



---

Georgetown University Institutional Repository  
<http://www.library.georgetown.edu/digitalgeorgetown>

The author made this article openly available online. Please [tell us](#) how this access affects you. Your story matters.

---

### **Repression, Fundamentalism, and Terrorism in the Middle East**

Kamrava, Mehran. "Repression, Fundamentalism, and Terrorism in the Middle East." *Political Terror and Democratic Development*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2005, pp. 167 – 91.

Collection Permanent Link: <http://hdl.handle.net/10822/1048299>

© COPYRIGHT Northeastern University Press

This material is made available online with the permission of the author, and in accordance with publisher policies. No further reproduction or distribution of this copy is permitted by electronic transmission or any other means.

## **Repression, Fundamentalism, and Terrorism in the Middle East**

**Mehran Kamrava**

Appeared in, William Crotty, ed. *Political Terror and Democratic Development*. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2005), pp. 167-91.

Since the late 1970s, the Middle East has witnessed a re-emerging convergence between two historically salient phenomena: continued repression by the state on the one hand, and a re-politicization of Islam on the other. Neither phenomenon is particularly new or novel in the political history of the region. However, the particular context within which this latest convergence has taken place, in circumstances that are unique to the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, has resulted in the emergence of one strand of political Islam that is both highly violent and is transnational in nature. This fundamentalist strand of political Islam competes with the two other strands of popular and reformist Islam. In a context of heightened political repression and continued political insecurity, Islamic fundamentalism's resort to violence has attracted a small but committed band of followers. As the conditions that originally heightened the popularity of Islamic fundamentalism continue to spread and deepen, so does the appeal of violence as a religio-political medium of expression at the expense of Islamic populism and reformism. In sum, political repression in the Middle East has pushed the oppositional phenomenon of political Islam into an increasingly radical and violent direction, in the process undermining the appeal of more tempered interpretations of the religion.

This chapter examines the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism as a source of radical domestic political opposition and international terrorism. What led to the emergence of Islam as a viable forum for political opposition in the first place? What caused its steady radicalization and its resort to violence? And, why and how has fundamentalism overshadowed other interpretations and strands within Islam? Only through answering these questions is it possible to gain insights into the underlying causes for the growth and spread of what is often conveniently, and frequently inaccurately, given the generic label of "Islamic fundamentalism". In doing so, the chapter begins with an overview of the historical and political contexts within which Islam

became first increasingly politicized—or, more accurately, re-politicized—then steadily radicalized, and eventually turned to anti-Americanism. The chapter’s focus then shifts to Islam in opposition and to a discussion of the different forms and the nuances within the various manifestations of Islamist opposition. Not all Islamists are fundamentalist, and not all fundamentalists are violent. Nevertheless, there is a group of highly committed Islamists who have resorted to violence of unfathomable proportions. It is important to ask what inspires these violent fundamentalists, what their goals and objectives are, where their primary base of support lies, and what consequences their existence and their agendas are likely to have for the larger world of Islam. How does fundamentalism operationalize Islam as an ideology and violence as a means? More specifically, how did the Islamic concept of jihad become one of the mainstays of global terrorism at the dawn of the twenty-first century? Once these questions are examined, the chapter looks at some of the likely scenarios for the course that Islamic fundamentalism is likely to take in the future.

### **The Political History Context**

Today, violent Islamic fundamentalism constitutes a potent, if small, strand within the larger world of Islam. The emergence of this radical strand is a product of the nuances that have taken place within Middle Eastern and Arab politics over the past few decades. In broad terms, a general background of political Islam has long been a salient feature of the region’s political history. Up until the late 1960s and the early 1970s, and more specifically after the utter military defeat of the Arab nationalist project in the 1967 nakba (disaster) following the Six Day War, political Islam faced serious competition from ostensibly secular ideologies such as nationalism and socialism as a viable medium for political expression. Whether part of the official ideology of the state—as in Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, and the People’s Democratic Republic of

Yemen—or a platform of the state’s more serious opponents—as in Iran and Turkey, and to a lesser extent in Jordan, Morocco, and parts of the Arabian peninsula—the dominant ideological discourse remained essentially secular. This dominant discourse was often informed by some local variation of socialism if it were articulated by state elites, or, alternatively, by socialism—usually Maoism—or by liberal democracy if articulated by state opponents.

Equally important was the existence of a series of highly charismatic political leaders throughout the Middle East, the most notable of whom was Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt, and many others who aspired to be like him, such as Ahmed Ben Bella in Algeria and later Muammar Qaddafi in Libya. For each of these charismatic leaders, religion only informed a larger social and political background within which they articulated largely secular, nationalist agendas. While they could not afford to ignore religion altogether, they made no conscious efforts to portray themselves and their political projects as necessarily religious, nor did they see much political utility in manipulating religion for political purposes. In one way or another, Islam for them was never a central tenet of the populist polities which they were seeking to bring about. If anything, Nasser saw in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al-Muslimin) a dangerous opponent to both his personal power and his socialist project. In 1954, when the organization began calling for the implementation of Islamic law, the shari’a, the Nasserist state arrested more than a thousand of its members and had many of them tortured. In 1966, Sayyid Qutb, a prominent figure within the organization and in many ways the spiritual father of Islamic fundamentalism, was hanged after enduring severe torture in prison (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999, 43).

As it turned out, however, it wasn’t Islam or the Muslim Brotherhood that unravelled Nasserism. It was, rather, Nasser himself, more specifically his penchant for repression and the

facade of military prowess in which he had wrapped himself. When he died of a heart attack in September 1970, he was a broken man, a shadow of his former self. Ben Bella fared even worse. His fate was that of a child of a revolution devoured by the revolution itself. On June 19, 1965, he was overthrown in a bloodless coup, arrested, and sent to exile in Europe.

Beginning in the 1970s, secular discourses, both official and oppositional, steadily discredited themselves. Throughout the Middle East, in one form or another, largely secular projects such as nationalism, socialism, and Palestinian liberation proved themselves to be militarily incompetent, politically inept and repressive, economically hollow, and morally bankrupt. Not surprisingly, the discourses attached to each, also largely secular, underwent a similar loss of appeal and popular legitimacy. It did not help that the primary architects of these secular doctrines were themselves defeated and dispirited, on the defensive, and, in many cases, politically suppressed. Michel Aflaq, for example, who had originally articulated Ba'athist ideology in Syria under the banner of "unity, freedom, socialism", was expelled from Syria in 1966 and moved to Iraq, where "he imparted ideological legitimacy" to Iraq's Ba'athist regime (Virost 1994, 28-9). Aflaq, incidentally, happened to be Christian. Khalil Hawi (b. 1912), the renowned nationalist Lebanese poet, also a Christian, could not stand to further witness the downward spiral of everything that he and his generation had once hoped for. On the eve of Israel's invasion of Lebanon on June 6, 1982, Hawi committed suicide. As the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish reflected in Hawi's eulogy, Hawi "was weary of the state of decay, weary of looking over the bottomless abyss" (quoted in, Ajami 1998, 28). Another nationalist poet, the Syrian Nizar Qabbani, told an interviewer in 1985: "I don't write because I can't say something that equals the sorrow of this Arab nation. I can't open any of the countless dungeons of this large prison" (quoted in, Ajami 1998, 112).

