributors to the volume were instructed to utilise a standard protocol[176] for their investigation of Islamism within the country of their concern. The subjects of focus in the protocol were the evolution of Islamism and the views of Islamists on several related issues, including political reform, democratic models, EU foreign policy, and areas of potential collaboration and difference with Europe. The findings reported in the various chapters are thus sufficiently comparable both to discern differences between countries and to formulate empirically-based generalisations about Islamism within the MENA generally. The purposes of this chapter are to do just that, as well as to draw out the implications of these empirical findings for a potential dialogue with Europe. To do this the chapter will first identify empirical regularities and differences across the case studies. It will then take up

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[176] See Annex A for the guide in English supplied to all authors and researchers, and Annex B in Arabic as the version used in the Egyptian case study.

some issues that the data do not address or provide insufficient bases upon which comparative observations can rest. It will then shift to a consideration of the costs and benefits of engagement with Islamism. Finally, it will conclude with some recommendations as to how a dialogue might best be conducted.

10.1 Who are the Muslim Democrats?

Muslim democrats consist of those movements and organised political parties that have either rejected violence and radicalism or restricted its application to what they see as efforts to achieve national liberation; or have evolved from being politically passive and focused on encouraging personal religiosity and/or providing social services, into being political activists. Many of them are former exiles, who have returned to their native countries following previous confrontations with incumbent regimes. In some cases movements and organisations of Muslim democrats combine these different backgrounds, having formerly been supporters of political violence and in other periods having operated primarily in exile.

All of the Muslim democrats under study, with two exceptions, are national Islamists in that their political focus is on their own nation-state, where they are seeking through democratic means to exercise political power. The two exceptions are Hamas and Hezbollah, which are more correctly thought of as Islamist liberation movements in that the primary stimulus for their creation and for much of their present raison d'être has been confrontation with an occupying power. These two parties have also not completely and absolutely eschewed the use of violence in the domestic politics of Palestine and Lebanon, respectively. They can possibly be thought of as Muslim democrats, however, because they have accepted the rules of democratic contestation in their respective national settings and are not substantially more inclined to violence than other political actors with whom they are competing.

The long political journey of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood (MB, or Muslim Brothers) illustrates the tortuous path followed by many Muslim democrats, which is hardly surprising given that the leading organisations in most Arab countries are either national organisational offshoots of the MB or were inspired by it. It commenced essentially as a social movement dedicated to personal spiritual regeneration and social service provision in Egypt in 1928. As the anti-British struggle intensified in the post-war era, the MB was both politicised and radicalised, with its armed wing entering

into guerrilla combat in the Suez Canal zone against the British and its secret underground organisation engaging in assassination of leading Egyptian political figures. Accused of plotting against Nasser in 1954 after it had been afforded special political status by the Free Officers who sought to use its power to bolster their own, the MB was crushed.

Upon Nasser's death in 1970 his successor, Anwar al Sadat, commenced almost immediately to court the MB as a counterweight to the then powerful left. But as Sadat's domestic political position deteriorated following his trip to Jerusalem in November 1977, he began to clamp down on all forms of autonomous political activity, including that by the Muslim Brotherhood.

The same scenario of a new regime courting popularity through a political liberalisation played itself out under President Mubarak, who, succeeding Sadat in 1981, let MB members and other political figures out of jail and permitted the MB to run for elections in alliance with the Wafd Party in 1984, despite the fact that it was not allowed to register as a political party. Since that time the MB has increased its political presence, although in zigzag fashion as the regime has alternated between allowing it political space and cracking down on it. It steadfastly refused to be drawn into the early 1990s insurgency led by the more radical Islamist organisations, chief of which were Islamic Jihad and Gama`a Islamiyya, but this did not prevent the regime from accusing it of so doing and harassing it in various ways. The combination of its political experience gained through electoral campaigns and membership in parliament, along with its solid membership base, enabled it to win 88 seats in the 454 member parliament in the 2005 elections, a remarkable achievement in the face of voter intimidation and general electoral fraud perpetrated by the regime.

In sum, the Egyptian MB at various stages in its almost 80-year history has manifested virtually all forms and stages of Islamist political organisation. In its early period it was politically passive, focused instead on personal behaviour and social services. It then became politically engaged and was swept up in anti-colonial and internal violence. Crushed by Nasser and then revived by Sadat, who permitted its leading members to return to the country, it definitively turned its back on political violence in the 1970s and has sought since then to build its capacities to compete for power within that political space the regime allows. It has used its influence in recent years to impact policies, especially in the cultural sphere. It has provided inspiration for numerous other Islamist movements

and its trajectory to non-violent, democratic participation has no doubt served as a model for many of them.

Whatever the particular path MENA Islamist organisations have followed to arrive at their present state of Muslim democrats, their moderation is now comprised of several different components. First, they renounce violence against domestic actors, although not against Israel in the case of Hezbollah and Hamas, organisations which also maintain significant coercive capacities that have direct relevance to the internal politics of Lebanon and Palestine, respectively. So by this measure the status of Hezbollah and Hamas as Muslim democrats is somewhat ambiguous and will remain so unless and until, as a minimum, they absolutely and unequivocally renounce the use of violence in domestic politics and take practical steps to implement that policy. Whether or not a renunciation of violence against Israel is also required for them to be dubbed Muslim democrats is a much more complicated matter and involves considerations of international law and foreign policy that are beyond the scope of this paper.

Second, these parties and movements have engaged directly in democratic practices, especially elections, although it is probably also true to say that they would not reject other paths to power, such as through co-optation by the military. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that their political manoeuvring is intended to make them suitable partners for politically beleaguered militaries and security forces that might one day find themselves in need of such allies. Still, this scenario, which was acted out in Egypt in the 1952-54 interregnum and for some period of time after the Umar al Bashir coup in 1989 in the Sudan, seems less likely than a democratic scenario in most national settings. For one thing, Islamists have learned through the experiences of Egypt and Sudan that a Faustian bargain with the military is fraught with peril. For another, Hamas has recently demonstrated that electoral victory is possible; while Hezbollah has shown that even minority participation in government as a result of electoral performance provides substantial benefits. The Turkish case of the Justice and Development Party assuming the reins of power is also instructive. For Muslim democrats to throw away their chances of exercising governmental power through the ballot box in favour of a short cut via an alliance with the military would suggest political despair, to say nothing of poor political judgement, neither of which seems to characterise contemporary Muslim democrats.

