

**Islamist Movements
in the Middle East:
Challenging
the Autocrats**

Bjørn Olav Utvik
Truls Hallberg Tønnessen

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Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages (IKOS)
University of Oslo

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Executive Summary

Terrorist movements like *al-Qa'ida* obviously constitute a grave security problem and to an extent they are also an extreme expression of a genuine rage against Western dominance in the Muslim World. Yet it is an Islamism of a quite different breed that moves and organises the masses, and that is posed to be a major influence on the future politics of the region.

In each of the countries of the Middle East the major Islamist movements in terms of the number of members and the size of their constituency are movements that work for moral, social and political reform of their societies through peaceful means such as verbal persuasion and practical grassroots work to improve social and economic conditions. Central to this "mainstream" Islamism is the international network of the Society of Muslim Brothers (MB). A number of non-MB organisations in countries such as Turkey and Morocco, and within the Shi'a world where Islamism has a distinct and separate history, exhibit broadly the same features.

Investigating the status and development of these mainstream Islamist movements will provide insights of far more direct relevance to the political present and future of the region than the study of bin Ladin and his disciples. Almost without exception Islamists movements represent the main oppositional challenge to incumbent regimes throughout the Middle East. For the foreseeable future, to the extent that the political regimes, whether forced to or willingly, will open up to competition, the Islamists are uniquely placed to profit. In the big picture of the region they are the only organised force for change with a substantial popular basis. It would thus seem that anyone interested in forming an idea about the political future of the Middle East, and in building relations to potential future power holders, would do well to talk to the Islamists.

Islamists in the Middle East are ardent advocates of rapid economic development. To promote that today they seek market-oriented reforms in states that have economies heavily dominated by the state. This goes hand in hand with a fight against corruption and the advocacy of meritocracy, since practices of clientelism, nepotism and bribery are seen as both morally wrong and as leading to economic inefficiencies that slow down economic growth. Yet while wanting the state to loosen its grip on business and trade, the Islamists still want it both to play an active role in directing development and not least in alleviating poverty and actively promoting health and education for the many.

In states where with few exceptions no democracy in terms of real power holders being chosen in free elections exists, the Islamists are today the main force calling for the introduction of precisely such a practice. They eagerly promote the principle that the people are the legitimate source of political power, and that power should rotate through the regular holding of elections that freely express the will of the people. Through their political work Islamists also have a democratising effect in that they mobilise people outside established power circles for political participation.

However, the Islamists insist that an essential part of, and framework for, reform is the reintroduction of Islamic moral standards, most importantly expressed in the reintroduction of the Islamic Law, the *Shari'a*, as ruling law. As for the interpretation of the *Shari'a* the degree of conservatism and literalism varies not least with the socio-cultural background and environment of individuals and movements. In the deeply socially conservative Arab peninsula Islamists tend to be more conservative. This is evident within the Muslim Brothers trend, but it is also no coincidence that precisely in this area the much more conservative *salafi* trend is on the rise, as witnessed lately in the elections in Kuwait.

A particular point of internal tensions within the Islamist movements and vis-à-vis the outside world is the question of the position of women in society and politics. In ideological

terms this is linked to the fact that the Islamists consider that the family, which they see as the core of Muslim society, is under attack. The role of the woman as mother and wife is central to their understanding of the Muslim family, and seen to be precisely defined in the holy scriptures. Therefore any attempt at altering the relation between the genders in the family is suspected of aiming at undermining the family, and thereby Muslim society at large. Nevertheless their general drive for progress have pushed many Islamists towards the advocacy of improved education for women and greater participation in society and politics.

As for the method of struggle for the envisaged reforms the general picture is very clear: the mainstream Islamist movements considered in this report have taken a definite stance in favour of a peaceful, gradualist road to change, and oppose the resort to violence in pursuit of political ends. This does not mean that the question of political violence is completely off the table. The Algerian example of the 1990s is interesting in that it shows mainstream Islamists taking up arms as a response to their exclusion from a nascent democratic system where they had scored great successes. Yet, although certainly such radicalisation continues to be a potential outcome of the current repressive policies against the Islamists, in fact the dominant response to repression seems to have been further consolidation of a moderate non-violent strategy. Perhaps the most difficult questions are raised by those cases where moderate Islamist movements have established armed wings in order to take part in a military fight against foreign occupation. The use of military forces built up to resist foreign occupation in settling scores in internal politics remains a potential temptation for these movements.

It is part of the birthmark of Islamism that it involves a distancing vis-à-vis Western society. The Islamists see themselves as representing the authentic identity of Arabs and Muslims, and this is an important part of the platform on which they seek moral legitimacy. This claim for authenticity has naturally involved painting a negative picture of the Other, the West. One needs not search long in programmes and other Islamist publications for depictions of Western civilisation as in a state of moral decay because of unbridled materialism and individualism.

But this is only part of the picture. Coexisting with the negative othering of the West is the advocacy (and practice) of a whole range of values and principles which would rank high in any positive self-presentation of Western culture: democracy, meritocracy, efficiency, transparency, equality, and the general idea of progress. Besides the issue of gender relations and sexual morality, the main quarrel the Islamists have with the West is over political issues to do with Western support for authoritarian regimes in the region, American interventionist policies, and not least Western support for Israel.

In a region where in most countries democracy is virtually non-existent, the main organised force challenging the autocratic regimes is Islamism. The main movements covered in this report have chosen a strategy for change through peaceful means. They seek to pressure the governments to implement reforms that would allow the peoples of the region to choose their leaders through free and fair elections. These facts combined should incline any institution in a country like Norway interested in the political future of the Middle East, whether governments, political parties or civil society organisations, to seek contact and dialogue with the Islamists.

This is not a question of deciding to *support* the movements in question. Certainly many points of disagreement between the Islamists and most Western political tendencies remain, linked to the role of religion in politics in general, and more specifically to policies towards women and towards religious minorities. In addition, although the Islamists dominate the scene, there are other competing movements working for democracy in the Middle East based on other ideologies.

But with the Islamists in a position to become an influential factor in the shaping of the future it is important to learn about them also through direct contact. A dialogue, while hardly likely to lead to complete agreement on all issues, could serve to mutually dispel misconceptions about the other, and identify the real points of disagreement. While no one can foresee how far these real disagreements can be dissolved in the future, identifying them is a vital first step in establishing a framework where they can be handled in a constructive manner.

In deciding which Islamists to talk to a number of factors should be considered, among them legal status, relative strength of the movement, and the size and importance of the country in question. Judged from these aspects at one level of course the Turkish AKP might be an important interlocutor. Despite this party's post-Islamist nature, it is the legitimate child of an Islamist movement, and retains an important network of contacts to the Muslim Brothers-inspired movements in the region. Among the oppositional movements the clearest candidate for priority is probably the Moroccan PJD. It is a legal party with an established strong electoral support, and a record of playing by democratic rules in Moroccan politics as well as internally in the movement. Other important legal parties are the *Islah* party in Yemen, the IAF in Jordan and the Islamic Constitutional Movement in Kuwait, although the two latter seem to have lost some voter support in the latest years

Among the movements that remain illegal obviously the most important one to consider is the Muslim Brothers in Egypt. The movement's current precarious situation with increased repressive measures against it by the authorities makes official meeting with the MB leadership difficult, especially for government agencies. But the fact that the MB has a sizable parliamentary group creates a useful channel for talks.

In order to enhance the credibility of Western parties to a dialogue it would be important to change current attitudes towards government repression of the opposition in the Middle East. There is no reason to declare support for Islamist movements. But there is every reason to declare much more firmly than is currently done unequivocal condemnation of the repression undertaken by Middle East regimes against oppositional movements, and to protest loudly against violation of human rights also when Islamists are the targets.

INTRODUCTION:

In the Shadow of *al-Qa'ida* Moves the Islamism that Mostly Matters

For obvious reasons the public perception of Islamism in the West has come to be dominated by the spectacular actions of terrorism performed in the name of Islam by *al-Qa'ida* and its allies. This poses a great problem. It tends to block insights into the real political conflicts in a Middle East dominated by moribund authoritarian regimes, and it grants the ruling autocrats a free hand in suppressing political opposition in the name of contributing to the "War on Terror". *Al-Qa'ida* is obviously a grave security problem and to an extent it is also an extreme expression of a genuine rage against Western dominance in the Muslim World. Yet it is an Islamism of a quite different breed that moves and organises the masses, and that is posed to be a major influence on the future politics of the region.

In each of the countries of the region the major Islamist movements in terms of the number of members and the size of their constituency are movements that work for moral, social and political reform of their societies through peaceful means such as verbal persuasion and practical grassroots work to improve social and economic conditions. Central to this "mainstream" Islamism is the international network of the Society of Muslim Brothers (MB). A number of non-MB organisations in countries such as Turkey and Morocco, and within the Shi'a world where Islamism has a distinct and separate history, exhibit broadly the same features.

Investigating the status and development of these mainstream Islamist movements will provide insights of far more direct relevance to the political present and future of the region than the study of bin Ladin and his disciples.

Before entering into the mapping of Islamist organisations across the Middle East that is a primary task of this report, some further clarification of the distinctions within the Islamist tendency as a whole is in order.

Definition and Important Distinctions

First of all, what is Islamism, and is it indeed a useful term? *For the purposes of the present report Islamism is understood to indicate an ideological tendency (or rather a family of tendencies) seeing the religion Islam as not only regulating the relationship between the individual believer and God, but containing as well divine directions which should govern social, judicial and political affairs in a Muslim society.* For most Islamists this involves a demand that the *Shari'a*, the Islamic Law based on the Koran and the Sunna of the Prophet must be the basis of the actual law imposed by the state.

While not all who share such views have organised to further them, in the present study it is precisely the main *political organisations* with an Islamist platform that are the subject of investigation.

Within Islamism so widely defined we need to make some major distinctions. One central dividing line concerns the preferred method for change; hence a discussion of the key concepts of *da'wa* and *jihad* is in order. The other main axis of differentiation has to do with varying attitudes towards modernity and modernisation.

Da'wa: an inner mission for piety

The most common term used by Islamists of the mainstream movements to describe the activity they are involved in is *da'wa*. The word means "call" or "invitation". The Islamists call out to their fellow Muslims and what they invite to is a life devoted to Islam. It is a call for piety, for living according to the teachings of religion, and for emulating the exemplary life of the Prophet. But, significantly, for the Islamists the true piety is one that goes beyond the mere observance of ritual duties like prayer, fasting and the like. The truly pious believer is one who devotes his or her life fully to the struggle for good against evil. This involves preaching the message of Islam, active social work to better the conditions of the poor and promote economic progress, and active engagement in politics in order to reform society for the better and to strengthen the Muslim nation(s). A core idea in al-Banna's thinking was that a comprehensive renaissance for the Muslim world was contingent on the spiritual reawakening and moral refinement of the individual believer. For this purpose in the Muslim Brothers great importance was (and is) attached to the movement's own elaborate programme of education (*tarbiya*).

Since Hasan al-Banna established the Society of Muslim Brothers in 1928 *da'wa* has been held forth as the method for change and been understood to involve preaching, education, persuasion, organisation, social work and engagement in politics. While the Muslim Brothers did establish a secret armed wing in the late 1940s, their armed action was overwhelmingly directed against the British and against the Zionist movement in Palestine in the war of 1948.

Since the 1960s the picture is even clearer. In 1969 the then General Guide of the MB, Hasan al-Hudaybi, published the book *Du'a la quda* (Preachers, not Judges), in which he clearly distanced the Muslim Brothers from the revolutionary ideas put forth in the prison writings of Sayyid Qutb (cf. below p.29). Since then the MB have explicitly rejected any use of violence in the struggle for internal reform in Muslim societies, and this is the overwhelmingly dominant line within the mainstream Islamist movements in the region.

Jihad

Jihad is short for *jihad fi sabil allah*, "struggle on the path of God" (more freely translated: "struggle for the cause of God"). *Jihad* is a positive term among Muslims: it is linked to the ideal of being willing to bring great sacrifices for the good cause. Yet how this ideal should primarily be understood is the subject of constant renegotiation. Learned men of religion, *ulama*, from Islam's formative period most often discuss the concept in the sense of a military fight for the expansion and/or defence of the realm of Islam. Yet there is a strong tradition of emphasising the purification of the self, the fight against evil forces lurking within one's soul, as a higher form of *jihad*. Many contemporary Muslims who wish to tone down the image of Islam as a militant religion are fond of quoting a Prophetic tradition, *hadith*, where Muhammad is supposed to have stated that "the *jihad* of the heart", the inner fight against evil forces within each individual, is the "greater *jihad*" and thus more important than the "lesser *jihad*" which is fought with arms when necessary. Others, notably those known as *jihadi-salafis*, reject the reliability of this *hadith* and insist that the relevant meaning of the call to *jihad* is a call to take up arms against the unjust and unbelieving forces of the world. In any case it is important to be aware that the term *jihad* is currently in common use, not least by Islamists, both in a general overarching sense of "struggle for the good cause" (which may then be fought with a variety of means) and in the more narrow sense of military struggle where Muslims stand against non-Muslim oppressors or occupants.

One may reasonably distinguish between three main types of situations today where Islamists are engaged in, or support, a military *jihad*:

- 1) Resistance against occupation or oppression by non-Muslim powers.

All Islamists (and many other Muslims) would agree on the legitimacy of this kind of struggle as a *jihad*. Examples may be Palestine, Kashmir, and Chechnya.

- 2) Revolutionary *jihad*.

This is exactly the defining distinction between mainstream legalist¹ Islamism and *jihadi* Islamism. The *jihadis* claim that the incumbent regimes in most Muslim countries today have through their policies, which trample on religious values and oppress the true champions of religion, demonstrated that they are really to be considered apostates. This triggers a duty for all righteous Muslims to take up arms in order to bring down the infidel leaders. The classic examples here are the two Egyptian groups *Jihad* and *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya* and their armed struggle against the regime in the 1980s and 1990s.

- 3) International *jihad*.

This is based on the idea that there is a global struggle going on between the Islamic world and the West led by the US, and that every action undertaken against the global enemy makes part of the same *jihad*. This form of *jihad* links up to both of the other forms, which the international *jihadis* of *al-Qa'ida* would like to incorporate into their global *jihad*. Yet what distinguishes it is the general "de-territorialisation" of the struggle. The two first forms have overwhelmingly been fought out within the territory of the home country of each organisation, while the actions that have become the hallmark of type 3 have typically taken the form of acts of terror in Western countries (or against Western interests in different areas of the world, in Muslim as well as in non-Muslim countries). There is a clear link between forms 2 and 3, in that revolutionary *jihadis* have historically been central in the formation of *al-Qa'ida*.

Terror, in the sense of attacks against non-combatant civilians, has occurred in connection with all three forms of *jihad*. In forms 1 and 2 this has taken place alongside military struggle against the uniformed armed forces of the opponent. Form 3 has been *dominated* by acts of terror. Mainstream Islamists generally condemn acts of terror. The main exception has been a considerable degree of support for the violent acts of Hamas, even when these have targeted civilians within Israel's pre-1967 borders.

Ideology

Islamist ideology is a very complex landscape, but it is possible to draw a rough main dividing line between a more modernist and a more traditionalist tendency.

- 1) The *Ikhwan*-tendency.

¹ The term "legalist" signifies those who want to work with peaceful methods within the existing legal framework and/or seek to apply pressure to change the legal regime so that it will allow for legal competition for power.

This is named after The Muslim Brothers (*al-ikhwan al-muslimun*) and is a legitimate (but not the only) child of Islamic modernism as it grew from the late 19th Century. Along with a strong emphasis on Islamic identity in opposition to the West there is a strong focus on development and reform aimed at making the Muslim world capable of catching up with the technological and economic lead of the West.

2) The *Salafi*-tendency.

This tendency has multiple roots; one of them being inspiration from the *Wahhabi* movement of Saudi Arabia. Common to *salafis* is a strong emphasis on a traditional, often literal, interpretation of Islamic mores and codes of conduct, and a strong aversion for anything that smacks of new interpretations. This is linked to a strong focus on ritual practice to the detriment of questions relating to social problems.

The Islamist movements and these dividing lines

In the real world these dividing lines overlap. If we focus on the two distinctions relating to the view of *jihad* and the view of reform and modernisation, we may theoretically have four main types of movements:

- 1) legalist-*ikhwani*
- 2) *jihadi-ikhwani*
- 3) legalist-*salafi*
- 4) *jihadi-salafi*

But even if there are obvious historical links between the Muslim Brothers and the *jihadi* tendency, we may currently generally exclude type 2, because those with a Muslim Brother background who have chosen a line where armed *jihad* is posited as a privileged method for change of one's own society, have gravitated strongly in a *salafi* direction.² We thus end up with these three analytical categories within the Sunni Islamist movements:

legalist *ikhwani*

legalist *salafi*

jihadi salafi

Based on the purpose of this report, in the survey below overriding priority has been accorded to the category of legalist *ikhwani* movements (and to similar movements among Shi'a Muslims). Nevertheless we have devoted space to the analysis of some movements that *have* on occasion used arms in internal political struggles in their country, notably the Algerian FIS during the mid-nineties, Hamas in Gaza in June 2007, and Hizbullah in the current conflict in Lebanon. In the two latter cases armed wings built up primarily in the context of a fight against occupation have been used to challenge forces loyal to governments considered illegitimate by the Islamists. In the former the FIS took to up arms to protest a military coup

² An exception here may be the special case of Iraq, where there is an unclear and disputed borderline between resistance to foreign occupation and rebellion against a national government. It is possible that some elements of the armed resistance may be close to an *ikhwani* ideological outlook.

which had ended Algeria's nascent parliamentary democracy. While these actions may certainly pose questions as to the democratic character of the movements involved, the participation of these movements in parliamentary politics makes it of interest to treat them here. As for the legalist *salafi* category, these are mostly apolitical movements, although there are signs that this may be about to change. In the few cases where such movements are already engaged in political elections they have been included in the report.

To clarify: despite the fact that Hamas is involved in a military *jihad* (of type 1 above) which also involves acts of terror, the organisation is here counted as legalist *ikhwani* based on its ideology and on the methods it has (mainly) used in the struggle for Islamisation of Palestinian society and politics.

THE MIDDLE EAST: CENTRAL ISLAMIST ORGANISATIONS³

In the following country-by-country presentation of the major Islamist movements, each movement is listed by name, main leaders, and website where available. Most websites, if not otherwise marked, are in the relevant local language (Arabic, Persian, Turkish or Kurdish), but quite a number of them contain pages in English or French.

MAURITANIA

Mauritania is on the margins of the Arab world. A member of the Arab League, and with Arabic as official language, it nevertheless contains sizeable minorities speaking African languages not related to Arabic. The relation between the Arabic-speaking population and the linguistic minorities, largely concentrated in the South, has been ridden by conflict, exacerbated by the still not eradicated practice of slavery.

Politically since independence in 1960 the country has mostly been ruled by one-party and/or military regimes. Though multi-party elections were formally introduced in 1992 the last military ruler, Ould Taya, remained as president until being removed in a coup in 2005. Only in 2006/2007 something reminiscent of free elections for parliament and presidency were held. Still politics remain dominated by linkages of tribe and clan, but some organisations of a more ideological nature and representing the growing educated classes are emerging, notably the Islamist trend.

***Rassemblement National pour la Réforme et le Développement* (RNRD) (MB)**

Muhammad Jamil Ould Mansour

The roots of Islamism in Mauritania goes back to the late seventies when students who had come under the influence of *ikhwani* thought while in Egypt or Tunisia started returning to the country. Various organisations were formed, and in the last decade attempts were made to form an Islamist party. These attempts, including one as late as 2005 under the name *Parti de la Convergence Démocratique*, were blocked on the grounds that no parties based on religion could be allowed. The situation had clear parallels to Egypt in that the Islamists were allowed to operate publicly, and run for election as independents. At the parliamentary and local elections in November 2006 five Centrist Reformers (Réformateurs Centristes, RC), as this tendency was known at the time, were elected to the lower chamber of the National Assembly and three to the Senate: they were part of a "Coalition of Forces for Change" which secured 41 of the 96 seats. In addition the RC tendency had more than 10 of their numbers elected as mayors and more than a hundred as members of local councils. In front of the presidential elections of 11 March 2007 (the first after the dictator Ould Taya was toppled in a coup in August 2005) the RC did not run its own candidate but demanded and claimed to have secured from all candidates a promise to legalise the tendency as a political party.

And duly, on 3 August 2007 the *Rassemblement National pour la Réforme et le Développement* (National Gathering for Reform and Development, RNRD) under the

³ Organisations that are directly linked to the international network of the Muslim Brothers are marked MB.

leadership of Muhammad Jamil Ould Mansour was granted license as a political party together with 18 other groups.

At the websites of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers RNRD and its forerunners are regularly referred to as belonging to the Mauritanian branch of the MB. Yet Mansour in several interviews tend to deny that the new party is an Islamist party (though it would seem that at least partly this is to distance his party from militant *jihadis* active in the region). All the RNRD does, he says, is to claim Islam as the central guiding reference for state and society. Yet this is already embedded as a principle in the Mauritanian constitution and in the country's official name, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. In Article 5 of the founding declaration of the party, the first of its main principles is listed as "commitment to Islam as the only source for legislation, and the religion of the country and people, as prescribed in the constitution". Since all legal parties have to recognise the constitution, the question of the reference to Islam in no way singles out the RNRD, Mansour claims. On the other hand what the Law on political parties explicitly forbids is an attempt by any party to *monopolise* the Islamic reference, and the RNRD has no wish to practice such monopolisation.

In Mansour's discourse here, of course, can be seen an effort at avoiding the "Islamist" label. Under the continued conditions of the war on terror, the regimes of the region have been quick to exploit the international confusion of Islamism with terrorism in order to be able with impunity to suppress popular opposition groups, of which the Islamist tendency has for many years been the most vital and vocal. Yet it does also reflect a wish to be known as a pragmatic party concerned first of all with practical and efficient measures to improve the life of the population, and which is open to alliances with other parties. This pragmatism is both well rooted in the international MB tradition, at the same time it reflects especially the outlook of the younger generation, as seen most clearly perhaps in the Turkish [AKP](#) and in the [Wasat](#) initiative in Egypt. The RNRD has broadly supported the parliamentary alliance working with Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, president since 2007, although he was not their favoured candidate. In May 2008 some of its members entered the coalition government. But in the discussions around the creation of a party out of the presidential coalition, Mansour, while not outright rejecting the thought, has kept a critical distance and warned against any attempt at turning the clock back to a one-party system.

The RNRD was launched under the slogan "authenticity – reform – development". The party president, Mansour, in announcing the party formation, described three essential foundations upon which it was built: the reference to Islam, belonging to the nation and the democratic choice. Central issues pressed by the RNRD include the fight against corruption in the political apparatus of power, and a desire to break off diplomatic relations with Israel. In addition the party presents itself as a force that works to counteract the continued domination of tribal and ethnic loyalties over state and society. The RNRD has endeavoured in particular to build a bridge to, and to mobilise on its side, the black non-Arab part of the population, and has raised loud the call to end the continued practice of slavery in the country, defined in the party programme as a "social disease" along with racism, sectarianism, tribalism, regionalism and nepotism.

The party declares its support for democratic rule including the consolidation of mechanisms for a peaceful circulation of power.

MOROCCO

The mainstream Islamist movement in Morocco is broadly divided into two tendencies according to the attitude they have taken towards the official political life of the country. It should be noted here that an absolute condition of being allowed to take part in the formal political life of the country is to recognise the monarchy, the powers of the king, and the monarch's capacity of being *amir al-mu'minin*. This term, which translates as "Commander of the Faithful", is a title of honour historically bestowed upon the caliph, the ruler of the Islamic Empire after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. One group of Islamists has chosen to give that concession. These are the forces originating in the radical *Shabiba Islamiyya* (Islamic Youth) active in the 1970s, and now organised in the Movement for Unity and Reform (MUR), which is the mainstay of the legal political party the Justice, and Development Party (French abbreviation PJD). The other, possibly even more popular, tendency connected to the *Jama'at al-Adl wal-Ihsan* (the Justice and Beneficence Society, AI) under the leadership of Abdelsalam Yassine and his daughter Nadia, have refused to accept the king as *amir al-mu'minin* and have recently even argued for replacing the monarchy with a republic.

In both cases we are in front of highly sophisticated organisations with a keen sense of strategy and a quite developed doctrine accessible to the public (although the Justice and Beneficence as an illegal movement does not have access to the publication of a newspaper or any other regular press organ). Both movements are clearly to be considered "social movements", in the sense that they have an extended presence in the society, and that they are both at the head of a family of organisations guided by the same ideology. It is significant in this sense that to our knowledge Morocco represents the clearest case of the existence of distinct Islamist women's organisations. In the case of the AI the women's section is highly integrated with the parent organisation and led by it. In the MUR/PJD family the connections are looser. As Muhammad Hamdawi, the current leader of MUR, explained in an interview for this report, there is no formal organisational bond between the MUR, the party, the women's movement, the student movement and other associated groups. Hamdawi stated this as a principle, one that afforded flexibility, efficiency and freedom of action within the various fields of activity.