Aflaq's exile, Hawi's suicide, and Qabbani's loss of words all symbolized a deeper malaise in the larger Arab nationalist project, a project whose genesis and flavor had long been secular. Secularism was being beaten and defeated, partly on account of its own failures and partly a victim of circumstances beyond its control. Whatever the cause, its decline was steady and fast.

This loss of ground on the part of secular political projects and secular ideologies gave rise to and in turn reinforced the increasing ascendance of political interpretations of Islam, hitherto pushed into the background by a combination of state repression and lack of appeal among the urban middle classes. That by the early to mid 1970s the very class structure of Middle Eastern societies was being fundamentally altered—with expansive educational systems and bureaucracies giving rise to a salaried class of urbanites and the lumpenproletariat growing to uncontrollable proportions due to rural-urban migration—only added to the ideological and practical appeal of political Islam. By the time the decade drew to a close, Islam had proven itself as a viable and powerful political force, emerging victorious in an Iran that had been ruled by a seemingly invincible monarch. To the majority of Sunni Muslims, initially at least, it seemed to matter little that Islam's political victory had been achieved under the banner of Shi'ism. What was important was the transcendence of political Islam from the realm of theory into practice. For the first time in more than a half century since the demise of the Ottomans, something remotely resembling the caliphate and calling itself an Islamic Republic, had come to power. And, the new Republic was not at all shy in seeking to inspire Islamists throughout the Middle East and beyond.

The 1980s brought new heights for political Islam. This was due to a convergence of three clusters of factors. They included the failure of literally all Middle Eastern states to deliver

the goods and services on which much of their domestic legitimacy depended; international conditions supportive of an increasingly radicalized Islam; and, the increasing re-emergence of Islam as a viable and potent source of collective and national identity. Combined, these sets of factors not only increased the potency of Islam as a viable political solution but also led to its growing radicalization. By the time the decade was over, political Islam was well on its way to giving rise to an increasingly violent strand of fundamentalism.

One of the primary reasons for the deepening growth of political Islam had to do with the appearance of cracks in the ruling bargains that Middle Eastern states had been able to strike with their societies over the previous decades. As serious economic difficulties set in beginning in the early 1980s, many Middle Eastern states found it more and more difficult to fulfill their end of the bargain. This bargain had been predicated on four primary premises designed to guarantee the state's legitimacy and resilience: defense of the motherland and its national interests; the provision of goods and services through patronage networks; fostering economic development through rent-seeking activities; and, to ensure the bargain's tenacity, state authoritarianism (Kamrava 2001). However, throughout the 1980s, Middle Eastern states faced multiple economic setbacks resulting from a decade-long recession, a serious decline in oil revenues, and the mounting costs of the Iran-Iraq war for literally all countries of the region. Even Saddam Hussein, the new, self-declared Nasser and Saladdin of his age, turned out to be a less than capable military leader, his supposed military victory over the Iranians in 1988 only skin deep.

The ensuing void in state services was filled by a host of emerging Islamist organizations and associations in practically every Middle Eastern country. These Islamic organizations and charitable associations (jam'iyat khairiyya) provide a whole slew of services such as affordable



health care, job training, infant day care for working mothers, and various forms of financial assistance like money-lending and money transfers. Their size can vary from as few as four or five employees to scores of health care professionals, educators, or clerical personnel (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999, 26-7). In Egypt especially, where the financial and structural limitations of the state have been particularly acute, there has been a proliferation of Islamic organizations of various types. In Palestinian Occupied Territories, the initial rise in the popularity of the Hamas organization was also a product of its sponsorship of a number of voluntary associations dedicated to preaching and guidance, health, education, sports, welfare, and charity (Mishal and Sela 2000, 20). A similar but slightly different development occurred in both Jordan and Egypt, where in many of the professional associations that were being established—belonging to physicians, pharmacists, engineers, dentists, and lawyers—individuals with strong Islamist convictions were being elected to leadership positions (Tripp 1996, 60-3).

The emergence and spread of Islamist organizations and professional associations with strong Islamist overtones have had two important, inter-related consequences. To begin with, although the services they provide by no means make the state redundant, they do serve as an important vehicle for addressing some of the needs of the more traditional strata of society. In Egypt, for example, there is a popular perception that “Islamic institutions have the concern for the poor that the public sector is supposed to have and the efficiency and quality attributed to the private sector” (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999, 33). This has helped to further erode the legitimacy of the state while at the same time enhancing the credibility of Islamist alternatives. Related to this is a further development, namely the spread of a popular form of collective, communal identity that is heavily enmeshed with Islam and is distinct from the official identity that the state has been trying to articulate and spread among the masses.

Identity politics was, in fact, a second factor that directly contributed to the growing salience of an increasingly radical political Islam. Proliferating Islamist organizations provided ordinary people with an alternative source of identity—an Islamic sense of the self, both at the individual and the national levels and, in some cases, even at the much larger level of the whole Muslim world. The fostering of a compelling sense of political identity, of being a part of and belonging to a body politic, was an endeavor in which the state had not only failed but, in fact, it often seemed to be directly working against.

In the Palestinian territories and in Lebanon, where the state was either on the run (the PLO in the 1980s, if it could even be called a state) or in a condition of near-total paralysis, the Hamas and the Hezbollah organizations respectively played especially crucial roles in fostering alternative, profoundly religious sources of identity. In Lebanon, years of neglect and institutional prejudice by the central government had created a pool of slum-dwelling Shi'ites living in the "belt of misery". When Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, a conglomeration of armed Shi'ite groups, highly militant and with little to lose, joined to form the Hezbollah organization (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 10). As the invasion dragged on and turned increasingly bloody after the massacres of the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, the Hezbollah, initially aided by Iran, became considerably more militant and developed deeper roots within Lebanon's Shi'ite community. For the first time, Lebanese Shi'ites had a group that actively represented them and defended their interests. As the war dragged on, and as the Hezbollah itself underwent a steady process of "Lebanonization," there was an increasing sense among the country's Shi'ites that they had earned their citizenship in their struggle against Israel and no longer belonged "on the edge" or "on the margins" (al-atraf) of the country (Dagher 2000, 43).

A somewhat similar development occurred for the Hamas in the Palestinian territories of Gaza and the West Bank, at a time when the PLO was bogged down in internal squabbles and was losing touch with many of its constituents in Palestine, having earlier been expelled from Lebanon by the advancing Israeli forces. When, in December 1987, the spontaneous uprising known as the intifada erupted, “Hamas quickly attracted a large following. Young men joined up in droves, many of them already Islamic activists, others disaffected supporters of the PLO. . . Of the young men who flocked to its ranks, many had refugee backgrounds and saw an opportunity for self-identity and esteem vis-à-vis the rest of society through their association with this religious organisation which put a mask of holiness on them” (Milton-Edwards 1996, 147).