Third, Muslim democrats are measured in their approach to Islamicisation. Unlike the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Muslim democrats of Turkey and the Mediterranean Arab world have been reasonably cautious in their efforts to spread Islamic practices, although there is considerable variation in how strident these efforts have been. In Palestine Hamas has explicitly renounced any desire or attempt at imposed Islamicisation, while Hezbollah has taken the position that Lebanon is a pluralistic, multi-cultural society in which religious diversity must be respected. Morocco's Justice and Development Party (PJD), despite its status as the third largest party in parliament, has not vociferously advocated measures to impose Islamic dress or other manifestations of religiosity. On the other hand, Egypt's MB has used its presence in parliament to launch attacks on governmental actions that they deem to be too liberal or secular and have also sought through the courts to restrict personal freedoms that they deem to violate strict interpretations of Islam. Whether it and others like it would seek to impose Islamicisation if they were to attain power is an open question, but there are good reasons to suggest that they would not, chief among which are political calculations based on fear of backlash by both domestic and international political actors were they to do so. For Egypt, the presence of a Christian minority that comprises some 6-10% of the population and is actively supported internationally poses a further restraint.

Fourth, some Islamists have demonstrated, at least at the elite level, a willingness to engage directly with non-Muslim international actors, such as democracy promoters from the US and the EU and its member states. In Egypt, for example, both the parliamentary and party leadership of the MB have worked with the Westminster Foundation's project to strengthen various capacities of parliament. Similar cooperation has occurred in Morocco, whereas in Palestine Hamas has conveyed its willingness to work with Western governments, who have refused to reciprocate. While all Muslim democrats express reservations about involvement of European and North American actors in their respective political systems, this in no way differentiates them from most secular nationalist opposition figures or even from incumbent authoritarians, the latter of which typically condemn external support for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and democratisation activities in general, but which have no qualms about themselves receiving various types of support from those same external actors.

In addition to sharing a growing tendency towards moderation, the movements and political parties labelled here as Muslim democrats are also characterised by significant gaps between their leaders and followers, precisely because they are mass-based organisations. Unlike most of their secular and semi-secular competitors within political oppositions, which are typically coteries of elites without popular bases, or government-controlled and -created single parties that are loosely-knit patronage vehicles, Muslim democrats typically span the social order. Their leaders are normally educated professionals, while at the base they recruit successfully from among the petty bourgeoisie and even among the socially marginal, including unemployed and undereducated youths. It is not surprising, therefore, that within the same organisation a wide variety of different interests and outlooks exits.

A key question (beyond the scope of this book) is how leaders of these movements and organisations retain the loyalty of their followers, for objectively their interests are not identical and socially they may inhabit and reflect quite different milieu. A common observation about moderate Islamist leaders is that they appear remarkably familiar with Western models and procedures and seem to have no difficulty in interacting with Westerners, even in their own languages. Presumably if asked about the reasons for the loyalty of their followers, these leaders would invoke explanations to the effect that they share common views of social, economic and political problems precisely because they are all committed Muslims. Leaving aside the issue of whether or not shared ideological commitment provides sufficient glue to bind together those of markedly different social backgrounds within a single political organisation, the question remains of how such coherence is created, maintained and acted upon operationally. Might it be middle level apparatchiks who provide key linkages between elites and the mass base? Alternatively, might it be that these Islamist organisations are comprised of coalitions based on pre-existing social units, with the organisational sinews thus linking the leaders of these social units, who in turn deliver their followers?

Whatever the answer is to the query of how the gap between leaders and their followers is bridged in these organisations, it is apparent from the evidence presented in this volume and more generally that Muslim democrats are under constant threat of being outflanked by extremists. Indeed, in virtually every country under study both moderate and radical Islamist organisations coexist. In the case of Egypt, for example, the dominant MB faces challengers on both the left and right flanks. On the

former, Islamic Jihad, Gama`a Islamiyya and a host of smaller organisations have track records of violence and uncompromising stands towards the government and its Western backers, even though some have in recent years renounced violence. On the right, al Wasat, as suggested by the very name - which means 'the middle' – is an attempt led by young political entrepreneurs to capture the political middle ground between the MB, on the one hand, and those who are less committed Islamists and even Christians, on the other. In Palestine, Islamic Jihad stands firmly on Hamas' left flank, frequently refusing to honour ceasefires and other concessions that Hamas is willing to make. A similar relationship exists in Morocco between the establishment-oriented PJD and the more radical Justice and Charity. The history of the Islamist insurrection in Algeria cannot be told accurately without reference to the split between the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which gradually eschewed violence, on the one hand, and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), on the other, which intensified it. All Islamist organisations are banned in Syria, but the Syrian Muslim Brothers operating from exile are pursuing a moderate, non-violent line, while occasional acts of political violence, such as the attack on the US Embassy in 2006, suggest that radical underground Islamist organisations are not content with non-violent means to deal with their perceived enemies. In comparatively democratic Turkey the ruling moderate Islamist AKP has to be wary of the appeals of the considerably more radical Felicity Party. The fragmentation of both Sunni and Shi`a communities in Iraq into numerous Islamist political organisations, with some eschewing violence and others perpetrating it on a daily basis, is the extreme case that exemplifies the general trend.

This evidence suggests that Muslim democrats do not have the Islamist political field to themselves. Others who claim to be yet more democratic than they or, more typically, more effective because they have not 'sold out' by renouncing violence and accepting democracy, are present in virtually every country in the region. The relative strengths of moderates and radicals are determined in large measure by the contexts in which they operate. Probably the most common theme running through the recent history of these countries is that the radicals overplay their hand, inviting massive and successful retaliation by governments, leaving the ground clear for the moderates. This scenario played itself out in Syria in the early 1980s, in Egypt in the early 1990s, in Algeria later in that decade. In Turkey one can read the history of the last quarter century as one in which governmental repression of Islamists brought about their gradual

moderation, leading ultimately to their successful assumption of governmental power in 2002. It would be incorrect, however, to assume that history moves in a uni-linear, predictable fashion and that present contexts, which by and large favour moderates, will persist. The volatile situations in Lebanon and Palestine are possibly the most likely candidates for a return to conditions in which moderation is overwhelmed by violent approaches, but they are by no means the only possible candidates for such changes.