Movement for Unity and Reform (harakat al-tawhid wal-islah)

www.alislah.ma

Muhammad Hamdawi

Abdelilah Ben Kirane

Daily newspaper: *Al-tajdid*

The MUR was formed in 1996 through a merger of several separate inheritor groups of the original *Shabiba Islamiyya* formed by Abd al-Karim Muti' in 1969. Most prominent among them were the Movement for Reform and Renewal under the leadership of Abdelilah Ben Kirane, Muhammad Yatim, and others, and the Union for the Islamic Future under the leadership of Ahmad al-Raissouni. In a parallel to the situation of the Muslim Brothers organisation in Jordan, the MUR is the "mother" movement of what we may call the *ikhwani* tendency in Morocco. It should, however, be made clear that Morocco is exceptional within the Arab countries in that there is no local branch of the Muslim Brother movement proper in the kingdom. So we are talking definitely of a homegrown Moroccan movement but sufficiently similar to the MB to warrant the label *ikhwani*. At the latest congress of the MUR there were invited guests from the MB in Egypt.

The MUR/PJD family differs with the rival Justice and Beneficence Society on several counts. They argue that it is important to take part in political life within the system so that change can come about in a peaceful and gradual way. They deal with the monarchy in a matter-of-fact way, indicating that the monarchy and the Alawi dynasty⁴ have through their long history become an integral part of the fabric of the Moroccan society and polity. So they do not call for the end of monarchy, but for a strengthening of the powers of popularly elected political organs vis-à-vis the *makhzan* (the royal court). In contrast to the AI they do not look upon voter abstention in elections as a positive sign of resistance to the authoritarian powers but as a lack of participation that will hinder the gradual emergence of democracy in the country. The decision of the AI to stay out of legal politics is therefore lamented as a factor hindering a constructive development. In this connection the MUR and PJD do not deny the considerable strength of the following of the AI. When leaders of the two groups were confronted with the idea that the AI tendency was the stronger of the two in terms of followers, there was no flat denial.

The other main criticism of the AI was what they claimed to be the strict hierarchical organisation of the AI and the cult of personality of its founder and leader Abdelsalam Yassine. The MUR/PJD take great pride in their own internal democracy. The MUR leader Muhammad Hamdawi in our interview with him pointed for instance to the fact that leaders could only be elected for a limited time period, and that currently he had several former presidents of the movements with him on the board of MUR. Incidentally, as they acknowledged, having an open democratic process was made easier by the relatively liberal atmosphere of the country and the legality of the movement, in comparison with the situation lived by for example the Muslim Brothers in Egypt and of AI inside Morocco.

Justice and Development Party (hizb al-adala wal-tanmiya)

www.pjd.ma

Saad Eddine Othmani

Newspaper: *Al-Adala wal-Tanmiya*

This party in its present shape was formed in 1996 when members of the MUR tendency joined the pre-existing Popular Constitutional Democratic Movement (MPCD) and changed its platform in an Islamist direction. In 1998 the name was changed to the Justice and Development Party. In the 2007 legislative elections the party expected based on several opinion polls that they would emerge as the clearly dominant party within the new assembly. In actual fact the party advanced only slightly in the election, coming in as number 2 after the Independence Party (*hizb al-istiqlal*) (although the PJD received the highest number of votes by a slight margin), and increasing their number of seats from 42 to 46 out of the 325 seats in the assembly. It got 10,9 percent of the votes according to the official count, making it the largest vote-getter in the extremely fragmented Moroccan party system. The party puts the relatively disappointing result down to mostly three factors, first of which is voter apathy caused by the continued dominance of the royal court over political decision making, something which renders the elected institutions rather impotent. Secondly, and linked to this, comes the decision of the AI not to take part in the elections nor support any candidates; in effect discouraging voter participation. Thirdly, election fraud in various forms committed by the real power holders and their supporters is seen to have played a significant role.

While the PJD had made part of the governing coalition from 1998 to 2002, since then it has remained in opposition. Yet the expectation of winning adds to the significance of the

⁴ Not to be confused with the heterodox Alawi (Nusayri) sect of Syria and its neighbouring countries. The Moroccan royal family are staunchly Sunni.

programme the party presented for the 2007 elections, under the slogan "Let us build together the just Morocco". Within this programme it is noteworthy that of the eight main sections the first one concerns "improving the quality of the system for education and formation and the advancement of scientific research", and the two next concern speeding up economic development. In fourth place comes "strengthening of the democratic option". Only as number five comes what is termed "strengthening of the system of national values and of the Islamic civilisational identity of Morocco". The three last points are concerned with improving human development and social justice, strengthening development in construction, housing and natural resources, and securing national sovereignty. This last point contains a determined defence of Moroccan rights over Western Sahara, with provisions for regional autonomy, all much in line with official policies.

In terms of the political system the envisaged reforms are basically concerned with strengthening the power of the people through their elected representatives. While avoiding any direct and explicit challenge to royal power, in effect the realisation of the PJD's programme would bring Morocco a long step closer to the constitutional monarchies of Western Europe. This is not least because the prime minister is to be appointed based on the results of parliamentary elections and to be given extended powers as a real head of government. The powers of parliament are also to be strengthened by its being more continuously in session and by the strict limitation of any legislation by royal decree when it is in recess. It is also suggested that the current indirectly elected second chamber, the Council of Advisors, either be abolished or be directly elected and have its powers reduced. The programme further calls for the development of local democracy and decentralisation on a wide scale. Here the party in particular advocates the establishment of self-rule for the "Southern desert provinces", i.e. the disputed region of the former Spanish Sahara, under Moroccan rule since 1975, but where the POLISARIO movement demands independence with support from the African Union. On this issue the PJD is firmly behind the Moroccan semi-consensus. It refers to the "Moroccan Sahara", and warns against secessionism. It talks about the plight of the Saharan refugees in Algerian Tindouf and ask that they be returned to their homes, albeit voluntarily. The refugee community in Tindouf is the main base of the POLISARIO, so what the PJD is doing here is to picture the refugee situation as the responsibility of hostile forces outside Morocco. In an effort at a conciliatory tone the programme as noticed calls for self-rule in the area and for place of pride to be given to the "Hasaniyya culture", i.e. the Arabophone culture of the Western Sahara and Mauritania, with its distinct dialect of spoken Arabic and its bedouin characteristics.

Otherwise the programme also call for the major linguistic minority in the country, the Berbers or *Amazighen*, estimated at 40 percent of the population, to have their rights recognised in the constitution. The PJD demands that their language be recognised there as a national language, that it be allowed for use in religious sermons, and that Berber language broadcasting be made accessible to all parts of the country and to Moroccans abroad.

On the issue of women's rights the party is very much in line with the Egyptian Muslim Brothers (see below). They acknowledge the political rights of women, *inter alia* the right to vote and to stand for elections (without touching on the issue of a woman as head of state; unthinkable in a Moroccan setting because it would touch on the royal prerogative). Like with the MB in Egypt focus is given to the primary role of the woman as mother, and the party campaigns regularly for strengthening the family as the mainstay of the nation and society. Yet strong emphasis is put on improving the education of women, strengthening labour legislation to make it easier for women to combine work outside and duties in the home, and preventing women being paid less than men doing the same work. What is somewhat of a development in Islamist circles, again with parallels in Egypt, is that these

demands are put inside a framework where it is explicitly considered beneficial to increase women's sustained participation in the labour market outside the home.

The Organisation for the Renewal of Female Awareness

(munazzamat tajdid al-wa'y al-nisa'i)

Basima al-Haqqawi

It is a remarkable feature of the PJD/MUR social movement that it also includes a largely autonomous women's movement, the Organisation for the Renewal of Female Awareness. This movement is also remarkable for some of its expressed views. Its general secretary Basima al-Haqqawi, takes care to stay within the Islamist fold in the sense that she explicitly rejects "Western feminism" and defends the idea of the complementarity of the genders. Yet she argues strongly for the need for women to take more equal part with men even in the leadership of the Islamist movements. She sees as one of the advantages of the setting up of a separate women's movement that it affords the women an invaluable freedom of actions and a platform for developing self-esteem. In an interview with the MUR newspaper *al-Tajdid* in 2007 she actively defended the use of quotas to promote female representation to Parliament and other elected organs in a society dominated by patriarchal attitudes. It is also remarkable that as an Islamist she talked about her pride in the achievements of Fatima Mernissi, the internationally famous, but distinctly secularist, Moroccan writer on women's issues and Islam.

Jama'at al-Adl wal-Ihsan (Justice and Beneficence Society)

www.aljamaa.com

www.aljamaa.info/fr (French)

Abdelsalam Yassine

Nadia Yassine (also leader of women's section)

Fathallah Arslan

Unlike the PJD/MUR *al-Adl wal-Ihsan* has stubbornly refused to grant legitimacy to the monarchy. As a society the AI was founded in 1981. But there is a continuity of ideas and legitimacy going back to the public letter of admonition addressed to king Hasan II in 1974 by Abdelsalam Yassine and two associates under the title "Islam or the deluge" (*al-islam aw al-tufan*).

This letter, an unprecedented public challenge to the monarch landed Yassine in mental hospital for a number of years, but at the same time established for him a strong legitimacy as a courageous opponent of the ruling system. Before 1974 Yassine was a central figure in the Boutchitchiyya Sufi *tariqa*.⁵ When the old shaykh died in 1972 Yassine was one possible candidate as his successor, but in the event the leadership went to one of the sons of the deceased shaykh Sidi Hajj Abbas. Yassine left the Boutchitchiyya to become leader of his own movement which, although not a Sufi movement proper, retains many traits of a mystical movement, including the exalted position of the leader.

The AI advocates a peaceful transition to what it terms "a true Muslim society and state". While it sometimes speaks in terms of a return to the Caliphate, it has been made clear that this is not to be taken literally, but rather as indicating a return to what the group sees as

⁵ Sufism is the mystical tendency within Islam; its followers seeking a path towards God through spiritual exercise under the guidance of a master (*shaykh* or *murshid*). Sufis are typically organised into orders or brotherhoods; the Arabic term for this is *tariqa* (road or path).

the spirit of justice reigning under the first four Rightly-Guided caliphs.⁶ In essence the movement, like other mainstream movements, advocates a pluralist democracy in a state governed by the *Shari'a*. It is significant that Shaykh Yassine has stated explicitly already in 1994 that the group firmly believes in taking part in competition between parties under conditions of political freedom. Should the people then choose to vote for something else than an Islamic system, the Islamists would have to accept that and endeavour to improve their work so as to gain a majority next time around.

But the group refuses to play by the current rules of the political game in Morocco. Most specifically it refuses to accept the monarch's pretension to the title of *amir al-mu'minin*, a title historically reserved to the caliphs, the men who ruled the Islamic empire as successors of the Prophet. Nadia Yassine, the founder's daughter, has also stated openly that monarchy as such is not suited for Morocco. These kind of public stances immediately bars the group from access to the sphere of legal political contestation in Morocco. Instead the AI, which according to police reports from 2006 had a membership of 100 000 across Morocco, sticks to a strategy of reforming society through the education of its individuals. Hence great store is set on the organisation of AI's own campaign of *tarbiya*, which includes both literacy classes, Koran reading, and ethical lessons as well as discussions of the economic and political problems of society.

Like PJD/MUR the AI has a separate women's organisation, the Sisters of the Hereafter (*akhawat al-akhira*), headed by Nadia Yassine, an outspoken defender of an increased role for women. But in contrast to the MUR-related women's movement mentioned above, which has a rather autonomous status, the *Akhawat al-Akhira* is an integral part of the AI's main organisation, constituting its female section.

⁶ The reference is to the first caliphs ruling after the death of the Prophet: Abu Bakr (d.634), Umar (d.644), Uthman (d.656) and Ali (d.661), who had all been early companions of Muhammad.

ALGERIA

There are some distinct similarities between the situation in Morocco and that in Algeria in that the mainstream Islamist movement is broadly divided into two tendencies according to the position vis-à-vis the official political life of the country. Yet the background to this division in terms of recent history is much more dramatic and bloody in Algeria, which also means that the mutual bitterness between the competing tendencies runs much deeper.

On the one side are the scattered and disorganised remnants of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which won the local elections of 1990, and in Algeria's first ever multiparty parliamentary elections in December 1991 were well on its way to winning a powerful majority in the National Assembly, when the generals decided to abolish the elections and ban the FIS. Despite the lack of an organised legal presence, many observers consider the FIS legacy to represent a "silent majority" of Algerian Islamists.

On the other side are two smaller Islamist parties, the Movement for a Peaceful Society (HMS), and the *Nahda* movement, now split in two main currents, the *Nahda* proper and the Movement for National Reform. Since multiparty elections were reintroduced in 1995 these parties have taken part, with some limited success. In the presidential elections of 1995 the historical leader of the HMS movement, Mahfouz Nahnah ran against the regime's man Liamine Zeroual, and secured 25 percent against 61 percent for Zeroual (although the HMS insist that in reality Nahnah won the elections). In the 1999 elections all opposition candidates withdrew before the election citing fraud concerns. In 2004 the HMS decided to support the incumbent Bouteflika, so the only Islamist candidate was the historical leader of the *Nahda* Abdallah Djaballah who garnered merely 5 percent of the votes. The tendency within the parliamentary elections is not much better for the "legal Islamists" if considered as a whole. In 1997 HMS got 14.8 percent and won 69 seats, while the *Nahda* got 8.7 percent and 34 seats (of a total of 380) making for a combined Islamist 23.5 percent of the votes. Five years later in 2002 the HMS had dropped to 7 percent of the votes and 38 seats, while Djaballah's newly formed Movement for National Reform got 9.5 percent and 43 seats, and the *Nahda* movement he broke away from only 0.6 percent and 1 seat, making for a total 17.1 percent, a loss of 6.4 percentage points. Finally in 2007 the HMS got 9.6 percent and 52 seats, the MNR, now in bitter internal conflict, was sharply down to 2.5 percent and 3 seats and the *Nahda* slightly up to 3.3 percent and 5 seats, bringing the total Islamist vote to 15.4 percent, a further loss of 1.7 percent. Part of the story is that along with this went an increasing voter disinterest in parliamentary elections, from a healthy participation rate of 62.6 percent in 1997 down to 46.2 percent in 2002 and again to merely 35.7 percent in 2007.

Movement for a Peaceful Society (harakat mujtama' al-silm)

Abu Guerra Soltani, president

Abdelmajid Menasra, deputy president

Abd al-Rahman Sa'idi, deputy president

Bi-weekly newspaper *al-Naba'*, monthly journal *al-Mukhtar*

Slogan: Knowledge - Justice - Work (*al-ilm, al-adl, al-amal*)

www.hmsalgeria.net

The Movement for a Peaceful Society is the main Algerian expression of the international Muslim Brother tendency. The historical leader of this movement was Mahfuz Nahnah. Nahnah joined the Muslim Brothers in the 1960s. After being involved in radical activities in the seventies and being jailed for four years in connection with a protest against the National Charter of 1976, he took part in the early eighties in founding the Association for Reform and

Guidance (*al-islah wal-irshad*), as well as the League for Islamic Preaching (*rabitat al-da'wa al-islamiyya*), formed together with other prominent Islamists like Ahmad Sahnoun and Abbasi Madani, the future leader of FIS. The current movement, which enjoys status as a legal political party was formed in 1990. It was first known as the Movement for an Islamic Society; the name was changed when legal political contestation was reintroduced later in the nineties. Nahnah had refused to join the Islamic Salvation Front, FIS, which was formed in 1989 when party formation was legalised, and went on to win a landslide victory in the local and provincial elections of 1990. He argued that the FIS was too radical, advocating a much more gradual transition towards an Islamic society; one in which the incumbent regime should not be seen as adversaries to be overcome or even eradicated, but as partners in the reform process.

The gradualism of the HMS is clearly reminiscent of the insistent emphasis of the *Ikhwan* tendency internationally on the primary importance of long-term work to educate the individual members of the public in matters both spiritual and profane. Yet, perhaps because of the level of conflict in Algeria, the HMS is an exception within the Muslim Brother international family in that it could be seen as largely co-opted by the regime, to serve as its Islamist alibi. This is certainly the charge directed against it from supporters of the FIS legacy. The feelings are the more intense in that the HMS did not even take part in the 1995 Rome initiative to put a stop to the fighting in Algeria through a national reconciliation based on principles of democracy and tolerance. This initiative was joined by FIS as well as almost the whole range of political groups, even by the former ruling party the FLN and the other smaller Islamist party, the *Nahda* of Abdallah Djaballah. But the HMS stayed away, apparently giving priority to not rocking the boat in its relation with the circles in power. There is a continuation from this stance to the current set-up, where the party has since the elections of 1997 made part of the government coalition. Both the current leader Soltani and his deputy Menasra were government ministers in the 1997-2002 period.

On its side the party gives the following version: what was in danger in the mid-nineties was not merely the regime, the very state of Algeria was about to collapse. While remaining critical of the regime, in this grave situation it was the duty of the HMS to defend the state (and apparently the army as the mainstay of this state). The party also emphasises that it paid dearly for this choice in that more than five hundred of its members were assassinated during the "years of crisis".

In the local elections of November 2007 the party scored a noticeable progress, coming in third in number of votes and increasing the number of local assemblies it controls from 38 to 83.

Islamic Renaissance Movement (harakat al-nahda al-islamiyya)

Fateh Rabiäi, Lahbib Adami

This is the other main non-FIS political party that has opted to work within the limited framework for legal political participation in force in Algeria. However it has not been as close to the power circles as the HMS, and has had considerable less electoral success, especially after the leaving of its historical leader Abdallah Djaballah in 1998. The *Nahda* movement was founded as a political party in 1990. In contrast to the HMS which condoned the cancelling of the 1991/92 elections the *Nahda* opposed this and as noted above took part in the meetings in Rome 1995 that agreed on a programme for national reform and reconciliation, including a demand for the re-legalisation of FIS.

According to some reports Djaballah was forced out of the party under heavy government pressure because he tried to keep some distance towards the state and keep the party independent. He went on in 1999 to found the Movement for National Reform.

Movement for National Reform (*harakat al-islam al-watani*)

Official wing: Mohamed Boulahia, Djahid Younsi

Wing of historical leader: Abdallah Djaballah

Under Djaballah's leadership the Movement for National Reform in 2002 scored a reasonable success, overtaking the HMS as the biggest Islamist party in the National Assembly. In 2007 a dissident group supported by the Ministry of the Interior threw Djaballah out of even this movement. He has refused to acknowledge the new leadership, but has been prevented from running for elections, something which might be the cause of the catastrophic result of the MNR in the 2007 elections compared to 2002. In the local elections in November 2007 Djaballah ran some candidates on the lists of other legal parties, and he is working to form a new party again.

Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) (*jabhat al-inqadh al-islami*)

Ali Belhajj (Algeria),

Ahmed Zaoui, Mourad Dhina (exile)

www.fisweb.org

The Islamic Salvation Front was founded in 1989 as a coalition of a large and heterogeneous collection of Islamic-oriented groups and personalities. Ideologically the movement encompassed traditionally-minded religious leaders as well as reformists of the *ikhwani* type and radicals inspired by contemporary *salafi* tendencies. The composite nature of the organisation was epitomised in the persons of the two most prominent leaders, the moderate reformist Abbasi Madani and the radical young schoolteacher and preacher Ali Belhajj.

The movement scored great successes in the local elections in 1990 where the FIS was supported by 54 percent of the voters, securing majority in 55 percent of provincial (*wilaya*) assemblies and 48 percent of local assemblies. It is to be noticed that despite the broad character of the movement and its alliance with many locally based traditional imams, the election results point to a characteristic of its support that is a core feature of international Islamism as such: its heavy concentration in urban areas. In the 1990 elections FIS gained control over 93 percent of the elected assemblies in municipalities with more than 50 000 inhabitants.

In December 1991, despite the arrest of its two main leaders in June and continued arrests and police harassment throughout the year, the party won 48 percent of the popular vote in Algeria's first-ever free legislative elections. Due to the system of one-man constituencies this led to the FIS winning 188 of the 231 seats decided in the first round, and the party looked well on its way to securing a large majority in the National Assembly. However, as is known, the army intervened in January 1992, calling off the second round of the elections, and rapidly followed up with a ban on the FIS that is still in force today. The events that followed, where important elements of FIS joined the armed struggle against the regime, eventually setting up the Armée Islamique du Salut, led to the total suppression of the FIS as a civil movement in Algeria, and to the exile of many of its active members. Today, while the FIS remains a powerful symbol for large parts of Algerian public opinion, the party has no united organisational presence, neither inside the country, where it is still forbidden, nor in exile. An attempt in 2004 by the pro-Islamic former education minister Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi to set up a party that could have meant the resurrection of an alternative supported by the FIS constituency was refused licence by the government and came to nothing.

Despite the continued existence of infighting tendencies and personalities within the FIS family, it is noticeable that in terms of ideology the initially very heterogeneous movement seems to have converged on a platform very close to the international *ikhwani* tendency.

TUNISIA

Besides Turkey Tunisia under Habib Bourguiba's rule (1957-1987) is probably the Muslim country in the region where the most wide-ranging secularising reforms have been carried out. Central to these policies were reforms of family legislation that gave greater rights for women. At the same time in political terms Tunisia has been and remains one of the most repressive regimes in the region.

As the other Maghreb countries, Tunisia has been heavily influenced by the culture and language of their former colonial master, France. This led to a widening cultural and class chasm between those who were educated within the westernised, French-speaking educational system and those from more traditional Arab Islamic backgrounds. While resisting Western cultural hegemony is certainly a common cause for Islamists, in the Tunisian case it has been of particular importance.

Hizb al-Nahda (exile)

Rached Ghannouchi (UK)

www.nahdha.net

Founded in 1989 by members of the Islamic Tendency Movement, originally a rather conservative Islamist movement, the *Hizb al-Nahda* (Renaissance Party) developed into one of the first Islamist movements to consistently call for a system of political pluralism and democracy.

One of the main priorities of the group is to strengthen the Arab identity, language and values in Tunisia. In a document entitled "Who We Are," they state clearly that their mission is to work against the Westernisation of Tunisian society, language and especially education. The other central theme in the literature of *al-Nahda* is to fight for civil liberties and human rights in a country where the Islamists and the opposition in general have faced very tough suppression by the regime. Except for a very brief period at the end of the 1980s, the Islamists in Tunisia have lacked legal access to the political system. *Al-Nahda* and its predecessors have sought legal recognition as a political party, to no avail. However, in the 1989 election the government allowed the Islamists to run as independents in the parliamentary election. Officially *al-Nahda* won 17 percent of the votes, which led the regime to yet another clampdown on them. Shortly after, and as a result of this, Ghannouchi and other leaders of the party went into exile, where they still are. The lack of freedom in Tunisia makes it difficult to assess the real strength of the organisation and its level of support inside the country. Nevertheless the influential role played by *al-Nahda*, and especially its historic leader Rached Ghannouchi, in international debate among Islamists, means a brief review is of importance.

The *Nahda* movement is a typical "movement of the intellectuals", where students and teachers dominate both as members and as leaders. In the 1970s and 1980s its forerunners recruited among professionals, workers and civil servants. According to a study of the social composition of the precursor of *al-Nahda*, the Islamic Tendency Movement (ITM), the average member was around 20 years old, well-educated, and of a rural and modest background. This indicates that the cultural chasm is combined with a kind of class chasm between a Western-oriented elite and a more traditionally-rooted educated middle class.

Al-Nahda has been committed to changing Tunisian society through dialogue, reform and political participation. They have stated that they respect and aim "to strengthen the republican regime and its foundations". Regardless of the harsh repression *al-Nahda* has faced, it seeks consistently to work within a legal framework. Consider for instance Article 1

of its “Constitution and Goals”: “We, the citizens who have agreed to this constitution and enumerated goals have agreed to form a political party named “The Renaissance Party”, for an unlimited period of time, according to the law of May 3, 1988 and all its provisions”. Ghannouchi has taken a very clear stance against violence and terrorism committed in the name of Islam, and severely criticised *al-Qa'ida* and their killing of civilians.

ITM and *al-Nahda* were among the first Islamic groups in the Arab world to commit themselves to democratic values and principles. The document called “Governing Principles of the Annahdha Party”, stresses *al-Nahda*’s commitment to democracy and the establishment of a multi-party system. *Al-Nahda* states in this document that it will respect the democratic process, “regardless of the outcome”. The party seeks political freedom for all parties and minority groups inside Tunisia. The ITM declared already at its third conference in 1984 that it would promise to recognise whatever government came out of a regular election. *Al-Nahda* rejects the Islamic models observed in Saudi-Arabia, Iran and Sudan and favours democracy as “the foundation upon which to build a just and equitable society”. For Ghannouchi, the commitment to democracy is legitimised in Islam. “*Shari'a* gave multiple solutions; it ordered changing the evil while it opened more than one way to achieve this according to what is available.”