A third set of factors revolved around the international and intra-regional developments that were unfolding in the Middle East throughout the 1980s, not the least of which were the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88 and the disintegration of Afghanistan as a viable national entity ruled by a sovereign state. The Iran-Iraq war prompted both of the belligerents—and on the Iraqi side its close allies in the Arabian Peninsula—to actively promote their own religious credentials and to court Islamist supporters. Fighting against a feverishly militant, brand new Islamic Republic, Saddam Hussein was eager to emphasize his own religious credentials. The president frequently reminded his audiences that he was a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad; and he often implied that only Arabs could rightfully claim the mantle of Islam (Karsh and Rausti 1991, 151-2). Later on, in the midst of the Gulf War, in 1991 the Arabic inscription Allah Akbar (God is great) was added to the Iraqi flag. A similar official re-emphasis of the state’s Islamic credentials occurred in Saudi Arabia. For the Saudi royal family, this re-emphasis on Islam was given added urgency after the takeover of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by a group comprised of several hundred Islamic fundamentalists in November 1979. The takeover lasted more than two weeks

and ended only after close to three hundred militants and government soldiers were killed in the ensuing firefight. Once the Grand Mosque was reclaimed, the kingdom's official ulama (clerics), whose salaries were raised, were told to emphasize the royal family's religious credentials during their sermons. There was also a public campaign to clamp down on video stores selling movies considered offensive to Islam (Wilson and Graham 1994, 589). Finally, in 1986, King Fahd dropped the honorific "His Majesty" and instead adopted the title "Custodian of Islam's Holiest Mosques". Even the self-avowedly Europeanizing prime minister of Turkey at the time, Turgut Özal, found it prudent to undertake a well-publicized hajj pilgrimage to Mecca in 1987.

The cumulative effects of the public embrace of Islam by these and other states helped reinforce a general atmosphere of heightened Islamic identity throughout the Middle East. Within each country, the state's belated championing of religion was often seen by the population, especially the urban middle classes, as another sinister ploy to bolster its declining legitimacy. Domestically, therefore, such moves seldom succeeded in mollifying Islamist opposition. At a broader regional and international level, however, they did create a larger atmosphere of heightened religious awareness, a sense that Islam was a viable and powerful source of collective identity which demanded and received the respect of successive governments in the region.

The 1980s started with Islam having entrenched itself within the dominant discourse and political atmosphere inside each Middle Eastern country and throughout the region. By the time the decade was drawing to a close, what was now "political Islam" had given rise to a radical strand that embraced violence as a tactical and strategic necessity. The underlying causes of this turn by a subcategory of political Islam toward violence lay in domestic political dynamics within each Middle Eastern country on the one hand, and, on the other hand, in the larger

regional and international reverberation of events unfolding in three other Middle Eastern countries, namely Lebanon, Palestine, and Afghanistan. More specifically, most states responded to the emergence of oppositional political Islam with reinvigorated authoritarianism and heightened levels of repression. This was especially the case in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Algeria, where state violence directed at Islamist groups helped pushed them underground and further in the direction of radicalism and violence. At the same time, the bloody course of the Lebanese civil war, the eruption of the Palestinian intifada in 1987, and the disintegration of Afghanistan during the prolonged struggle against Soviet occupation provided the backdrop against which the articulation of political Islam began to take shape beginning in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. More significantly, whereas Lebanon and Palestine starkly reminded Islamist groups of the plight of fellow Muslims and the perceived injustices meted out against them, Afghanistan provided the appropriate conditions and opportunities to put theory into practice, first by fighting against “godless invaders” and then fighting for a truly Islamic state.

In Egypt, the Islamist opposition has long been divided between the more mainstream, largely reformist Muslim Brotherhood and the radical groupings collectively referred to as the Jama‘at Islamiyya, or Islamic Groups. The Egyptian state’s tolerance of the Muslim Brotherhood has ranged over time from begrudging tolerance and allowing it to partake in parliamentary elections, to banning the organization altogether and throwing its members in prison. It has, however, been consistent in its extremely harsh treatment of those suspected of being sympathetic to the goals and ideologies of any of the Jama‘at groups. In September 1981, for example, following clashes between militant Islamists and Copts, Egyptian security forces rounded up some 1,500 religious activists and Jama‘at sympathizers. Less than a month later, President Anwar Sadat was assassinated by members of one of the Jama‘at organizations called

the al-Jihad (Rubin 2002, 21-2). As the government's sweep of Islamist activists continued through the 1980s, so did intermittent terrorist attacks by Jama'at members on foreign tourists and former and current government officials.

Morocco also saw scattered terrorist attacks on foreign tourists in the 1980s and, to a lesser extent, in the 1990s, although the attacks were not anywhere close in magnitude to those in Egypt (Hughes 2001, 302-3). In Syria, meanwhile, the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, long an opponent of President Hafiz Assad's regime, had agitated against the state for some time in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. In February 1982, after months of scattered attacks orchestrated by the Muslim Brotherhood, government forces attacked the city of Hama, which had been one of the Brotherhood's strongholds. In the three-week carnage that ensued, some 10,000 to 25,000 residents of the city were killed, countless homes were demolished, and entire neighborhoods and quarters were razed to the ground (Friedman 1989, 77-87).

Less than a decade later, Algeria witnessed a bloodbath of a different sort. In January 1992, the Algerian military stepped in and canceled the second round of parliamentary elections that had been scheduled a few months earlier. The first round of balloting, held the previous December, had resulted in an unexpected victory by candidates from a new Islamist party called the Islamic Salvation Front (Front Islamique du Salut, FIS). What ensued was a bloody civil war that lasted for most of the remainder of the decade between FIS supporters on the one side and state security forces on the other. Altogether, during the next seven years or so, an estimated 75,000 Algerians lost their lives and many more were wounded. Early in 1993, small armed gangs known as Armed Islamic Groups (Groupes Islamiques Armes, GIA) began appearing throughout the country, especially Algiers. As one observer has noted, the GIA "seemed to be little more than gangs, but with the extra zeal that may have come from fighting in a religiously

sanctioned campaign against a regime that was considered to be illegitimate and non-Muslim” (Quandt 1998, 66). The atrocities that were committed by both sides were equalled only to those committed during the country’s national war of liberation from France from 1954 to 1962. During the thanatos of the 1990s, “the killing was often of the most intimate and grisly kind, the kind that perhaps only happens in civil wars where the enemy has to be totally demonized in order to legitimize the killing” (Quandt 1998, 66).

Such was the predicament of the Middle East by the end of the 1980s and the start of the 1990s. Syria’s bloody uprising in Hama had been suppressed with unfathomable repression near the beginning of the decade, and an uneasy calm masked deeper Islamist resentment toward the secular regime in Damascus. Iran and Iraq were still smoldering from a violent conflict—the longest war of the twentieth century (Hiro 1991)—during which they had both sought to claim the mantle of Islam’s leadership. Lebanon’s sectarian-based civil war ended in 1990 only after the different sides had fought each other to exhaustion and the Syrian army intervened in the country with full force. Among the civil war’s lasting legacies was the establishment and rise of a new political party calling itself the Party of God, Hezbollah, trained and supported by that other divinely inspired state, Iran’s Islamic Republic. Algeria’s nightmare had only just begun, meanwhile, as both the GIA and the government’s security forces reigned terror on innocent civilians and bystanders. And Afghanistan was about to sink further into the abyss as the struggle against Soviet invaders gave way to fratricide among competing fanatical warriors.

Throughout the region, the state has been too insecure of its hold on power and too keenly aware of its unpopularity to allow any form of meaningful political opposition or even unfettered political participation. Instead, every attempt by even moderate political forces to carve out a space for themselves in the public domain is at best restricted by law and at worst

crushed by violence. The experience of the Wassat party in Egypt is instructive. Founded by a group of highly respected Islamist reformists in 1996, the party repeatedly applied to the Egyptian government for a permit to operate, but to no avail. Following each unsuccessful attempt, party leaders sought to allay government concerns by further moderating the party's already centrist ideological platform. But nothing seemed to satisfy the government, and the authorities even refused permission to party leaders to publish a newspaper instead (Baker 2003, 198-201).

