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THE REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS IN THE ARAB WORLD

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The objective of this paper is to identify major regional implications and consequences of the rise of Islamist movements and parties in the Arab World. The importance of studying this subject is related to four factors. First, there is the universal nature of the Islamic Da'wa and movements. Islam is usually perceived by its adherents as a universal call; a call which transcends political boundaries and ethnic or linguistic barriers. Thus it is interesting to note that Islamic movements, though they are rooted in their local indigenous environments, usually appeal to an audience far beyond their own states.

Second, if the aforementioned factor holds true for Islamic countries in general, it is more applicable to the Arab region where unity of language and culture brings its peoples more closer to each other. The permeability of boundaries and cultural transparency provide a conducive environment for an easy flow of ideas and thoughts across states. The new technologies of communication makes the flow easier, more effective, and impossible to control by governments. Moreover, the movement towards democratization and political liberalization in certain Arab states creates a relatively freer and more favorable environment for Islamist activities.

Third, is the existence of a number of conflicts in which Muslims are being victimized and which have become the focus of Islamist political action. Issues such as Palestine, Afghanistan, and Bosnia, were discussed from an Islamic prospective and became rallying

points for political agitation and mobilization. Moreover, Western writings on Islam and Islamism as a new international threat reinforces a sense of encirclement among Islamist groups and encourages their cooperation across states.

Fourth, with the increasing importance of Islamist movements as the main articulator of dissent and political opposition, various kinds of linkages and cooperation appear to exist at the level of these movements as well as at the level of their adversaries, namely the incumbent regimes. Indeed, new regional alliances and conflicts have emerged in the Arab world as a function of the rise of Islamists.

The main argument of this paper is that the rise of Islamist movements and parties in the Arab states, have introduced a new factor into the political-diplomatic regional setting. From the perspective of the holders of state power, Islamists present a common source of opposition and possibly threaten regimes' stability and survivability. Thus it was natural for them to cooperate and coordinate their activities to counter a perceived common threat. On the other side, the victory of an Islamist movement in one country has been a source of inspiration and political support for similar groups in other countries. Different Islamist leaders came to know each other and exchange experience. Increasingly, whether we talk of Islamism or of states' policies to deal with it, there exists a definite regional component.

The main problem of writing the paper was data availability and accuracy. Many aspects of cooperation between Islamist movements and states is shrouded in secrecy. The same is true of the relation between Islamic governments such as Iran or Sudan and these groups. There are plenty of charges and counter charges, but solid objective evidence is a rarity. It follows that we have to be cautious in our analysis and tentative in our conclusions.

I- INTERSTATE RELATIONS :

The rise of Islamist groups changed the political and ideological context of the Arab world. Three major landmarks can be identified, i.e., the Iranian revolution 1979, the Islamic Jihad in Afghanistan during the 1980s, and the victory of FIS in local and parliamentary

elections in Algeria (1989 - 1991). The Iranian revolution provided a model for revolutionary Islam. It demonstrated the ability of its leaders for mass mobilization and coalition building. For a while, the impact of the revolution swept all over Arab lands; its lofty principles, and the charismatic appeal of its leader were perceived as inspiring for Islamist movements and threatening to ruling elites. Notwithstanding the Sunni -shiite divide and/or the Arab-Persian divide, the Iranian revolution provided a moral uplifting to all those who were challenging existing regimes in the name of Islam.

Similarly, the Afghani resistance movement against the Soviets and the ruling communist regime was another focus for Islamist action. Islamist groups called for the help of "Muslim Brothers" in Afghanistan; funds were raised and volunteers were recruited in support for Jihad. The money came from many sources, primarily from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states and volunteers came from Egypt, Jordan, Sudan, and Algeria. For years, the Pakistan - Afghanistan border area became a meeting point for functionaries and militants from different Arab countries; and new bonds of solidarity developed. Soviet military withdrawal, the collapse of the communist regime, and the victory of the Mujahdeen were perceived as victory for Islam and Islamist movements. Empowered with a strong sense of triumph and zeal, many Arab volunteers, or as they are usually called the "Afghan Arabs", went back to their countries to resume struggle. In Algeria their appearance in their distinctive uniform in demonstrations touched a sensitive cord among the populace and energized their emotions. In Egypt, the government disclosed the existence of an organization with the name of the "returnees from Afghanistan".