The adherence to democratic values has not abated even though the party has been refused participation by the regime and instead its members are being harassed and imprisoned. *Al-Nahda* is particularly concerned about the lack of civil rights and the violation of human rights in Tunisia, and they state as one of their principles “respect for the basic tenets of freedom of the press and freedom of expression”.

Neither Ghannouchi nor other *al-Nahda* members have ever mentioned the creation of an Islamic state governed by *Shari'a*, and the *Shari'a* is very seldom mentioned in their texts. However, they want to work towards a Tunisia more based on Islamic values and traditions, which may imply that they want to Islamise Tunisia without necessarily creating an Islamic state.

Ghannouchi has called for the replacement of the concept of *dhimma*, a traditional Muslim concept where Christians and Jews are granted protection in return for the relinquishing of some rights, by equal citizenship rights to all regardless of religion. He has also stated that the state has no power over the beliefs of people. It seems that Ghannouchi prefers that the religious minorities have their own legal system instead of one legal system for all citizens regardless of religious belonging.

The governing principles of *al-Nahda* state that: “AnNahda begins from the premise that men and women are equal. Opportunities for personal and professional advancement will be promoted, and policies will be implemented to deter and reform historic attitudes towards women”. *Al-Nahda* emphasises the family as the pillar of society and wants to strengthen it. They also state that they want to “improve the situation of women by stressing the important role they should play socially, culturally, economically and politically so that women can contribute to the progress of society away from depravation and backwardness”. Yet it is not entirely clear which role they think women should play. Liberation of women for Ghannouchi is liberation both from what he terms “false Islam” and from Westernisation. “False Islam” here refers to traditional Islam, which does not grant women their full rights. The instrument for women's emancipation, though, should be the Islamism of *al-Nahda*, and not Western principles of freedom and equity. Incidentally, Ghannouchi remains loyal to Koranic injunctions, which for instance in the area of inheritance accord females only half of the male share. *Al-Nahda* has had female leaders, albeit not as top-leaders, and there were three women in the founding committee of the would-be ITM party in 1981.

Al-Nahda strongly opposes the regime’s restrictions on the use of *hijab*, although they claim that they do not want to impose the *hijab* on women or girls. Women must choose to

wear it out of their own will. This is one of the cornerstones of how *al-Nahda* perceives women's emancipation. The Party aims through reform of society and reaffirmation of the traditional Islamic and Arabic culture and values to create a just and equitable society with a clear identity rooted in the indigenous culture. Through this reform both men and women will be emancipated and become active participants in society. As Ghannouchi have said, "What the Muslim woman needs now is a liberation movement to restore her to herself and to her innate nature as a guardian of the heritage of mankind and a companion of man in the *jihad* to liberate herself and him from the forces of exploitation and oppression."

According to a recent report by the Finnish Institute of International Affairs Tunisian Islamism is "EU-based and more "Europeanised" than any other brand of Islamism". This refers to the assessment that Tunisian Islamism has been de-linked from its homeland with most leaders residing in exile within the EU. It is claimed that when the *Nahda* leadership went into exile in Europe after 1989, a major transformation began. The party's remarkable championing of "Western" liberal principles, marks the progression in *al-Nahda's* thought inside the EU, and notions like freedom, democracy, competition, alternation of power, multipartyism and inter-faith dialogue are now all part of its political vocabulary.

Several commentators have stated that *al-Nahda* at the present time seems to be weak, due to the imprisonment and exile of its leaders and defections from its ranks. However, several of the jailed members and leaders have been released over the last years. For instance on 25 February 2006 1657 detainees were released in Tunisia; among them a number of leading Islamists. *Al-Nahda* has sought cooperation with the liberal and secular opposition in the country in order to regain a place in the domestic political landscape, and takes an active part in human rights activities.

LIBYA

Libya has been characterised by a very close relationship between religion and politics. This is evident in the vital role played by the Sufi Sanusi brotherhood in resistance against the Italian colonial power, a factor that led to the establishment of the Sanusi monarchy at independence in 1951. When Mu'ammarr al-Qadhafi and his group of officers revolted in 1969 they were clearly inspired by Nasser's Arab Socialism. Yet Qadhafi provided the new regime with a highly idiosyncratic ideology tied to his Green Book, in which Islam and in particular the Koran played a pivotal role. But any attempt at building autonomous Islam-inspired organisations has been severely repressed.

Muslim Brothers

Sulayman Abd al-Qadir (Switzerland)

www.ikhwanlibya.org

The Libyan Muslim Brother organisation was founded in the 1950s by Izz al-din Ibrahim under inspiration from Egyptian Muslim Brothers who had fled repression in their homeland. In the 1980s the Libyan Muslim Brothers changed name to *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya al-Libiyya* (the Libyan Islamic Group) in order to identify the movement more with Libya and not have an international approach. Today they have returned to the Muslim Brothers name, and are acknowledged as the most influential Libyan opposition group.

The main social base of the Libyan Muslim Brothers has been the educated middle classes. The groups charitable and welfare work was one of most important reasons for its popularity. However the MB have not been able to build a strong foundation within the popular classes, though this may be explained by the fact that they have not been able to function openly in Libya since the 1970s. Geographically, their main support base has been in the east of the country centred on the city of Benghazi. This is also the part of Libya where the opposition against Qadhafi has been strongest.

According to their leader Sulayman Abd al-Qadir, who lives in exile in Switzerland, the MB lack an organisation within Libya now, although they are present inside the country and are active in charity efforts and welfare projects.

The Libyan Muslim Brothers have never advocated the use of violence, and did not develop an armed wing as the MB had done in Egypt in before the revolution. When the group changed its name to *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya al-Libiyya*, it stated that it “aspired to replace the existing regime with *Shari'a* law through peaceful means”. They have rejected the use of violence and the use of force to settle disagreements and conflicts. All disagreements should be solved through dialogue in civilised manner. In 2004, the MB in Libya initiated a dialogue with the Libyan regime to achieve a national reform. Abd al-Qadir has stated that “dialogue is for us a principle inspired by our *Shari'a* and the life of the Prophet”. He stressed that according to the Libyan Brothers, reform means the cumulative, gradual and persistent peaceful action to bring about real and comprehensive changes to all aspects of the political, economic, social and cultural life. According to Abd al-Qadir MB members resort to peaceful means and use the existing constitutional institutions in order to achieve their aims. The group has concentrated its efforts on charitable and welfare work, and the present leader of the group has emphasised their efforts “for the orphans, the needy, patients in hospitals, and students in school and universities”.

The MB state that their main goal is to reform Libyan society through establishing human rights and freedom of expression, strengthening civil society and improving the living conditions of the Libyans. This reform should be implemented through laws and the means should be dialogue. At its latest general conference the Muslim Brothers in Libya stated that they want to “build a country based on constitution and law”, “giving vent to all public freedoms and opening the field for independent media that follow the teaching of Islam and values and traditions in society”. The Muslim Brothers have given their support to the reform agenda propounded by Sayf al-Islam al-Qadhafi, the son of Mu’ammarr al-Qadhafi., with a view to extract the country from the present political situation with lack of democracy, transparency and press freedom.

The MB have voiced scepticism about the improved relations with the US, as they do not believe that the Libyan people will harvest any gains. In their view it was the people of Libya who paid and suffered because of the economical boycott of Libya after the Lockerbie incident and now the compensation paid to the victims by the Libyan regime is taken from the finances of these same people.

The MB considered Western pressure to revert death sentences in the case against one Palestinian medic intern and five Bulgarian nurses accused of injecting children with HIV to be a violation of Libyan sovereignty.

Like other Islamists the Libyan MB support the Palestinian people’s right to defend their homeland and to “repel the aggression”. However, they explicitly condemn targeting civilians or civilian facilities on both side of the conflict.

Due to harsh repression it has been very difficult for the MB to be openly present in Libya, and by the end of the 1990s, the organised Islamic opposition inside the country had almost been wiped out. However, Abd al-Qadir said in an interview in March 2007 that most of the Muslim Brothers in Libya were now out of jail, though several still remain in prison.

The Islamist opposition in Libya does not have good relations with the secular opposition. The Libyan Muslim Brothers together with other Islamist opposition groups boycotted a Libyan opposition conference held in London in June 2005 because they considered the Islamists to be the real force in the Libyan street vis-à-vis the secular opposition, and therefore the Islamists should have “precedence in such conferences”.

EGYPT

With 80 million inhabitants Egypt is the most populous country of the Middle East, and has more than double the population of any other Arab country. It is also the cultural and political centre of the Arab world. Its regime, established by a military coup in 1952, was for many years the foremost representative of the radical nationalism that swept the region. Today it is the leader of the so-called "moderate" regimes of the area, meaning that it has a moderate line towards Israel, and that it suppresses its Islamist opposition. It is also, besides Israel, the most important US ally in the region, and at the same time home to the dominant tendency among Islamist movements in the Arab world, namely the Muslim Brothers, whose international network is centred on Cairo. Cairo is also the seat of the Arab League, and home to al-Azhar, the most prestigious centre of religious learning within Sunni Islam. All this makes Egypt a country of huge strategic importance for further developments in the Middle East.

The current regime is typical for the region in that it rules in authoritarian manner, not allowing its power to be put to the test of real elections, and severely restricting freedom of expression and of organisation.

Muslim Brothers (jama'at al-ikhwan al-muslimin)

Muhammad Mahdi Akif

Muhammad Habib

Abd al-Mun'im Abu al-Futuh

www.ikhwanonline.com

www.ikhwanweb.com (English)

The Society of Muslim Brothers (*jama'at al-ikhwan al-muslimin*), founded in 1928, remains the vastly dominant factor in the Egyptian Islamist movement as well as in Egyptian civil society and political opposition at large. The group has remained banned since it fell out with Nasser in 1954. Since the early 1970s its activities has been tolerated to varying degrees, but the lack of formal legal status is a tool which can be used at any minute by the state to put pressure on the Brothers.

Some brief facts illustrate the ambiguity of the situation. With 88 representatives in the People's Assembly the Muslim Brothers totally dominates parliamentary opposition in the country. At the same time a number of high-ranking leaders in the group, including the deputy leader, were recently sentenced to up to 10 years of forced labour basically for actively building an illegal organisation, *i.e.* the Muslim Brothers. The Muslim Brothers have since the early eighties dominated the professional unions representing educated groups like doctors, lawyers, engineers and university teachers. For that very reason most of these unions have now for fifteen years been put under administration of state-appointed caretakers.

The Shaping of a Generation

From 1954 until the early 1970s, Islamist activism more or less was frozen in Egypt, except inside the prison camps. When Islamic student groups (known as *jama'at islamiyya*⁷) started emerging in the universities during the 1970s, they were autonomous and were influenced at least as much by *salafi* thought, at the time a largely apolitical trend focusing on the emulation of the "founding generation" of Islam, as by the Muslim Brothers. From 1975

⁷ These formations emerged out of the "religious societies" (*jama'at diniyya*), which were a part of the "cultural committees" inside the local student unions at each university.

onwards, the *jama'at islamiyya* gradually became active in general student politics, and in 1977 a group of leaders toured the country to promote Islamist participation in the student elections of that year. In the process of propagating this idea, they created a nationwide network of Islamic groups, thus propelling the emergence of an organised Islamist student movement at the national level. They met with great success in the student elections. Islamists took over leadership of the elected student bodies in eight of the twelve universities of that time and also achieved significant representation in the remaining four. Already in this period, there emerged some of the emblematic figures of the generation, like Abd al-Mun'im Abu al-Futuh, who was the most prominent national leader of the Islamist students, Isam al-Iryan and Abu al-Ila Madi.

Toward the end of 1979 and the beginning of 1980 a number of Islamist student leaders decided to join the Muslim Brothers, which was led at the time by the aged Umar al-Tilmisani. They were followed by a vast majority of the rank-and-file members of the Islamist student movement. Their decision was of course important in and of itself, in that it linked the new generation directly to the legacy of the *Ikhwan*: its interpretation of the faith, its programs of spiritual and organisational training, its methods of social and political activity, and its network of contacts and funding sources inside and outside of Egypt. On the one hand, at the ideological level they became heirs to a tradition that was decidedly more modernist in its interpretation of Islam than the early *salafi* influences to which the student activists had been exposed. On the other hand, compared to that of Hasan al-Banna, the thinking of the aged Muslim Brother leaders in the 1970s and 1980s was more conservative and dogmatic, and less concerned with the burning social issues of the time. There was also a certain timidity vis-à-vis political authority, a timidity born out of the traumatic experience of the prison camps. But on the positive side there was a fund of organisational experience to be tapped.

It seems that the young students rapidly developed a very strong sense of loyalty toward the organisation. Yet, the fact remains that they were not the creation of the *Ikhwan*. By the time they joined the Muslim Brothers, they already had created a movement and gained a following through their own efforts. Thus, this generation was shaped by numerous circumstances and experiences that influenced its outlook in several critical ways and served to establish a distance between it and the old guard Muslim Brothers.

The fact that the student activists from the 1970s and 1980s were born during or immediately before the Nasser era, and came to ideological maturity under Anwar Sadat (or even Hosni Mubarak in some cases) has meant that they did not experience first-hand the violent suppression of the Muslim Brothers between 1954 and 1970. Thus, while they remained critical of Nasser's political heritage, at the same time they were (at least implicitly) more willing than the old guard to incorporate into their programme for reform in Egypt elements from Nasser's legacy, not least the need for the state to play an active role in promoting development and securing social justice.

Events during the 1970s forced this generation of young activists to take a clear-cut stance on the legitimacy of violence as a means for political and social change. The term *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya* later came to be synonymous with terrorist violence. A minority of students, concentrated in the universities of Upper Egypt and inspired by the prison writings of Sayyid Qutb,⁸ considered the Muslim Brothers' moderate line a capitulation vis-à-vis the ruling authorities, whom they considered to have committed apostasy against Islam. These radicals therefore saw it as both legitimate and indeed a duty to launch an all-out *jihad* against the government, including resort to military struggle. In some universities the confrontation

⁸ Notably *Ma'alim fil-tariq* (1964). English translation: *Milestones*, Islamic Book Service, Delhi 2006, Norwegian translation: *Milepæler*, L.S.P., Oslo 2004.

between the violent groups and the moderate pro-*Ikhwan* tendency deteriorated at times into violent clashes. A principled stance against the use of violence as a means to attain desired change thus became integral to the very formation of the young generation of Muslim Brothers

A third, and perhaps the most important, characteristic of the “1970s generation” (*jil al-saba‘inat*), almost from its emergence, is that it gained experience in relating to other political and ideological trends and in serving as elected representatives having to work in the interest of people professing diverse views. This experience has enabled this generation to break out of the confines of the Islamist movement and gain a broader outlook on society and politics, a tendency that was reinforced when several young Muslim Brothers became deputies in the lower house of the Egyptian Parliament, the People’s Assembly, during the 1987-1990 period. The work in the student movement was instrumental for inculcating in the generation of the 1970s the habit of organisational activities according to democratic procedures. For the leadership, it also meant their first exposure to the national political scene.

Later there followed an even more important experience that was central to the maturing of the new generation of Islamists. Starting in the early 1980s, the Islamists became involved in the professional unions (*niqabat mihaniyya*). The former students had become medical doctors, engineers, pharmacists, lawyers, etc. In the period 1986-1992 their influence gradually translated into Muslim Brother dominance of one professional union after the other, as well as a majority of the representative bodies of university faculties (*hay‘at al-tadris*). Exercising a leadership position in the unions meant working with other political trends, representing all members, and caring for their interests and those of their families. The Islamists used their base in the unions as a platform for raising a wide range of issues of general national importance, relating both to Egypt and to the wider Arab and Islamic world.

Crystallisation of an Alternative Vision

Several factors had been working in tandem, beginning in the mid-1980s, to shape among this generation a political and organisational vision that was different from and even opposed to the vision of the aged leadership in the “Office of Guidance” (*maktab al-irshad*), the leading organ of the MB. The well-informed writer Talaat Rumayh has provided insights about conflicts between the young guard who managed the unions and the old guard who controlled the top positions within the Brothers’ own organisation. In a speech some time in the mid-nineties, “*Al-infatih al-nafsi wal-‘amal al-‘amm*” (Psychological openness and public work), given at an internal meeting for Brothers active in the unions, the old guard was criticised for being too narrow-minded and inward-looking when there was a need for openness toward social and political forces other than the Muslim Brothers. The speaker also stressed the need to turn away from old-fashioned and provocative language, such as the talk of non-Muslims as *ahl al-dhimma*.⁹ Ideological influences from outside Egypt also worked to further the gradual consolidation of the younger generation around an alternative vision of the Islamist project. Through their activities in the student unions and later in the *niqabat*, the young generation came into contact with the various tendencies of the international Islamist movement. The influence that young Egyptian Islamists absorbed from these foreign groups was multi-faceted, yet a common denominator was development toward a more modernist and liberal interpretation of the Islamist project, not least with regard to questions such as the role and rights of women and religious minorities.

⁹ The concept of *ahl al-dhimma* refers to the protected, yet non-equal, status of recognised religious minorities prescribed in classical *fiqh* and practiced (albeit with great variations) in pre-modern Islamic states.

Under the aged leaders that followed Tilmisani: Hamid Abul-Nasr, Mustafa Mashhur and Ma'mun al-Hudaybi, generational tensions remained strong. Under the current *murshid*, Muhammad Mahdi Akif there are clear signs that the generation from the seventies are being allowed a greater say also at the highest levels of decision. Their outlook is now allowed to inform official group statements to a larger degree, though strong tensions remain between a more conservative tendency associated with the general secretary Mahmud Izzat, and a more liberal wing connected to the most central student leader of the 1970s, Abd al-Mun'im Abu al-Futuh.

The 2005 elections and their aftermath

In the last parliamentary elections in 2005 the MB, while prohibited from running party candidates in a formal sense, scored a major victory through the success of its members running as independents in the Egyptian one-man-constituency system.¹⁰ They won 88 of the 444 elected seats in the People's Assembly, up from 17 in the outgoing assembly. To grasp the full show of strength behind this figure, four factors should be kept in mind.

First, the 88 Muslim Brothers in the People's Assembly compares to a total of 33 other MPs for the opposition, only 9 of which belong to one of Egypt's 20 legal parties.

Second the MB only ran candidates in 150 constituencies out of a total of 444. So it won in nearly 60 percent of the contests it took part in. It is of course hard to say what would have happened if it ran in all constituencies. But it is generally acknowledged that beside the regime's National Democratic Party, which is really a part of the apparatus of state (and a junior one at that), the Society of Muslim Brothers is the only force which actually has the capacity to run candidates over the whole country, thanks to its solid roots and its nationwide organisation.

Thirdly the result is even more impressive in that the elections were characterised by gross intervention by security forces that drastically restricted the voters' ability to express their preferences freely. In many constituencies voters were physically prevented from accessing the voting booths, while others, mobilised to vote for the government, were bussed in from other constituencies. In addition outright manipulation of the counting of votes played a role. The voting took place in three stages, with one-third of the constituencies voting at a time. As the results from the first rounds became clear, nervousness spread within the NDP at both the local and central levels, and the last round was distinctly less free than the first. Everything points towards the assumption that if the whole process had been as (relatively) free as the first round, the MB would have picked up between 100 and 110 seats rather than the 88 they ended up with.

Fourthly, despite the fact that the MB candidates had to run as independents, in these elections the Brothers were allowed to an unprecedented degree to campaign openly under its own name. This means that for the voters there was no doubt as to whom they voted for. While motivations for voting for Muslim Brother candidates obviously varied a lot along a scale from diehard supporters of MB ideology to pure protest vote against the incumbent regime, they all consciously gave their vote to the MB.

The result therefore, in a whole new way brought forth the spectre that in the case of fully democratic elections, an Islamist organisation might come to power in Egypt, the strategic heart of the Arab world and its vastly most populous country. This was a shock both to the Egyptian government, and not least, followed as it was by the Hamas victory in the Palestinian self-rule territories, to the West in general and the US in particular. In almost no

¹⁰ Strictly speaking each constituency elects two representatives, one of whom should be a worker (in the cities) or a farmer (in the countryside), the other should belong to one of the other social groups. Each seat is contested separately.

time the gentle US pressure for political reform that had pushed some Arab governments to make nervous gestures in the direction of opening up for popular participation, vanished into thin air. The last couple of years have seen severely increased government harassment and persecution of MB cadres. At the moment the most prominent leader behind bars is Second Deputy Guide Muhammad Khayrat al-Shatir, who in late April was sentenced to seven years of forced labour by one of Egypt's infamous military tribunals.

The 2007 draft programme

In the autumn of 2007 a draft for an MB political programme was circulated to a number of Egyptian public figures for comment, and rapidly was made available to the public. It should be underlined that it was a *draft*, and might have been tilted in the direction of the more conservative wing on certain points, in a situation where many leading MB politicians were in jail and unable to take part in the discussions. Nevertheless the text gives a reasonable impression of the current political stances of the group.

In the Egyptian debate that followed the publication of the draft, prominence was given to the question of whether the Brothers were true democrats or not. Already in 1994, the Muslim Brothers had published a declaration, "*Shura* in Islam", which goes a long way toward identifying this Koranic (and indeed pre-Islamic) term with popular sovereignty and representative democracy. The declaration states that "the people are the source of political power" and that they must elect through free and fair elections "a representative assembly possessing effective legislative and supervisory authority". For the purpose of creating a just system of government the people must decide upon a written constitution securing a balance between the different institutions of the state.

The declaration saw limits to this democracy in that the constitution must be based on the *Shari'a*. Nevertheless, the Muslim Brothers acknowledged that there is an act of human interpretation involved. The constitution must be based first on the unequivocal texts of the Koran and the *sunna*, thereafter on the "intentions and general principles of the *Shari'a*". It is significant in this regard that the declaration emphasises that most affairs dealt with by the popular assembly will consist of questions of law and political decisions that are subject to human interpretation, *ijtihad*, or fall within the scope of the permitted (*al-mubah*), *i.e.* where the choice of a particular decision is neutral vis-à-vis the *Shari'a*. From this they draw the conclusion that disagreement and debate are not only natural but also indispensable in order to reach the most socially beneficial decision, especially if the debate is characterised by "tolerance, breadth of vision, and the absence of fanaticism". This leads the Muslim Brothers to the view that Islamic society needs to practice a multi-party system, and they oppose any conditions imposed by the future Islamic state on the free formation of parties and associations.

This declaration came about mainly due to the initiative of the younger guard, and it goes a long way toward expressing its outlook, although its numerous references to Islamic precedence and strong emphasis on the *Shari'a* as a framework within which a popularly elected assembly must act certainly reveals the effort to overcome the reservations of many in the old guard.

The draft programme of 2007 is clearly more explicit and unequivocal in its commitment to democracy. But it is also more detailed and in those details critics have seen a devil or two.

First it should be noted that while in the 1994 declaration the Arabic word for democracy, *dimuqratiyya*, is not found, in the 2007 programme it is freely and frequently used as a positive term for the desired political system. The programme contains a detailed discussion of important principles that are considered prerequisites of a well-functioning

democracy, such as the division of powers, free and fair elections, genuine popular participation, party pluralism (including the right freely to form parties), and so on. To be sure even in this programme Islam and its *Shari'a* is invoked as a framework within which democracy and freedom must move, but this is clearly less pronounced and less frequent than in 1994.

The harsh criticism that was filed against the draft programme by opponents of the MB concerned mainly two issues. One was the reference to a "Council of Higher Ulama" (*hay'at kibar al-ulama*), to be consulted by Parliament in the process of legislation. This was criticised for bringing in an Iranian-style system where a body of religious clerics could veto the decisions of the elected representatives of the people; a criticism coming both from without and from within the MB's own ranks. (Apparently not even all members of the supreme body, the Office of Guidance, had been properly consulted.) The line of defence came along two lines: first it was emphasised that this clerical council should also be elected. Secondly, while the text of the draft is distinctly ambiguous on this point, it was afterwards clearly stated by Deputy Guide Muhammad Habib, among others, that the council would only have consultative powers, and the Parliament remained sovereign in its right to decide against the counsel received.

The second point, or rather two points, which came under fire for being against democracy, was the fact that the programme made it a principle that the effective head of state, whether this be a president or a prime minister, must be a Muslim and a male. On the first point it was argued that while non-Muslims would be exempted from Islamic rules on matters related to personal status and to religious practice, it would still be the task of the state to see to it that Islamic principles were in effect in society at large and among its Muslim majority, and such a task could not be forced upon a non-Muslim. As for a woman becoming president this was not desirable because the head of state would also be a leader in war, and this does not harmonise with female nature. Two things should be emphasised here; first, that even on these points there was a lot of criticism internally in the MB, and secondly that in the shadow of these hotly debated provisions, the programme otherwise emphasises full equality in terms of political rights, and does this more clearly and explicitly than the 1994 declaration.

In an apparent effort to show its commitment to the unity of Egypt across religious boundaries the programme devotes a separate section to the Coptic Church, emphasising its pivotal role as a factor for social morality and cohesion. Some effort is also made to present Islam as a civilisational framework that does not obliterate the value of pre-Islamic culture and religions.

On the topic of relation between the genders and the role of women in general, a declaration was also made by the MB in 1994, parallel to the one on Shura mentioned above. In short it emphasised that men and women possess equal value, while stressing the complementary role of the sexes; women as mothers and "queens of the home", men as breadwinners. The man was the head of the family, but this leadership of men over women was only valid within the family. This meant that women had full political rights, except (like in the 2007 programme) she could not be head of state. The man had the right to allow his wife to work, but her priority should always be the home.

Comparing the 2007 draft programme to the declaration of 1994, some subtle changes may be discerned, although the newer text clearly moves within the framework set up by the first. The main change, perhaps, is that while in 1994 the tone is mainly one of *stating* the rights and duties of women according to Islam, in 2007 there is a repeated call for campaigns aimed at *improving* the actual status and situation of women. The programme states the necessity of activating women's political and social role, emphasising that it has become obvious that women can handle a lot of tasks which society is in need of. To do so, the programme advocates a campaign to spread "the culture of equality between the genders".

Interestingly it says use should be made of international conventions securing the rights of women, and of working women in particular, while it takes care to mention that all this should happen "within the framework of Islam".

In this connection the programme is different from the earlier declaration in that it seems, albeit ambiguously so, to assume as a socially beneficial thing the entering of women into the labour market, and the enhancement of their performance there. While not challenging, or even mentioning, in this regard the right of the husband or father to refuse women seeking employment, the programme specifically urges the government and lawmakers to intervene against private employers refusing to hire married women. It calls for legislation which should make it possible to work without neglecting home duties, but also, significantly, that home duties should not hinder good performance at work. It also calls for dedicated efforts to wipe out female illiteracy and this is put in the framework of the necessity for women to working, as part of the Egyptian development effort.

Both the 1994 declaration and the new draft programme are out to square the circle of making the MB appear at once a modern enlightened organisation and at the same time a party defending authenticity and the Islamic heritage against a perceived Western onslaught. In 2007 there nevertheless seems to be a greater emphasis on the need for things to change in the direction of a greater role for women. Yet the ambiguity is always evident as when it is stated that "the call for women to leave the family in the name of liberation has caused a harsh reaction from society and therefore we need to promote moderation and balance".

Besides the Muslim Brothers there are three smaller groups that deserve brief mentioning as part of the spectrum of Islamist groups in Egypt dedicated to peaceful work for change.

Egyptian Labour Party (hizb al-amal al-misri)

Magdi Husayn

www.el-3amal.com

This party is in principle one of the legal political parties but it has been closed down by governmental order since 2000, and its newspaper *al-Sha'b*, for a long time the main outlet for Egypt's Islamist opposition, has been banned since the same year. The party initially emerged outside the fold of Islamism proper. The Socialist Labour Party was founded in 1978 under the leadership of people who had been central in the radical nationalist Young Egypt movement in the period before the revolution of 1952. The ideology was primarily Egyptian nationalism but with a heavy emphasis both on Egypt's Arab nature and on Islam. From the mid-1980s, under the influence of the new editor of the party's newspaper, Adil Husayn, a long-time Marxist and also the brother of the charismatic historical leader of Young Egypt, the Labour Party shifted to an Islamist stance. The important turning point was a successful alliance with the Muslim Brothers in the parliamentary elections of 1987, and then the adoption of a clear-cut Islamist platform in 1989. Although the Labour Party and the Muslim Brothers remained clearly separate entities, their extensive cooperation after 1987 left a marked influence on the younger generation of Muslim Brothers, especially Husayn's ideas about a project for national revival based on Islam. Husayn's Islam was quite modernist in its interpretation of the salient tenets of the faith, and it put heavy emphasis on Islam as a mark of civilisational identity and pride and also as an energizing force needed to mobilise the population for the struggles of independence and development.

Despite the ban the party remains active in the Egyptian opposition and works closely with the *Kifaya* campaign for political reform. The newspaper has continued as a [web publication](#) and the party maintains an active web site.

Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya (The Islamic Group)

Karam Zuhdi

Isam Darbala

www.egyptianislamicgroup.com

A very interesting development on the Egyptian scene is the fact that since 1997 the majority of the established leadership of the *Jama'a Islamiyya*, which around 1980 emerged from the *jihadi* wing of the student movement and went on to wage armed struggle against the authorities (including some terrorist attacks on Christians and on foreign tourists) have called for a stop in military activity. Two initiatives for establishing political parties have been launched, apparently in recognition of the futility of the strategy followed thus far. A series of books appeared, containing a thorough reappraisal of strategy in favour of peaceful religious and political work. For a long time the state refused to acknowledge these initiatives, but in October 2003 300 former militants of the *Jama'a* were released from prison, including such prominent leaders as Karam Zuhdi, and since then many more. The group now runs its own website and is trying to build a platform for peaceful promotion of its views, which remain somewhat more conservative than those of the Muslim Brothers. It is worthy of notice that all the leaders listed on the website hail from the provinces of Upper Egypt, always the main base of this tendency.

Hizb al-Wasat al-Jadid (The New Centre Party)

Abu al-Ila Madi

www.alwasatparty.com

In January 1996, weeks after elections widely considered to be the most fraud-ridden in recent Egyptian history, a group of younger members of the Muslim Brothers together with a few Coptic intellectuals applied for recognition as a new political party to be called *Hizb al-Wasat*, the Centre Party. This initiative caused an uproar in various political circles. The authorities, the secular left, and the Coptic Church accused the proposed party of being merely a front for the outlawed Muslim Brothers. A number of the key people behind the initiative were arrested and taken before military courts. At the same time the Muslim Brothers quickly moved to distance themselves from the project and pressured a majority of the co-signing founders to withdraw their support. This tactic led the core group of founders to sever their ties with the *Ikhwan*. Nevertheless, the government rejected the request to license the party and later turned down an appeal against this decision. A similar fate befell the founders two years later when they attempted to register under the new name of *Hizb al-Wasat al-Misri* (Egyptian Centre Party). A third attempt under the name *Hizb al-Wasat al-Jadid* (New Centre Party) was finally rejected in January 2007 after two years of feet-dragging. Nevertheless the party remains active on the political scene under the leadership of the former Muslim Brother Abu al-Ila Madi, another of the central student leaders from the 1970s, and like the Labour Party supports the *Kifaya* movement. In a solid Egyptian tradition it runs a website under the party name with the addition "*hizb taht al-ta'asis*" (party under formation).

The Hizb al-Wasat Programme

The programme presented by the *Wasat* party in 1996 was arguably the first clear expression of the worldview of the post-1970 generation of Muslim Brothers. Obviously this generation is not any more monolithic than the old guard, but the *Wasat* programme had broad support among the young generation, as evidenced by the original list of signatories. The term *wasat* carries multiple layers of connotations. It has a Koranic reference, where the Muslims are spoken of as *ummat al-wasat*, literally the “community of the middle,” but generally understood to signify “the just and equitable community”. For the creators of the Centre Party, their aim was to seek the middle ground in terms of moderation, always an ideal in Islamic circles. This aspiration for moderation was partly one of *means*: they denounced the use of violence to promote political goals, but equally the passive, apathetic acceptance of current conditions. With it went a moderation of *outlook*: they sought a balance between the need to uphold sacred values and the need for dynamic social change, as well as a balance between the need to learn from abroad and the need to uphold independence. And the prospective new party founders considered themselves the standard bearers of the *jil al-wasat*, the “generation of the middle,” a generation they saw as having absorbed the experience of the pioneers but was free to chart its own course, a generation aware of the contemporary challenges but also able to guide the young onto the right path.

The *Wasat* group has presented a new programme with each new application for recognition as a legal party; yet the main lines remain the same, and represent a clear development of the Islamist vision on several counts. In a bid to establish a foundation for national unity across religious groups, the programme, while demanding the implementation of Article 2 of the constitution, where the *Shari'a* is stated to be the main source of legislation, defines the role of religion vis-à-vis state and society as that of a *marja'iyya* or point of reference. It is then made clear that, while for the Muslims Islam is a matter of *faith*, for both Christians and Muslims Islam is their inherited *civilisation*, to which they both have contributed. Rather typical of the programme, it is not spelled out exactly how this idea would translate in terms of the constitution and general legislation. However, the concept of *marja'iyya* is used to underscore the right of full participation for non-Muslims in rights and duties far beyond the position of *ahl al-dhimma*. At the ideological level it is a definite step in the direction of understanding religion as a provider of identity through a common cultural heritage and a set of deeply embedded shared values, rather than as a set of detailed regulations. The *Wasat* also puts great stress on the point that in defining the religious values that must guide society, vital distinctions must be drawn between what is permanent and unchanging and what must change as society changes, between what is incumbent on Muslims and what is incumbent on all citizens, and between those issues directly regulated by the *Shari'a* and the vast field of human activity that falls within the neutral category of the “permitted,” or *al-masmuh*.

With regard to the preferred political system to be adopted in Egypt, the *Wasat* adopted a clear-cut stance for a fully-fledged parliamentary democracy. No such concessions to the elders as those made by the Muslim Brothers in their *Shura* declaration of 1994 were found necessary, and consequently the *Wasat* programme contained an all-out embrace of the basic elements of a democratic life. As such, it certainly was a blatant challenge to the existing system of government in Egypt. Still the programme did call, as we have seen, for the implementation of the *Shari'a*. However, it came very close to equating the *Shari'a* with a set of moral values. Its application would be effected by the legislature “through democratic means,” and it was stated explicitly that the effort is not merely one to clothe the ancient regulations (*ahkam*) in a contemporary language. Rather the task was to choose interpretations that do not paralyze society and economic development. The call for

sovereignty to rest completely with the people was decidedly less equivocal than that of the earlier *Ikhwan* declaration, which stressed that no one has the right to rule other than in accordance with the Law of God. The *Wasat* programme also emphasised explicitly that the sovereign community, the *umma*, includes all citizens, regardless of religious affiliation.

There is a parallel development with regard to the question of women's role in society and politics. Again the *Wasat* programme is much less hesitant than the MB declaration in declaring the full rights of women to employment, to professional careers, and to participate in political life up to the highest level. Nevertheless, there apparently was a strongly felt need to preface these declarations with the customary references to women as mothers and the difference between Western and Muslim attitudes in this regard. Although in general the activists of *al-Wasat* deplore the tendency to make unsupported allegations about the misery and decadence of life in the West, here they draw a gruesome picture of the dissolution of families in the West as a development leading to the spread of AIDS and a host of social problems. The main gist of the content, however, is to support the complete equality of women in civil and political rights and duties and to underscore the duty of society actively to secure the conditions that will allow women to be mothers and simultaneously active members of society. In particular, the programme stresses the need to secure for women access to literacy and education.

SUDAN

Sudan is Africa's largest country in terms of territory and has a population of 40 million. It is a republic, formed in 1956 when the country gained formal independence from Britain and Egypt.¹¹ For most of its existence the country has been under military rule. In 1989 a group of army officers with the support of the National Islamic Front, the third largest party in the Sudanese parliament at the time, staged a coup and took power with a programme of radical Islamisation of the country and government. Since then Omar al-Bashir has been president. Gradually a modicum of formal democratic forms was reintroduced, lastly in connection with the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the Southern Sudanese opposition ending the civil war that had raged since 1983.

Sudanese politics have since independence been intimately related to religion. In the short periods when relatively free elections have taken place the country has been dominated by two parties, the Umma Party and the Democratic Unionist Party, both of which have a strong link to Islam. The Umma Party carries on the considerable lingering legitimacy of the Mahdi movement and its state (1885-1898). The *Ansar* or supporters of the Mahdi Muhammad Ahmad (d.1885) after the Madhist defeat gradually crystallised as a Sufi-like social and religious movement. It is currently led by the great-grandson of the Mahdi, Sadiq al-Mahdi, twice Prime Minister of Sudan since independence, who is also the leader of the dominant faction of the now badly divided Umma Party.

The other main religious movement in Sudan is its dominant Sufi order, the Khatmiyya. This *tariqa* is the basis for the other main historical political party, the Democratic Unionist Party, which is led by its current *shaykh* Muhammad Uthman al-Mirghani.

While the Umma Party, true to its origin in a rebellion against the Egyptian rulers of the country, have been staunchly in favour of Sudanese independence since the party's inception in 1943,¹² the DUP has historically been in favour of union with Egypt.

The Islamist movement

National Congress

Omar al-Bashir, Ali Osman Taha

Popular Congress

Hasan al-Turabi

Muslim Brothers

Iyad Abd al-Rahman

Somewhat surprisingly, given long-time Islamist control over the state, solid information about developments within Sudanese Islamism is hard to get by. What follows is a rough overview.

Rather typical of the situation in Arab countries the modern Islamist movement in Sudan (as distinct from the pre-modern religious heritage of the Umma and DUP movements) can be dated to the establishment of a branch of the Muslim Brothers in the country. This took

¹¹ After British forces had destroyed the Mahdi state in 1898, Britain decided to reinstate Egyptian rule over the country, but now as part of an Anglo-Egyptian condominium that was to last until 1956.

¹² It was first called the *Ashiqqa'* Party, then the National Unionist Party, and only in 1967 adopted its current name.

place in stages starting with the activities of some Egyptian MBs in Sudan from 1947, but only in 1954 came the formal declaration of a Sudanese MB organisation.

At the outstart of the second period of parliamentary democracy in 1964 the Muslim Brothers reorganised themselves into the Islamic Charter Front. This organisation also marked the rise to prominence of the young Hasan al-Turabi, who became secretary-general of the ICF, and who came to dominate Sudanese Islamism and strongly influence the general politics of the country for decades.

During the authoritarian military regime of Jaafar Nimeiry from 1969 Turabi and the majority of the Sudanese Brothers developed a strategy of peaceful work for change. They formed the National Islamic Front in 1976, and when Nimeiry, who had been threatened by several coup attempts both from the left and from the traditional parties, launched his National Reconciliation in 1977, the Islamists responded positively. In the ensuing period they were gradually let into positions of power within the regime, Turabi himself becoming Attorney General in 1979. Later the Islamists fell out of favour with the regime, and during the years 1983-1984 many leaders including Turabi were arrested. The act of introducing *Shari'a* legislation and *Shari'a* courts in 1983 was a unilateral move by Nimeiry and a last desperate attempt by a beleaguered dictator in gaining some legitimacy.

In the spring of 1985 Nimeiry was brought down by a popular uprising in combination with military intervention. This augured in a four-year period with a modicum of pluralist politics. The NIF ran in the 1986 elections, emerging as the third largest party after the Umma and the DUP, showing particular strength in the urban centres. It joined the two broad coalition governments set up by the Umma leader Sadiq al-Mahdi. In March 1989 al-Mahdi dissolved the coalition government over the issue of whether *Shari'a* laws should be imposed on the South of the country after a peace agreement, with the NIF refusing to accept any concessions in this regard. In June of the same year the NIF supported the military coup led by Omar al-Bashir, and became, since 1992 under the name the National Congress, the party of the regime.

The context for the take-over was the intensifying civil war fought by the central government against the Southern Sudan People's Liberation Army led by John Garang. The new power holders took a hard line against the Southern rebellion. For a time it was able to return to the military offensive but in the long run it has turned out that Khartoum seems unable to stabilise its rule over the south. In the meantime the stakes have increased since oil in commercial quantities have been found and production partially developed in the Abyei region straddling the dividing line between the two warring parts of the country. In a seeming recognition of this the government signed in the winter of 2004-2005 the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which is supposedly in the process of being implemented.

Turabi, long regarded as the man behind the throne in Khartoum, in his writings seems to present a rather modernist understanding of Islam, making comparatively radical statements as to the rights of women. Yet the policies of the post-1989 regime have rather reinforced a conservative practice of gender relations and has established a tight control over political opposition and a jealous guard against all what might be seen as separatism.

Towards the end of the 1990s a schism developed between Turabi on the one hand and Bashir and his closest advisers on the other. In 1999 Turabi lost all positions and was put under house arrest. In 2000 he responded by forming his own party, the Popular Congress. This party presents a programme in favour of democratisation and a real federalism in the country with a large degree of autonomy being granted to the provinces.

Interestingly one of the current Darfur rebel groups, the Justice and Equality Movement, is led by former adherents of Turabi, and could be considered an Islamist group.

Finally it must be mentioned that elements of the original Muslim Brothers organisation, who parted way with Turabi in 1969, now operate as a political party in Sudan

under the MB name. This party cooperates with the regime and have a number of ministers in the government.

PALESTINE

In 1987 a civil uprising broke out in the West Bank and the Gaza strip, which came to be known as the first *intifada*. For the first time since 1967 the main Palestinian resistance against Israel now came from inside the Palestinian territories. It was not just an uprising against the occupation, but also a clear sign to the exiled leadership of the PLO, who had not managed to liberate an inch of Palestinian soil, that the population of the West Bank and Gaza strip were clearly dissatisfied with the way the resistance was led.

It was also at this point in history that a new Islamist resistance movement, *Hamas*, emerged in the occupied territories. Islamists had been active in Palestine and among Palestinians before this, notably through the Muslim Brothers and the radical pan-Islamist *Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami* (Islamic Liberation Party), but with the *intifada* for the first time a national Islamist resistance emerged and challenged the power of the old guard of leaders from the established nationalist organisations.

Later, following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the support for Iraq voiced by Arafat and other PLO leaders enraged all the Gulf states, and the funding the PLO received from many of these states were now diverted to Hamas. In the aftermath of the Gulf War a peace conference was held in Madrid, where the Arab states, the Palestinians and Israel sat together for the first time to discuss a peace solution. As a result of this, and of what became known as the Oslo Process, the PLO leadership returned from exile and set up a civil administration in the West Bank and the Gaza strip, intended as the forerunner of an independent Palestinian state living side by side with Israel.

However, in the eyes of large sections of the Palestinian people far too many concessions were given and far too little gained in this process. Gradually the corruption and mismanagement displayed by the returning PLO leadership boosted Hamas in such a way that it became the leading Palestinian resistance group.

Hamas (MB)

Khalid Mish'al

Isma'il Haniya

www.palestine-info.info

Hamas is the main Islamist organisation among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. The name is an acronym for *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya* (The Islamic Resistance Movement). Hamas was established by the Palestinian Muslim Brother organisation in 1987 at the outset of the first *intifada*. Until that time the Muslim Brothers, established in Palestine since the 1930s, and subject to Israeli rule in the occupied territories since 1967, had kept out of politics, and consequently been given scope to engage in active social work and proselytising. For a while the MB were being seen by Israeli authorities as a conservative counterweight to radical Palestinian nationalists.

Hamas was, as the name indicates, founded as a vehicle for engaging in the fight against Israel. In line with this it built a military wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, which have engaged both in operations against Israeli soldiers, and, famously, in suicidal terror missions against mostly civilian targets inside Israel. But through its civilian activity Hamas has developed into what is for all purposes the main political and organisational expression of the MB tendency among Palestinians.

The leadership of the movement has many common features with the leaders and members of the MB in other countries; they are members of the educated middle class, with professions like physicians and engineers being well represented.

The main initiative in the founding of Hamas lay with Gaza MB leaders, most prominently Ahmad Yasin, and Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi, both killed by Israeli forces in 2004 in targeted assassinations. While Gaza remains the strongest Hamas bastion the group enjoys nationwide popularity as evidenced in the 2006 elections, but the recent controversies with Fatah, and continued Israeli persecution has made it far more difficult for the group to operate in the West Bank.

For security reasons the movement has retained a leadership outside of the occupied territories, based in Damascus. The current leader of the Damascus office, Khalid Mish'al, is considered the organisation's top leader, while the most prominent leader inside the territories is Isma'il Haniya, Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority (PA) 2006-2007.

Hamas opposed the Oslo Accords, and for a long time refused to take part in elections to the institutions of the self-rule administration on the grounds that they did not want to grant legitimacy to what they considered a sell-out to Israel. But gradually a more pragmatic approach prevailed and the movement ran candidates in local elections in 2005 and then in the legislative elections in 2006. Here they won a majority of 74 out of the 132 seats in the Legislative Council. Based on this victory Hamas formed a government under Isma'il Haniya. The PLO and Fatah leadership under PA president Mahmoud Abbas, however, refused to fully accept defeat, in particular denying the Hamas government control over the security forces. A situation developed where the two main political tendencies operated competing armed groups. The Hamas government was also boycotted by most of the international society and by Israel. After a brief attempt with a national unity government under Haniya in the spring of 2007, relations between Hamas and Fatah/PLO broke down, leading to severe chaos especially in the streets of Gaza. In June clashes developed between Hamas and Fatah security forces in the city, and Hamas eventually moved to take full military control in the Gaza strip. This led to President Abbas dismissing the Haniya government, appointing a new government under the technocrat Salim Fayyad. Since then in reality the Palestinian areas has been ruled by two governments, Haniya in Gaza and Fayyad/Abbas in the West Bank. In this situation Gaza has come under an almost complete siege by Israel.

Hamas has placed much emphasis on providing social welfare and education to the population, in line with its MB roots, and this has undoubtedly given it considerable support. However, the actions of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades with their use of suicide-bombers inside Israel and against civilian targets, has branded them a terrorist organisation and made it difficult for them to be accepted as a partner in the ongoing peace process. One should keep in mind, however, that in periods of greater acceptance of their political involvement, both on the part of the PLO and of Western governments, they have showed a clear willingness to suspend these actions.

A key to understand the strong support Hamas has been given in recent elections, local and legislative, is the emphasis they put on fighting corruption and mismanagement. This focus was reflected in the name under which they ran in the 2006 elections, the Reform and Change list. In the years after the establishment of the PA a new class emerged, some from the higher echelons of the local society and others PLO cadres returning from exile, which constructed large villas and openly displayed a newly acquired wealth. This combined with lack of progress in the peace process and deteriorating living conditions, made them loathed by the population. Hamas was the opposite of this, with their emphasis on honesty, social welfare and a leadership who lived simple lives among the population. Their main slogans in the elections were linked to the fight against corruption. This struck a solid cord among wide sections of the population, and played a decisive role in securing victory.

Hamas states that it is not against peace, although it does not accept the framework of the current peace efforts. In its view the process initiated in Oslo has not led to an implementation of Palestinian rights, such as the right to return for Palestinian refugees. What it wants is a "just peace" where these rights are respected.

Nevertheless, through its participation in PA elections Hamas has shown a pragmatic willingness to accept working with the institutions established within the Oslo framework, and a willingness to increase its political involvement both with other Palestinian groups and with the international society. In their electoral programme for the legislative elections in 2006, they state that they wish to build an advanced civil society based on political pluralism and the rotation of power.

The movement further states that ... "(Hamas will) emphasise respect for public liberties including the freedom of speech, the press, assembly, movement and work. (Hamas) objects to arbitrary arrests based on political opinion... (Hamas) will guarantee the rights of minorities and respect them in all aspects on the basis of full citizenship".

The decision of the Muslim Brothers to enter active politics through Hamas coincided with an ever clearer willingness by the exiled PLO and Fatah leadership to adopt a policy of seeking negotiations with Israel on the basis of a recognition of the Israeli state. This was a concession withheld by mainstream Palestinian nationalists until that time. Now Hamas moved in to defend the position vacated by Arafat and his allies, the call for the liberation of the whole of Palestine. In its founding covenant Hamas vehemently opposes the state of Israel, considering it an illegally established entity on land that is the inalienable possession of the Muslim *umma*. Nevertheless Hamas has shown some flexibility on the issue of peace with Israel. While until now denying the possibility of durable peace between a Palestinian state and the Jewish state of Israel, Hamas leaders have expressed readiness to enter into a long-term truce provided Israel withdraws from all territories occupied in 1967. In the election programme for the 2006 elections Hamas confirms its support for: "the establishment of a sovereign, free and independent Palestinian state on the full territory of the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem", while adding that this does not imply "giving up any inch of the historical territory of Palestine".

ISRAEL

In three ways Israel represents exceptional circumstances for an Islamist movement in the Middle East. First, Muslims are in a minority. Palestinian Arabs make up around 20 percent of the population, and within this group 80 percent are Muslim. So in the population as a whole Muslims count for 16 percent (18 percent if the Druze are included). Second, Israel is politically organised on a democratic model. This means that despite discrimination against the Arab population in many fields, in contrast to the situation in many Arab countries the Islamists have the chance to run for elections and be elected, both to local councils, and to the national assembly, the Knesset. But, thirdly, the issue of actually participating in politics, as we shall see, is not uncontroversial, because the very state of Israel is considered an illegitimate aggression against Palestinian national (and religious) rights.

The Islamic Movement

"Southern faction"

Abdallah Nimr Darwish

Ibrahim Sarsur

"Northern faction"

Ra'id Salah

www.sawt-alhaq.com (newspaper)

The Islamic Movement was founded in 1983 by Shaykh Abdallah Nimr Darwish when he returned from prison after completing a three-year prison sentence.

In 1996 the movement split in a Southern wing led by Darwish and a Northern wing led by Ra'id Salah over the decision to participate in the Knesset elections in 1996. In addition the movement experienced internal disagreement following the Oslo Accords. Darwish expressed reserved support for the Oslo Accords while Ra'id Salah and Kamal al-Khatib from the Northern wing opposed them. The main reason for the split, however, was the Southern wing's decision to participate in the Knesset elections for the first time in the history of the movement. As will be discussed later, the problem was to participate in elections at the national level and not only at the local level.

Apart from the willingness to participate in election at the national level, the differences between the two wings are not very clear. Ibrahim Sarsur, who became head of the Southern faction in 1998, stated in 2004 that the reason for the split was "disagreement over methods and policies". However, he also stated that they were more united (in 2004) than in the past. There was full coordination on the ground between them, and they coordinated demonstrations and charity projects even though he admitted that the organisational split still existed. In effect, both wings work within the framework of the Israeli system and not outside it.

The geographical base of the Islamic Movement within Israel is the Arab Israeli cities, especially in the Sunni-dominated Triangle (Umm al-Fahm, Kafr Qasim and Kafr Kana). The movement also has considerable support in mixed cities like Nazareth, Jaffa and Acre, and among the Bedouins in the Negev desert. The last parliamentary elections in 2006 provide some insights into the level of support enjoyed by the movement. The United Arab List-Ta'al alliance with Ibrahim Sarsur as head, received 88 percent of the votes in Umm al-Fahm, in al-Tayyiba 90 percent, in Kafr Qasim 71 percent, in Sakhnin 86 percent, and in the Bedouin

village of Rahat about 70 percent of the votes. Sarsur and two others were elected to the Knesset.

As self-proclaimed defenders of the Israeli Arabs and due to their positive and visible social welfare activities in the Israeli Arab cities and villages, the Islamic Movement in Israel has a very heterogeneous social base. However, this broad social base has also led to deepening of internal conflicts and tensions among the leadership.

Both wings of the movement are most concerned with preservation of the Arab identity inside Israel, serving the Israeli Arabs' interests and protecting and maintaining the Islamic holy sites and mosques inside the country. They stress their Islamic approach as opposed to their main competitor amongst the Israeli Arabs, the communist Maki party. This emphasis on Islam can be seen in their slogan "Islam is the solution" (*al-islam huwa al-hall*), common to the international Muslim Brother tendency and its allies.

The founder of the movement, Shaykh Abdallah Nimr Darwish broke with his violent past while in prison and opted to employ non-violent means. Both the Southern and Northern wing of the movement has continued this non-violent policy. The movement gained popularity among the Israeli Arabs through its visible social welfare activities and this popularity have provided the movement several victories in the local elections.

As mentioned, the main division between the two wings is the willingness to participate in the Israeli national election for the Knesset. This is a reflection of two different approaches to the state of Israel as participation in the national election would imply an acknowledgement of Israel's right to exist and accepting the rule on a non-Muslim majority. Kamal al-Khatib of the Northern wing has said that the need to take an oath of allegiance to Israel would justify not participating in the elections. A locally elected Islamic mayor does not need to swear allegiance to the State of Israel. Ra'id Salah continued to boycott the election in 1999 and refused to back any Arab candidates for the Knesset. However, the Northern wing does not call for an overall boycott of the Knesset elections and according to al-Khatib the members could choose whether to vote or abstain. In this sense they accept, and operate within, the legal framework of the Israeli system. According to Ra'id Salah, the main reason not to participate in the national election is that this will not serve the interests of the Arabs in Israel. Since there are very few Arab members of the Knesset they will only be able to protest, without being able to influence Israeli policy. Salah and the Northern wing have instead been concerned with activities on the local level inside the Arab community where they have been able to get influence through their positions as mayors and their active role in health care, education, and welfare. In addition, they have worked very actively for the preservation of Islamic holy sites like the al-Aqsa mosque, and for Arab claims in Jerusalem in general.

The founder of the Islamic Movement, Abdallah Nimr Darwish, has stressed the need for each Islamist movement to adapt its policies and practices to the circumstances in which it works: "Because the Islamic movement acts within different socio-political contexts, every movement should decide its political strategy according to the interests of the local population that it represents". This perception is based on the writings of Sudan's Hasan al-Turabi who has written that "the Islamic *Da'wa* is universal, while the organisation and specific plans of every movement should be local". Darwish used this argument to legitimise the representation of the Islamic Movement in the Knesset. In fact Darwish seems to argue for a kind of secularised Islamism that separates the religious and political activities of the Islamic movement. The Islamic Movement should concern itself with the (political) interests of the Israeli Arabs and Muslims without laying much emphasis on whether this is *halal* or *haram* according to Islam. In contrast, the Northern wing has remained steadfast in calling for a political system based on the *Shari'a*.

As both wings participate in local elections and the Southern wing in the national Israeli elections, they have shown willingness to follow democratic rules and to respect and cooperate with other political forces. In addition, Darwish has founded a forum for interfaith and intercultural dialogue and is a member of international forums for such dialogue. The Northern wing as well has shown signs of pluralism. Ra'id Salah stated in a recent interview that the services the movement provides reach out to every segment of the Palestinian society independent of political or religious beliefs. Salah hailed the democratic victory of Hamas in Palestine. As the Arabs and Muslims constitute a minority within Israel, he remains more sceptical towards the Israeli democracy. He once stated in an interview that he could accept the political process in Israel if the system would demonstrate a genuine concern with its Arab citizens.

Like with other Islamist movements (and indeed much of the political spectrum in the Middle East) there is no scope for pluralist or liberal attitudes when it comes to questions of homosexuality. Together with other Jewish and Arab religious leaders inside Israel, Sarsur of the Southern wing objected in 2006 to the holding of the Gay Pride Parade in Jerusalem. During a joint conference Sarsur stated that "if gays will dare approach Temple Mount during parade, they will do so over our dead bodies", and that "this attack is more venomous than the Zionist attack to make Jerusalem Jewish". In 2007 he spoke out against a group of Palestinians lesbians, and called for "all respectable people from all communities and tendencies to stand up against preaching sexual deviance among our women and girls".

As the Arabs in Israel constitute a minority themselves they have a clear self-interest in stressing the rights of the minorities. In order to foster a strong and united Arab community against the Jews, the Islamic Movement has tried to reach out to their Christian compatriots. The Islamic Movement has several times stood together with the Christian Arabs in denouncing Israeli atrocities or Israeli blasphemy or attack against Muslim and Christian sanctuaries.

Ra'id Salah favours gender-segregated schools, but he thinks people should be able to decide for themselves if they want their children to attend segregated schools or not. In Umm al-Fahm the movement has two secondary schools, one for girls only and one mixed, so parents can choose. As for Darwish, he also favours gender-segregated schools, but has no problem lecturing in front of a mixed audience.

Salah has rejected honour killing as a means to protect the value of honour, but at the same time he stresses the need of respecting honour in order to avoid a decadent society without values or ethics. Therefore it is necessary to strengthen family and social cohesion and to protect the morals and ethics of both men and women. Instead of killings, moral weakness like adultery must be treated through "the revival of religious, historical and cultural traditions, as well as ethics, values and Islamic, Arab and Palestinian codes of behaviour". This indicates to what extent the mission of Islamic Movement is to protect and safeguard the identity and values of the Israeli Arabs in front of what they term "destructive Westernisation".

As Arab residents within the "enemy state" Israel, the Islamic Movement and the Arab community altogether has a special relationship to the question of a Palestinian state. Both wings of the Islamic Movement favour an independent Palestinian state. However, the Southern wing seems to be more willing to coexist with the Israeli Jews than their Northern companions.

The Northern wing has stated several times that it wants to see an independent Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital. This is according to Salah not possible as long as the Israelis continue to steal the land of the Palestinians. Salah criticises Israel for "creating facts on the ground" with the aim of stealing as much Palestinian land as possible. He claims that Israel and the US are behind the war on the Palestinian people, exemplified by the

international economical boycott of Palestine following the democratic victory of Hamas. Salah perceives this boycott as a part of a war against the Palestinian people since 2000 (the outbreak of the second *intifada*), and the aim of this war is to make the Palestinian people kneel for the Israelis and the Americans. The Islamic Movement issued a statement concerning the November 2006 attack at Beit Hanun in Gaza, and stated that “we are certain that the aim of the Israeli occupants is to kill many of our people and this barbarism does not serve the interests of the occupants”. Despite the strong rhetoric, the Islamic Movement proposed peaceful demonstrations as the means to show their disgust with the attack.

The Northern wing tends to advocate religious, cultural and social separatism for the Arabs of Israel, and does not conceal the fact that it does not recognise the state of Israel.” Nevertheless a spokesman for the Northern wing, Hashim Abd al-Rahman, stated in 2003 that “I want Umm al-Fahm to be open to Jews and I will push forward a slogan that says that Umm al-Fahm respects guests and pursues the well being of its residents.” The Islamic Movement has several times objected to Arab citizens of Israel serving voluntarily in the Civil Guard or serving a kind of “civil service” instead of military service. Ra’id Salah maintains the right of the refugees to return, and deems it necessary to stop the expropriation of Palestinian land through creating a special fund dedicated to challenge land expropriations.

The Southern wing and especially Darwish has shown a more positive attitude towards coexistence with the Jews. Darwish has actively sought a rapprochement between Arabs and Jews in Israel. He has also stated that if asked he will mediate between Hamas and Israel. The current leader of the Southern wing, Ibrahim Sarsur, stated in 2004 that military operations against Israeli soldiers or installations were not on the group’s agenda. He stated that generally for Israeli Arabs military actions are unthinkable as the Israeli Arabs are “the lungs through which the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank breathe”.

Sarsur has stated that the Islamic movement in Israel agrees that Jews have the right to live in Israel as a part of Palestine. He has also said that he accepts the existence of the State of Israel as a fact of life. Sarsur stated in 2006 that he had “no problem with the settlers’ becoming part of Palestine and staying on should an independent Palestinian state be established within the boundaries of 4 June 1967”. He gave the settlers two options; either to leave for Israel or to become a part of the Palestinian state. He also stated that: “I am willing to live in peace with the sane majority that wants peace, and we are willing to extend our hand regardless of the differences between us”. Sarsur declared his willingness to normalise relations with a sovereign Israel within the Green Line.

Both wings of the Islamic Movement regard Palestinian unity in particular and Arab unity in general as crucial to solving the Palestine conflict. They have several times contributed to reconciliation between the different Palestinian factions within Israel and issued statements encouraging unity between Hamas and the PA.

JORDAN

More than any other country outside historical Palestine itself, Jordan is inextricably bound up with the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. In 1988 the king gave up his claim to the West Bank, which in the period 1948-1967 had been part of the kingdom. But most likely more than half of the population of Jordan are of Palestinian origin, and especially the capital Amman is dominantly populated by Palestinians.

Like the monarchs of Morocco and Saudi Arabia, the Jordanian king seeks part of his legitimacy in religion. As part of the Hashemite family he is considered a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, and claims the role of custodian of the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, the third most holy sanctuary in Islam. Another similarity with Saudi-Arabia is that both monarchies have been opposed to Nasser and his pan-Arabism, and both countries used Islam as the most important means against radical nationalist and leftist forces that tried to monopolise the Palestinian conflict.

Islamic Action Front

Zaki Bani Irshayd

www.jabha.net

Muslim Brothers

Hamman Sa'id

<http://www.ikhwan-jor.com>

In contrast to Islamists in other countries in the area, the Muslim Brothers in Jordan for a long time enjoyed good relations with the regime, and this “alliance” has influenced the Islamic movement in the country. The Muslim Brothers have greatly benefited from their past amicable relationship with the regime and while now in opposition represent the most powerful independent political force in the country. Nevertheless in the current parliament, elected in 2007, its political expression the Islamic Action Front is reduced to only 6 seats in the 80-member lower house.

The Jordanian Muslim Brothers attained legal status as a charity in 1945 and shortly after the MB was represented in the government through Abd al-Hakim Abdin (the brother-in-law of Hasan al-Banna). Following the constitutional reform in 1992 permitting the establishment of political parties, the Islamic Action Front (IAF) was licensed. The MB initiated the establishment of IAF with the aim of uniting with other independent Islamists in order to seek an enhanced role for Islam in Jordanian politics. Leaders of both organisations emphasise that MB and IAF are two different entities. Yet, although they may be two administratively different entities, there is a very close relationship between the groups in practice. The two first leaders of IAF, Ishaq Farhan and Abd al-Latif Arabiyyat, were MB veterans and the former general controller of the Brothers, Abd al-Majid Dhunaybat, stated in 2003 that 80 percent of the Shura Council members of the IAF are Muslim Brothers. The MB domination of the IAF has resulted in defection of independent Islamists from IAF.

The Brothers have strong influence over the policies of IAF. For instance, when the MB decided to boycott the 1997 parliamentary elections, the IAF followed suit despite some internal opposition. Even though Hamza Mansur, then spokesperson and deputy general secretary of IAF, said that “the IAF will participate in the elections, regardless”, the Shura council of IAF voted 80 against 16 to boycott the election. The current general secretary for the IAF, Zaki Bani Irshayd stated in 2006 that “the Brothers conduct consultations and recommendations, and these are not binding since the matter (nomination) is within the

jurisdiction of the party's Shura Council. But the norm is that the Shura Council respects the recommendations of the group (MB) that are reached through consultations.”

It has been argued that the IAF is more flexible than the MB, which is more hard-line. This could be seen in that the IAF was more lenient than MB in dealing with the two members who defied the boycott decision in 1997. It has also been argued that MB is less pragmatic towards the government as a result of their demand for halting the normalisation with Israel and abolishing the Wadi Araba peace treaty. The IAF has been more concerned with domestic issues and as Arabiyyat said in 1998: "freedoms and democracy first of all”.

The Jordanian MB has been dominated by the educated middle class. They have strong support in the student and professional unions; especially in elite professions such as doctors, pharmacists, lawyer and engineers. As such the MB are primarily an urban movement, but it does not enjoy strong support from the urban poor, nor with blue-collar workers or peasants.

Like Jordanian society itself, the MB is comprised of Jordanians from the East Bank and Jordanians of Palestinian descent from the West Bank. It is estimated that 30 to 40 percent of the leading members have Palestinian background. It has been alleged that the Palestinian faction within the MB constitute the base of the “hawkish” trend (cf. below), while the moderate "doves" tend to hail from the East Bank. However, this could also be seen as a generational conflict between the young, more militant Palestinians and the elder, veteran members from the East Bank who traditionally have enjoyed strong relations with the monarchy.

The Muslim Brothers describe their organisation as an Islamic society that aims to establish God's religion on earth by way of persuasion through *da'wa*. They want to establish an Islamic state based on *Shari'a*, but the realisation of this state should occur within “a controlled process by educating the individual and society”. How the MB aim to Islamise Jordanian society from below is clear from their 1989 election programme, where they state that their aim is to reform "the Muslim, then the Muslim family, then the Muslim people, then the Muslim government”. In order to “reform the Muslim people,” the MB has focused much of their activity on education and the curriculum used in Jordanian schools. They have created their own independent and Islamic educational institutions (kindergartens and elementary schools) and they have traditionally exerted much influence over the ministries of education and religious affairs and other “ideological ministries”. They also run a private university in al-Zarqa. Fully in line with the ideas of the historical founder of the Muslim Brothers, Hasan al-Banna, the Jordanian Brothers declare that they aim to spread Islam through *da'wa*, education (*tarbiya*), guidance (*tawjih*) and to establish Islamic institutions like mosques, schools, hospitals and clinics.

The Muslim Brothers have separated their social activity from their political activity. The social activity is represented by the Islamic Centre Society, while the political activity is carried out by its political wing, the Islamic Action Front. The social activity of the group has heavily contributed to the support base of the Brothers. In the 1980s, when there were no elections due to the martial law following the 1967 war, the mosques were important arenas of activity for the Brothers. Part of the government efforts to suppress the Muslim Brothers in recent years has consisted in weakening or eliminating MB control of al-Zarqa University and the Islamic Centre Society.

Due to the historical good relations between the monarchy and the Muslim Brothers, the latter for a long time had considerable more latitude than other oppositional movements or groups in the country. The MB therefore had more experience and a longer history of social and political activism than their competitors. The Brothers participated in the elections in 1962 and 1967, but it was not until the “reformed” and relatively free elections of 1989 that the Brothers really showed muscles. Islamists won altogether 34 of 80 seats in the parliament,

and 20 of the 26 candidates from the Brothers were elected. This created tension with the regime. The MB (and other oppositional forces) were still restrained by several rules decreed by the king. In 1990/91 Islamists received seven ministries, five to the Brothers and two for independent Islamists. In the next election in 1993, the Brothers were represented through their political wing, the IAF. Its representation declined slightly, to 17 seats, despite an actual slight increase in votes cast in its favour. This was due to a new election law that was explicitly designed to counter the influence of the Islamists, through two main mechanisms. One was a redesigning of constituencies in order to weaken the representation of urban areas where the MB/IAF were strong and increase that of rural and tribal areas. The other was what is known as the "one-vote-system". It means that in multi-seat constituencies each voter can only cast her or his vote for one candidate. In a society where tribal loyalties remain strong this has important consequences. Earlier the voter could simultaneously vote for candidates from her own tribe and candidates with whom she agreed ideologically. After the reform when only one vote can be cast priority is more often than not given to the tribe.

In 1997 the IAF boycotted the elections in protest at the election law and against the peace treaty with Israel concluded in 1994. When it returned to take part in 2003 it was further weakened, with 16 seats in the lower house, which had now expanded to 110 seats. In 2007 the IAF did its worst elections so far, returning with only 6 representatives. The reasons for this decline are partly linked to regime restriction of the political space and manipulation of elections, and partly to an apparent recent erosion of voter support. Still it should be noted that even in this much weakened position, the IAF is the only proper political party to have a representation at all.

For the MB/IAF seeking influence through elections is a strategic choice. In their 1989 programme the MB state that they consider their "presence in parliament as a means to fulfil the nation's mission of power, might and of applying God's *Shari'a* to uphold rights and spread justice and equality among all people regardless of race and creed". However, they constantly assess the pros and cons of participation in relations to the changing political circumstances in the country.

The Jordanian Muslim Brothers are strictly against violence as a means for political change. Yet it defends the right to use violence against an occupying force. The controller-general of MB, Abd al-Majid Dhunaybat stated in 1994 that the Brothers "renounce violence as a way of change from any source. We have tried such means. The Brothers in Syria have tried it". The Brothers have also warned that if the Islamic movement does not achieve results through their moderate and centrist line, the field will be open for more extremist trends in Jordanian society. The MB condemn terrorist attacks like the 11 September attacks and the *Al-Qa'ida* organisation. However, they have supported the use of suicide bombs against Israel, and MB controller-general Dhunaybat stated in 2004 that he supported the Iraqi resistance and the kidnappings of all who cooperated with the occupation forces in Iraq, although not supporting the beheadings. Ahead of the US invasion of Iraq, Dhunaybat stated that it was not the plan of MB to use violent means in the region at this stage, but that this would be a last and unavoidable weapon if the US invaded the Arab and Muslim world. He stated that the MB is a preaching movement and not a military movement, but they will not stand idly by if their country is attacked or harmed.

The wings of the Jordanian Muslim Brothers have traditionally been classified as "moderate" doves versus more "radical" or "conservative" hawks. The doves have historically been the dominant trend, but since 2000 a centrist faction in between the doves and the hawks has been in ascendancy.

The main difference between the wings is related to political participation in the Jordanian parliament and especially in government. Each time the MB participated in the elections there were harsh debates within the Brothers both before and after the elections as

they sought a balance between Islamist ideology and political flexibility. This balance became increasingly difficult as the Jordanian regime changed the electoral law after the victory of the Islamist movement in the 1989 election and especially because of the Jordanian peace agreement with Israel in 1994. Both the IAF and the MB discussed internally whether to participate in government after the peace treaty, but the hawkish trend won out and the movement abstained from joining the government. The moderates saw participation in the government as a strategic means to contain normalisation with Israel, while the hard-liners set the abrogation of the peace treaty as a precondition for joining the government.

Another contentious issue inside the Brothers has been their relation with Hamas. While the Palestinian-dominated hawkish trend enjoyed good relations with Hamas, the moderate East Bank leaders had a more strained relationship with this movement. This has created tension within the MB whenever there has been conflict between the Jordanian government and Hamas.

It is important to note that increasing tension with the regime following the 1994 peace agreement with Israel has not resulted in a considerable strengthening of the hawkish trend. The last ten years has instead witnessed the rise of a young “centrist” current, which have managed to fill the gap between the two other trends that increasingly polarised the movement. The emergence of the centrist trend may be dated to the elections to the MB's Shura Council in 1998. Here both two of the moderate favourites (al-Farhan and Arabiyyat) and two of the hawkish candidates, Ali al-Utum and Abd al-Jalil al-Awawidah were defeated. Instead a younger rank of centrists, led by Imad Abu-Diyah, Jamil Abu Bakr, Dawud Qujaq, and Badr al-Riyati won 25 seats in the 45-member council.

In general it could be said that the MB and IAF have been most pragmatic in the fields of government and domestic politics, while they have been more ideologically driven and least flexible on the Arab-Israeli peace process and the role of women in Jordanian society.

The Jordanian MB has demonstrated through their participation in parliament that they respect democracy. They have also showed that they play according to the rules laid down by the regime, even though they sometimes object to the rules as they did when they boycotted the 1997 parliamentary election. The boycott was however an exception from the rule and boycott could be seen as a means within the parliamentary framework. They have always respected the constitution and the laws, even though they have been opposed to some of them, and especially the election law issued after the 1989 victory of the Islamic movement. In the parliament they have pragmatically played the political game and cooperated with Christians and made trade-offs and compromise with potential allies. Dhunaybat stated in 1994 that they “favour political pluralism, partnership in the government and granting women the right to vote and be elected.” The 1989 election programme indicated that the Brothers wanted to get rid of nepotism and voting following tribal identities: “If good candidates are more than the required number, voters must choose the best, irrespective of relationship, personal interest, or tribal considerations. The Prophet has said: Anyone who makes another govern while, among Muslims, there are those who are better, then he will have betrayed God, His Prophet, and the believers.”

The Muslim Brothers follow democratic rules internally as well. Every four years the members of the movement elect the Shura Council which then elects the general controller. They have managed to settle several conflicts between the doves and hawks in the Shura Council. In 1993, after the amendments to the election law, 85 percent of the Shura Council voted in favour of participation in the upcoming election, while the hawks won in 1997 when 63 percent of council members voted in favour of boycott. The members of the MB accept and follow majority decisions by the Shura Council or the Executive Council even if they are against the decision. For instance, the controller general of the Brothers, al-Dhunaybat, stated that he would prefer to participate in 1997 elections, but he respected the majority view inside

the MB. The exception is the members who did not heed the decision to boycott the 1997 election and ran for parliament as independents. They were later expelled.

The Muslim Brothers want Islam to permeate the entire society and this may run counter to what religious minorities in Jordan want. However, the Brothers have shown pragmatism towards the religious minorities. For instance, the Brothers demanded a complete ban of alcohol in Jordan, but later stated that the ban should apply only for Muslims. The MB and IAF have given no indication that they would seek to impose special non-Muslim *dhimmi* status upon the country's minorities should Islamists come to power in Jordan. As already stated, they have also had electoral and political alliances with some Christians.

The IAF has several times stated that Christians are welcome to join the party, and reportedly a limited number of Christians are currently members. In 2001 a central spokesperson declared that "we consider the Christian as a citizen with rights just like any other citizen. The Christian Arab is a Muslim in his thinking and culture." The condition for membership is that the Christians have to agree to the party principles and statutes, which include a call to reform society based on "a flexible Islamic formula that would include all individuals who believe in Islamic thought and culture". In February 2007 a Christian, Aziz Mas'idah, was elected to the IAF's General Assembly for the first time in the history of IAF. However, he resigned less than a week later due to "religious dimensions and the rumours which accompanied the news of his success, which aimed to smear his image and for other personal reasons."

The IAF oppose the system whereby religious minorities are given a certain quota of seats in parliament. The front describes it as discrimination by faith and race, and Arabiyyat has stated that it wants the "minorities to be representatives of the homeland and have higher status than that of a minority". The IAF has stated that it is "for absolute equality and justice between all the sons of the homeland, regardless of their so-called different origins".

The Brothers have several times stated that men and women have equal rights including the right to vote and be elected. However, these rights have to be within the Islamic framework. As the MB stated in their 1989 election programme "the woman has the right to own property, work, and participate in developing the society within the limits set by Islam, on condition that this does not overwhelm her duty toward her home, husband and children. Woman is man's partner". The MB support gender segregation and in IAF's 1989 election programme it stated that it would be "resisting coeducation at universities and community colleges". The Islamists are against imposing the veil by law, but call for women to dress decently at home, outside the home and at work and not to be a source of temptation and seduction.

In 2003 the Jordanian Muslim Brothers for the first time in the history of the Islamist movement in Jordan nominated a woman to the parliamentary election. She was one of 30 nominated candidates from the Brothers, but al-Dhunaybat considered this only the first experience and claimed that they had chosen the woman they thought best qualified and had the best chance of being elected.

However, the IAF wants to protect the morally conservative character of Jordanian society. For instance, in 1999 IAF criticised the government for its decision to introduce tougher punishments against men who kill their female relatives on suspicion of illicit relationships. They saw this as an imposition of Western values on Jordan and seeking to corrupt public morals. According to Ibrahim Zaid Kilani, the decision was "a Zionist plot aimed at infiltrating our culture and religion" while Arabiyyat stated that "we feel that whoever is leading all these campaigns aims at demoralising our society, and the women's issue has been used by the West against the Arabs and the Muslims to push Arab women to abandon their honour and values and start acting like animals". In a letter to the Jordanian Prime minister Ali Abu al-Raghib the IAF secretary general Arabiyyat stated that "we

condemn all suspicious attempts to change the features of our identity by organising questionable festivals, ceremonies, and events. We also caution against the moral anarchy we see in mixed nightclubs, cafes, and camps, where teenagers of both sexes and different nationalities get together in the name of cultural exchange or culture of peace. We are extremely concerned at the so-called American and Jewish peace-culture women teachers who polluted our Arab and Muslim villages and rural areas with their destructive traditions and values. Letting these women work in schools in our beloved Jordan is very detrimental to our Arab, Muslim community. We also caution against letting herds of foreign women labourers work in our factories and spread corruption”.

Concerning Palestine, the MB has vehemently opposed Israel and the 1994 peace treaty. Yet in interpreting the harshness of the rhetoric applied one should consider the movement's need to legitimise their continued presence in parliament after the signing of the peace treaty since this could be seen as in fact acquiescing in the treaty. The movement's 17 deputies in the previous Lower House voted against the ratification of the 1994 peace treaty. The hawks of MB wanted to resign from the Parliament, but they stayed on as the doves deemed it more important to be a part of the parliament for strategic reasons. It has been alleged that the Islamists only made a stand for history ensuring that their position was clear while avoiding a direct confrontation with the government.

The Jordanian MB have undoubtedly showed some measure of pragmatism towards the peace treaty. In 1991 the then controller general of the Brothers, Abd al-Rahman Khalifa stated that "we will not participate in any government that will negotiate with Israel or with its American partner”. And the implication of their 1989 election programme, stating that everyone who negotiates with the Zionist enemy is a sinner implies that the Jordanian government (after 1994) is a sinner. Despite this the Brothers still favour representation in parliament and the main reason for the 1997 boycott was not the signing of the peace treaty but the 1993 amendments to the election law that reduced the Brother's position in the parliament.

Like the Muslim Brothers, the IAF has been more pragmatic than its statements might suggest. Even though all 17 IAF deputies voted against the peace treaty they did not resign from parliament. There were also voices inside the IAF with an explicitly stated pragmatic approach. For instance, Ibrahim Gharayiba advocated a more pragmatic approach towards the peace agreement and pointed towards that even the Egyptian Muslim Brothers have accepted the Camp David accords and that the Islamic Movement inside Israel has participated in elections for the Knesset. The “dissident” IAF deputy Abdallah al-Aka'ila, has criticised the Muslim Brothers for not understanding that it is impossible to abrogate the peace treaty through the Parliament, as it is an international agreement.

LEBANON

Lebanon, with 4 million inhabitants, has only a brief history as a state within its present borders, and a population that is highly diverse in terms of religious affiliation. The current political unit was carved out by the French mandate power in 1920 from various former Ottoman provinces. To the autonomous district of Mount Lebanon were added parts of the former Province of Beirut (including the city itself - to be capital of the new country) and the Province of Damascus. By this act the formerly dominantly Christian enclave got a large population of both Sunni (Beirut and the North) and Shi'a (South and East) Muslims, which together with the highly heterodox Druze of the mountains almost had parity with the Christians. The last official census took place in 1932, but it is commonly acknowledged that because of higher population growth and lesser propensity to emigration among Muslims, they now constitute anything between 60 to 65 percent of the population (even not counting the 400 000 Palestinian refugees in the country, almost all Sunni Muslims). There is also great uncertainty as to the distribution of Muslims between the Sunni and Shi'a denominations. Some hold the Shi'a to be a majority, while others estimate a rough parity in numbers.

The political system that was confirmed at the time of independence in 1943 was a compromise intended to secure a balance between Christians and Muslims and between the various denominations within each main religious group. The system remains in place, despite some slight revisions in the Ta'if accord which signalled the end of the Civil War 1975-1990. Both seats in Parliament and major government positions are allotted to representatives of specific denominations. After Ta'if the Parliament of 128 is equally divided between Christians and Muslims, but a system remains in place where the President must be a Maronite Christian, the Speaker of Parliament a Shi'a Muslim and the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim. A similar division exists for a number of minor posts throughout the political and bureaucratic apparatus of the country. The confessionalism of politics along with the traditional strong position of local great families of land owners has contributed to a certain compartmentalisation of the country, in which politics takes place within local groups of co-religionists often dominated by a leader from an old established family, and where national politics is the arena for negotiation and compromise between the local leaders known as *zu'ama* (sing. *za'im*).

In a paradoxical way perhaps the most important break with the politics of clan and family in favour of interest- and ideology-based politics is represented by the Islamists, although of course on the other hand their ideology may reinforce the divisions between adherents of different religions and even to an extent between Shi'a and Sunni. The Islamist movement is clearly divided along sectarian lines, each side having its own historical trajectory, ideological development and international Islamist connections. This is not to say that there has been no cooperation between the two.

The inclusion of the Lebanese Islamist groups below, especially Hizbullah, in a list of moderate Islamist movements may be controversial, because of accusations of terrorism directed against them, and more generally because Hizbullah has been heavily involved in armed struggle under the banner of *jihad*, and maintains its own army. Still the inclusion has been made because the armed struggle (and acts of terror, although they date back to the eighties and early nineties) have taken place against external enemies, while in internal Lebanese politics Hizbullah and the other Islamists included here have broadly acted according to the rules of the game and worked to increase their influence through the voting booth.

Sunni Islamism in Lebanon

Despite in recent years falling far behind the Hizbullah both in terms of international media attention and in terms of influence within its own religious group, Sunni Islamism linked to the Muslim Brothers have in fact by far the longest history in the country.

Al- Jama'a al-Islamiyya (The Islamic Group)

Faysal Mawlawi, General Secretary

Ibrahim al-Masri, Deputy General Secretary

www.al-jamaa.net

The Lebanese *Jama'a Islamiyya* (despite carrying the same name as the militant Egyptian group that was formed in opposition to the MB) is the local offshoot of the Muslim Brothers. It traces its origin to 1952 when the then leader of the Syrian Muslim Brothers, Mustafa Siba'i spent some time preaching and organising in the country. Officially the JI was formed in 1964 with the charismatic cleric Fathi Yakan from the main Sunni centre of Tripoli as general secretary. Yakan stayed as general secretary until 1996, when he was elected a deputy from Tripoli to parliament.

Later he developed in a radical direction (including some statements seemingly in support of bin Laden and *Al-Qa'ida*, albeit indicating that he himself would choose other methods in the struggle with the West). He left the JI, and in 2006 set up his own organisation, the Organisation for Islamic Action.

The current general secretary of the JI is Faysal Mawlawi, also a cleric. The JI had three representatives in Parliament 1992-1996 and one in the next parliament. After 2000 they have not been represented but scored some victories in the local elections of 2004. In the turbulent internal situation pertaining since late 2006 with the Shi'a community led by Hizbullah and allied to the Maronite leader Michel Aoun pitted against the government led by the Sunni Fuad Siniora, Fathi Yakan has sided clearly with the opposition. The JI itself let its small al-Fajr militia fight alongside Hizbullah in the war of summer 2006. But under influence of strong Sunni majority support for the government it has since taken care to place itself safely within the Sunni fold. For instance it continued to recognise the government, while trying to tread a fine line between the two sides and calling for reconciliation. It stated that it did not support fully either side in the internal conflict, but recognised that each side had major legitimate concerns. It agrees with the government in calling for a full investigation under international supervision of the murder of former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, while also agreeing with the opposition in the need for "protecting the resistance", *i.e.* standing against US and Israeli pressure to disarm Hizbullah.

The JI is very critical of the sectarianism dominating Lebanese politics, and calls for abolishing the sectarian political set-up. In line with this it calls for a new election law, for the introduction of proportional representation, to be realised at the provincial level, and for alliances to be made on the basis of political programmes.

Shi'a Islamism in Lebanon

Modern Shi'a activism in Lebanon is linked to the activities of the cleric Musa Sadr. Musa Sadr was born in Iran into the famous Sadr family of Shi'a clerics. He was educated in the seminaries of Qom and Najaf. In 1959 he went to Lebanon and gradually established himself as a central leader of the Shi'a community, working to enhance the social conditions and the political status of this largely disenfranchised part of the Lebanese mosaic. In 1974 he founded *Harakat al-mahrumin* (Movement of the Disinherited), which during the civil war

acquired an armed wing known as *Afwaj al-muqawama al-lubnaniyya* (Battalions of the Lebanese Resistance) better known under its acronym Amal (also meaning "hope"). After Musa Sadr disappeared under mysterious circumstances in 1978 while on a visit to Libya, Amal emerged as the main continuation of his movement; gradually taking on the role of a political party. Since 1980 it has been led by the lay politician Nabih Berri, and has developed a more secular profile. Although still a factor to be reckoned with, since the 1990s its position as leader of the Shi'a of Lebanon has largely been taken over by the staunchly Islamist Hizbullah.

Hizbullah

Hasan Nasrallah, General Secretary

www.hizbollah.org

Hizbullah (The Party of God) was founded in the aftermath of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Though the details remain unclear, a detachment of Revolutionary Guards (*pasdaran*) dispatched from Iran played a pivotal part in the early formation of the group. In 1985 Hizbullah published its manifesto, calling for the establishment in Lebanon of an Islamic government according to Ayatollah Khomeini's principle of *wilayat al-faqih* (government of the jurispudent, cf. below under Iran).

From the start Hizbullah had a double focus: resistance against the Israeli occupation of the country and work for the Islamisation of Lebanese society and politics. While military resistance against Israel has remained a dominant *raison d'être* for the organisation and central to its activities, a major watershed took place after the civil war in Lebanon had ended with the Ta'if accords. Facing the re-emergence of normal political life in the country, Hizbullah chose to contest the first post-civil war elections, which took place in 1992. The decision to take part in a political system Hizbullah had previously utterly condemned, was not uncontroversial, and led to the defection of the long-time general secretary Subhi al-Tufayli. The parliamentary campaign was the start of a development that has gradually turned Hizbullah into the strongest ideological political party in Lebanon, in a country where politics is largely the business of alliances between leaders representing major, often land-owning, families. Besides its military forces Hizbullah has developed an impressive apparatus providing for the Shi'a population's welfare needs (as well as non-Shi'a living in the main areas of Shi'a concentration: the South, the Biqa' and Southern Beirut).

In the 1992 elections Hizbullah won 12 seats in the 128 member strong Lebanese Parliament. Under the highly controlled elections under Syrian occupation this decreased to 10 seats in 1996 and 8 seats in 2000. But after the Syrian withdrawal the party won 14 seats in the 2005 elections. Importantly the Resistance and Development Bloc which links the Hizbullah as the strong part in an alliance with Amal and some minor groups holds 35 seats (and in the current conflict it can count on 58 votes on its side through its alliance with the Maronite Christian leader Michel Aoun). These figures should be understood against the background that Hizbullah has taken care to preserve its alliance with the Amal leader Nabih Berri in designing the electoral lists so as to assure a rough parity between the two groups despite the greater popularity now enjoyed by Hizbullah. In local elections the party won control over 21 percent of the municipalities in 2004, up from 15 percent in 1998 when it first ran.

A glance at the development of the diverse declarations and statements emerging from the movement is instructive. The 1985 declaration refers to the need for establishing an Islamic order in Lebanon (albeit this should not be forced on the population). In contrast the electoral programmes of later years carry few or no religious references and consist of a combination of patriotic rhetoric on the need for defending the nation against Israel and a

detailed programme for economic and political reform in Lebanon: eradication of poverty, a more just distribution and the introduction of greater democracy. Interestingly Hizbullah has taken the lead in advocating the abolition of the confessional system of government in place in the country since 1943. In its election programmes it has made some concrete suggestions in that direction, such as making the whole of Lebanon one electoral district with proportional representation. It has also advocated that political parties must be based on political programmes and not on sectarian, ethnic or clan-based alliances, and has suggested the establishment of a national commission to draft a programme for the abolition of political confessionalism (something in fact envisaged in the Ta'if Accords that ended the civil war, but never acted upon). But while still advocating such a change Nasrallah has recently emphasised that the battle must first be against the confessionalism in the minds before one can remove the confessionalism of the constitutional texts.

Does all this mean the Hizbullah has lost its religious foundation? This is hardly so. It should be noted that, in contrast to Sunni Islamist groups, clerics (like Hasan Nasrallah) remain highly prominent in the leadership of the group. Religious motivation among its members and fighters also remains strong. Rather the toning down of outwardly religious slogans should be seen as resulting from the very choice to enter into politics. Religious and other highly ideological groups that move from anti-systemic opposition to seeking positions and partial power within the system, are faced much more directly with the day-to-day business of solving the practical problems confronting the population. It is commonly observable that they then tend to become more oriented towards concrete issues and less towards grand ideological proclamations. This effect is strongly added to in Lebanon by the fact that anyone with an ambition to gain leadership over the whole country can only hope to do so by building broad alliances extending across the borders between the various religious confessions and sects.

The party's line on the ideal political system is contradictory at two levels. First, both in the initial statement of 1985 and in later programmatic statements, like the book published by Deputy Secretary General Naim Qassem in 2005 - *Hizbullah: The Story from Within* - an Islamic state is advocated. Yet the party has been led by the stark reality of the religious heterogeneity of Lebanese society to forego this idea as a practical programme. Second, the party sticks in principle to its support for Khomeini's idea of the rule of the Islamic jurispudent, the *wilayat al-faqih*, something which seems to contradict the principle of political democracy advocated by Hizbullah in the Lebanese context (although the term "democracy" is rarely used in programmatic statements).

This links into the enigma of the movement's relation to Iran. According to Naim Qassem there is no doubt that the acceptance of the principle of *wilayat al-faqih* entails considering the current leader of Iran Ali Khamene'i also as the ultimate guide for Hizbullah. Major decisions can only be implemented after his agreement, according to Qassem. Yet one may of course speculate as to what extent this is rather a diplomatic stance linked to preserving the absolutely vital Iranian support for Hizbullah. Perhaps by its acknowledgement of the formal head of the Iranian state the party aims to avoid being dragged into the ever-vibrant internal struggles of that country. The fact that Khamene'i has named Nasrallah and leading Hizbullah member Mohammed Yazbek as his personal representatives in Lebanon is considered by one observer to actually increase the real autonomy in decision-making of the Hizbullah leadership. There are also reports that Hizbullah has indicated that the Iranian leader is not automatically the leader of all Muslims, and the party has on occasion taken care to secure the support of the leading *Lebanese* clerics, such as Muhammad Fadlallah.

SYRIA

The secular nationalist Ba'th party has governed Syria since 1963. From the mid-sixties the party's military wing, where most leading figures have belonged to the Alawi Shi'a minority, have controlled real power in the country. The Ba'th regime has exercised harsh suppression of the Sunni Islamist movement in the country. There have been several clashes between the government and the religious opposition. The period from 1979 until 1982 was exceptionally tense between the regime and the Muslim Brothers, climaxing with the uprising in Hama where somewhere between 10 000 and 30 000 were killed. The regime blamed the Muslim Brothers for the uprising, but although the Brothers played an important part they were not the only force behind it. This is reflected in the establishment of a broad opposition front, the National Alliance for the Liberation of Syria, after the uprising and the subsequent massacre. Islamists, dissident Ba'thists, socialists, and Nasserists participated in this alliance and their aim was to overthrow the Syrian regime.

Muslim Brothers

Ali Sadr al-Din al-Bayanuni (UK)

www.jimsyr.com

After its violent suppression in the early 1980s the Muslim Brothers have had no open organisational presence in Syria. Under the leadership of Ali Sadr al-Din al-Bayanuni who lives in exile in London the organisation have adopted a moderate reformist platform, and insists on its commitment to pluralism and democracy. According to observers it retains a strong latent force within Syrian civil society

The Syrian branch of the Muslim Brothers was founded by Mustafa al-Sibai in 1946 through a merger of several smaller Islamic societies. While the Ba'th originally appealed to marginalised groups, like religious minorities or the rural Sunni Muslims who had been excluded from economic and political power, the Muslim Brothers were strong among the urban population. The Islamists were particularly strong in the Northern cities Homs, Hama and Aleppo. The Islamists of the capital, Damascus, have traditionally been more moderate than their Northern colleagues. The Syrian Brothers were closely aligned with the urban Sunni trading and manufacturing middle and lower middle classes who feared that the rural-based Ba'thists should usurp their position. When the Ba'th challenged the trade monopoly of this urban-based segment, it was only natural that the Islamists became the "forward arm of the endangered urban traders". The position of the Muslim Brothers in the cities versus the countryside is illustrated by the results of the parliamentary elections the Syrian MB participated in before the Ba'th takeover in 1963. At national level their ratings were modest, ranging from 2.6 percent in 1949 to 5.8 percent in 1961. However, in Damascus the corresponding ratings were much stronger, 23 percent in 1949 and 17.6 percent in 1961.

As a result of the confrontations between the regime and the Muslim Brothers the regime enacted Law No. 49 of 1980 that made it a capital offence to belong to the MB. The prescribed sentence has later been reduced to 20 years of imprisonment, but still makes it very difficult for the Brothers to be active in Syria. According to the exiled leader, Bayanuni, the MB has no organisational presence in Syria today. The ban has made it very difficult to gauge how strong the support and the social base of the Brothers are nowadays. In fact, merely to conduct research on the Muslim Brothers is illegal according to the Syrian regime. However the Brothers still retain a latent sympathy, especially among lower middle class Sunnis. It has been alleged that the social base of the Syrian Muslim Brothers have shifted somewhat from

the more wealthy business element in the direction of the urban lower middle and underclasses.

After the Muslim Brothers were crushed in the Hama massacre in 1982, the movement has opted for a non-violent strategy of reform and cooperation with other oppositional forces. For Bayanuni, the best vehicle to avoid the repeat of violence is “a comprehensive social contract in which everyone will be committed to renouncing violence and resorting to the ballot box.” According to him the MB is not a political party, but a “general Islamic call movement whose main task is to call for the path of God with wisdom and good preaching”. However, if the freedom to form political parties is granted, the Brothers will not object to forming a political party based on Islam. It should be noted that the Syrian Muslim Brothers favoured non-violent means before the Ba'thist takeover in 1963 and they participated in several parliamentary elections until that time. The decision to take up arms was highly controversial within the movement, and led to a leadership crisis and internal divisions. Bayanuni stated in an interview in 2006 that violence never has been a policy of the Muslim Brothers and that the violence of the 1970s and 1980s was only in self-defence against the regime's repression and violence.

A point of contention in the relationship between the Brothers and the Bashar al-Asad regime has been the willingness to bury the hatchet and the bloody legacy. The Syrian MB has been criticised for not taking responsibility for its share of violence during the 1970s and early 1980s. However, the Muslim Brothers have several times asked for an independent committee to investigate the violence of the 1970s and 1980s, and Bayanuni has stated that they will apologise for their past mistakes if this committee finds the Brothers partly responsible. In 2006 the Brothers formally disavowed revenge and retribution. Bayanuni has several times denounced violence and the Syrian MB has publicly condemned the 11 September attacks and the 11 March 2004 attack in Madrid. They have also denied having relations with *al-Qa'ida* and Usama bin Ladin or to agree with *al-Qa'ida's* ideology. They condemned the terror attack in London in July 2005 as a crime against humanity. Despite harsh repression the Brothers have chosen to work within the tight and narrow Syrian framework of non-violent opposition.

The Syrian Muslim Brothers state that their goal is to create a new generation of Arab Sunni Muslims following the creed (*aqida*) of the Islamic umma. To reach this goal they want to harmonise different parts of Syrian society with this creed and with the general interests of the nation, beginning with individuals, then families and in the end the entire Syrian society and the state. Thus the strategy of the Muslim Brothers is Islamisation from the bottom up through non-violent means such as reform and dialogue.

The main method of the Syrian Brothers following Bashar al-Asad succession as president after the death of his father in 2000 has been to cooperate with other oppositional forces through forums and meetings outside Syria. The main aim of this cooperation is to contribute to a reform of Syrian politics. Bayanuni stated in 2005 that “since President Bashar (al-Asad) assumed responsibility in Syria we have been calling for a gradual reform that will have no earth-shattering impact on the country”. In May 2001, the Muslim Brothers issued a national charter of honour. In this charter they rejected political violence and called for democracy in Syria, and for the first time recognised the legitimacy of the Syrian regime.

At a meeting in London in August 2002 with other Syrian oppositional forces, including leftists and Nasserists, a “National Charter Project for Syria” proposed by the Muslim Brothers was endorsed by the Syrian opposition. This charter aimed at organising and coordinating the politics of the Syrian opposition in order to stand united against the regime. The opposition has released several strategic documents after the national charter. In December 2004 the Muslim Brothers announced “The Political Project for Future Syria”, and in October 2005 the Brothers endorsed the Damascus Declaration prepared by other Syrian

oppositional forces. The most recent vehicle for reform is the National Salvation Front, formed in March 2006 by Bayanuni and former Vice-President Abd al-Halim Khaddam.

The statements from the Syrian Muslim Brothers are characterised by the oppression and the difficulties facing the opposition in general and particularly the Brothers. Therefore their demands concentrate on the political prisoners and the possibility of being active in Syria. Their demands are to cancel the state of emergency and put an end to the martial law that has been in force since 1963, to release all political detainees, to determine the fate of the thousands of missing people, to allow the return of thousands of displaced and deported people, and to cancel Law no. 49 of 1980 (see above, p.58).

As a part of the reform project the Brothers (together with other oppositional forces) have called for a modern and democratic Syria with free press, a political opposition and a strong public opinion. In the National Charter Project of 2002, they stressed the importance of "pluralism and institutional interaction, ruled by law and governed by justice and equality". Human rights and dignity must be preserved, and citizens enjoy civil and political liberties by being able to actively participate in national decision making and bearing the burden of public responsibility. Political disagreements should be settled through voting. The charter also stated that the Brothers "seek to build a modern state that respects the law and institutions and where citizens live in freedom, dignity, and productivity". They are "saddened by and strongly condemn the continued oppressive measures." In order to build the envisioned modern state the Brothers demand separation between the branches of power and rotation of power based upon elections.

Bayanuni has several times stated that the Syrian Brothers are willing to share power with other oppositional forces. He emphasises that the Brothers do not want to monopolise government and will unconditionally accept the results of the ballot box. "We are not against any party. Every party has its own principles and objectives. We accept others and coexist with them". This pragmatic willingness to cooperate with other oppositional forces, including leftist and Nasserists, has been shown in reality by the Brothers through their participation in oppositional activities like the National Salvation Front, the Damascus Declaration etc. Bayanuni has moreover stated that the Brothers respect and accept the view of others if they should contradict the views of the Brothers.

However, as an Islamic movement the Brothers want to base the democratic state upon Islam and the *Shari'a*. They have stated several times in their recently issued documents that a modern and democratic Syrian state should be based on Islam where both ruler and subjects should obey and follow the *Shari'a* and the law. There are some areas where there should be no room for opposition. For Bayanuni ideas and thoughts which contradict the Islamic nation's principles and creed, which should be respected and obeyed as stipulated in the constitution, threaten public order and morality and have nothing to do with the freedom of expression. It is well known, he says, that each nation and people have principles, sanctities, and limits that are stipulated in their constitutions, and which cannot be bypassed or contravened. Islam and the Arab-Islamic civilisation must be the base and the source for the reform of Syrian society.