Within such a context, when even moderate opposition is not tolerated, the radicalization of political dissent is all but inevitable. With mainstream ideologies shut out and moderate activism suppressed both legally and physically, the only recourse open to many political aspirants is to resort to extremism. The moderate opposition appears weak, at the mercy of a state that does not even recognize its right to exist, and advocates an accommodationist ideology that seems highly inadequate for tackling the harsh realities of the body politic. At the same time, through their binary vision of the world into good and evil, extremists offer a simple and compelling ideological framework that promises tangible results and immediate gratification. More importantly, it offers its adherents the conceptual and practical tools to combat the state on the uncompromising, violent grounds that state leaders understand. Just as the demise of secular alternatives pushed Middle Eastern political ideologies into the embrace of Islam, state repression pushed political Islam into an increasingly violent direction.

### **Political Islam and Anti-Americanism**

By the time the decade of the 1990s started, political Islam had found a new target: the United States. This identification of the United States as the real enemy was not necessarily a product of an ideological shift directed at battling the infidel enemy. Neither was it a manifestation of a



larger civilizational clash in the making. Instead, it was a product of simple realpolitik. Facing unprecedented levels of repression and highly constricted environments at home, Islamist groups faced serious tactical and strategic challenges. Although they had been emboldened by the larger regional and international developments, and of course by the seemingly higher levels of piety among their own populations, many of the more radical Islamist groups appeared to have reached a tactical and strategic dead end. They had adopted armed struggle to overthrow the state, and had dedicated much energy, manpower, and sacrifice to their endeavors. But the state, now more repressive than ever before, showed no signs of collapsing. Instead, many Islamist groups decided to embarrass the state internationally and to make cooperation with it costly in human terms. The Jama'at Islamiyya, for example, began targeting tourists in Egypt, and, at around the same time, the FIS started attacking foreign contractors and businessmen in Algeria. But the most spectacular attacks were directed at American targets and symbols.

The opening shot at America had been fired as early as 1979 by the Iranians, when on November 4 of that year street rioters attacked the US embassy in Tehran and, with the blessing of Ayatollah Khomeini, took its diplomats hostage for 444 days. Then, on October 23, 1983, in the midst of the blaze and ruin of Beirut, came what was later to become the first of a series of spectacular attacks on American might. A car laden with explosives drove through the barracks housing the US Marines who had been stationed there to keep a non-existing peace. Some 161 American soldiers were killed, another 75 wounded. Also dead were scores of French paratroopers stationed in the same complex. It took another decade for the United States to once again become the target of terrorism from the Middle East, which this time struck on American soil itself and in the heart of America's financial nerve center. On February 26, 1993, a car-bomb went off in garage of the World Trade Center in New York City, killing six and wounding nearly

a thousand people. Sheikh Umar Adbel Rahman, an Egyptian cleric who earlier had been linked to the assassination of Sadat and now lived in the United States, was convicted of being the primary force behind the attack. Then came two bombings directed at American forces stationed in Saudi Arabia, one in Riyadh in November 1995 and another on the Khobar Towers near Dhahran, in July 1996. Five American soldiers were killed in the first attack and another nineteen in the second, with hundreds more injured. Two years later, on August 7, 1998, the American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam were car-bombed by terrorists with Middle Eastern links, resulting in 258 deaths and more than 5,000 injuries. Finally, on October 12, 2000, the U.S.S. Cole was attacked off the coast of Yemen as it was docking in Aden to refuel. Seventeen American sailors died and many more were injured.

As daring and painful as these attacks were, they paled in comparison with what transpired on September 11, 2001, the tragic story of which is all too familiar and needs no repeating here. By the time that awful Tuesday morning was over, four jetliners full of passengers had been lost, the Twin Towers had crumbled, and the Pentagon itself was attacked. The mastermind behind the attacks, it was soon discovered, was none other than Osama bin Laden, long one of America's most determined and violent opponents in the Islamic fundamentalist camp. After "9/11," the landscape of New York City, and America itself, was forever changed as a direct result of Islamic fundamentalism and its unbridled violence.

There was, of course, more to anti-Americanism than mere tactical and strategic convenience. The attacks on American targets and symbols by Islamic fundamentalists were the product of a larger, more complex phenomenon of pervasive anti-Americanism simmering throughout the Middle East for some time. Middle Eastern anti-Americanism predated the re-emergence of political Islam by a long shot, having grown out a history of unconditional

American support for Israel and for corrupt and repressive dictators who were seen to be doing America's bidding on its behalf. By the time Islam stepped in to fill the vacuum left by the discrediting of various secular "isms," anti-American sentiments were already widespread. It was only natural for Islam, a powerful strand of which had already become politicized and radicalized, to also become anti-American.

What made the 1990s so deadly for the Americans in the Middle East was the dawn of what was seen as Pax Americana in the region following the end of the second Gulf War (Ajami 2001). Since the defeat and ejection of Iraqi forces out of Kuwait in 1991, the United States had made itself a permanent military presence in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula. Through a series of bilateral and multilateral agreements with the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the US steadily secured "access to naval and air bases, the prepositioning of war matériel, combined exercises, and vast arms sales" (El-Shazly and Hinnebusch 2002, 73). This level of American military and political penetration into the Middle East was unprecedented, and the angry reactions to it were swift and violent. Political Islam provided the available, and most viable and resonant, medium through which this anger and violence was expressed. Fouad Ajami's reflections in this regard bear repeating:

There were men in the shadows pulling off spectacular deeds. But they fed off a free-floating anti-Americanism that blows at will and knows no bounds, among Islamists and secularists alike. For crowds in Karachi, Cairo, and Amman, the great power could never get it right. A world lacking the tools and the political space for free inquiry fell back on anti-Americanism (Ajami 2002, 78-9).

Islam had stepped in at just the right time. First political, then radical, eventually violent, and always resonant, by the 1990s it offered the perfect blueprint for venting frustrations and for striking at enemies. Perhaps no other force or ideology could have mustered the level of

commitment or the depth of violence which simmered throughout the decade and reached a crescendo on September 11, 2001.

Islam's journey from the political background in the 1950s and the early 1960s into the political limelight in the 1970s and the 1980s, and its resort to violence since the 1990s, has been a direct result of the evolving political context within which it found itself. Failed oppositional alternatives brought it to the fore, regional and international developments emboldened it, and state repression made it violent. As Ajami puts it, what we see is "a generational faultline between secular parents and their theocratic children" (Ajami 1998, xii). But the succession of Islam first by political Islam and then by Islamic fundamentalism was by no means a linear process. Neither did each successive layer of Islam completely overwhelm the previous one that had given rise to it. And, each of the three interpretations of the religion—Islam as a religion and a moral blueprint, Islam as a medium for political expression, and Islam as an inspiration for radicalism and political violence—is itself multi-layered and far from being monolithic. It is, therefore, important to understand the differences that mark one interpretation of Islam from another, and the precise role that Islam has come to play today in articulating cultural identity and offering political solutions for Muslims. More specifically, what, if any, is the political ideology of Islamic fundamentalism? It is to an examination of these issues that the chapter turns next.