That moderation is in significant measure a product of context and that radical organisations are for the most part still present, but sitting on the political sidelines presumably waiting for a return of conditions that will favour them rather than Muslim democrats, suggest the tenuous nature of the present conjuncture. Moderation has yet to be firmly institutionalised, which requires it not only to be incorporated into the political system and to be accepted by important external actors, it also requires accommodation and ultimate acceptance by other domestic political forces. Not even Turkey has yet met those preconditions, as many significant Turkish political actors still harbour ambitions of turning back the political clock to Kemalist secularism and evicting Islamists not only from government, but from the political and social systems more broadly.

It would hardly be surprising, therefore, if Muslim democrats were contingent ones. Threatened on their flanks by other Islamists, in the front by opposed governments and powerful foreign actors, and in the rear by the frailties of their own organisations, they naturally must feel compelled to keep all options open. Democracy is the preferred, but not the only option. They would be politically foolish to make their last stand for democratic principles when other actors in the system are violating them. It is thus vital that so long as democracy remains contingent in the mind of those who are in positions to help bring it about, that the conditions which nurture it are as favourable as possible. In the case of Islamist moderates, most have recently witnessed the heavy price paid by failed direct assaults on entrenched political power and have drawn the conclusion that compromise is preferable to 'all or nothing' approaches. But that situation cannot continue indefinitely if all paths to power appear irrevocably blocked, if only because Islamist radicals are already there to pick up the challenge.

A final feature common to Muslim democrats observed in the chapters is that they do not see themselves as representing specific societal

or economic interests. Indeed, the very concept of interest is inimical to them and, they would claim, to Islam itself. Good Muslims are, by definition, united, forming a society that is cohesive, fair and moral. The divisions that Islam sanctifies are between those who are Muslim and those who are not. Contemporary Islamists implicitly also distinguish between engaged and disengaged Muslims, that is, those who are committed to establishing Muslim social and political orders and those who are not. The task before them is thus to engage those Muslims, not to represent interests of specific classes, regions, ethnic or other group interests. Reflecting this orientation is the Islamist concern with moral issues in society, which takes the form of preoccupation with education, culture and the media. So, for example, in the 2000-05 Egyptian parliament, the seventeen MB deputies devoted 80% of their interpellations, or questions to ministers, to matters concerning those issues, leaving a scant 20% for matters of economics, foreign and defence policies, and other vital governance issues.[177]

Materialists naturally find this argumentation to be both temporising and self-serving. In reality, according to them, Islamists can claim to be above the fray of politics that decides who gets what, how and when, only as long as they are not in government. So, presently, most Muslim democrats have the luxury of being all things to all people, not having to make hard choices on resource allocations while reinforcing claims to moral superiority by focusing on culture and education. But when and if they confront material reality, according to this view, they will have to reveal which interests they favour and which they ignore. This in turn will tend to fracture their political organisations and possibly bring about broader political realignments, with Islamists forging new coalitions with non-Islamists on the basis of interests rather than on the basis of moral convictions and claims.

Islamists would naturally reject this reasoning and scenario, not only on philosophical grounds but possibly also by pointing out that Islam is generating a new calculus of interest, with Islamic banking and finances being but one manifestation of this re-ordering of the material according to Islamic precepts. They might also point to the Turkish case, where the AKP has in fact been in government for more than four years and if anything,

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[177] These figures come from a publication issued by the MB and referred to in Gamal Essam El-Din, "One More Episode", al Ahram Weekly, 1 December 2006.

appears to be as united and in a stronger political position than when it first swept into office, despite having had to wrestle with allocation issues.

Resolution of these philosophical and empirical debates is beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say here that Islamist democrats reject the epistemological foundations of Western political science and political economy, which prioritise the material over the spiritual and are sceptical of those who claim to be acting on moral grounds. The tests of whether or not moderate Islamists can rise above specific material interests and maintain coalitions of Muslim wholes have yet to be undergone. With the partial exception of Turkey, Muslim democrats remain on the sidelines of MENA governance. In the case of Turkey it can be argued that countervailing forces have reduced both the AKP's control of and perceived responsibility for public policy, so the Turkish test is yet to really commence. And one can also argue that in Turkey the AKP more clearly represents the interests of the independent small and middle bourgeoisie, especially its Anatolian core, so that it does indeed rest on a solid material base. But this is to prejudge the issue, for it cannot at this stage be resolved empirically. All that can be said with complete confidence is that there are profound differences between Western and Muslim political philosophies and that the views of each will colour the manner in which they would enter into and conduct dialogue with the other.

In conclusion, these chapters reveal remarkable consistency about the nature of Muslim democrats, given that they are a political phenomenon present in so many different countries in the region. Their evolution, however, has followed similar patterns in those various countries, with the MB in Egypt not only having the longest such history of evolution, but serving as a model for Arab Muslim democrats elsewhere. Presently favoured by the historical conjuncture that has seen radicalism eclipsed, at least for the time being, Muslim democrats must nevertheless be cautious of their commitment to democracy, for the systems in which they operate are at best quasi-democratic and their challengers do not necessarily share such a commitment. Not having been called upon to formulate and implement public policies, the 'real' nature of Muslim democrats remains – aside from the case of Turkey - untested. They themselves profess that the moral imperatives of Islam provide sufficient guide for public policy and establishing and maintaining a coherent, Muslim socio-political order, whereas many non-Muslim observers remain sceptical of their ability to remain united in the face of the difficulty of reconciling competing material claims.

10.2 Muslim Democrats' views of the EU

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Muslim democrats interviewed for this volume, with the partial exception of the Turks, appear to know little about EU policies, including the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). After all, EU policies are not particularly well-known to European audiences and those policies relevant to MENA countries have been negotiated almost exclusively on government to government bases. Other issues, such as the Lebanese war of 2006, the civil war in Iraq or the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict, to say nothing of domestic political issues in the countries concerned or US policies towards the region, have all captured greater media and public attention than European policies, which seem in fact to have little impact on the ground. Thus Muslim democrats, like their fellow countrymen, have had few opportunities to learn about relevant EU policies, to say nothing of participating in their formulation.