Finally, FIS electoral victory in municipal and parliamentary elections demonstrated the popularity of an Islamist movement if fair elections were held. The army intervention and the nullification of elections results gave credence to the view that many Arab ruling regimes could not afford the risk of free democratic process.

In the early nineties, these four milestones created the context for interstate activities and interactions in relation to Islamist movements. We can distinguish between three groups of states. The first is broadly perceived as being supportive of Islamist groups, namely Iran and Sudan. The second is united by the existence of active Islamist opposition; primarily Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria. A

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third group is made of those states which adopted an ambigious middle ground; sometimes encouraging and sometimes opposing Islamists movements according to their national interests. This group may include Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. The room for maneuver of these groups are steadily decreasing as a result of the growing polarization emerging since 1991 - 1992.

Iran projects itself as the Islamic model; a force for cultural authenticity in domestic development and egalitarianism in international relations. Its constitution emphasizes the importance of supporting " Al Moustada'afeen", all Islamic movements, and oppressed peoples in the world (Articles 152 and 154)[1]. As early as April 1979, a delegation from the international organizations of the Muslim Brothers including representatives from Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines went to Tehran and met Khomeini in demonstration of Islamic support to the revolution. According to a report published in a Muslim Brothers' Journal in Egypt, the meeting emphasized the importance of establishing an international Islamic front to help oppressed Muslims everywhere, considered the Iranian revolution as a part of the international Islamic movement and urged the need of employing its success in support of Islamic movements[2]. Iran established an office for Islamic Da'wa to propagate its ideas among Muslims. Moreover, it sponsors scholarship program to encourage students to study in Iranian Universities.

Iran has been accused of supporting oppositional Islamist groups politically, financially, and militarily. For instance, in 1988 Egyptian officials accused Iran of sponsoring a Shiite organization through one of its diplomats in Cairo. It was alleged that the organization included Egyptians, Pakistanis, and other Arabs, and that some of them visited Iran to get military training and religious indoctrination[3]. On November 23, 1992 Dr. Yusuf Wali, the secretary general of the ruling National Democratic party implicated " rebel Iranian agents " for terrorist attacks, stating that Egypt would respond decisively to prevent them from endangering and destroying the Egyptian economy and tourism.[4] In 1992 and 1993, a main theme of Egyptian media has been accusing Iran of supporting terrorism and subversive activities.

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Iran did not hesitate in providing political and moral support to oppositional Islamist groups. It condemned the Egyptian government for its harassment of these groups. In 1985, speaker Rafsangani compared the situation of Egypt to the pre-revolution one in Iran. In support of these groups, the Iranian government named a number of streets after the names of their celebraties such as Khalid Al-Islamboly (hanged in 1981 for the assassination of President Sadat), Sayed Qutb and Sheikh Abdel Hamid Kishk.

Iran was also involved in Algerian developments. When FIS victory in the first round of parliamentary elections was declared in 1991, Iranian media welcomed the news as a confirmation of Iran's political line. Later, Iranian authorities did not hesitate to condemn the military intervention and the demise of FIS political fortunes. Iranian radio asserted that the Algerian people opposed their new rulers, and Tehran warned from civil war[5]. The new regime in Algeria accused Iran of intervening in domestic affairs and severed diplomatic relations with Tehran. An Algerian foreign ministry statement accused the Iranian regime of supporting the fundamentalists and of fostering the cycle of violence that engulfed the country throughout 1991-1992.[6]