### **Islamist Opposition**

To better understand the essence and appeal of Islamic fundamentalism, it is important to acquire a clearer picture of the larger social and cultural milieu within which it operates. More specifically, since Islamic fundamentalism is a product of a larger social and political environment, one which it in turn effects, attention must be paid to some of the broader

developments unfolding within Islam as a religion and a socially pervasive phenomenon. The re-emergence of Islam as a medium for political expression, both peaceful and violent, and its rediscovery as a viable source of cultural identity has occurred at three levels. The first level may be labelled popular Islam as it revolves around a general deepening of piety and religious convictions among a vast majority of Muslims in the Middle East and elsewhere. A second level is intellectual or learned Islam as evident in a re-emergence of Islam as a field of debate and theorizing by Islamic thinkers and academics throughout the Muslim world. The third level is Islamic fundamentalism, with its own worldview, ideal polity, and conceptual and actual tools for achieving political goals.

As a social phenomenon, the growth of popular Islam in Muslim societies is difficult to empirically quantify and measure. However, even casual, impressionistic observations in any Middle Eastern city quickly reveal the depth and magnitude of popular belief in and devotion to Islamic precepts. At the most observable level, one notices a far greater preponderance of men sporting beards and women wearing various forms of veil in a manner which, for both genders, represents their Islamic piety (Gaffney 1994, 88-90). This is the case not only in the more traditional quarters of cities in the Arab world, or in places where the observance of Islamic dress code is legally enforced, as in Saudi Arabia and Iran, but also in ostensibly Europeanized cities such as Istanbul and Tunis. In Turkey, what has come to be known as the “headscarf war” has been fought off and on since the early 1980s between the country’s virulently secularist establishment and an expanding pool of urban women with Islamist sentiments. As one observer has noted, “an ultimate irony is the fact that many young Western-educated women are at the forefront of the headscarf movement, although Turkish women have acquired more legal rights than any women in the Muslim world” (Howe 2000, 104). There was a similar increase in the

adoption of the Islamic dress by Tunisian women in the late 1980s, prompting the government to react by banning state agencies from hiring women wearing the hijab (Holmes-Eber 2003, 20).

There are two other equally revealing measures of increased levels of religious piety among average Middle Easterners. One has to do with the proliferation of formal and informal religious groups and societies, especially among the youth and university students. Beginning in the late 1970s, for example, as the number of Egyptian universities grew to more than double what it had been in the Nasser era, various Islamic societies were established on many campuses and became the hotbeds of Islamist political activism (Choueiri 1997, 160). Throughout the 1980s, Islamist students gained ascendance on many Palestinian university campuses as well, a trend that was only accentuated in the 1990s (Abu-Amr 1994, 17; Milton-Edwards 1999, 132-4). In Algeria, students with Islamist tendencies became active in the so-called Student Mosque groups and other similar informal gatherings beginning in the 1970s, in turn paving the way for the explosion of Islamist sentiments in the late 1980s and the 1990s (Shahin 1998, 119-20). Similar developments took place in university campuses across the Middle East throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and the 1990s. Even in the virulently secularist Turkey, the 1980s and the 1990s saw a dramatic rise in the numbers and popularity of non-governmental religious secondary schools, universities, and hostels. Most of these religiously-based educational establishments are funded by the Islamist activist millionaire Fethullah Gülen and his charitable foundation, reportedly responsible for the founding of some one hundred schools in Turkey and another two hundred in Central Asia (Howe 2000, 37). Before long, many of the Gülen-funded hostels had turned into meeting places for sufi orders (tarikats) and informal Islamic discussion groups, much, of course, to the chagrin of the secular political establishment. By the early 1990s, official concern over the pervasiveness of Islamic sentiments on campuses prompted the zealous rector

of Istanbul University to decree a ban on the observance of the Islamic dress code by female students (Howe 2000, 104).

Another indication of the rise of popular Islamist sentiments is the incredible increase over the last two to three decades in the number of mosques in practically all Middle Eastern countries, and throughout the Muslim world for that matter. In the West Bank and Gaza, for example, the number of mosques jumped from 400 in 1967 to 750 in 1987, the year the intifada started (Abu-Amr 1994, 15). There have also been “galloping increases” in the number of mosques in Egypt even as there been a precipitous decline in the number of qualified professional preachers, with official estimates putting the total number of mosques in the country anywhere between 40,000 to 60,000 (Gaffney 1994, 265). In Tunisia, as more and more university students became attracted to Islam in the 1980s and the 1990s, they started opening small mosques in their faculties and dormitories (Hamdi 1998, 25). There has been a similarly discernible rise in Islamist sentiments among Moroccan university students (Entelis 1996, 99-100).

The general underlying causes for the popular resurgence of Islam are not that different from those which were responsible for Islam’s politicization and eventual militancy. Repression and lack of responsiveness by the state, the successive failures of various secular ideologies and movements, and cultural alienation at the dizzying pace of social change, especially for recent arrivals to the cities, all combined to enhance the social resonance of Islam and its emergence as a viable source of identity. Two additional factors need mentioning. The first had to do with the initial courting of Islam by otherwise secular states for purposes of their own legitimacy. In addition to those mentioned earlier, Anwar Sadat’s overtures to the Muslim Brotherhood and to

Islam in general at the beginning of his tenure in office went a long way in encouraging and emboldening Egypt's Islamist movement (Ansari 1986, 211).

A second factor revolves around the geographic concentration of a greater percentage of those with strong religious convictions in the provincial cities and towns instead of the capital city. In Egypt, for example, most of the members of the Jama'at Islamiyya are drawn from the southern cities of Upper Egypt, especially Asyut (Gaffney 1994, 82). In Turkey, similarly, political parties with vaguely religious platforms—the Refah, which was banned and resurrected as the Fazilet, and now its latest incarnation the AK Party—have consistently done well in the eastern parts of the country and in other provincial towns. One of the primary reasons for this has to do with the state's diminished capacities to effectively penetrate society outside of the capital city, therefore eroding its ability to craft a political culture that supports its ideology and its overall position in relation to the larger society. Also, the less cosmopolitan and more conservative atmospheres of the provincial towns more easily lend themselves to the unfettered growth and spread of Islamist sentiments as compared to the more complex, multi-layered cultural context of larger cities. Where alienation is more acute, so is the pervasiveness of the comforting cushion and worldview of religion.

The widespread social and cultural alienation of both popular and the more learned classes in the Middle East has also resulted in the emergence of a more learned, intellectual Islam, articulated by academics, intellectuals, and theoretician activists. In their analysis of contemporary Islamist discourse, Mansour Moaddel and Kamran Talattof (2000, 3) offer a division of Muslim thinkers into the two distinct camps of reformists and fundamentalists. There are five core issues, they maintain, that sharply distinguish the two groups from one another. They include (i) Islamic jurisprudence, and its relation to the rational sciences and epistemology;



(ii) the relationship between Islam and politics and the proper form of government; (iii) the nature of Western society and the larger idea of civilizations; (iv) the status of women in society as prescribed by Islam; and, (v) personal lifestyle and behavior (Moaddel and Talattof 2000, 3).