The impact of this lack of knowledge is that most Muslim democrats appear to evaluate the EU at a general perceptual level, rather than on an empirical basis. Not knowing what the EU has proposed to do vis à vis their country or what in fact it is doing, they report in general how they feel about the EU. Not surprisingly they say that they feel distant from the EU and its negotiations with their respective governments. Interestingly, this lack of engagement does not seem to translate into hostility. Most respondents report a generally favourable view of Europeans, European countries and the EU and would like to have more direct interactions with them. In some cases they differentiate between European countries, with France typically being evaluated more favourably than the UK, for example.

Muslim democrats express no profound reservations about interaction with Europe, at least as far as economic and technical matters are concerned, although members of Hezbollah evince concern that the EU will seek to impose privatisation and other elements of neo-liberal economic policy. MENA Muslim democrats are more cautious about interactions over socio-cultural and political issues, however, with some expressing their opposition to direct EU involvement in democracy promotion, for example. Virtually all moderate Islamists caution the EU about interference in the cultural domain, in which they see Islam as playing a vital role. In general there appears to be a desire to learn from

Europeans in various fields, albeit with qualifications about political and cultural matters.

Muslim democrats are thus quite unlike more radical Islamists, who reject interaction with the European Union on principle. The possible rationales underlying the accommodating approach of the former are probably driven as much by their present political circumstances as they are by their broader philosophical outlooks. Their more moderate views, coupled in many cases with direct familiarity with the West and desire to learn more from it, predispose them to want to engage. But they must also see direct political benefits from such engagement or they would not be such strong supporters of it.

The benefits in question grow out of their special status as Islamist opposition forces in authoritarian political systems. They are seeking legitimacy and recognition, both domestically and internationally. In some countries, such as Egypt and the member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), it is unlawful for them to operate as political parties, whereas in others, such as Syria and Tunisia, membership in an Islamist organisation is illegal, in the former constituting a capital offence. Only in Turkey, Lebanon and Palestine do they have an established presence in government, but even in these comparatively open systems they are confronted with politically existential threats. It is not inconceivable, for example, that in the wake of a political change they could face severe restrictions or even worse. Elsewhere, the existential threats are more real and pressing and the challenges to operating as democratic organisations yet more profound. So to protect themselves against autocratic regimes or not fully institutionalised democratic or quasi-democratic ones, they need broader recognition and the legitimation such recognition provides. Entering into direct dialogue with the EU, even informally, provides some measure of that recognition and thus legitimation.

The content of interaction with the EU might from Islamists' perspective also be beneficial. Material resources, depending on how they were provided, might be welcome. Moderate Islamists are well aware that substantial resources flow not only to governments, but also to secular oppositionists in the region. To be put on an equal footing with secularists would be of substantial symbolic value even if resources were not part of the exchange. Of still greater value would be pressure on regimes by the EU to liberalise and democratise, for such measures, if successful, would

necessarily provide greater political space within which Muslim democrats could operate.

The potential downside for Muslim democrats of substantially enhanced interactions with the EU would be threats to their reputation and unity. Their opponents might use such interactions to discredit them, as governments have done with other opposition organisations, for example. Such criticism could exacerbate internal tensions that might arise over the issue of whether or not and how to engage with the EU. Criticism from elements within the broader Islamist movement could be anticipated by Muslim democrats unless the terms of such engagement were delineated in what was seen to be appropriate fashion. Overall, however, the possible benefits to Muslim democrats of engagement considerably outweigh the potential costs. They seem to indicate a clear awareness of that as suggested by their manifest desire to engage.

10.3 Muslim Democrats' comparative views of the EU and US

Muslim democrats interviewed for this volume differ more in their views of the EU and US than they do on matters previously discussed. This seems to reflect their different experiences with the EU and US. In Morocco and Turkey, for example, countries where they have a long history of engagement with the US, Muslim democrats believe the US to be more interested in them and their welfare than is the EU. This apparently reflects not only the proactive nature of US government policy towards these countries, but more generally it probably also reflects the comparative plethora of US-based private or quasi-governmental democracy promotion organisations. Europe, by comparison, relies more heavily on governmental actors for democracy and human rights promotion. Because those actors are more restricted by government policy than are those of civil society, the likelihood is that if Muslim democrats have interacted directly with democracy promoters, they will be Americans.

But the general impression held by Islamists of the US as compared to the EU does not favour the former. The EU is seen as being more sympathetic and better informed about the region. US policies, such as those towards Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine, are roundly condemned, with special criticism being levelled at US efforts to isolate Hamas and Hezbollah. In general the informants see the EU as being sympathetic but weak in the face of US pressure, whereas they see the US as being strong but antagonistic. Almost all urge the EU to adopt policies more

independent of the US. While one might discount somewhat the comparatively favourable assessments of the EU because informants were aware they were talking with individuals who were connected to an EU-related project, the fact that those assessments were expressed in such fulsome terms and by so many informants indicates that it is not just anticipated reactions by informants that underlie them.

As far as the appropriateness of the two social and political models is concerned, views differ. With regards to the former, the treatment of indigenous Muslims is seen as being less favourable in Europe than the US. The multiculturalism of the American melting pot is contrasted favourably to the 'uniculturalism' of most European nation-states. But paradoxically, the multicultural model is not held out as being appropriate for the MENA, unless you accept the proposition put forward by a member of Turkey's AKP that his country has been multicultural for centuries. Indeed, quite the contrary is the case. Muslim democrats are seeking to establish 'unicultural' Muslim societies, with special conditions being granted to non-Muslim minorities. So while they are highly critical of the treatment of fellow Muslims in EU member states and in comparison laud their treatment in the US, they do not even entertain the possibility that the American socio-demographic model might be the more appropriate one for them to emulate.