Similar charges were echoed by Tunisian officials regarding Iran's links to El-Nahda party. In Lebanon, Iran supported its Shiite community and Hizbullah was developed to become a major force in Lebanese politics, particularly in the south. Iran was accused of using southern Lebanon to establish training camps for militant Islamist elements. In addition, Iran developed relations with HAMAS and the latter has an office in Tehran. In October and December 1992, delegations from HAMAS visited Iran to attend meetings and engage in discussions with senior Iranian officials[7]. Turkey also accused Iran of providing military support to some Islamist groups. Turkish Minister of Interior implicated Iran in the assassination of three Turkish journalists[8]. Moreover, after a period of improvement in relations between the two countries, tensions erupted between Saudi Arabia and Iran regarding the behavior of Iranian pilgrims. Saudi Arabia accused Iran of abusing pilgrimage and trying to exploit it for its political objectives.

Iran is also active in Muslim States where Shi'ites represent a significant portion of their populations. It appealed to Shi'ite communities in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq and Lebanon. In

Saudi Arabia, Iran supported Shi'ite demonstrations which erupted in Al-Ahsaa region in 1979 and 1980. In Kuwait, Iran was accused of supporting an attempt to assassinate the Amir of Kuwait. It was also accused by the Bahraini government of supporting the failed coup attempt in 1981. In Iraq, Iran took an active role in promoting the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution led by Ayatullah Mohamed Baqir Hakim. It was accused of providing military training to its members and securing access to southern Iraq through Iranian territory. It was equally active in helping Amal movement and Hizbullah in Lebanon. A number of Iran's revolutionary guard went into Lebanon to offer military training and assistance.

Due to these activities, real or alleged, Iran is suspected in many Arab capitals. President Mubarak of Egypt, for example, considers Tehran a major source of instability in the region, and accuses it of providing political and military support to Islamist groups. In this context, Iran's sole ideological ally is Sudan . The two states seem to cooperate in a number of areas. Sudan receives cheap, if not free, oil supplies from Iran. Sudanese opposition accuse Iran of providing Sudan with military training, light weapons, and ammunitions. In exchange, Iran perceives Khartoum as an irritant to Egypt. It also provides a good outlet to North African Arab states and Africa at large. The two states were reported to have planned to establish "voice of the Islamic revolution" to broadcast in Arabic and be directed to audiences in Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria[9]. As a consequence of this Iranian - Sudanese relations, Sudan was accused by Egypt and Algeria of supporting subversive activities. In particular, Egypt accused Sudan of hosting camps for military training of members of Islamist groups and of allowing militant Islamist elements to take refuge on its territory. In particular, Sudan provided passports for Islamist leaders such as Mr. Rashed Al-Ghanoushi.[10]

In parallel to the increasing challenge of Islamist groups and the perception of linkages between them and/or Iran and Sudan, a number of Arab states started to work together in response to a common threat. Tunisia made a number of initiatives with Arab and Islamic states to exchange information and coordinate their activities regards Islamist groups. Tunisian Foreign Minister Habib Ben Yahia mentioned that these initiatives were received positively by many members of the organization of the Islamic conference[11]. In May 1992, a Tunisian - Algerian committee was established to coordinate security policies against terrorism and subversive

activities[12]. The committee met in October after the arrest of a number of Islamist militants in Tunisia who were reported to have come from Algeria[13]. In the same month, a Pakistani official delegation visited Tunisia to exchange information. Pakistan promised to evict Algerian and Tunisian Islamists from stationing in its territory[14]. In June, Pakistani State Minister for Foreign Affairs visited Tunisia and the two countries discussed security cooperation[15]. Also, the Foreign Minister of Turkey visited Tunisia and discussed security cooperation between the two states[16]. President Zin Al-Abdeen Ben Ali communicated with former Afghani President Mougadadi requesting him to control Afghan support to Islamist groups[17]. In January 1993, the Tunisian - Egyptian higher committee headed by the Prime Ministers of the two countries reviewed security cooperation against terrorist activities[18]. The Tunisian government also coordinated its efforts with Muritania to control the activities of Tunisian students in Muritania[19].