While highly useful as a general signpost for distinguishing the two extremes of contemporary intellectual discourse within Islam, the sharp distinction offered by Moaddel and Talattof overlooks subtle differences among intellectuals in the moderate camp. In broad terms, as Moaddel and Talattof maintain, Islamist thinkers and activists may be divided into the fundamentalist and moderate categories. Equally important, nevertheless, are subtle differences among moderate thinkers on Islamic doctrine and jurisprudence. Nevertheless, there is widespread agreement among most thinkers and intellectuals belonging to this category on a number of key issues. For example, they generally bemoan the erosion of Islamic values in society, which they claim is largely due to the encroachment of Western materialism, and advocate a more authentic, indigenous vision of the ideal society. They seek to authenticate what they see as an imitative reality imported from the West. At the same time, they do not advocate or endorse retreat from the world of modernity, or, for that matter, from active engagement in the global arena. At the same time, they refuse to endorse violence as a viable political or social mean and, instead, advocate a gradualist, reformist strategy for achieving long term objectives (Baker 2003). Not surprisingly, some of these Muslim thinkers have articulated highly complex and vibrant visions of an “Islamic democracy.” The most representative of these individuals are figures like Fethullah Gülen (b. 1938) in Turkey, Rachid Ghannouchi (b. 1941) in Tunisia, Mohsen Kadivar (1959) and Abdolkarim Soroush in Iran, Indonesia’s Abdelrahman Wahid (b. 1941), and Anwar Ibrahim (b. 1947) in Malaysia.

Gülen's ideas are inspired by those of Said Nursi (1873-1960), who had earlier sought to foster a new Turkish national identity based on the construction of an Islamic consciousness and "a new map of meaning to guide everyday life" (Yavuz 1999, 588; original emphasis). Through reading circles, darshanes, of which there are an estimated 5,000 in Turkey today, Gülen and other followers of Nursi, generally called the Nurcus, call for a remembering of the past rather than its erasure from the collective memory and a "rediscovery of the self." While he has been careful not to repudiate the secular legacy of Kemal Atatürk, Gülen has been the primary force behind the "construction of a 'new' national Islam of Turkey that is marked by the logic of a market economy and the Ottoman legacy" (Yavuz 1999, 593).

Rachid Ghannouchi similarly calls for a rebuilding and re-Islamization of Muslim societies. (Esposito and Voll 2001, 106). "We need to define ourselves," he maintains. "Tunisians are not tourists. They have a history and a background that forms their identity. The rules on which they live should come from that background" (quoted in, Esposito and Voll 2001, 106). At the same time, while carving their own identity, Tunisians should "not refuse to interact and learn from other civilizations" (Esposito and Voll 2001, 107). This would neither exclude the possibility of political democracy, nor does it imply blind imitation of the West. Islam, Ghannouchi maintains, itself has democratic foundations, giving people freedom of choice, education, property ownership, and participation in public life (Tamimi 2001, 91).

Anwar Ibrahim's arguments are quite similar, and he has tried to distinguish his position from both fundamentalism and Westernism:

We believe that a revitalization of tradition, with all its cultural and intellectual richness, is the most effective countervailing force against fanaticism and ethnocentrism. In the context of Islam, this process of revitalization comprehends the reassertion of the values of justice (al-adl), tolerance (al-tasamuh) and compassion (al-rahman) (Esposito and Voll 2001, 195).

For his part, Mohsen Kadivar has devoted the bulk of his writings to examining the various aspects of religious government in general and religion's role in the Islamic Republic of Iran in specific. Kadivar's writings revolve around four main themes: a firm belief in religion as a viable, and in fact necessary, force in politics; the compatibility of religion and freedom; the political role and responsibilities of the clergy; and the nature and responsibilities of the velayat faqih (supreme jurisconsult). It is in relation to the last theme, the role of the velayat faqih, where Kadivar's views come into sharp conflict with those of the official orthodoxy of the Iranian state. After a long and detailed analysis of Islamic political thought over the centuries, he delves into a detailed, critical analysis of the concept of faqih (Kadivar 1998). Although he never quite challenges Ayatollah Khomeini's seminal views on the notion of velayat faqih (explored below), he comes very close to doing so. After examining the concept as articulated in the Koran, in the sayings of the Prophet, and in Islamic and Shi'ite traditions, Kadivar comes to the conclusion that the concept has never been a central tenet of Islamic thinking and practice. More specifically, he maintains, absolute, religiously based faqih (Velayat-e Shar'i Faqih), used by Khomeini to justify theocratic authoritarianism, has no scientific and rational justification. That does not, however, necessarily rule out some modified form of jurisconsultancy that is subject to supervision and checks. The practical significance of this point, of course, has not been lost on the Iranian state. Nor, of course, has it gone undetected by the politically-aware middle class Iranians at large.

Despite the relative moderation of their arguments and their great reluctance to foment or be associated with extremist movements, literally all of these intellectuals have been subject to harassment and/or arrest by the authorities. Gülen has been living in self-imposed exile in the United States for years. Ghannouchi, currently in exile in France, has spent several years in

prison off and on and the political party he helped set up, al-Nahda (Renaissance), has been banned and driven underground. Ibrahim, who rose to become Malaysia's deputy prime minister, was later charged with sodomy and jailed after a sensational, politically motivated trial designed to embarrass and humiliate him. Kadivar has been arrested a number of times in Iran, and Soroush has been forced to spend long period of time outside of Iran. Once again, in each of these cases, the state's active suppression of its moderate opponents has only served to polarize and radicalize political opposition and to push it in a radical direction.

Quite unlike the discourse of moderate reformists, there are no subtle nuances in Islamist fundamentalist ideology. Fundamentalist discourse is fundamentalist, whether articulated a hundred years ago or today. It stands in direct contrast to nearly every principle which moderate reformist discourse upholds. In broad terms, Islamic fundamentalism sees Islam besieged by an aggressive West that is determined to defeat and overwhelm it through its military might, its economic superiority, and its materialistic and decadent culture. The best defense against the West's aggression and against other similar conspiracies designed to destroy Islam is to base all social and political institutions and all cultural norms on Islamic precepts. Reform is insufficient; what is necessary is a re-constitution of the entire polity according to the norms laid out by the Prophet Muhammad when he was in Medina (Moaddel and Talattof 2000, 4). Only then can Islam be properly defended against the re-emergence of the pervasive ignorance that preceded it, that dark era known as the Jahiliyya.

In constructing a comprehensive political ideology, fundamentalism has found in Islam a series of convenient conceptual tools that can readily be interpreted to suit its purposes. The "modernists" have it all wrong, fundamentalists maintain, and their understanding of "true" Islam has been tainted by the incorrect interpretations of Western Orientalists. A correct

understanding of true and pure Islam can only be acquired through reference to the Holy Quran, the application of Islamic law, the shari'a, and observance of the Prophet's deeds and traditions (sunna) as well as his sayings (hadith). Whether or not independent reasoning (ijtihad) is permissible or one should simply resort to imitation (taqlid) is a question that remains as yet unresolved (Esposito and Voll 2001, 10). This is largely a mute point, however, as doubt and uncertainty are not generally to be found in fundamentalist doctrines of any sort. With great certainty and self-assuredness, Islamic fundamentalist theorists such as the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb (1906-66) and Iran's Ayatollah Ruhullah Khomeini (1902-89) have constructed visions of the ideal Islamic polity, a general worldview, and Islam's place in it. At the same time, these and other theorists have pointed to the centrality and the need for a struggle, a jihād, in defending Islam against conspiracies from within and from the outside.