With regards to the comparative attractiveness of political models, the reverse is the case. Muslim democrats are more attracted to EU than US models and do see those models as having direct relevance for their conditions. This preference seems to reflect various considerations. First, some of the informants are not distinguishing between the nature of the political systems and the foreign policies they generate. Thus European parliamentary democracies are seen as preferable because by and large European policies are seen as being more sympathetic and understanding of the MENA countries and of the role of moderate Islamism than is the US. Second, the US political system seems to most of the informants to be much more disorderly and 'capitalist', or at least more penetrated by special interests, than European parliamentary democracies. The free-wheeling, bargaining nature of American politics is seen as distasteful. Moreover, none of the MENA countries copied US governmental models, as they are all either parliamentary democracies of the European variant or are monarchies. So there is no first hand familiarity with the American system of balance of powers achieved through separation between the three branches of government and led by a President and Congress.

Finally, underlying the preference for European-style parliamentary democracies might well be a broader philosophical concern, which is that the good Muslim polity, hence by extension, any good polity, is a united one that does not admit of divisions along the line of particularistic interests. The American model of government is founded on the very opposite notion, namely, that different interests need to be protected by dividing and counterbalancing governmental power. The motor force of American politics is special interests and the channels through which power flows are multitudinous and only quasi-institutionalised, thus admitting of endless bargaining and coalition formation. In Europe, by contrast, government is formed by the party or parties that capture a majority of seats in parliament, thus the channels of influence are well defined and comparatively rigid. The European model, in other words, more closely approximates the Muslim ideal, with the ruling party or parties being able to act on behalf of the entire policy to a much greater extent than the American counterpart.

In sum, perceptions of the EU and its member states tend to be more favourable on the grounds of both policies and models of government than the US, with the obvious and important exception being that of treatment of Muslim minorities. Those Muslim democrats who feel that the US has been more forthcoming than the EU seem to be those who have had first-hand experience in dealing with US officials and private actors involved in democracy and human rights promotion, suggesting in turn that dialogue and engagement by Western actors results in more positive assessments of them by Islamists. The already comparatively favourable views of the EU further suggest that engagement by it, both formally and informally, would have immediate and positive impacts on the attitudes towards it held by Muslim democrats.

10.4 Muslim and Western conceptions of democracy and human rights

The interviews revealed unequivocally that Muslim democrats and most Westerners do not share the same *weltanschauung* when it comes to their understanding of democracy and human rights. It is important to emphasise this point because of a prevailing tendency in some circles in the West to downplay or even ignore these philosophical differences. Their reaction to Edward Said's critique of Orientalism typically underlies their view and it may in fact be an overreaction. Before Said's pioneering work, differences between 'the Orient' and the West were commonly seen as

being 'essentialist' in nature, owing to inherent differences between the cultures and, most importantly, the religions of the peoples concerned. This extreme view was rightly and effectively debunked by Said.

It has been replaced by an emphasis, and possibly an over-emphasis, on the role of situation in determining outlooks. This implies a plasticity of beliefs that may be excessive, as suggested by Muslim democrats' reflections on democracy and human rights as recorded in this volume. Virtually all of the interviewees draw sharp distinctions between Islamic and Western conceptions of representative government and protection of individual rights and freedoms. Yet it is also clear from available polling data that experience with democracy is the most important single factor in explaining Muslim's attitudes about that system of government.[178] In short, it is important to recognise that both 'essence' and 'situation' condition politically relevant beliefs. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that when grounded in other systems of thought and practice, such as religion, and reinforced by well-structured organisations, these political beliefs are unlikely to change dramatically as a result of intermittent engagement with outside actors, although they may undergo some modification. This is not to suggest, however, that enhanced mutual awareness is of no value, for it clearly is. It is to suggest though that expectations of changes of values, beliefs and behaviour as a result of engagement should not be excessive.

With regards to the content of views on democracy and human rights, the relevant difference in philosophical orientations of Westerners and Muslim democrats is that the former believe in universal norms, whereas the latter do not. The Islamist view is that the West is seeking to portray its own notions and practices of human rights and democracy as universal in nature. Instead, they contend, these conceptions of human rights and democracy reflect the particular cultures and histories of European nations. They are not relevant for all peoples at all times, especially for Muslims, who have their own religious, cultural and historical bases for human rights, political freedoms and democratic practices. The moderate Islamists interviewed noted the excessive 'individualism' of European ideas, arguing that conceptions of human rights and democracy founded on individualism had no resonance in

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[178] See Moataz A. Fattah, Democratic Values in the Muslim World, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006.

Islam, in which social obligations and solidarities are of greater importance. Western liberal values that prioritise individual freedom over community rights are, in short, seen as being un- or anti-Islamic. Finally, the elevation of human over divine wisdom, a concept which lies at the heart of Western representative institutions and legal systems, is also seen as being antithetical to Islam.

These profound philosophical differences underlie disagreements over specific policies, which in turn tend to become highly emotive, symbolic issues for both sides. Competing views of appropriate gender roles and relations are possibly the most critical of these symbolic issues. Muslim democrats deeply resent what they see as an attempt by Europe to impose its own preferences for gender relations, a step which they view as neo-imperialist, rather than reflecting the application of so-called universal norms. So the wearing of headscarves, the recognition of equal rights for women and the treatment of homosexuality are issues about which Muslim democrats and most Europeans have profoundly different views that will be difficult to reconcile, no matter how long and intense the dialogue over them. But it is nevertheless important to recognise that enhanced awareness of other perspectives, even if they are not shared, is a potential benefit of dialogue.

10.5   Additional issues that might be addressed

The approach utilised in this volume of interviewing moderate Islamists might fruitfully be extended to some other, relevant issues. Possibly the most interesting, directly relevant issue that could also be included is that of connectivity in the region in general and that between Muslim democrats specifically. Indeed, the research already undertaken and reported upon revealed that reactions to specific events in the region, such as the Lebanese war of 2006, may be of profound significance. It is clear from existing evidence that Muslim democrats, as well presumably as most residents of the region, are closely attuned to events not only in their country, but in the region as a whole. These are not hermetically sealed political systems. Indeed, the Middle East is more of a region than possibly any other in the developing world in the sense that political events in one part of it quickly impact other sub-regions and countries within it. Shared language, culture and history contribute to the strongly systemic nature of the MENA, a strength now reinforced and reflected politically by the ubiquitous nature of Islamism. It would of course be useful to assess more systematically how regional events impact the perceptions and actions of

Muslim democrats and to determine if they are yet more attuned to those events than are their compatriots of different political persuasions.