In addition to its diverse bilateral relations, Tunisian diplomacy brought the importance of regional security cooperation to the attention of international councils. For instance, in November 1992, in an African meeting on human rights President Ben Ali warned from the impact of "extremist fundamentalist movements" on African societies[20]. In a different context, he warned from the danger of "racist and extremist fundamentalist movements" across the Mediterranean. He called for a Mediterranean strategy to contain these movements and eradicating them eventually. If such a strategy is not developed, these movements could become a serious threat to the stability of the region and its security[21]. In the Magahrebi summit meeting of 1992 held in Muritania, the issue of religious extremism was discussed. The summit passed a resolution urging its member states to cooperate in the fight against terrorism.

Egypt has been also active in furthering security cooperation with other Arab states against the violence attributed to Islamist groups[22]. In addition to its cooperation with Tunisia which was reported earlier, it had close consultations with Algeria, Libya, and Pakistan. In August 1992, the Egyptian and Algerian Ministers of Interior held high level discussions. An Egyptian - Libyan committee was established to coordinate activities against terrorism and prevent the abuse of the open borders between the two states by subversive elements[23]. In November 1992, Egyptian authorities disclosed an attempt to smuggle forty kilos of gold to finance

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extremist activities in Egypt. According to official statements the gold was obtained from Iran, was shipped to Sudan, and then was planned to be smuggled through Egyptian - Libyan borders[24]. Egypt cooperated with Pakistan to gather information about Egyptian militants residing on Pakistani territory. A security Egyptian delegation visited Pakistan and the latter agreed to provide Egypt with information about 63 militant elements[25].

The picture that emerges is complex and diverse; states in the region have initiated security cooperation at the bilateral and multilateral levels. Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria are central in these efforts. The three states exchange information in relation to Iranian and Sudanese activities. Other actors contribute to these efforts in different ways. For instance, it was revealed that the PLO provided Egypt with information about training camps in Iran[26]. The PLO leadership grew dissatisfied of HAMAS increasing relations with Tehran and Yasser Arafat accused Iran publicly of intervening in internal Palestinian politics and of supporting HAMAS against the PLO. Pakistan is also crucial to these efforts since it hosted many Arab Mujahdeen for most of the eighties and after. Militant Islamist elements accused in their countries or requested for trial took refuge in Pakistan; a fact which invited Arab and western, particularly American, pressure on Pakistan to control aliens. In January 1993, the Pakistani government announced that these elements created many internal problems and that it had intended to expel them. The announcement was opposed by Pakistani Islamist movements which defended the Afghan Arabs, and requested the government to grant them Pakistani nationality[27]. In response to the Pakistani move, the Afghani leader Hekmetiar announced the readiness of his country to receive the Afghan Arabs[28].

In 1993, combating political religious extremism and terrorism was discussed in a number of regional councils. For instance, the Council of Arab Ministers of Interior held in Tunisia in January, emphasized Arab cooperation on security issues and exchange of information. In his speech, the Egyptian Minister referred to the fact "we are all in the same boat, and threatened by the same threat". The Algerian Minister lamented that "we did not recognize in due time the danger of what some people did in the name of religious and philanthropic activities, and then planned to use violence and terror to seize power"[29]

The conflict between Iran and Sudan on one side, and other Arab states has had its impact on the functioning of Islamic organizations. For instance, at the beginning of the eighties Iran attempted to redefine and redirect the objectives of the Muslim World League, thus initiating a conflict with Saudi Arabia, the main sponsor of the League. The Iranians pushed for a more politicized agenda whereas the Saudis and other Arab states were in favor of strictly religious objectives. Another example is the OIC which has been the battleground for several conflicts between Iran and opposing Arab states.

In April, The OIC Foreign Ministers meeting in Pakistan condemned terrorism and emphasized the importance of coordination between Islamic states to counter it. Its resolution urged its member states not to allow their territory or media to be used by certain groups or individuals to inflict harm on other states[30].

Finally, in the Organization of African Unity summit meeting held in Cairo in June 1993, a number of speeches referred to security threats posed by religious extremism and violence. In particular, President Mubarak warned against the increasing new threat of terrorist movements and called for the coordination of efforts to encounter it[31].