Sayyid Qutb, one of the main figures within the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, subscribed to the notion that the world was divided into the binary arenas of the Abode of Islam (Dar al-Islam) and the Abode of War (Dar al Harb). There are ever-occurring conspiracies against Islam and the Muslim world, at times carried out directly by hostile forces, namely European colonialists, and at times indirectly, through their domestic lackeys (Qutb 2000, 204). Secular ideologies such as liberalism, nationalism, and socialism have been incapable of defending the Muslims' interests, thus plunging Islamic societies into the darkness of Jahiliyya. Only Islam and an Islamic system could save Egypt and the larger Muslim world. Such a system would be based on a literalist interpretation of the shari'a, which "covers the entire scheme that God has devised for regulating human life. It includes within its sphere the regulation of thoughts and views, fundamentals of statecraft, principles and ethics of culture, laws of transactions, and regulations of knowledge and the arts" (Qutb 2000, 198).

Seeking to dispel the notion that Islam in general and his arguments in specific were archaic and authoritarian, Qutb argued that the historical development and conduct of political systems claiming Islamic legitimacy should not be confused with the true essence of Islamic government. A truly Islamic state operates according to the principle of consultation (shura), does not practice tyranny, is not primitive and is forward looking, and does not discriminate against minorities and the People of the Book (ahl-e kitab) (Choueiri 1997, 96-7). While not venturing into the specifics of the types of political action needed to bring about such a polity, Qutb called for the “organization of the masses and the promise of an updated Islam . . . (as) the ideal solution to the social crisis of his country. Social justice, rather than communism, was the national answer for a country proud of its unique history and independent character” (Choueiri 1997, 101).

There was no lack of details in Ayatollah Khomeini’s conception of the ideal Islamic polity. Similar to Qutb, Khomeini proclaimed that Islam is the solution and, interpreted properly, provides a thorough and ideal blueprint for a political system. “The nature and character of Islamic law and the divine ordinances of the shari‘ah,” he writes, “furnish proof of the necessity for establishing government, for they indicate that the laws were laid down for the purpose of creating a state and administering the political, economic, and cultural affairs of society” (Khomeini 2000, 253). In establishing such a government, Khomeini was unabashedly radical and revolutionary, his rhetoric incendiary:

We have in reality. . . no choice but to destroy those systems of government that are corrupt in themselves and also entail the corruption of others, and to overthrow all treacherous, corrupt, oppressive, and criminal regimes. This is a duty that every Muslim must fulfill, in every one of the Muslim countries, in order to achieve the triumphant political revolution of Islam. . . In order to assure the unity of the Islamic umma (community), in order to liberate the Islamic homeland from occupation and penetration by the imperialists and their puppet governments, it is imperative that we establish (an Islamic)

government. In order to attain the unity and freedom of the Muslim people, we must overthrow the oppressive governments installed by the imperialists and bring into existence an Islamic government of justice that will be in the service of the people (Khomeini 2000, 257).

As the leader of the Iranian revolution and the founder of the Islamic Republican system, Khomeini is rather unique among theorists for his good fortune of putting his ideas into practice. The cornerstone of these ideas was the notion of rule by the velayat-e faqih, or a Supreme Jurisconsult, a position Khomeini himself occupied after the revolution's success until the time of his death in 1989. The Jurisconsult, Khomeini maintained, must have two essential characteristics: he must be learned in the religious science, and he must be just.

Should a meritorious person who has both qualifications emerge and establish a government, he has the same authority (velayat) in ruling the society as that of the Prophet, and it is incumbent upon the people to obey him (Quoted in, Dabashi 1993, 443).

The arguments of Sayyid Qutb and Ayatollah Khomeini, as well as others like them—such as the Indian Abul A'la Maududi (1903-79)—have formed the theoretical backdrop against which one of Islam's central notions, jihād, has been used to legitimize violence against perceived enemies. Political repression at home and an unequal balance of power in the international arena formed the actual context of the radicals' operationalization of the concept. The concept itself has been subject to great debate and controversy among Muslim scholars, and its precise meaning has changed over time. In recent years, for many Westerners who have been on the receiving end of the wrath of Islamic fundamentalism, jihād has come to symbolize the very violent essence of Islam. Therefore, although a full treatment of the notion is beyond the scope of the task at hand, it is important to highlight some of the different definitions given to jihād at various times and to examine its use by Islamic fundamentalists as a legitimizing agent for violence.

Much of the ambiguity surrounding the notion of jihad arises out of the dual definitions that seem to be attributed to it in the Quran. This is largely a result of the concept's gradual transformation during the life of Muhammad's prophecy. Initially, as the Muslim community was beginning to form and the new religion's principles were being propagated in Mecca and later in Medina, jihad was used in the sense of striving to live a better life. As such, it was used to cement the bonding of the Muslim community through collective submission (islam) to the only God (Allah). As John Esposito (2002, 30) explains, "Muhammad's prophetic call summoned the people to strive and struggle (jihad) to reform their communities and to live a good life based on religious belief and not loyalty to their tribes." The Quran 29:5 is one such example: "For those whose hopes are in the meeting with Allah (in the Hereafter, let them strive); for the Term (appointed) by Allah is surely coming: and He hears and knows all things". Once the Muslim community was firmly established in Medina, it faced multiple challenges from the Meccan elite and from other near-by tribes, and jihad increasingly came to mean "struggle" against enemies for the preservation and benefit of Islam. Not surprisingly, therefore, a number of later Quranic verses employ the concept in a militaristic sense.

A careful reading of the Quran reveals very detailed guidelines for the conduct of warfare (Esposito 2002, 32). There are regulations concerning who is to fight and who is exempted from it (48:17, 9:92); when hostilities must cease (2:192); how prisoners should be treated (47:4); and the need for proportionality in warfare (47:7). At the same time, there are a number of what many consider "sword verses" in which the believer is enjoined to "slay the idolaters" (9:5); to "keep on fighting against (disbelievers) until the way prescribed by Allah prevails" (2:193); and to "fight against the followers of Satan" (4:76). As the Muslim community grew in size and military strength, especially after the Prophet's death, and as temporal concerns gradually



equalled and even surpassed sacral ones for successive generations of Muslim rulers, the emphasis on the meaning of jihad shifted accordingly. Moreover, the eruption of the Crusades was not without significance. As time went by, through selective references to the Quran, both Muslim rulers and thinkers paid increasing attention to the militaristic meaning of jihad (Malik 1998, 63-71). Before long, the term had become synonymous with “holy war,” its meaning as “inner struggle” (by both the individual and the community) for closeness to God more and more de-emphasized.

It is not surprising that by the closing decades of the twentieth century, by the time Islam had once again become politicized and radicalized after decades of dormancy, jihad emerged as the Islamic fundamentalists’ primary conceptual justification for resort to violence. The very dynamics that propelled Islam into the political realm and pushed it in the direction of militancy and radicalism resulted in militaristic interpretations of jihad to gain supremacy over the other. The Osama bin Ladens of the Middle East, the self-declared warriors and defenders of Islam, have little patience with less activist, more introspective interpretations of jihad. They choose selective verses from the Quran, as well as selective hadiths from the Prophet, through which they construct a jihadist view of the world and their own place in it. For them jihad is a viable mean of defending Islam, and it must of necessity be violent. The Quran’s injunctions on the rules of warfare, its prohibition on indiscriminate terror on noncombatants and on women and children, and the Prophet’s preference for diplomacy over conflict are either ignored or forgotten. Under the banner of jihad, Islamic fundamentalists have vowed to unleash terror on their enemies. In the process, they have inflicted more harm to the religion than Islam’s opponents could have ever hoped for. And, ironically, they have violated far more Islamic precepts than they have defended through their actions.