Possible connections between Muslim democrats in different countries were not directly investigated. The degree to which they interact, learn from one another, and provide tangible and intangible resources is an important, yet largely unknown aspect of moderate Islamism. Intensive research which has been conducted on connections has focused on those among radical Islamists. There is nevertheless evidence that Iranian support has been vital for the creation and continued effectiveness of Hezbollah. Similarly, arguments have been made that Saudi support for Egyptian Muslim Brothers and, by extension, moderate Islamists throughout the Arab world, has been a key factor in their success. So while there has been some research on connections between radical Islamists and considerable speculation on the role of Saudi Arabia, in particular in supporting both *mujahidin* in Afghanistan and moderate Arab Islamists elsewhere, little is known in detail, particularly about the latter, to say nothing about direct dealings between moderate Islamists in the various countries. The Turkish case is being followed closely by Arab Muslim democrats, but whether that is simply a monitoring exercise or consists of more direct engagement is unknown. Precisely because there are good reasons to believe that there may be extensive interactions between moderate Islamists and that those interactions may have significant impacts, it is important that this aspect of connectivity be more thoroughly investigated. Indeed, if the EU is to adopt a policy of more extensive and intensive engagement with moderate Islamists, it would want to consider the relevance of such regional connections to its dealings with moderate Islamists on a country by country basis.

The other major issue that remains largely unaddressed is what Muslim democrats do when they exercise political power. Of course there is little empirical evidence to report, for it is only Turkey, Palestine, and Lebanon where they are currently in government in greater or lesser measure. The two cabinet portfolios (health and education) the Jordanian Islamic Action Front was briefly awarded in the wake of the 1989 elections hardly qualify.

Yet this question is vital to understanding the political nature of moderate Islamism. The allegation that Muslim democrats have an opportunistic rather than abiding commitment to democracy is widespread. The fear that they would seek to impose a draconian,

thoroughgoing Islamicisation once they had sufficient power to do so is shared by secularists everywhere in the MENA. The Turkish case has not provided much comfort to those with such doubts, precisely because in Turkey the AKP is confronted with the countervailing power not only of the military, but also by the reasonably well institutionalised legal/judicial system and by firmly held public opinion, buttressed by a comparatively well-developed civil society. Thus the AKP's capacity to impose Islamicisation is limited, whatever its will might be.

The same may well not apply in Arab countries. Military traditions are not those of nation-guarding, Kemalist secularism. Courts are not independent of the executive and public opinion is comparatively diffuse and poorly aggregated within civil society. Moreover, in opposition, Muslim democrats, such as the MB in Egypt and the Islamic Action Front in Jordan, have been vociferous in their criticism of manifestations of secular, 'global' culture and adamant in insisting upon censorship, prohibition of alcohol, imposition of dress and behaviour codes, revision of school curricula and the like. The question can rightly be raised that if this is what they are like in opposition, what would they do once in power? Alas, the track record is too short for a definitive answer to be given, but a more thorough search of the existing evidence might provide more informed assessments.[179]

A related area of ambiguity is what Muslim democrats think about the relationship between the state and the exercise of power. At a theoretical level it can be argued that since Islam encompasses both *din wa dawlah*, or religion and state, the latter is the instrument of the former, being responsible for implementation of Islamic precepts in society. In this view Muslim democrats are focused on achieving political power so that they can utilise the state to implement Islam as they conceive it.

At the level of practice, however, recent social and economic history suggests a somewhat different approach. Authoritarian states in the MENA

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[179] A recent effort to evaluate whether participation by Islamists in the political systems of Jordan and Yemen induced moderation revealed that in the former it did, but not in the latter. Both the nature of the Islamist movement and aspects of the broader political system in which it operates appear to determine whether inclusion will or will not induce moderation. See Jillian Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

have been inhospitable to moderate Islamists, so they have set about constructing parallel structures in civil society. This is true in the economic realm, where various forms of Islamist finance and business have sprouted and multiplied, as well as in service delivery, where a rich array of Islamist NGOs have set down roots as they have provided health, educational, sanitation, transport and other facilities. Many of those involved in these economic and social activities have become highly sceptical not only of the authoritarian, semi-secular states under which they live, but presumably also of the notion that the state should be the repository of all political, hence also all economic and social power. So it is important to know not just what Islamic doctrine says about the state, but what Muslim democrats think its appropriate role should be. What limits should be imposed upon its reach? What relationship should it have to the economy and to private providers of social services? What should the mechanisms be that protect individuals against possible excesses of the state? In sum, this is a potentially rich and important area for investigation and one that is very relevant to relations between Muslim democrats and external actors, including the EU.

10.6 A preliminary cost/benefit analysis of engaging with Muslim Democrats

A thorough cost/benefit analysis from a Western perspective of engaging with Muslim democrats would require clear parameters defining that engagement, including answering such questions as with exactly whom, over what topics, in what settings and so on. Prior to that undertaking all that can be done is to suggest some possible costs and benefits in general terms. As far as the former are concerned, chief among them might well be the risks of not engaging. The evolution of moderate forms of political Islam could serve to alleviate problems arising from ethnic and sectarian divisions, undercut support for violent Islamist movements, and strengthen connections between economic and political elites and the grass roots of civil society. In the absence of Muslim democrats taking on these challenges, it is hard to envision what other resources are available to address these problems, which if they are not tackled, will intensify. Engagement might also contribute to rendering authoritarian regimes more susceptible to reforms, while challenging the systems of corruption and patronage politics that underlie them. A careful engagement could also serve as a means for drawing important parts of MENA societies into a discussion with Europe and North America about the complex practical

and philosophical issues of governing societies in democratic, accountable and effective ways, while also respecting the rule of law and human rights. Although engaging Muslim democrats is unlikely to solve all the political problems of the region, a thoughtful and careful engagement could clearly be a part of encouraging reform and political evolution in the region in directions that the EU would welcome. While this is obviously a long term project, it may represent one of the best uses of 'soft power' in the region.

There are also potential costs to engagement. It is unlikely to bring about coincidence of views and there is a possibility, if not carefully managed, that it could exacerbate differences and increase tensions. At the more directly political level, engagement may enhance the resources of moderate Islamists at the expense of other political actors who might in fact be more natural allies of the West. As mentioned above, engagement would necessarily provide some measure of legitimacy to moderate Islamists, which is a valuable gain for them in its own right, as authoritarian regimes are seeking to deny them this legitimacy.

But EU engagement might also contribute to a shift in the balance of power within political oppositions away from secularists and towards Muslim democrats. The former are politically less well-organised in virtually all of the countries under consideration, as evidenced by their weak electoral performances compared to the Muslim democrats, not only in national elections, but in elections in syndicates, student bodies, chambers of commerce, and indeed in virtually any setting in which elections are conducted. This does not necessarily mean, however, that moderate Islamists outnumber secularists. In addition to the organisational factor, which favours Islamists, is the fact that Islamist political parties and movements are seen as posing the only viable alternative to incumbent governments, hence are the recipients of protest votes by those who do not necessarily endorse their Islamist platforms. Finally, actual voting results that have been referred to as proof of the political predominance of Muslim democrats are not as conclusive as such claims suggest. In Palestine, for example, Hamas won about 40% of the popular vote in the January 2006 election, just slightly more than Fatah. But the electoral system converted that plurality into a substantial parliamentary majority, much to the surprise of even Hamas and Fatah operatives. Hezbollah's share of the Lebanese vote is of course kept small by virtue of the fact that it appeals virtually exclusively to the Shi`a community. It is also the case, however, that substantial numbers of Shi`a do not vote for Hezbollah, preferring

instead to vote for the secularly inclined Amal party, or for traditional notables who eschew Islamism or any other ideology, for that matter.

It is thus important not to think of moderate Islamism as constituting a political wave that is sweeping all before it. It is of large and probably still growing importance, but its support level in the population may well be lower than is typically projected by election results, even though governments have in many instances sought to discourage votes for moderate Islamist candidates. Secularists are not a small minority in any of these systems and may in fact constitute silent majorities in most. It is important, therefore, not to write them off as political dinosaurs on the verge of extinction in the MENA. That could happen, but it is not pre-ordained. To the extent dialogue influences the balance of power between moderate Islamists and secularists, it needs to be evaluated from that perspective.

10.7 Recommendations

Probably of greatest importance is the need to clarify what the EU is seeking from engagement with Muslim democrats. While information exchange and general dialogue serve the purposes of increasing mutual familiarity and probably reducing misunderstandings and associated tensions, these are not truly strategic objectives. The one such objective that stands out is to help facilitate the transition to pluralist democracy through gradual incorporation of democrats, including Muslim democrats, into their respective political systems. This will require various compromises and changes by virtually all actors within these political systems, and those in turn will take time and possibly support by outside parties, including the EU. The systems themselves are also in need of change, for they are structurally inhospitable to democrats. They have been built around the principle of expediting the unfettered exercise of centralised executive power and hence have an absence of checks and balances and alternative sources and centres of power. Thus the transition to pluralism under the rule of law requires the democratic development of both actors and institutions and it is that development that should provide the focus for engagement not only with Muslim democrats, but other actors and institutions within these systems.

A related consideration is that despite Muslim democrats' rejection of the concept of interest representation, unless and until that feature develops, a truly pluralist democracy will not emerge. At present the

relationship between political organisations, including parties and broader movements, on the one hand, and specific interests, whether economic, regional, ethnic or whatever, on the other, is weak to non-existent. Authoritarian governments have systematically sought to prevent the emergence of such linkages. They have built patronage parties as alternatives to interest-based ones. And the political societies in question have not had long histories of organised political representation of specific interests, as opposed to political leadership by notables of various types. Thus a major transition in the concept of representation is necessary if mature, stable democracies are to emerge in the MENA region. This transition can only happen once competitive, democratic politics begin to take root and provide the opportunities for that competition to facilitate the emergence of interest representation. It is in the intervening period that Muslim democrats are likely to be powerful actors within these political systems. It should not be assumed that their prospects will be enhanced by the institutionalisation of pluralism. As presently constructed the organisations of Muslim democrats are more akin to broad protest movements and service providers than to interest-based political parties. They are thus appropriate for this particular historical circumstance, but not necessarily for the one that hopefully will follow. It is thus important that those involved in engagement appreciate the historical circumstances that have given rise to the popularity of Muslim democracy and also realise that those circumstances are not likely to persist forever.

A third recommendation is for engagement to be concerned primarily with the practical, not the philosophical. As discussed above, there are clear and profound philosophical differences between Europeans and Muslim democrats and those differences are unlikely to be resolved soon or through any imaginable sort of dialogue that could occur. Divergent views on many key issues, including human rights and especially gender relations, are embedded in these different philosophies. That does not mean, however, that compromise on the handling of these issues cannot be reached until the underlying philosophical differences are dealt with. Indeed, quite the opposite is the case, for the more the root causes of these differences are explored, the less easy will it be to reach compromise at a practical level. The search for common ground in resolving practical issues might be assisted by a general awareness of the philosophical orientations of both parties, but this could be severely impeded were the search to enhance that awareness to turn into exercises in self-justification. Possibly the best reconciliation of this potential dilemma is to separate the two

discussions, so that those with immediate policy relevance are isolated from engagement over philosophical issues, which can occur on a separate track.

A related recommendation is that engagement should be concerned with institutions and the nurturing of professionalism associated with the growth of both personal and institutional loyalties and capacities. The MENA is an area of strong societies and weak states, meaning that informal associational ties, such as those of kinship, region or sect, typically command greater loyalty than do ties to formal institutions. Mature democracy depends upon the effective functioning of such institutions, whether they are of government itself or in civil society. It is thus vital for the long term prospects for MENA democracy that such institutions, and loyalties to them, are strengthened. In the short term they also serve as valuable conduits through which democratisation assistance can reach wide audiences, including Muslim democrats. Assistance provided to parliaments, for example, is of at least indirect and frequently direct benefit to parliamentary delegations of Muslim democrats. Providing such assistance through institutions avoids the necessity of picking individual beneficiaries and also serves to cement linkages between civil society actors and state institutions. Thus to the extent that engagement with Muslim democrats can simultaneously serve to strengthen their commitments to institutions and the institutions themselves, it will maximise its impacts.

Finally, the evidence presented in this volume points to the need for the EU to clarify its policies towards the MENA and, specifically Muslim democrats within it, as well as to communicate those policies to non-governmental audiences, including to Muslim democrats. The present situation is one in which lack of knowledge of EU policies, combined with the actual lack of EU policies towards engaging with moderate Islamists, cause Muslim democrats to at best be curious about the EU and at worse to be suspicious of it. Engagement might itself help to contribute to policy formation in this important area, while also serving as a vehicle to disseminate relevant information about EU policies.

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Annex A: Check-list of topics and questions for interviews

I. The evolution of Islamist parties and movements in the political system

- How have the structures of the various Islamist groups/parties evolved, what is their relative importance, and what are their formal ideological/theological leanings?

- In particular, how have the ideas and strategies of the predominant Islamist party developed?

II. Islamist views on political reform process in the country in question

- Do Islamists aspire to more gradual change or a faster and further reaching process of reform, and in which directions?

- What alliances and divisions have taken shape between different Islamist groups/parties?

- How well embedded are Islamists' democratic credentials, as they have developed in practice?

III. General Islamist views on Europe as a democratic model

- To what extent does Europe serve as a normative reference point for democratic aspirations?

- If it does not, what are the negative factors that account for the lack of normative influence?

- How is the issue of Muslim minority rights within Europe perceived by Islamists?

- How do Islamists compare European and US models of democracy?

IV. Islamist views on EU foreign policy, including Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)

- Do Islamists have a high or low level of awareness of the nature of EU foreign policy in the Mediterranean?

- What do Islamists see as the strong points and the weak points of EU policies?

- How do they think EU policies compare with those of the US?

- What more could Europeans have done to defend Islamists' political rights?

- Is Europe seen as a supporter of democracy or of authoritarianism?

- What, if anything, does the move from EMP to ENP mean to Islamists?

- If EU policy has been largely irrelevant to the evolution of Islamist identities and policy positions, how do we account for this?

V. Areas of potential collaboration with Europe

- Have links with the EU taken root in any specific areas of cooperation?

- To what extent do Islamist opposition groups want EU support?

- Is there any link between Islamists' social welfare work and EU grsss roots programmes and intiatives?

- Where do Islamists think collaboration with the EU might be most possible and desirable?

VI. Areas of potential difference with Europe.

- Is there any evidence that in power (or stronger positions in government/parliament) Islamists would dilute cooperation with the EU?

- Would they be more cautious on opening up to European trade and investment?

- Are there human rights issues where Islamist policies are likely to clash with European views?

If Islamists have so far thought little about their views towards the EU, why is this?

Annex B:
Questionnaire submitted to the Muslim Brothers and Wasat party

<div dir="rtl">

<u>السيد:</u>
_____

<u>رؤية الإسلاميين لأوروبا كنموذج للديمقرطية:</u>

1- **هل تمثل أوروبا أو بعض الدول الأوروبية نموذجا للديمقراطية بالنسبة إليكم؟**
_____

2- **إذا كانت الإجابة بـ(لا)، ما هي الأسباب التي لا تجعل منها نموذجا للديمقراطية؟**
_____

3- **كيف تنظرون إلى مسألة حقوق الأقيات المسلمة في أوروبا؟**
_____

4- **ما هو الفارق بين النموذج الأوروبي والنموذج الأمريكي للديمقراطية من وجهة نظركم؟**
_____

<u>روية الإسلاميين للسياسة الخارجية للاتحاد الأوروبي (بما في ذلك سياسة الشراكة الأورومتوسطية وسياسية الجوار الأوروبية)</u>

1- **هل تعتقدون أن لديكم فكرة واضحة عن السياسة الأوروبية تجاه منطقة البحر الأبيض المتوسط؟**
_____

2- **ما هي في وجهة نظركم طبيعة أو أهم ملامح هذه السياسة؟**
_____

3- **كيف تقيمون معرفتكم بالسياسات الأوروبية (من 1 إلى 5 مع كون 1 الأقل معرفة و 5 هي الأكثر معرفة)**
_____

4- **ما هي ــ في وجهة نظركم- أهم نقاط القوة والضعف في هذه السياسة؟**
_____

5- **ما هو الفارق الرئيسي ــ في وجهة نظركم – بين سياسة الاتحاد الأوروبي وسياسة الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية؟**
_____

6- **ما الذي يمكن للاتحاد الأوروبي القيام به للدفاع عن الحقوق السياسية للإسلاميين؟**
_____

7- **من وجهة نظركم، هل يدعم الاتحاد الأوروبي الديمقراطية أم أنه يدعم النظم التسلطية؟**
_____

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—————————

8- ما هي أهم أسباب عدم الإحساس بأهمية السياسة الأوروبية بالنسبة لكم كإسلاميين؟

—————————

إمكانات التعاون مع الإتحاد الأوروبي:

1- هل هناك مجالات للتعاون مع الاتحاد الأوروبي بدأ العمل فيها بالفعل؟

—————————

2- إلى أي مدى لديكم رغبة في نيل مساندة من الإتحاد الأوروبي (لوجستي- تدريب- تقني...إلخ)؟

—————————

3- هل هناك أي صلات بين أنشطة الحركة الاجتماعية وأي من برامج ومبادرات الاتحاد الأوروبي الموجودة في مصر؟

—————————

4- ما هي في وجهة نظركم أفضل مجالات التعاون مع الاتحاد الأوروبي؟

—————————

مناطق الإختلاف مع أوروبا

1- في حالة وجودكم في أماكن صنع القرار ووضع السياسات (سواء عن طريق الوصول للحكم أو المشاركة فيه)، ما تأثير ذلك على التعاون مع الاتحاد الأوروبي؟ هل ترون فرص التعاون أكبر أم أقل؟

—————————

2- هل ستكونون أكثر حذرا من فتح مجالات التجارة والاستثمار مع الاتحاد الأوروبي؟

—————————

3- كيف تختلف رؤيتكم لحقوق الإنسان عن رؤية الاتحاد الأوروبي؟ ما هي قضايا حقوق الإنسان التي يختلف فيها موقفكم عن موقف الاتحاد؟

—————————

4- لماذا لم يبلور الإسلاميون إلى الان رؤية وموقف واضحين من الاتحاد الأوروبي؟

—————————

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