II- TRANSTATE INTERACTION :

There are a number of factors attaining to the development of links between the Islamist movements. One factor is ideological affinities, in addition to personal and organizational links.. For instance, Dr. Hassan Al-Tourabi relates that the Islamist movement in Sudan was influenced by the Muslim Brothers of Egypt and the writings of Al-Moudoudi[32]. Also, the Muslim Brothers of Egypt had their branches in a number of Arab countries in the Arab East and the Gulf. In the fifties when the Muslim Brothers were persecuted in Egypt, they took refuge in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. In the course of time, they acquired wealth and established good contacts with their Saudi counterparts. In the seventies, the role of these individuals was crucial in subsidizing Islamist activities in Egypt. The charter of HAMAS movement of August 1988 refers to the movement as a branch of the Muslim Brothers in Palestine.[33] Another example is the Islamic liberation party which was established in

Jordan but gradually extended its activities to a number of other Arab States. Egyptian and Sudanese teachers were instrumental in disseminating Islamist ideas in North African states.

Another factor is pilgrimage as a meeting point for Islamist activists and functionaries. Pilgrimage provides the occasion for exchange of ideas and experiences. The thought of pilgrimage as an international political meeting was suggested by many Muslim leaders and thinkers, including Nasser of Egypt in 1955. In the eighties, Iranian pilgrims organized rallies which had definite militant political objectives, thus leading eventually to a confrontation with Saudi authorities.

A third factor, referred to earlier, is the existence of conflicts and problems that have broader Islamic implications such as Palestine and Bosnia.

A fourth one is the perception of western hostility which takes in some cases the extreme from of a western conspiracy against Islam and Muslims. The globalization process including the steady flow of ideas, life-styles, and cultural norms are perceived by some Islamist groups as a new form of political encroachment and penetration, and a new form of western domination. Great powers lack of determination on the tragedy of Muslims in Bosnia reinforced these sentiments and Islamist groups used the issue effectively to prove their point. In some of their writings, the image of a new crusades has been revived. Last but not least, ruling elites' security cooperation was another factor encouraging Islamist groups to coordinate their activities.

Thus it is not surprising that Islamist groups have searched for some international formula. As early as 1937, the Muslim Brothers initiated the first attempt. Two concepts of organizational linkages were discussed; the first emphasized coordination between independent and autonomous organizations, and the other proposed by the Muslim Brothers of Egypt, suggested a more tight relation between a headquarter and a number of branches.

A detailed discussion of the arguments for and against each of these two positions go beyond the scope of this paper. It is interesting to note, however, the resemblance in substance between "Islamist" discourse and "Communist" one in this regard. The core of the

discussion was the conflict between " Internationalism" on one side, and respect of independence and autonomy of different organizations on the other.

In 1972, an attempt for reconciliation between the two positions was suggested, but eventually went to no where. In the early 1980s, the Muslim Brothers of Egypt took the initiative in leading international Islamist activities. Delegations were sent abroad to discuss the establishment of an international organization for the Muslim Brothers, and despite some objections from the Brothers in the Gulf, Sudan, and Tunisia, the organization was established.

The main feature of the international organization of the Muslim Brothers (IOMB) is the centrality of Egypt. The leader of the Organization is Al-Murshed Al-a'am (Supreme guide) who has always been from Egypt. According to article one of the IOMB statute, the headquarter is Cairo. The composition of the supreme guidance office (Maktab Al-Irshad Al-a'am) which is the executive organ of the IOMB also reflected the Egyptian weight; it consisted (article 18 and 19) of thirteen members, eight of them are elected from the state in which the supreme guide resides. Consequently, the office comprised eight from Egypt, one from Kuwait, Lebanon, Algeria, Syria, and Jordan. Such Egyptian preponderance was criticized by certain Islamist leaders particularly Al-Tourabi of Sudan.

The IOMB is not a coalition between different Islamist groups, but rather a supranational organization comprising different branches of the same movement. Significant Islamic movements such as FIS in Algeria, Al-Nahda of Tunisia, or the National Islamic Front in Sudan were never affiliated to the organization. We have no evidence of the intervention of the IOMB in the domestic politics of the Muslim Brothers in different Muslim countries, nor of its attempt to develop a grand strategy for its branches. Rather, it remained more of a forum to exchange views and pass resolutions in support of Islamic issues.[34]

For instance, in February 1980 the IOMB issued a resolution warning from certain international developments including "communist invasion of Afghanistan", and American policy against Iran and support for Israel. It identified three evil forces against the Islamic world, namely; Communism, Zionism, and the spirit of Crusades.[35] In September of the same year, it issued a resolution

condemning the repressive policy of Syria against the Muslim Brothers.[36] In June 1981, it supported Iran against Iraq; it condemned the atheist Ba'th ruling party and appealed to Iraqi soldiers to join the Islamic revolution.[37]

We have no evidence of the existence of institutional links or close tactical cooperation between Islamist organizations in Arab states. The leaders of these movements meet occasionally in conferences and seminars in Tehran, Khartoum, or some European capitals. In 1986, it was reported that leaders of Islamist movements met in Geneva under the patronage of the former Algerian president Ahmed Ben Bella. The meeting was attended by representatives from Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Algeria, Lebanon, and Syria; and the participants evaluated the prospects of the Islamist movements in these countries.[38] According to the same report, the meeting approved the establishment of training camps in Sudan to be administered by representatives of different groups.

In his chapter on Sudan in this book, Dr. Hayder Ibrahim refers to the establishment of the popular Arab-Islamic conference by Al-Tourabi in April 1991. During its inaugration meeting held in Khartoum, Al-Tourabi asserted that the conference will function as a new platform for the Islamic movement and its allies. According to Dr. Ibrahim, Al-Tourbi's objective from the establishment of the conference was to initiate an " Islamintern " that can replace the IOMB which is dominated by the Muslim Brothers of Egypt, and the pro status-quo organization of the Islamic conference.[39] It is interesting, however, to note that a Muslim Brothers delegation headed by Mr. Mustafa Machhour, the supreme guide deputy participated in the meeting. The meeting approved a permanent structure including a general secretriat in Khartoum and Dr. Al-Tourabi was elected a secretary general.[40]

III. COLLECTIVE ISLAMIC DIPLOMACY:

The invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 provided an opportunity for Islamist groups to demonstrate their regional influence and their ability to make collective diplomatic initiatives. The analysis of positions taken by these groups for and against Iraq is beyond the scope of this paper[41]; our emphasis is on how these groups exploited the crisis to project their increased role in regional

politics. It is interesting, however, to observe the similarity of these positions in terms of substance and justifications. In a perceptive analysis by James Piscatori of the positions of Islamist groups in different Muslim countries, he observes their common invocation of the political symbolism of Islam. Words like Jihad, infidels, crusades, and the holiest cities were employed intensively by Islamists to denounce the existence of foreign troops in Arab lands and the measures taken by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and their Arab allies.[42]

These similarities in positions paved the way for collective political actions. An international Islamic meeting was held in Aman (Jordan) during the period September 12-15, 1990 to discuss the developments of the crisis " from an Islamic perspective." The meeting was attended by a large number of representatives of Islamist groups including the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, and Syria; Islamic National Front in Sudan, Al-Nahda in Tunisia, Islamic association of Pakistan, Islamic party in Malaysia, labor party in Egypt, HAMAS in Palestine, "Jamiyat Al-Irshad Wal Islah" led by Sheikh Nahnah in Algeria, in addition to a number of independent Islamic figures. The meeting was clearly preoccupied by the presence of foreign troops in the region. The plan approved by the meeting included the necessity of working to prevent the break out of war, to get foreign troops out of Arab land, to end the siege against Muslim Iraqi people, " to end the problem of Kuwait in a way ensuring the freedom of the Kuwaiti people in its homeland within an Arab Islamic framework ", and to guarantee legitimate rights to all parties without foreign intervention. It was also decided to establish a delegation to meet with concerned parties.

The delegation met with king Hussin of Jordan, king Fahd of Saudi Arabia, president Saddam Hussin of Iraq, and president Rafasnjani of Iran. These efforts led to nothing and the delegation never came with a concrete plan to end the crisis. The fact that some members of the delegation were in record already taking a position against the measures adopted by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait had drastically reduced its credibility. The real significance of the effort, however, was to enable leaders of Islamist groups to act as mediators and representatives of people's diplomacy. In a press conference summarizing the outcome of its meetings, members of the delegation emphasized that the absence of an Islamic approach (Al-Manhag Al-Islami), or its weakness in most Arab states is the

ultimate cause for the lack of democracy, the gap between ruler and ruled, and the creation of crises and tensions between Arab states. According to them, the immediate task is to get foreign troops out of the region since their real objective is to destroy Iraqi power thus enabling Israel to expand at the expense of Arab states. Their other objective was to weaken Islamist movements. Finally, the delegation requested the intensification of efforts to find an Arab Islamic solution of the crisis.[43]

Another Islamic effort came from " the popular international Islamic leadership " which is closely related to Libya. A delegation was established, presided by Dr. Mahmoud Al-Sherif, head of the association for Islamic call, with representatives from the labor party of Egypt, Al-Nahda of Tunisia, HAMAS of Palestine, society for guidance and reform of Algeria, and other representatives from Turkey, Pakistan, and Senegal. The delegation visited Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Iran, and Jordan for consultations. Dr. Al-Sherif emphasized the need to reach an Arab Islamic solution; he asked Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait so that the U.S. should not have an excuse for military intervention. He suggested a simultaneous withdrawal of Iraqi and foreign troops to be replaced by Arab Islamic ones.[44]

IV. CONCLUSION:

Thus we end up with a regional situation characterized by a confrontation between a transislamist alliance and a transanti-Islamist one. In addition to coordinating their activities, both work earnestly to secure extra-regional help and support. Both compete over the control of Muslim communities all over the world. Also both compete over the sympathy of major western powers, particularly the US. In an interview with the CNN, Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman made a conscious effort to project himself and his movement as moderates. He went out of his way to praise the US and its institutions.

In the 1970s, some authors argued that interarab politics were deideologized. With the demise of revolutionary Arab Nationalism and Socialism, regional politics acquired a more pragmatic and down to earth substance. The rise of Islamist movements and their impact on regional relations demonstrate the limits of this argument. Similar to the situation in the early 1960s when Arab states were

divided into two groups, revolutionary and conservative regimes, these states are once more divided along ideological lines. It is difficult to decide whether such a division will deepen in the coming few years, or the imperatives of raison d'Etat and national interests will blurr such a distinction. It is important to underline the dynamic and changing nature of the division. States belonging to the "Islamist camp" have to conduct business with others. The Egyptian-Sudanese rapprochement of July 1993 is a case in point. Similarly, regimes facing the threat of Islamist opposition continue to pay respect to the ideals and norms of Islam. These regimes are particularly sensitive, and sometimes vulnerable, to the accusations of being too much secularized and anti-Islam. In almost all Arab states, the call for anthentecity and particularism still has a strong appeal which no government can overlook or ignore. From this perspective, the confrontation between regimes and Islamists opposition is a specific case of the worldwide globalism versus particularism debate.

Another consideration regards possible future developments is whether an Islamist movement will assume power in a key Arab state. Such a development will certainly boost Islamist movements throughout the Arab world. Notwithstanding the importance of Iran, it remains non-Arab and Shi'ite state thus limiting its ability to influence others. It remains problematic however whether Arab states will pursuit a policy of appeasement or confrontation towards such a new comer. This depends on a number of factors such as the importance of the state, its political weight and ability to influence others, its readiness to allocate resources abroad, and finally its ability to build regional and international coolitions.

END NOTES

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