## **Conclusion**

The historical evolution of Islamic doctrine from its inception until today is directly influenced by the evolving political circumstances in which Muslim rulers and thinkers have found themselves. This has been the case for every epoch in Islamic history, and the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have been no exception. In contemporary times, as in previous eras, we find a direct correlation between the larger national and international political contexts on the one hand and developments within Islamic thought and practice on the other hand. This chapter has traced the political history of Islam since the middle of the twentieth century, first by looking at its re-emergence as a viable tool for political expression following the steady decline of various secular ideologies, and then examining the ascendance within it of increasingly more radical strands due to the proportionately higher levels of state repression directed at it. Politics pushed Islam to become first political and then radical.

There are three highly inter-related, yet still distinct, strands within this latest incarnation of political Islam. They include what may be broadly labeled as popular, intellectual, and fundamentalist Islam. While quite different and in some respects diametrically opposed to each other, these three strands have developed a symbiotic, reinforcing relationship with one another. Each trend has had a deepening and reinforcing effect on the others. For obvious reasons, fundamentalist Islam has generated the greatest degree of attention and controversy, as it has managed to inflict terror on its victims with considerable success. However, developments occurring within the other two trends, especially within intellectual Islam, are just as likely to shape the course of the future trajectory of Islam as is the case with Islamic fundamentalism.

It is difficult to determine with any degree of certainty what the future course of Islamic theory and practice is likely to be. Nevertheless, there are strong indications that radical

fundamentalism will remain part of the Islamic landscape, and by extension that of the global landscape, for the foreseeable future. The conditions that originally gave rise to Islamic fundamentalism have not disappeared, and, in fact, in many ways they have become far more pronounced in the post-9/11 environment. In some ways, as the United States has invaded and occupied Afghanistan and Iraq under the banner of “fighting terrorism,” Islamic fundamentalism’s premise that there is an ever-present conspiracy against Islam has become a self-fulfilling prophecy. At a time when the American military’s presence in the Middle East is more extensive than at any other point in the past, and when many Middle Easterners feel that America’s “war against terrorism” is in reality a war against Islam, religiously-inspired anti-Americanism is only likely to deepen in the Middle East. The American invasion of Afghanistan might have overthrown the Taliban and their fanatical brand of Islam, and the US military did dismantle Saddam Hussein’s “republic of fear” with speed and resolve. In the long run, however, such enterprises will only strengthen the resolve and popular appeal of Islamic fundamentalism. In the Arab “street,” anger against the United States and its domestic allies is at an all time high. For the foreseeable future, all indications point to the continued ascendance and popularity of Islamic fundamentalism and the violence to which it frequently resorts.

## **References**

Abu-Amr, Ziad (1994). Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Ajami, Fouad (1998). The Dream Palace of the Arabs: A Generation’s Odyssey. New York: Pantheon.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2001). “The Uneasy Emporium: Pax Americana in the Middle East”. James E. Hoge and Gideon Rose, eds. How Did This Happen? Terrorism and the New War. New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 15-30.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2002). “The Sentry’s Solitude”. David Makovsky, et al. The Middle East in Crisis. New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 72-86.

- Ansari, Hamied (1986). Egypt: The Stalled Society. Albany, New York: SUNY Press.
- Baker, Raymond William (2003). Islam without Fear: Egypt and the New Islamists. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Choueiri, Youssef M. (1997). Islamic Fundamentalism. London: Pinter.
- Dabashi, Hamid (1993). Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. New York: New York University Press.
- Dagher, Carole H. (2000). Bring Down the Walls: Lebanon's Postwar Challenge. News York: St. Martin's.
- El-Shazly, Nadia and Raymond Hinnebusch (2002). "The Challenge of Security in the Post-Gulf War Middle East System". Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, eds. The Foreign Policies of Middle East States. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 71-90.
- Entelis, John P. (1996). Culture and Counterculture in Moroccan Politics. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America.
- Esposito, John L. (2002). Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Esposito, John L. and John O. Voll (2001). Makers of Contemporary Islam. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Friedman, Thomas (1989). From Beirut to Jerusalem. New York: Farrar Starus Giroux.
- Gaffney, Patrick D. (1994). The Prophet's Pulpit: Islamic Preaching in Contemporary Egypt. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Hamdi, Mohamed Elhachmi (1998). The Politicisation of Islam: A Case Study of Tunisia. Boulder, Colorado: Westview.
- Hiro, Dilip (1991). The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Military Conflict. New York: Routledge, Chapman, & Hall.
- Holmes-Eber, Paula (2003). Daughters of Tunis: Women, Family, and Networks in a Muslim City. Boulder, Colorado: Westview.
- Howe, Marvin (2000). Turkey Today: A Nation Divided over islam's Revival. Boulder, Colorado: Westview.
- Hughes, Stephen O. (2001). Morocco under King Hassan. London: Ithaca Press.

Kadivar, Mohsen (1998). *Nazariye-haye Dowlat dar Feqh-e Shi'a*. (Perspectives on Government in Shi'a Theology). Tehran: Ney.

Kamrava, Mehran (2001). "The Middle East and the Question of Democracy". Jeff Haynes, ed. Towards Sustainable Development in the Third World. London: Palgrave, 187-216.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2003). "Iranian Shiism under Debate". Middle East Policy. Vol. 10, No. 2, 102-12.

Karsh, Efraim and Inari Rausti (1991). Saddam Hussein: A Political Biography. New York: The Free Press.

Khomeini, Ruhullah. "The Necessity of Islamic Government". Mansoor Moaddel and Kamran Talattof, eds. Modernist and Fundamentalist Debates in Islam: A Reader. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 251-62.

Malik, Iftikhar H. (1998). "Islamic Discourse on Jihad, War and Violence". Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. Vol. 21, No. 4, 47-78.

Milton-Edwards, Beverley (1996). Islamic Politics in Palestine. London: I.B.Tauris.

Mishal, Shaul and Avraham Sela (2000). The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence. New York: Columbia University Press.

Moaddel, Mansoor and Kamran Talattof (2000). "Contemporary Debates in Islam: Modernism versus Fundamentalism". Mansoor Moaddel and Kamran Talattof, eds. Modernist and Fundamentalist Debates in Islam: A Reader. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1-21.

Quandt, William B (1998). Between Ballots and Bullets: Algeria's Transition from Authoritarianism. Washington, DC: Brookings.

Qutb, Sayyid (2000). "Islam as the Foundation of Knowledge". Mansoor Moaddel and Kamran Talattof, eds. Modernist and Fundamentalist Debates in Islam: A Reader. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 197-206.

Rubin, Barry (2002). Islamic Fundamentalism in Egypt Politics. London: Palgrave Macmillan.  
Saad-Ghorayeb, Amal (2002). Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion. London: Pluto.

Shahin, Emad Eldin (1998). Political Ascent: Contemporary Islamic Movements in North Africa. Boulder, Colorado: Westview.

Sullivan, Denis J. And Sana Abed-Kotob (1999). Islam in Contemporary Egypt: Civil Society vs. the State. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner.

Tamimi, Azzam S (2001). Rachid Ghannouchi: A Democrat within Islam. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tripp, Charles (1996). "Islam and the Secular Logic of the State in the Middle East". Abdel Salam Sidahmad and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, eds. Islamic Fundamentalism. Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 51-69.

Virost, Milton (1994). Sandcastles: The Arabs in Search of the Modern World. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press.

Wilson Peter W. and Douglas F. Graham (1994). Saudi Arabia: The Coming Storm. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe.