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CROSS-LINKS AND DOUBLE TALK? ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS

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Cross-Links and Double Talk?

Islamic Movements in the Political Process

Gudrun Krämer

In the Middle East, the transition from authoritarian rule to a democratic, pluralist and liberal order of government and society, difficult enough to achieve under most circumstances, runs against heavy odds. One is almost tempted to speak of a 'fateful triangle', for it is not only unfavourable socio-economic conditions, of which the weakness of the middle class(es) and rapid population growth are merely the most prominent, that act as powerful obstacles on the road to democratization. Foreign policy and security issues, notably relations with Israel and the US, tend to reinforce authoritarian rather than democratic patterns of decision-making (see the second Gulf War and the current peace process with Israel). Regional powers closely linked to the West (notably Saudi Arabia) receive calls for political participation at home and in their neighbouring countries (e.g. Yemen) with utmost reserve. It is, however, the third element of the triad that will be discussed here: the presence, and as it would seem, still growing strength of Islamic movements that demand to be recognized as legitimate actors and to be included in the formal political process. The question that flows from this demand is deceptively simple: Can you have political liberalization and democratization, implying a commitment not only to specific rules and procedures of political behaviour and organization, but also to certain values reaching far beyond the realm of politics, with the active participation of groups and individuals that make Islam and not just any religion the basis of their ideology and activities? The debate is passionate, controversial and ridden by uncertainties.

Among participants and outside observers, the democratic potential and credentials of Islamic movements, no matter whether 'moderate' or militant, are viewed with considerable scepticism.[1] Islam as a doctrine and

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1 For a critique of this approach, see Yahya Sadowski, 'The New Orientalism and the Democracy Debate', in Middle East Report, No. 183, July-August 1993, pp. 14-21, 40. For an unusually sanguine assessment of the issue, see Azzam Tamimi (ed.), Power-Sharing Islam?, London 1993. In a previous paper I have focused on three case studies;

legal system is widely considered to be incompatible with Western-style liberal, pluralistic democracy. Political Islamic movements are largely seen to be obscurantist, fanatic, and intolerant, a menace not only to the existing order of state and society ("stability") and the regimes in power, but also to freedom, civil society and their intellectual critics and opponents. The note of unease, if not open disgust, at the demand of Islamic movements to be accepted as legitimate actors in the political process is unmistakable. There are, however, significant regional differences. In the Arab East - in Egypt for instance, in the Sudan, Jordan or Yemen -, local elites seem more prepared to accept political activism based on Islam provided its advocates are 'moderate', rooted in local tradition and society and endowed with national legitimacy. The situation is different in Algeria or Tunisia, where the political role of Islam has come to be more controversial, and where the Islamic movements presently active lack deep roots in reformist tradition and the national liberation struggle. Added to it comes the impregnation of North African intellectuals with French notions of *laicité* that view the separation not only of church and state, but of religion and politics, as a basic requirement of a viable liberal democracy as well as national unity.

And yet on a practical level it seems impossible to, as it were, get around the Islamists and exclude them from the political stage altogether. In virtually all instances where Arab regimes have, over the last two decades or so, risked a process of controlled political "democratization", Islamic activists have emerged as the most vocal and best organized force of opposition (Morocco, which is a borderline case anyway, may be quoted as an exception). Past experiences with repression (notably in Nasirist Egypt) suggest that its long-term effectiveness is doubtful, holding important implications for current practices in Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, and possibly Syria. The attraction of political Islam is clearly not restricted to those living on the margins of society, the downtrodden, the uneducated, and the desperate. Its appeal reaches far beyond the disaffected youth of rural origin, high ambition and deep frustration so well known from text books and case studies, and deep into the urban middle classes with considerable commercial and financial interests, who can be neither classified as marginal nor do they view themselves as such. The Islamic movement is strongly entrenched in the professional associations of the educated middle class, especially in the private sector (lawyers, medical doctors, pharma-

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'The Integration of the Integrists. A Comparative Study of Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia', in Ghassan Salamé (ed.), Democracy Without Democrats? (forthcoming).

cists, engineers, etc.). "Islamic" banks and investment firms, self-help and charitable associations are active at all levels of society and the economy. And while political Islam is still a predominantly urban phenomenon, it enjoys important tribal support, urban as well as rural, in countries such as Yemen, Jordan and the Sudan where tribal affiliation still counts as a political factor.

Given the strong appeal of Islamist discourse and activism, government response to the Islamists' search for legal status will effectively shape the course and outcome of the liberalization process. Indeed I would argue that there can be no genuine liberalization and democratization that excludes the 'moderate', or to be more cautious, the pragmatic Islamists who formally declare their commitment to the democratic principle and renounce the use of violence. Legal status and integration obviously require a formalized, negotiated framework of participation, or at least some kind of 'working compromise'[2] allowing for peaceful coexistence and competition. They require the observance of basic values, rules and procedures of intellectual controversy and political competition; the acceptance of pluralism that rules out all claims to a monopoly over Islam, the truth or the will of the people, and of compromise allowing for peaceful coexistence and power-sharing; the banning of violence, not to mention terrorism, and possibly the transparency of financing and external links and contacts.

The experiences in integration and accomodation gained so far have been highly mixed, and their assessment among participants and observers rather divergent. Regrettably there are virtually no comparative studies covering experiences in non-Arab countries such as Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia or, operating under very different conditions, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, where Islamic parties have, often for many years, been included in the legal political framework in general and the multiparty system in particular.[3] In the Arab world, two approaches have so far been pursued: In the first and until recently most common one, Islamic parties have not been legalized, but Islamic activists been admitted to elections on an individual basis and occasionally even been included in cabinets; in the second, Islamic parties have been licensed and openly included in the existing or newly created multiparty system. In both cases, the purpose of openness was essentially the same: It was primarily an effort

2 See John Keane, in Tamimi (ed.), Power-Sharing Islam?, p. 30.

3 One of the rare exceptions is the book edited by Tamimi, Power-Sharing Islam?, which, stimulating as it is, calls for more rigorous analysis.

to "defuse" the challenge of Islamic fundamentalism, to separate the moderates from the militants, to contain the first, and to marginalize and delegitimize the latter. There was no intention to allow Islamic parties, or for that matter any other parties, to win a majority and take control over state and society.

Toleration without recognition has been a long-term policy in Egypt, which in the mid-70s established a multiparty system, banned religious parties, but allowed Muslim Brothers and other Islamic groups and activists to enter parliament either individually or in an alliance with legally recognized parties. A similar line was followed in Tunisia up to 1989/90. In Jordan and Kuwait, by contrast, no political parties were legalized at all when parliamentary elections were held in November 1989 and October 1992, respectively. And yet in both instances members or sympathizers of well-known Islamic groups were admitted, gaining important shares in the vote and assembly. The other approach, legal recognition of Islamic parties, is of more recent origin and has still not been widely tested in the Arab world. Two examples have served to highlight the risks of this gamble, threatening to seriously compromise the entire approach: Within a relatively brief period ranging from the riots of October 1988 to the 'constitutional' coup of January 1992, Algeria went the whole way from legalization of Islamic parties to their unexpected and undesired electoral success, leading to open confrontation, wholesale repression and eventual banning of the Islamic opposition. In the Sudan, the elections of April 1986, in which Hasan al-Turabi's newly formed National Islamic Front (NIF) scored a remarkable success, were quickly followed by the military coup of June 1989 which was suspected to have had the tacit support (if not more) of the NIF.[4] Other, more recent experiments in multipartyism including Islamic parties - the Yemeni parliamentary elections of April 1992 and the Lebanese ones of August/September 1992 - look more encouraging.[5] The results of the parliamentay elections planned for 8

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4 The Sudanese case would merit special attention which it cannot be given here; see e.g. Roland Marchal, 'Le Soudan entre islamisme et dictature militaire', in Monde arabe. Maghreb-Machrek, No. 137, July-September 1992, pp. 56-79.

5 For the Lebanese case, see Volker Perthes, 'Problems with peace: post-war politics and parliamentary elections in Lebanon', in Orient, 33 (1992)3, pp. 409-432, and Joseph Bahout, 'Liban: Les élections législatives de l'été 1992', in Monde arabe. Maghreb-Machrek, No. 139, January-March 1993, pp. 53-84. The highly interesting case of Yemen has so far been sadly neglected; for recent analyses, see Renaud Detalle, 'Yémen. Les élections législatives du 27 avril 1993', in Monde arabe. Maghreb-Machrek, No. 141, July-September 1993, pp. 3-26, and Bernard Lefresne, Les islamistes yéménites et les élections, ib., pp. 27-36.

November 1993 in Jordan, where a multiparty system was installed in 1992 and an Islamic Action Front dominated by the Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood licensed in early 1993, remain to be seen and analyzed.

Islamic strategies of accomodation and integration

The political strategies of Islamic activists are not much different from those of other political movements in that they are to a large extent based on political considerations rather than abstract principles. They are the product of interaction with government and society, of historical experience, trial and error, and to a certain extent reactive rather than active. The high profile of militant Islamic groups and individuals has obscured the fact that a strong segment of the broad Islamic movement, appearing to be primarily urban middle class, does indeed favour a strategy of accomodation and integration into the given political framework. This option will, of course, be justified with reference to Islamic precepts (the preservation of Muslim life, offspring and unity, the safeguard of peace, etc.). In actual fact, however, it reflects a sober assessment of past experiences and present realities. Dispassionate stock-taking seems to have persuaded important sections of the movement that in spite of the all too obvious limitations of liberalization from above, there is no alternative to a reformist strategy of gradual transformation of individual behaviour, state and society (*tadarruj*) that requires an integration into the existing legal-political framework.[6] The political system therefore has to be recognized as legitimate, with a distinction sometimes being made between political and religious legitimacy. In order to promote the main objective of seeing Islamic ethics, norms and laws enforced (the Sharia applied), all opportunities to exert influence are used: public education, the media, associations ("civil society") and the political arena proper. Participation in local, municipal, national and presidential elections constitutes only one element among others and not necessarily the most important one. For this reason influential Islamic groups like the Egyptian Muslim Brothers have long hesitated to register as a political party (only to see their application repea-

6 For a theoretical formulation of this approach, see the Palestinian/Jordanian writer and former activist Kamil al-Sharif, Al-fikr al-islami baina l-mithaliyya wal-tatbiq, Amman 1984, or the statements of Rashid al-Ghannushi (Tunisia) and 'Isam al-'Iryan (Egypt) in Tamimi (ed.), Power-Sharing Islam?. The statement of Mustafa Ali, by contrast, (The Islamic Movement & the Malaysian Experience, ib., pp. 109-124) can only confirm the fears of those who doubt that the commitment to the democratic 'game' is more than tactical.

tedly rejected) because this might have suggested a narrowing down of activities to the political sphere.

But gradualism and integration have never been universally acclaimed as the only 'Islamically valid' way of transforming state and society. They have always remained subject to internal debate and criticism. On a very basic level, the Islamists share the dilemma of all protest movements that pose as a radical alternative to the dominant order and value system, no matter whether religious or not: They owe their aura of autonomy and purity to their distance from established (party) politics, which are commonly seen as both corrupt and ineffectual. Accomodation and integration cannot but diminish their attractiveness, the more so since the benefits of participation are difficult to evaluate. So far opposition forces have had little say in defining the conditions of legitimate political activity (party laws, national charters, codes of honour or political conduct, etc.). They have been obliged to play the political game on terms that are essentially defined by the government - with the not so hidden aim of securing its hold on power, broadening its support and containing any serious contenders.

Moderation has in some cases enhanced the position of its advocates. The best example are the Muslim Brothers who have taken it upon themselves to counsel reason and restraint to well-meaning but ill-guided youth attracted to religious extremism. This role renders them useful to the government, but it also exposes them to attacks from various quarters, which either accuse them of maintaining links with the Islamic underground, or else of being too tame and really nothing but another, and all the more insidious, agent of corruption and impiety. In the last resort, general acceptance of gradualism is predicated on success. And success has so far been limited. Nowhere outside Iran, and possibly Sudan, have the Islamic moderates been able to implement their program (but neither have the militants). While relatively successful in the areas of public morality, art and culture, education and women's rights that do not directly affect regime control over political and economic decision-making, they have not been able to enforce the implementation of the Sharia (as they interpret it), and nor have they been able to mould foreign policy according to their wishes. In Egypt and Jordan, they were unable to block negotiations with Israel. And although during the second Gulf War they did in some cases get conciliatory gestures from their governments (e.g. in Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan), they could not force them to openly side with Iraq or abandon

the American-led alliance against this country.[7] Do we therefore have to conclude that the decision in favour of peaceful involvement, competition and, if necessary, power-sharing is reversibel? Analysts are deeply divided on this point, and the answer hinges on an assessment of their value system or ideology as well as their actual behaviour.

a) *Shura* and democracy

In a well received article, John Esposito and James Piscatori have argued that the notion of democracy may well have become "accepted as a marker, a kind of signpost of public life, a powerful symbol of legitimacy seen to be a universal good", and that it may be true that "almost all Muslims today react to it as one of the universal conditions of the modern world. To this extent, it has become part of Muslim political thought and discourse."[8] Islamic movements and activists have not been immune to this trend. Under the impact of political liberalization (and/or the shock of grave setbacks and defeats) they have been compelled to reflect on the correct attitude or, as they are more likely to put it, "the position of Islam", on the merits of democracy, pluralism, equality, citizenship and human rights. The debate has been intense and more controversial than is commonly acknowledged by those who take Sayyid Qutb, 'Ali Belhaj, 'Abdassalam Faraj or the Ayatollah Khomeini to be the only authentic, and representative, voices of contemporary political Islam.

The positions of moderate, pragmatic, what I would consider to be mainstream, Islamic groups and thinkers on pluralism and democracy have in many ways moved beyond classical doctrines of governance and the caliphate. But they are neither uniform, nor are they always very clear and consistent.[9] In spite of the fact that Islam is commonly thought to be irreconcilable with pluralist democracy, many Muslims, including well-known Islamic activists, actually call for *shura*, the idealized Islamic concept of participation-qua-consultation, or "Islamic democracy". What they want to see enforced are government control and accountability, political participation, the rule of law and the protection of human rights. But they do not, and they are as a rule quite explicit about it, adopt Western liberal,

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7 See James Piscatori (ed.), Islamic Fundamentalism and the Gulf Crisis, Chicago 1991.

8 John L. Esposito/James P. Piscatori, 'Democratization and Islam', in Middle East Journal, 45 (Summer 1991)3, pp. 427-440 (438 and 440).

9 The following is based on my articles 'Islam et pluralisme', in Démocratie et démocratisations dans le monde arabe, Cairo: Dossiers du CEDEJ 1992, pp. 339-351, and more specifically 'Islamist Notions of Democracy', in Middle East Report, No. 183, July-August 1993, pp. 2-8.

secular democracy. On the contrary, they will usually denounce liberalism as synonymous with moral profligacy and depravity, and secularism as the surest path towards immorality and instability. In their eyes, Islam provides for a specific social and political system, because in contradistinction to e.g. Christianity, it encompasses 'religion and world' (*din wa-dunya*) or 'religion and state' (*al-islam din wa-dawla*). This notion does not, however, imply a total fusion of state and religion. The subtle distinctions characteristic of Islamic legal thinking also mark the present discussion of Islamic politics. Many contemporary Muslims, including prominent religious scholars and Muslim Brothers, actually differentiate between the spheres of religion proper (i.e. faith and worship, the *'aqida* and the *'ibadat*) and of worldly affairs (*mu'amalat*), the first immutable and untouchable, the second flexible and subject to the changing requirements of time and place. This leads directly to the debate on how the Sharia is to be understood: Is it an all embracing system of norms, codes and values regulating human life down to the minutest detail, which theoretically excludes all variation based on human interpretation, or a set of general rules of piety and moral behaviour that leaves room for adaptation based on human understanding? Both positions have their vocal advocates, and it is on this question that I would look for the dividing line between the radical and the moderate, the literalist and the pragmatic, the fundamentalist and the modern(ist), 'liberal' interprets of Islam, be they politically involved or not. What distinguishes the pragmatist and modernist from the unbending fundamentalist is the degree to which he or she believes in human freedom in interpreting God's law and conceives of a certain autonomy of the political sphere.

The pragmatists, and those include conservative Muslim Brothers as well as 'enlightened' progressive thinkers, are agreed that the Sharia is comprehensive, covering all aspects of human life, but that outside the domain of faith and worship it is also flexible and for that reason suited to all times and places. Political organization belongs to this flexible sphere, which was left to the Muslims to define according to their needs and aspirations. If government organization is a matter of convenience, then the adoption of democracy, or of selected democratic procedures and principles, may be acceptable or even recommended - provided it leaves Islamic norms and values untouched. While the term 'democracy' may be contested, because it can always be attacked as a Western and hence un-Islamic concept, representative government acting as a check on arbitrary personal rule is not. The rule of law (law of course being identified with

ded they remain within the limits of Islam and common decency. Most Islamic activists will reject the claim of individuals or groups to possess a monopoly, guardianship or tutelage (*wisaya*) over Islam or the Muslim community. Some movements therefore will not refer to Islam in their name or title as this might imply such a claim (what they usually resort to is 'reform'). In actual fact, however, the competition over who represents 'real' Islam, and who is the better protector of both faith and authenticity, provides one of the core issues of political contestation.

In accordance with the widely accepted distinction between form and substance, techniques and values, mainstream (moderate, pragmatic) positions are remarkably flexible (or modern) with respect to modes of political organization. They envisage institutionalized checks on the ruler in the form of a separation of powers, an independent judiciary, parliamentary rule, and in some cases even a multiparty system. But they remain highly restrictive (conservative, orthodox) when it comes to the freedom of political, religious and artistic expression. While they generally concede that it is legitimate and may even be necessary to formalize consultation and to institutionalize control so as to make them effective upon a strong executive, associations, clubs and political parties must not represent particular whims and interests, and nor must they transcend the 'framework of Islam'. The 'enemies of Islam' must not be tolerated, and Islamic activists tend to take it onto themselves to define who is a good Muslim, and who is not. This has obvious repercussions on the concept of human rights, which is commonly linked to the duties towards God but at the same time widely seen as the heritage of all humankind. Full equality between men and women as well as between Muslims and non-Muslims (the notion of citizenship) or unrestricted freedom of faith and conscience including the right of Muslims to abandon Islam have not been accepted. In sum, change is more noticeable in the domain of political organization than of social and religious values. Even moderate pragmatic Islamic political thinkers and activists have not adopted liberalism. As a result, there is certainly "democratic potential", but also a potential clash, or at any rate 'profound tension' between Islamic and liberal notions of pluralist democracy - and their respective advocates.[10]

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10 For the terms, see John Keane in Tamimi (ed.), Power-Sharing Islam?, pp. 20, 29. For the wider issue, see Leonard Binder, Islamic Liberalism: A Critique of Development Ideologies, Chicago, London 1988.

the Sharia) is seen as the only viable and reliable foundation of justice, legitimacy and stability. There is a consistent effort to translate ethico-religious duties and injunctions (to do the right thing, give counsel, speak up in the face of the tyrant, etc.) into principles of political responsibility and participation, and at the same time to extend, formalize and institutionalize them. The limited involvement of the Muslim community in selecting its leader via *shura* and the oath of allegiance (*bai'a*) that is to be found in classical treatises on Islamic governance is transformed into a constitutional system, in which the community (or, going even further, the people) have a right to be consulted and to control government, which is now held responsible not only to God, but also to its electorate. *Shura*, which originally was little more than consultation in all matters private and public, is now seen as the functional equivalent of Western parliamentary rule, and as the basis of an authentic Islamic democracy. While many practical questions remain disputed, most Muslim Brothers and 'enlightened' Muslim authors consider *shura* to be both required and binding on the caliph, imam, or president, and to require institutionalization (an elected *shura* council), in which majority decisions are the rule.

At this point the well-known distinction between values and mechanisms, substance and form becomes relevant. Among pragmatic thinkers and activists, it is common to state that pious Muslims may adopt techniques and modes of organization of non-Islamic origin as long as Islamic values are preserved intact and the Sharia fully enforced. The concept of *shura* illustrates the implications of this notion. Most contemporary Muslim authors do not see, or want to see, consultation and participation as a genuinely political process involving interest representation, competition and conflict. What they have in mind is a council of experts deciding on the grounds of right and wrong (*halal/haram*, *ma'ruf/munkar*), aiming at the common good (*al-maslaha al-'amma*) only, and not a political assembly representing conflicting opinion and interest. Their ideal reflects a moral rather than a political perspective. In the place of competition and strife they would like to see the ideals of unity and consensus (*ijma'*) safeguarded and a harmonious balance of individuals, groups and interests (*tawazun*) maintained.

The same approach is evident in the debate about pluralism. There is general agreement that God created people to be different ("men, women and tribes"), that differences of opinion are divinely ordained, and that they may even be beneficial to humankind and the Muslim community - provi-

b) Conflict and cooperation

The ultimate test of commitment and creditbility, of course, lies not so much in theory, but in actual behaviour.[11] Again Islamic strategies and activities must not be seen in isolation, but as a result of interaction with a given environment, which is largely defined by the territorial state. Islamists may still talk about the *umma* and the universal caliphate (and so do their critics). What they in actual fact interact with is a more limited constituency, and prominent Islamist spokesmen like Hasan al-Turabi or Rashid al-Ghannushi have not hesitated to say so openly and to propagate the virtues of specificity. Interaction on the national level may be envisaged as another triangle (though not a fateful one this time). It is made up of the regime at one point, non-religious political actors (political parties, professional associations, trade unions, women and human rights groups, etc.) at the other, and the Islamic movement at the third. If one accepts that the Islamic pragmatists advocating an incrementalist strategy and armed militants propagating *jihad*, open confrontation and the violent overthrow of the system are not part of one integrated network, and that they in fact compete and fight each other on certain issues, one would even have to speak of a quadrangle. Relations between the various parties are not fixed, but largely determined by tactical considerations. While differing views on the role of Islam in law and society, the status of women, non-Muslim minorities, apostates and agnostics may be ultimately irreconcilable, there is also common ground: the protection of Muslims at home and abroad, the defence of the homeland and Muslim soil in general, political participation and government accountability, the respect of human and civil rights, etc.

As a consequence, there has not only been conflict, but also cooperation among representatives of differing political movements. Islamic activists have regularly collaborated in human rights and other solidarity groups, professional associations and intellectual circles. Understandably, the willingness to cooperate has tended to increase in the moments of weakness. In Syria, parts of the Islamic movement entered into a broad-based alliance with non-religious opposition forces after being nearly crushed in the early eighties. In Iraq, similar alliances were formed during and after the second Gulf War with its ruthless government strikes against insurgent Shia and Kurds. Under more favourable conditions, Islamic mo-

11 In a different context, James P. Piscatori has analyzed the evolution of Islamic under the impact of changed political conditions; see his Islam in a World of Nation-States, Cambridge etc. 1986.

derates have cooperated with political rivals of various orientation, from nationalist to royalist, and from liberal to Arab socialist, as long as the latter pledged adherence to the values of religion in general and Islam in particular. But they have consistently tried to exclude "atheist" leftists, first and foremost Marxists and communists, from formal coalitions. The best known examples are the alliances that the Egyptian Muslim Brothers concluded, from a position of strength but lack of recognized status, with established non-religious parties in the electoral campaigns of 1984 and 1987. In Jordan, the Muslim Brotherhood cooperated with a broad range of opposition forces when trying to mobilize public opinion against Western military involvement in the second Gulf War. Still in Jordan individual Muslim Brothers joined cabinet on several occasions (the last time for a brief spell of six months in 1990), an experiment followed more recently in Yemen, where in October 1993 Islamic activists joined the newly formed Presidential Council.

In spite of these experiments in peaceful coexistence and cooperation, relations between the Islamic and the non-religious movements (and not all of them are openly secular) remain marked by wariness and mutual recrimination. Critics note the authoritarian tendencies of Islamic activists which are mirrored in the internal structure of their organizations. Authoritarian leadership, a low level of consultation and membership participation (*shura*) and excessive group solidarity reflect the emphasis on forceful leadership, unity, and obedience that is to be found in the literature from Hasan al-Banna to Fathi Yakan. Not that other political movements were really so much different in this respect. It is the combination of tight internal control and reference to the eternal truths of religion that singles out the Islamists. Incidentally, it has even given rise to self-criticism.[12] Sceptics are even more worried by the limits to applied tolerance vis-à-vis intellectual critics and opponents. Salman Rushdie, Faraj Fauda and the Algerian intellectuals killed, so it is assumed, by Islamic extremists since the coup of January 1992 serve to reinforce the image of Islamic activism as religious fanaticism married to terrorism.

Moving beyond the present stage, there are persistent doubts whether Islamic moderates would still respect democratic rules, accept criticism and grant others the freedom of speech, organization and participation if they

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12 See notably 'Abdallah Fahd al-Nafisi (ed.), Al-haraka al-islamiya: ru'ya mustaqbaliyya. awraq fi l-naqd al-dhati, Cairo 1989; see also my 'Die Korrektur der Irrtümer: Innerislamische Debatten um Theorie und Praxis der islamischen Bewegungen', in Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft (forthcoming).

were ever to gain power and establish what they call an Islamic system. As long as there are no checks and balances there are indeed no guarantees (and again this does not apply to the Islamists only). Which issues would they be prepared to compromise and accept democratic majority decisions on? Would they e.g. accept limits to the implementation of the Sharia? And what would happen to those 'outside the pale' - dissenters, artists, atheists? Iran and Sudan may not provide the models of political organization and behaviour that Jordanian Muslim Brothers, Lebanese Hizbollahis or Ghannushi's followers in Tunisia wish to emulate, and hence reference to these examples of authoritarian 'Islamic' rule may not be fair. It is nevertheless made, and it is widely felt that when Islamic moderates distance themselves from the excesses of revolutionary violence and military repression they merely practise dissimulation (*taqiyya*).

Doubts thrive on speculation about possible links between the pragmatic moderates and a militant underground preparing for revolution if the Islamic state is not installed fast enough and the Sharia not fully enforced. The real or alleged links between the Egyptian Muslim Brothers and their Secret Apparatus (*al-jihaz al-khass*) in the fourties and fifties, between the moderate and militant branches of the Tunisian Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique in the eighties and early nineties, between Hizbollah and Iran, Ghannushi and Turabi, conjure up the vision of one centrally directed and tightly integrated Islamic movement which is only tactically split into non-violent moderates and armed militants. Reliable information on 'real' intentions or hidden agendas, cross-links and double talk is almost impossible to obtain. It remains that there is little trust, and that fear of Islamist designs tend to rally leftists and liberals to the government line even if this implies further restriction rather than extension of democratic freedoms. Under these circumstances, opportunities to prove good faith and to engage in confidence building are limited. But they are there and they deserve more attention than they have so far received.

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