As the leadership of the current Syrian regime is dominated by members of a Shi'a sect, the Alawis, the conflict between the Sunni Muslim Brothers and the regime has often been portrayed as a sectarian conflict. Bayanuni denies that this conflict is a sectarian one, and states that the Brothers do not view the entire community of Alawis as responsible for the doings of the current regime. He stated that they call on all communities, Alawis included, "to stand together with the people in one rank to call for freedom and democracy". He has also stated that the Muslim Brothers regard the Alawis as Muslims and not as heretics.

On the topic on a Christian president, Bayanuni has stated that they will accept the results of the ballot box, whatever they may be. However, Bayanuni mentioned that the

present constitution of Syria and previous constitution of 1950 stipulate that any president of the republic must be a Muslim, because this is the religion of the majority of the people. So under the current constitutions or under the 1950 constitution a Christian cannot be a president of Syria. Bayanuni has also stated that if a political party based on Islamic principles was to be formed, this party could include non-Muslim members as Islam is not only a religious framework for Muslims but also a cultural and civilisational framework for all Syrian individuals.

The last statement from Bayanuni may indicate that Islam has superiority over the other religions as Islam constitutes the majority religion. A similar use of Islam as legitimising the integrity of the nation of Syria can also be discerned in the Brothers' stance towards the Kurdish minority.

In a communiqué issued in May 2005 the Syrian Muslim Brothers denounce what they term racist politics against the Kurdish minority in Syria. They use this topic to argue for a reform of the repressive Syrian regime under the emergency laws. The Syrian MB want to give equal civil rights and civil duties to everyone living in Syria and to create a united Syria. The Brothers' insistence on the unity of Syria and that the Syrian Kurds belong to a united Syria could be seen as opposition to Kurdish self-government of the kind the Kurds in Iraq have attained. The Brothers state that they will recognise the cultural, civilisational and sociological peculiarities of the Kurdish people. However, the movement stresses that the Kurds are Muslim and thus a part of the Islamic umma, which they also have an important historical role in defending through the anti-crusader hero Salah al-Din. In the "National Charter for Syria" the MB state that the Arab and Islamic character of Syria does not imply racism or superiority for the Muslim Arabs. All citizens of the Syrian society are equal and have the same rights. Nevertheless the insistence on the unity of the Umma may well signify a limit beyond which the Brothers do not intend to let Kurdish separatism venture.

The Syrian Brothers have been especially concerned with the Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights and seek the return of Golan to Syria. In many statements they have called for resistance against Israel in the Golan Heights. The Brothers regard the aggression on the Palestinian people as direct aggression against Syria and according to some statements they wanted to confront Zionism through opening the Golan Front and mobilise the nation against the Zionists. Nevertheless, the MB have also signalled that they are not averse to a political solution and that the goal of returning the Golan to the motherland should preferably be realised through peaceful and means.

There are divisions within the exiled leadership of the Brothers. The main contentious issue dividing the movement is the nature of their relationship to the current Syrian regime. The dominant wing, led by the general supervisor Ali Sadr al-Din al-Bayanuni, rejects the idea of reconciliation with the Syrian regime as they believe the regime never will meet the core demands of the Brothers. Instead this wing favours cooperation with other Syrian opposition currents and dialogue with Western governments. The other wing, led by former general supervisor Hasan al-Huwaydi, seeks reconciliation with the Syrian regime as they believe the growing domestic and international isolation of Bashar al-Asad will force him to make concessions to the Brothers.

In 2006-2007 this rift reportedly widened to "the point of breaking the group's organisational unity". The conflict was triggered by Bayanuni's decision to cooperate with the former Syrian vice-president Abd al-Halim Khaddam who had defected from the regime. In 2006 Bayanuni, Khaddam and other oppositional figures formed a National Salvation Front with plans to establish a government-in-exile. A minority within the leadership of the Brothers was staunchly opposed to any cooperation with Khaddam but the *shura* council of the MB approved the coalition. This decision led the deputy general supervisor, Faruq Tayfur, to announce his resignation from the Brothers.

TURKEY

It would seem like a paradox: of the Muslim majority countries that formerly belonged to the Ottoman Empire, Turkey is (with the possible exception of Albania) supposedly today the most thoroughly secularised country, a result of a conscious policy vigorously pursued by the state at least since the mid-1920s. Yet at the same time it is the only one with a government and a parliamentary majority based in a party with strong ties to Islamism. Perhaps it is no coincidence that it is also, despite its shortcomings, the only democracy.

Turkey, with 74 million inhabitants, is the second most populous country in the Middle East, ranking after Egypt and slightly before Iran. The current situation reflects its distinct historical trajectory as regards the relation between religion and state in the country. While the reference to Islam was a central part of the legitimising ideology in the Ottoman Empire, in the new republic established in 1923 Mustafa Kemal Atatürk tried with draconian measures to stamp out any autonomous role for religion whether in government or in civil society. Sufi orders were banned and the leading clerics were removed from the high positions they had held in Ottoman government. A strict secularist policy was introduced and constituted as one of the founding principles of the republic. Yet this secularism did not mean the separation of state and religion, rather the subordination of religion to the state, under the command of the new Directorate for Religious Affairs, commonly known as the *Diyanet*.

Religion in Multi-Party Politics

Multiparty politics was introduced after 1945, and in 1950 the Democratic Party (DP) won the elections with a programme of liberalisation on many fronts, including that of religion. The more liberal attitude towards religion exhibited by the DP and its successors went some way towards appeasing resentment against the authoritarian secularising reforms of Atatürk. Yet with the gradual emergence of aspiring educational and business elites rooted in the provincial lower middle classes of Anatolian towns, the scene was set for the emergence of a more clear-cut Islamist political tendency. The first organisational expression of this in the form of a political party was the National Order Party established by the engineer Necmettin Erbakan in 1969. While this party was banned when the military took over in 1971, it re-emerged as the National Salvation Party (NSP), gathering about 10 per cent of the vote in the 1970s and taking part in several coalition governments. Like all other parties the NSP was banned in 1980 by the military government of General Evren, which held power till 1983.

In an interesting parallel to developments in many Arab countries, in the nineteen-eighties important elements in the Kemalist establishment and its military core saw it as prudent to put more emphasis on religion in their own rhetoric. This 'Islamisation-from-above' policy was partly aimed at containing leftist elements, partly at pulling the rug from under the Islamists' feet. In recognition of the population's strong attachment to Islam and Islamic ideals it was felt necessary to link regime legitimacy to the faith by symbolic moves that would be welcomed by the pious masses. In Turkey this took the form of regime espousal of the so-called Turco-Islamic synthesis. After the military coup of 1980, both the military leadership of General Kenan Evren (who remained President of the Republic until 1989) and its civilian successor the Motherland Party led by Turgut Özal, promoted this synthesis as the proper legitimising ideology of the Turkish state.

Though taking up the themes in a century-old debate about the relation between nationalism and religion, in its current form the Turco-Islamic synthesis was put forth by Ibrahim Kafesoglu, leading ideologue of the *Aydinlar Ocagi* (Hearths of the Enlightened), a

group formed in 1970 to counter what was seen as left-wing hegemony in ideological and cultural debate in the country. The basic idea was that the Turks were strongly attached to Islam because it resonated with central elements of their own pre-Islamic culture: "a deep sense of justice, monotheism and a belief in the immortal soul, and a strong emphasis on family life and morality". The Turks held a special mission as the soldiers of Islam. Turkish culture, then, was built on two pillars: "a 2500-year-old Turkish element and a 1000-year-old Islamic element". In accordance with this the military government also for the first time since the twenties made "religion and ethics" a compulsory part of the basic curriculum in all schools.

Concurrent with these developments was the gradual emergence of a distinct nostalgia for the Ottoman Empire, or what became known as "Neo-Ottomanism", expressed both in an increased interest in the historical heritage and in a new foreign policy propounded by Turgut Özal where he broke with Kemalist isolationism in favour of an active interest in developments in the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East.

In this atmosphere, of course, it was also easier for the Islamists to breathe, once they had reorganised themselves after the initial suppression following the 1980 coup. From one perspective what happened can be seen as the gradual emergence of the 'common people' of Turkish, and in particular Anatolian, society into the public realm, hitherto dominated by the Kemalist elite. Through long-term processes of mobilisation linked to economic development, improved communication and not least expanded access to education, the common people became visible, as it were. And these were deeply religious people. According to a survey carried out as recently as 2000, in Turkey as many as 46 per cent pray 5 times a day, 84 per cent of men go to communal prayers in the mosque each Friday, 91 per cent fast during Ramadan, 60 per cent pay the prescribed religious alms, the *zakat*, and 71 per cent would go on the pilgrimage to Mecca, the *hajj*, if they could. As broader layers of this population were drawn into public life, they did not accept to remain quiet and to the astonishment of the established elites when they spoke, it was (in the words of a writer describing the same process in nineteenth-century Norway) in order to demand "public space for an outdated piety".

With his new Welfare Party, founded in 1983, Erbakan scored the greatest success of his career when the party emerged as the largest in the parliamentary election of 1995, leading to a coalition government headed by Erbakan in 1996-7. This government was forced out of office by the military in what has been described as a post-modern coup, and later the Welfare Party was banned for having violated the constitution's stipulations on secularism. Erbakan was now banned from taking part in politics for life. But the new Virtue Party picked up the torch despite a slight setback in elections in 1999. When even that party was banned in 2001, the Islamist movement split in two.

The post-Islamists

Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) (Justice and Development Party)

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

www.akparti.org.tr

Saadet Partisi (Felicity Party)

Recai Kutan

www.saadetpartisi.org.tr

In the summer of 2001 traditionalist wing of the Virtue Party, led by Erbakan loyalist Recai Kutan, formed the Felicity Party (*Saadat Partisi*), while the modernist wing under former Istanbul Mayor Recep Teyyip Erdoğan established the Party of Justice and Development, better known under its Turkish acronym AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*). While the traditionalists were reduced to insignificance in the elections of November 2002 (with 2,4 percent they were very far from entering Parliament, and in 2007 their share of the votes even declined slightly), the AKP swept to victory. With the support of 34 per cent of the voters, due to the peculiarities of the Turkish electoral system they gained 66 per cent of the seats in Parliament and have headed the government since.

The local elections of 28 March 2004 were an important second test for the AKP. The party increased its vote to 42 percent. In a landslide victory, the party prevailed in 12 of the country's 16 metropolitan municipalities, 46 of 65 provincial municipalities, 425 of 789 county municipalities and 1216 of 2250 district municipalities,

In the next parliamentary elections, in 2007, the AKP increased their voter support even further. The elections, originally due in November that year, were held half a year early, due to the controversy surrounding the election by Parliament of a new president for the country after the termination of the seven-year term of the staunchly secularist Ahmet Necdet Sezer. With solid control in Parliament the AKP proposed the Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül, besides Erdoğan the foremost leader of the party. This triggered a political storm, and huge demonstrations by secularists in the major urban centres of the country. The president has limited powers but can act as a brake on the legislation of Parliament by refusing to sign laws enacted by it. Sezer had used that prerogative on several occasions. Now it was feared that with the presidency in hand, the AKP might unhindered introduce a more aggressive Islamising agenda. With a boycott of voting in parliament by the opposition a legal quorum was impossible to achieve, and there was a political and constitutional impasse. In this situation the Prime Minister used his right to call for fresh legislative elections. In these elections held in July 2007 the AKP increased their share of the vote from 34 to 46 percent, albeit losing 23 seats due to the fact that a third party, the Turkish nationalist MHP this time made it past the required threshold of 10 percent of the vote. This time the presidential elections went ahead and Abdullah Gül was taken in oath as President of Turkey on 28 August 2007.

Many Turkish Islamists including the current AKP leadership have been in close contact with the mainstream Arab Islamist movement, the Muslim Brothers. But unlike the MB and other Islamist movements in the Arab world the religious parties in Turkey never demanded the introduction of an Islamic state ruled by the *Shari'a*. Of course this must be seen against the background of Turkish law, jealously guarded by the powerful military, which makes it illegal to put forward such demands in Turkey. Thus, despite the fact that at least some tendencies within the parties saw the introduction of *Shari'a* as a long-term goal, in order to make use of the legal political space in Turkey they had to refrain from saying so in

public. Yet beyond that it is probably fair to say that the Islamic parties in Turkey have broadly speaking not seen it as their task to impose religious restrictions on the public, but rather to remove public restrictions on religious life. It would seem that, while emphasising the need for religion to provide moral guidance for society and politics, they have more or less adhered to a liberal interpretation of the secularist character of the state.

With the AKP this development has reached a point where one might legitimately ask whether this party should more aptly be described as a *post-Islamist* organisation. Virtually all explicit references to religion have been dropped from the party programme. Leading representatives deny any religious character to the party and prefer to label themselves "conservative democrats". The party programme states that

Our party considers *religion as one of the most important institutions of humanity*, and *secularism as a pre-requisite of democracy*, and an assurance of the freedom of religion and conscience. It also *rejects the interpretation and distortion of secularism as enmity against religion*.

Basically, *secularism is a principle which allows people of all religions, and beliefs to comfortably practice their religions*, to be able to express their religious convictions and live accordingly, but which also allows people without beliefs to organise their lives along these lines. From this point of view, secularism is a principle of freedom and social peace.

Our Party *refuses to take advantage of sacred religious values and ethnicity and to use them for political purposes*. It considers the attitudes and practices which disturb pious people, and which discriminate them due to their religious lives and preferences, as anti-democratic and in contradiction to human rights and freedoms. On the other hand, it is also unacceptable to make use of religion for political, economic and other interests, or to put pressure on people who think and live differently by using religion. [Our Italics]

In line with this, alongside its modernist and pro-European stance, the party does strive to strengthen the hold of (sometimes quite traditional) morality in society, as was indicated with the abortive attempt to criminalise marital infidelity. And it seeks to remove restrictions of religious expression like the ban on headscarves for women generally enforced in public institutions, most notably in schools and universities. At the time of writing the General Prosecutor has filed a case for banning the AKP. The grounds given are that the constitutional reforms adopted by the parliament on its suggestion in view of lifting the ban on women wearing *hijab* in schools and universities constitute a break with the basic Kemalist principle of secularism. The Supreme Court has agreed to hear the case, perhaps making this the final test of the willingness of the established Kemalist elites to allow a fully democratic development to take place in Turkey.

Otherwise the party's policies as envisaged in its programme and implemented in its practice are notable for the strong emphasis on promoting Turkey's chances of entry into the European Union. While the earlier Islamist parties were sceptical towards Turkish membership, the AKP has become its leading proponent, and has used its elected power to push through a number of legal reforms to make Turkey comply with EU standards especially on human rights. Still its Islamist background can be seen in the fact that while the Kemalist establishment to a large degree isolated Turkey from its Islamic environment, under the AKP government Turkey is carefully but distinctly upgrading its role in regional affairs. Under Erdogan Turkey has increased its involvement with other governments of the region, both pro-Western regimes and Iran. It has not cut off the special ties with Israel established under previous administrations, but has tried to position itself primarily as a promoter of peace and has at times made harshly critical statements about Israeli policies towards the Palestinians.

A reason for the party's continued popularity is the fact that the Turkish economy has been going rather well under its rule. The party clearly represents a pro-market philosophy,

and has carried vigorously forward the liberalising and privatising policies originally initiated in the 1980s. It also has a strong image of pursuing efficient and clean administration, avoiding the morass of corruption and bureaucracy that characterised the country, at least in the public eye, before.

IRAQ

Iraq during the Ba'th regime of Saddam Husayn was characterised by extreme brutality and oppression towards political opponents, which led to the absence of any open opposition to the regime. As a result of this, the different opposition groups in exile lacked experience in cooperating with each other on a daily basis.

Following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and its subsequent liberation, a *de facto* autonomous Kurdish political entity was established in Northern Iraq under the umbrella of a no-fly zone protected by the US air force. The Islamist movement in the Kurdish region will be treated separately.

A point of vital concern for the Iraqi opposition is how they should deal with the American-led forces currently occupying the country. This has led to a split between those condoning the cooperation with these forces and participation in the new political institutions, and those who refuse any cooperation with them and puts the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Iraq as a precondition for political participation.

Worth noting as well is the ever increasing sectarian divisions in the country, and as such the Islamist opposition is divided between different Sunni and Shi'a parties and movements, with various degrees of cooperation between them, if any at all. Those included here are the major nation-wide movements that have taken part in the national political institutions set up after the American invasion in 2003 and the fall of the Saddam Husayn regime.

Shi'a Movements

The involvement of the Iraqi Shi'a communities in politics on the basis of their religious belonging is a relatively recent feature. They were if politically active mainly involved with various leftist groups and the rank and file of the Iraqi Communist Party consisted mainly of Shi'as. The establishment of the first Shi'a-based political groups came in the late 1950s with the formation of the *Da'wa* Party (*hizb al-da'wa*). This was a direct response to growing communist influence, and was initiated by members of the *ulama*. This is not to say that the *ulama* had not been involved in politics before this, but for the first time parts of the clerical establishment were now represented on the political scene with a religiously founded political grouping.

It is worth noting in this respect that contrary to Khomeini the most senior members of the Shi'a *ulama* in Iraq, the *maraji' al-taqlid* (sources of emulation) like Muhsin al-Hakim, Abd al-Qasim al-Khu'i and later Ali al-Sistani, have never involved themselves directly in politics. This is not only due to the repressive character of the various Iraqi regimes since independence, but rather a religiously based consideration.

The Shi'a population in Iraq is mainly found in the Southern parts of the country, from the suburbs of Baghdad to Basra in the far South. While the first Shi'a movements were dominated by *ulama* and educated members of the middle-class, this has changed in the course of time. *Hizb al-Da'wa* is now a regular political party led by laymen. It is not linked to any particular *marja' al-taqlid* and has a following among different sections of the Shi'a population. The other two main Shi'a groups are both led by members of the *ulama*, and as opposed to *al-Da'wa* they are not political parties as such, but rather movements with an emphasis on social welfare projects, and each of them have their own militia. The Sadr movement is led by junior members of the *ulama* and recruits mainly from poorer sections of

the population, with its stronghold in Baghdad's Sadr city and Kufa, while ISCI recruits much broader and has stronger connections with senior *ulama*.

The three movements in question have to a varying degree accepted to participate in the new political institutions of the country established after the American-led invasion. While both *al-Da'wa* and ISCI participate whole-heartedly in these, and both of them hold important ministerial portfolios, the Sadr movement is more reluctant in their approach. They participate in elections, but have on occasion withdrawn their members from parliament and put the fight against the Americans high on their agenda. This has in turn led to continuous confrontations with the Iraqi Army supported by the American-led forces and rival militias.

Hizb al-Da'wa

Nuri al-Maliki

<http://www.islamicdawaparty.com>

Founded in 1958, *Hizb al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya* is the oldest Shi'a political force in Iraq. The party emerged in the aftermath of the 1958 revolution in Iraq as a reaction to the growing impact of secular forces and leftist ideology. The most influential cleric and leading personality in *al-Da'wa* was Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr. The party was initially not limited to Iraq, but had followers and an organisation in other countries, such as Lebanon, and had a pan-Islamic (or at least pan-Shi'a) approach. It has, however developed into an Iraqi party, and today the party is led by Nuri al-Maliki, the current prime minister of Iraq.

Hizb al-Da'wa was persecuted after the Ba'th party's coup in 1968, and inspired by the Iranian revolution in 1979, the party decided to take up arms against the regime. After the execution of Baqir al-Sadr and his sister Amina in 1980 by the regime, the group pioneered the use of suicide bombs when they attacked the Iraqi embassy in Beirut in December 1981, taking 27 lives. Several attempts were made on the life of Saddam Husayn and his son Uday. The party was for a long time financially and militarily assisted by Iran. In response the Saddam Husayn regime made membership of *al-Da'wa* punishable by death.

Before the fall of Saddam Husayn, there existed three different and sometimes competing branches within *Hizb al-Da'wa*. There was a branch in Teheran, naturally the one politically closest to Iran. The London branch, led by Ibrahim al-Jaafari who became the first prime minister in Iraq following the fall of the previous regime, was considered the most pragmatic. The Iraqi branch was of necessity secretive and organised in a cellular clandestine organisation.

Al-Da'wa was opposed to the invasion of Iraq by the coalition forces, and held demonstrations against the occupation, but they have eagerly participated in the political process after the fall of the regime both through the Interim Governing Council and through participation in parliament and in the government.

Ideologically, the party has been marked by a progressive and inclusive ideology. For instance, they do not follow Ayatollah Khomeini's tenet of *wilayat al-faqih*, or "the rule of the jurisprudent". Instead of advocating clerical control of the state, they contend that the role of the clerics is to oversee legislation and to ensure its conformity with Islamic norms. The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI, later ISCI, see below) split from *Hizb al-Da'wa* in the early eighties partly because of disagreement on the *wilayat al-faqih* tenet. Even though SCIRI is in favour of *wilayat al-faqih*, *Da'wa* and SCIRI have mostly kept an alliance between them. However, in the power struggle following the demise of Saddam Husayn and in the preparation for US withdrawal from Iraq, the party perceives the other Shi'a political groups as its main political competitors. *Al-Da'wa* holds 25 of the 128

parliamentary seats controlled by the Shi'a-dominated United Iraqi Alliance (although these deputies are divided in two main factions).

In the debate over the future governing system of Iraq *al-Da'wa* has advocated the need for a strong central state and has been sceptical towards grand schemes of autonomous Shi'a regions.

Unlike SCIRI, *al-Da'wa* has been independent of the Iranian clerical establishment. Instead of direct clerical control of the state, *al-Da'wa* favours a political organisation that blends scholars and non-scholars. *Al-Da'wa* has managed to recruit educated lay people as well as working class Shi'as, especially in the section of Baghdad now called Madinat al-Sadr although here it is now largely overtaken by the followers of Muqtada al-Sadr (see below).

Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI)

Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim

www.almejlis.org

This movement was founded as the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) in Teheran in 1982 by Ayatollah Baqir al-Hakim, son of the Grand Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim who was one of the most important spiritual leaders of the Shi'as from 1955 until 1970. Baqir al-Hakim had been a leading member of *Hizb al-Da'wa* and he fled to Iran when he was released from prison in 1980. SCIRI was initially promoted by Iran as an umbrella organisation to unite the different Islamist groups opposing the regime of Saddam Husayn, and consisted mainly of members and former members of *Hizb al-Da'wa*.

In the course of the eighties the influence of Iran increased within the front, and members from other groups withdrew. SCIRI became the Iraqi Shi'a group closest to Iran, and unlike both *al-Da'wa* and the (Muqtada) al-Sadr movement, SCIRI endorse the concept of *wilayat al-faqih*. The disagreement on the concept of *wilayat al-faqih* was also one of the reasons for the split between *al-Da'wa* and SCIRI. Iran was involved in the foundation of the group and the group has been based in Tehran since its inception and until they came to Iraq following the US-led invasion of Iraq.

After they came back to Iraq, SCIRI gained popularity through their social and humanitarian work. At the same time their armed wing, the Badr Corps, has continued to exist and has been blamed by the Sunnis for playing an important role in the sectarian fighting between Shi'a and Sunnis in Iraq.

SCIRI has been the main proponents of an ethnic-based federalism where the nine majority Shi'a provinces in the South of the country would form an autonomous region on a par with the Kurdish North.

After Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim was killed in an attack in August 2003, his brother Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim has been leader of SCIRI. It is one of the most important and powerful political parties in Iraq today and is the largest single party in the Iraqi National Assembly. Together with *al-Da'wa*, they joined the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) for the elections to the National Assembly. The Alliance is led by the leader of SCIRI, Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim, and the movement holds 36 of the 128 parliamentary seats of the UIA.

In 2007 the movement changed its name to the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI).

The Sadr Movement.

Muqtada al-Sadr

www.muqtada.com

The Sadr movement was developed by Ayatollah Mohammad Sadiq al Sadr, focusing initially on charities and religious sermons. Following the death of Grand Ayatollah al-Khu'i in the early nineties al-Sadr developed an apparatus of functionaries and agents that was necessary for taking over the leadership of vast numbers of Iraqi Shi'a. He succeeded in this, also thanks to the legacy of his cousin Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, and forged an alliance with influential members of the urban middle class. He was viewed as apolitical from the outset, but the regime of Saddam Hussein soon came to see him as a serious threat, and he was assassinated in 1999 together with two of his sons.

The current leader of the movement, the Ayatollah's son Muqtada al-Sadr lacks the religious education of his father and does not use the title of *mujtahid* (qualified interpreter of Islamic law). He gained his position due to his family background. Muqtada al-Sadr inherited the vast networks of charities and social services from his father and these networks are the main reason for his popularity today together with his legacy inherited from his two famous family members assassinated by the Saddam Husayn regime.

He has several times staged violent demonstrations against the US presence in Iraq; at the same time his movement has been represented in parliament and is definitely an important political actor in Iraq politics. Muqtada al-Sadr enjoys support from the impoverished masses of Shi'as in Iraq, especially in the poor area of Baghdad called Madinat al-Sadr or Sadr City. The Sadr movement has been described as more of a social movement than as a religious movement. It currently holds 29 of the 128 seats controlled by the mainly Shi'a United Iraqi Alliance in the National Assembly.

On the federal question Muqtada and his movement has kept to the idea of a unitary state, although this has been linked to an argument that no substantial decisions on the degree of federalism should be taken under foreign occupation.

The Sadr movement also has a militia, called the Mahdi Army (*jaysh al-mahdi*). This militia seems to be highly fractured and it has been questioned whether Muqtada al-Sadr has complete control over it. In August 2007, al-Sadr ordered his fighters to lay down arms for six months in order to reorganise the Mahdi Army and tighten his hold over it. In March 2008 the Iraqi Army on the orders of the Maliki government launched a major campaign against the Mahdi Army and wrested several areas in Basra and other parts of the South, as well parts of Sadr City in Baghdad from its control.

Sunni movements

It is no accident that the Sunni Arab population has been the main base for armed resistance against the American occupation of Iraq. From 1535 and till the advent of British mandate rule Iraq had been a part of the staunchly Sunni Ottoman Empire, except for a brief interlude under Persian Shi'a rule in the middle of the seventeenth century. During this time local recruitment to positions of administration was almost entirely from the Sunni population. Sunni dominance continued under the British (who brought in the Sunni king Faysal in 1920), and even after the radical revolutions in the 1950s and 1960s. Only the introduction of relatively free elections after the fall of Saddam Husayn signified the historic fall of Sunni pre-eminence. For this reason many Sunni groups have been reluctant to have anything to do

with the new political set-up. The leading force advocating critical participation is the local branch of the Muslim Brothers, the Iraqi Islamic Party.

Iraqi Islamic Party (MB)

Tariq al-Hashimi

www.iraqiparty.com

The Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) is one of the few legal political channels for the Sunni Islamists in Iraq and the main task for the party seems to be preserving a leading role for Sunni Muslims in Iraq.

The party was founded in 1960 by the Iraqi Muslim Brothers as a legal political party under president Qasim's short-lived opening of the political system. Several members of the Iraqi Muslim Brothers and IIP later went into exile, especially to London and the Gulf countries. When the Muslim Brothers were able to return to the Kurdish areas after 1991, the IIP was re-established. Muhsin Abd al-Hamid, who had served as leader of the party in 1960 reassumed the position as general secretary and served as its leader until July 2004, when Tariq al-Hashimi succeeded him as general secretary. The IIP publishes a newspaper, *Dar al-Salam*, and runs a radio station in Baghdad with the same name.

Leaders of IIP state that they have a political approach to reform, and that military action is not an option for the group. IIP was against the occupation of Iraq, but they stated that it was important that the party participated in the Interim Governing Council in order to "to fill the vacuum, defend the Iraqi people's right ... and call for sovereignty and independence for our country as quickly as possible", and to ensure representation by the Sunnis on the Council. Thus, Muhsin Abd al-Hamid became a member of the Interim Governing Council (ICG) and IIP joined the Iraqi Interim Government where Hajim al-Hasani served as a minister. However, they withdrew from the interim government in November 2004 as a reaction to the US attack on Falluja in the same month as they did not wish to "bear responsibility for shedding Iraqi blood without a legitimate justification". They did not withdraw from the Iraqi National Assembly however.

The IIP chose to withdraw from the national elections in January 2005, although they had prepared themselves to participate. The reason for their withdrawal was that they demanded a postponement of the election due to the security situation in Iraq, which made it impossible to stage free and fair general election in Iraq. They also complained that many voters had been denied access to registration forms and that many Iraqi were hindered from voting. However, the IIP did not request other parties to boycott or to withdraw from the election. Shortly after the January 2005 elections, Muhsin al-Hamid regretted that IIP boycotted the elections as he stated "there must be participation in the political process" and that is was neither in the interest of Iraq nor in their own interest to boycott the election.

In the governorate council elections in January 2005, the IIP did very well in Anbar and in Diyala. In Anbar they received 71.3 percent of the votes and won 34 of 41 seats and in Diyala 14 of 41 seats. The party received significant numbers of votes in many parts of the country, even in Shi'a-dominated provinces like Basra, Dhiqar, Wasit, Babil and Maysan. The IIP claims to have branches from Mosul in the north to Basra in the south, and to be active not only in Sunni-dominated areas. The party changed its opinion on the constitutional referendum only three days ahead of the vote in October 2005. They had led a campaign urging Sunnis to vote "no", but decided to support the Constitution after agreeing with US, Shi'a and Kurdish negotiators. The IIP stated that it was able to make important amendments to the constitution, and therefore changed its position. The contentious issues were federalism and Arab identity, and IIP managed to change the sentence "Arab people in Iraq are part of the Arab nation" to "Iraqi people are part of the Arab nation". IIP called for people to

participate in the December 2005 election, but they complained that it was difficult for Sunni Muslims to cast their vote due to several hindrances, like too few polling centres in Sunni-dominated provinces.

In the December elections when they ran as a part of the Iraqi Accord Front, the Front received 44 seats in the National Assembly making it the third largest political coalition after the Shi'a coalition and the Kurdish coalition. The general secretary of IIP, Tariq al-Hashimi became Vice President of Iraq after the election and is still serving as Vice President although the Iraqi Accord Front withdrew from the government in August 2007 as its demands on releasing Sunni detainees and disarming Shi'a militias had not been met. In April 2008 the front declared its readiness to rejoin the government.

The IIP has voiced some support in general terms for resistance against the occupation. In 2004 Abd al-Hamid stated that "the Sunni insurgency expresses the anger felt by most Iraqis because the United States has devastated their country." According to Iyad al-Azzi, a member of IIP's political bureau and a former member of the Iraqi National Assembly, IIP favours a political peace project, but "the Iraqis have every right to take pride in their resistance, which is seeking to expel the occupiers, and to celebrate the evacuation day." The IIP also had a leading role as negotiators between the US forces and the resistance in Falluja during the fights in April 2004. However, they are against all attacks on the Iraqi people, including Shi'as.

IIP wants to establish an electoral system based on the Islamic principle of *shura*. The IIP stated in their programme issued after the return of the party in 1991, that "all political parties should promote elections and refrain from political violence". It has urged the Iraqi people to lay aside sectarianism and stand united as Iraqis. For instance, the party tried to calm people after the attack on the al-Askari mosque in Samarra, one of the holiest mosques in Shi'a Islam, in February 2006.

The IIP claims Islam as a basic source of legislation and demands a role for Islam in all constitutional, legal and legislative affairs. Muhsin Abd al-Hamid said in an interview in February 2005 that Islam must play a fundamental role in all the articles and chapters of the constitution. However, Tariq al-Hashimi has stated that the Sunnis in Iraqi do not favour a religious state like the Taliban regime, but instead wants a "civilian government based on the legitimate and national constant principles that are backed by all Iraqis regardless of their races, sects and affiliations." He further states that IIP tries to "establish a civilian government based on Islamic values."

The leading member Iyad al-Samarra'i stated that IIP representation in the Interim Governing Council made it possible for the party to secure inclusion in the constitution of the principles that Islam is the official religion of the state and that *Shari'a* is the basic source of legislation.

IIP states that it considers Iraq to be one entity and Iraqis as one people including all ethnicities and denominations. Ahead of the December 2005 election Tariq al-Hashimi advocated the representation of religious minorities, such as Assyrians, Sabeans, Christians and Chaldeans in the National Assembly. According to al-Samarra'i the IIP does not make any distinction between a Sunni, a Shi'a, an Arab or a Kurd. Reportedly one of the leaders of the party, in charge of four centres of Baghdad, is a Shi'a.

IIP accepts a Kurdish federal region, but refuses the existence of other federal regions. The party wants a specific timetable for withdrawal of the occupying force and they blame the occupation and the Iraqi government for the low level of security in Iraq.

IRAQI KURDISTAN

The politics of Iraqi Kurdistan, a largely autonomous region since 1991, has been dominated by two secular nationalist parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP). The Islamist parties in Kurdistan regard themselves as the third political force in the region, and came third after KDP and PUK in the elections in 2005. There are a number of groups but the most important one is the Kurdistan Islamic Union.

Kurdistan Islamic Union

Salaheddin Bahaeddin

www.kurdiu.org

The Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), also known as *Yekgirtu* (The Union), is the Kurdish organisation closest to the Muslim Brothers and the Iraqi Islamic Party. It was founded in 1994 by Kurds who had belonged to the Iraqi Muslim Brother organisation and who returned from exile in 1991. The present leaders claim that they were not a part of the Iraqi MB, but acknowledge to be inspired by them and to have good relations with the Iraqi Islamic Party. In 1992 some future leaders of *Yekgirtu* had run in the elections in Iraqi Kurdistan, on the list of the clerical-dominated Islamic Movement in Kurdistan.

The KIU is now led by Secretary-General Salaheddin Bahaeddin. It is the largest Islamist organisation in Iraqi Kurdistan and the third largest party in Kurdistan, after PUK and KDP. Based on finances from the Gulf the party is active in charity work, also in the rural areas where it has a strong support base. Due to its social work the KIU is becoming increasingly popular, not least amongst students and young people. Its support among students was shown when it received about 40 percent of the votes in the student elections in 2000, while receiving 22 percent of the votes in local elections at the same time.

KIU is present in several cities in the autonomous Kurdish region and after the fall of the Saddam Husayn in important cities outside its borders, like Mosul, Kirkuk and the Iraqi capital Baghdad.. In addition, they have representation abroad, in Syria, the United Kingdom, Iran, Turkey and Sweden. They have several television stations in Kurdistan, including in Sulaymaniyya, Irbil, Halabja and Ranja. They also control about ten local radio stations and publish a weekly newspaper, *Yekgirtu*.

Shortly before the December 2005 Iraqi elections, KIU withdrew from the Kurdistan Alliance, which combined all the Kurdish political parties into one electoral list, and ran as an independent group. It received 7.1 percent of the vote in Dohuk, 3.6 percent in Erbil, and 10.8 percent in Sulaymaniyya. In the disputed city of Kirkuk, centre of an oil-rich region which the Kurds consider to be a natural part of Kurdistan, the KIU received as much as 30.8 percent of the votes. The group gained five seats in the Iraqi national assembly. The party has nine member in the Kurdistan National Assembly, thus making it the third largest political party in the assembly after KDP and PUK.

According to the programme of KIU the party defines itself as “an Islamic reformative political party that strives to solve all political, social, economical and cultural matters of the people in Kurdistan from an Islamic perspective which can achieve rights, general freedom and social justice”. It differs from the other Islamist groups in Kurdistan in that it never had an armed faction, and in its programme states that organised political work and dialogue are the means for reform. The KIU does not have armed resistance as a part of its agenda, and has condemned violence and armed operations both by the Coalition forces and against the Coalition forces.

The KIU Islamists call for adhering to the demands of Islam and aim to educate the people through a complementary Islamic education. One of the means to attain this goal is to participate “in the professional syndicates and in unions for workers, women, students, farmers, and other classes”. Another means is “opening and establishing charitable, educational, artistic, cultural and sport establishments and projects”. The KIU is active in a variety of welfare organisations, especially the Kurdish Islamic League. Its charity work consists of building mosques, clinics and schools in rural areas.

The members of KIU have participated in the democratic process since 1991 and claim to have taken part in all elections held in Kurdistan and Iraq since that time, believing that “elections and polling stations are the best and most appropriate contemporary methods for participation in and changeover of power”. The secretary general of KIU Salaheddin Bahaaeddin was represented in the Interim Governing Council (ICG) of Iraq after the American invasion.

The KIU listed several reasons for its decision to run as an independent party in the December 2005 elections. One reason was that turnout for the earlier elections was very low. The party was afraid of losing its seats in the National Assembly and wanted to offer an alternative to the Kurdistan Alliance. The KIU seems to have perceived the decision to contest the polls independently as a means to receive more votes and to become “an effective party of the masses”. There also seems to have been some disagreements on the politics of the Alliance, as the party stated that it had its own views and plans for future elections. KIU complained that the Alliance had rejected all its requests, including changing the name from the Kurdish Alliance to the Kurdistan Bloc. Another reason for KIU decision to withdraw from the Alliance might be that it was critical towards KDP and PUK, claiming that they monopolised power. KIU, as the third most important Kurdish party, stated that it expected at least one ministry in the Iraqi government and several deputy ministers. The decision to leave the Kurdish Alliance led to repercussions for the group. Its party office was attacked and it was subjected to severe criticism from other political actors. KIU stated that although it withdrew from the Kurdish Alliance, it would cooperate with them in parliament on important questions like federalism, Kirkuk and the Kurdistan border issue. The KIU is a part of the opposition in the current Iraqi National Assembly as it was excluded from the government, despite stating its willingness to join the government without prior conditions.

The programme of KIU states that the “people is the source of all authority”, and that the party depends on “consultation and democratic manner in the elections and the practice of authority”. This is also to be exercised within the party. It is further claimed that “the freedom of belief in Islam requires a political and ideological multiparty system within the frame of supreme values”. KIU’s programme also states that the party wants to establish a parliamentary federal multi-party government in a united Iraq that ensures the legal rights for all”. The leaders of KIU have stated that they believe in multi-party politics and the right of parties to alternate in power and that they respect and want to have dialogue and cooperation with other parties. In 2003 the party did participate in a coalition with Christians, social democrats and communists.

In the programme of KIU the first general principle is that "Islam is the programme of life". Yet one of the leaders of KIU, Ali Muhammad, has stated that they do not believe in a theocratic government that rules the people in the name of Allah. Instead, the power should emanate from the people. Hadi Ali stated that the KIU wants to separate religion from the state, and thus create a secular system on a Western model. However, in connection with its welfare activities catering for the poor, the party has advocated a return to Islamic principles and the need to construct an Islamic state. The KIU declares that it does not want to force Islam on the people, and will only support an Islamic government if the majority of the people

are in favour. However, they want the laws regulating family and personal status to be determined according to religious identity. That means the *Shari'a* is the law to be followed for Muslims, but not for Christians or other religions. KIU complained in 2006 that the draft regional constitution for Kurdistan did not give Islam its proper role. They wanted to change the clause from “the principles of Islamic *Shari'a* are one of the basic sources of legislation” to Islam being the main source of legislation.

The programme of KIU calls for banishing ethnic and religious differences from political life. At its third party conference arranged in 1999, KIU stated that every individual had the right to be a member of KIU, as long as he or she followed the programme and the internal rules of the party. At the same time the party wants to assist the Turkmen minority in Iraq in gaining its legitimate rights.

The programme states that the party is working for “achieving the legal rights of women in performing their integral role in founding the community and dismissing the illegal customs that make women to be the first victim”. KIU has five women members on the leadership committee, who were elected and not appointed through quotas. One woman sits in the political bureau of the party. As for the *hijab* the KIU emphasises that wearing it must be a voluntary choice. The party advises women to wear *hijab*, but it should never become compulsory.

The KIU has several times stated that it is in favour of a federal Kurdistan within the frame of an Iraqi state. The federal unit of Kurdistan should be based on ethnicity and geography, and include the disputed city of Kirkuk.

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia is a hereditary kingdom. It has a population of 25 million of which at least five million are resident foreign workers with virtually no rights in the country. While religion certainly figures very prominently in the legitimation of political rule, and in the regulation of social practices, the current religio-political system of the country has little to do with modern Islamism of the kind we are surveying here. Rather it could be seen as the prime present-day example of a pre-modern Islamic state, where rule is exercised by a *sultan*, *i.e.* a leader controlling military power in the country and who takes it upon himself to ensure the enforcement of the *Shari'a*. As prescribed in the classical *fiqh* treatises in return the *sultan* demands the total loyalty and submission of the population. In principle the ruler is to be advised by the learned men of religion, the *ulama*. In reality there is an alliance where the *ulama* gain control over religious education and to a large extent over the running of the judiciary. Not least the clerics are given a large scope in controlling the social mores of the country. In return they provide religious legitimation to the ruler, while not interfering in the running of the economy nor in the conduct of foreign relations.

The Saudi state project has been built upon an alliance concluded in the middle of the 18th century between the Saud family and the religious reformer Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. Later the alliance has persisted between the Sauds and the descendants of ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the members of the "House of the Shaykh", *Al al-Shaykh*, from whose ranks for most of the time the official Muftis and other high religious dignitaries have been chosen. This alliance has generally secured the loyalty of adherents to the religious doctrine of ibn Abd al-Wahhab. It should be noted however that the current state of Saudi Arabia, with its present borders, is a relatively late creation, being consolidated only in 1932. Important tensions remain between the Najd-dominated state and regions such as Hijaz (with Mecca and Medina), Asir in the South-west, and the Eastern Province, which traditionally had a Shi'a majority.

The overt politicising of Islam by the state itself since its inception, and increasingly since the conflict with secular Arab nationalism in the fifties and sixties, obviously creates a very different background for the emergence of an Islamist movement in Saudi Arabia than elsewhere in the Middle East. Nevertheless such a movement has emerged and especially since the 1990s has become vocal within Saudi society.

In the mid-nineteen-fifties Saudi Arabia saw the influx of a significant number of Egyptian Muslim Brothers fleeing the harsh persecution directed against them in their homeland after 1954. They were welcome in a country that both needed allies against Nasser and, even more pressingly, was in dire lack of educated people to run its expanding modern apparatus of government. Not least many Muslim Brothers were used as teachers in the increasing number of schools built across the country. The roots of current Saudi Islamism can be found in the resultant meeting of the reformist ideology of the Egyptian Brothers with the more traditional, often Wahhabi-inspired, piety of their students.

The lack of a proper political life in a country with no real representative institutions (and certainly none at the national level), and the harsh repression of any organised dissent, means that we will look in vain for any publicly declared Islamist organisation inside the country.¹³ Nevertheless a distinctly Islamist oppositional trend is emerging, as will be

¹³ At least as regards the moderate mainstream Islamists we are analysing in the present report. The militants of *al-Qa'ida* seem at least at times to have built clandestine cells incorporated into a larger structure at the national and international level.

discussed below. In exile this trend has taken more clear organisational shape, the most important expression of which is the London-based MIRA.

The Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia (MIRA)

Sa'd al-Faqih

www.islah.info

www.islah.tv

The Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia (MIRA) was set up in exile in 1996 by Sa'd al-Faqih, a former professor of surgery who went into exile in 1994. Al-Faqih was fleeing the harsh suppression following the set-up by Saudi Islamists in 1993 of the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights (CDLR). Together with fellow oppositionist Muhammad al-Masari he first set up a London branch of the CDLR. After disagreements al-Faqih left the CDLR in 1996 and went on to form MIRA.

Both Faqih and Masari belonged to the group of intellectuals (both lay and clerical) who in 1991 and 1992 presented two public petitions to the king demanding reform in Saudi Arabia; the "Letter of Demands" in 1991 and the "Memorandum of Advice" in the following year. With the formation of MIRA in exile Faqih has moved from advising the king to calling for the overthrow of the whole Saudi system. MIRA declares that the ruling family has no legitimacy, and calls for a freely elected national assembly to name the head of state. Despite a deep commitment to Islam al-Faqih and his movement come across as rather progressive in a Saudi setting. They emphasise that many of the inhibitions lived by Saudi women spring from social habit and not from the Islamic texts. They also emphasise that the interpretation of the texts is not a male prerogative but is equally the task of men and women. MIRA has a clear stance against American policies in the Middle East and wants to break up the current Saudi-US alliance.

MIRA has put great emphasis on using media, especially the net and their TV station, to influence people in Saudi Arabia but are also seeking to build an organisation inside. Their success is very hard to gauge but there have been reports of demonstrations inside the country organised by MIRA with a modicum of success.

On the inside: *Al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya*

Salman al-Awda

www.islamtoday.net

Inside the country the movement initiated by the petitions in the early 1990s have continued in the form of what is collectively known by the loose term *al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya* (The Islamic Awakening). Under this umbrella there is a distinction between those closely related to the Muslim Brothers and more *salafi* tendencies. Perhaps the most famous leaders are the two clerics Safar al-Hawali and Salman al-Awda; the latter running his own website and having established himself as an important voice within international Islamist circles.

While Hawali and Awda remain rather conservative in their social views, a group of more politically oriented *Sahwa* reformers such as Abdallah al-Hamid and Abd al-Aziz al-Qasim have sought to develop a more progressive Islamic ideology. They emphasise the importance of civil society and popular participation and give explicit support for democracy and the sovereignty of the people, albeit like most Islamists insisting that the *Shari'a* remain the framework for politics and legislation. They also support social reform and a fresh *ijtihad* to remedy some of the strictures of Wahhabi practices, although they remain more conservative than al-Faqih in their statements on women's issues. In 2003 these "progressive

Islamists” together with more liberal Sunnis and some Shi'a intellectuals produced a call for reform that envisages a constitutional monarchy, an elected parliament, respect for human rights and an end to discrimination against the Shi'a. Compared to al-Faqih and MIRA they are less radical in that they do not call for the removal of the Saud family from power. This may be a reflection of what is possible to do while wanting to remain active within the country. In fact the current king has gone some way to declare his sympathy for their views, and they remain in contact with elements of the ruling family.

The Muslim Brothers, while enjoying no formal legal status in Saudi Arabia, is still thought to operate a network inside the country. According to a report by the French expert Pascal Ménoret, in the partial election of local councils in 2005 candidates associated with the Muslim Brothers and representative of the intellectual elite and of middle-level business executives did very well. Their two most marked successes were in Riyadh where they dominated the elections and in Jeddah, where they won in alliance with clerically-led *salafi* groups.

Concentrated in the oil-rich areas on the Gulf Coast there is also an Islamist reform tendency among the Shi'a (roughly 10 percent of the country's population), of which the historical leader is Hasan al-Saffar.

KUWAIT

Kuwait is a constitutional monarchy and has one of the strongest parliaments in the Gulf even though the monarch is not responsible to parliament (the National Assembly) and the royal family dominates the most important ministries. Two thirds of the people living in the country are non-nationals, migrant workers who largely run the economy. The Kuwaiti population is divided between Sunni (65-75 percent) and Shi'a Muslims, and the Islamist movement reflects this. Regular political parties are not allowed in Kuwait, yet ideological organisations do play an important part in political life. In the Kuwaiti parliament pure party representatives are few, but often combine with independently elected MPs into more or less permanent blocs. The Sunni Islamists (Muslim Brothers and *salafis*) are organised in the Islamic Bloc (*al-kutla al-islamiyya*), which is the strongest alliance in the National Assembly, and the Islamists have had several ministers. Even though the emir is not constitutionally responsible to parliament, the parliament has some power and the Islamists have employed it several times. For instance in 2005 the Sunni Islamists managed to oust the then only Shi'a minister from the government. Muhammad Abu al-Hasan was the third information minister forced out of office by Islamists in the past seven years, all because they were "not protecting morality". According to the Islamists, Abu al-Hasan by allowing musical concerts had failed to protect the values of society. Kuwaiti Islamists thus have been able through parliament and government positions to influence the politics of the state, which among the major groups there is no controversy over the choice of participation in the political system.

Kuwait is a very conservative tribal-dominated society and this influences the character of the Islamist movement in the country, not least in relation to the question of women's rights. In 1999 the National Assembly rejected a decree from the emir giving voting rights to women. When women finally were given the right to vote and to run as candidates in 2005, the Islamists managed to subject this to Islamic law. This means, for instance, that men and women will vote in separate polling places.

The Sunni Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM) has been dominant among Kuwaiti Islamists groups, but the elections in 2008 seems to indicate a significant shift in favour of the *salafi* groups (see below). Together Islamists of various persuasions strengthened their position in these elections; going from a combined total of 21 deputies to 26, which gives them a slight majority of the elected members of the assembly. The three mainstream Sunni Islamist groups, the Islamic Constitutional Movement, the *Salafi* Movement and the Islamic *Salafi* Alliance, together also control dozens of charity organisations and trade unions. Islamists have controlled Kuwait University's student union for the past 26 years and they also control the teacher's union.

Due to the crucial role of the United States in liberating Kuwait from Iraqi occupation in 1991, the Kuwaiti Islamists have held a generally more positive view of the United States than other Islamists. However, they are against foreign occupation of Muslim lands. They denounced the attack on Afghanistan and called for swift action by Muslim countries to "protect the lives and resources of Muslims." A statement jointly signed by Kuwait's Islamic Constitutional Movement, the Shi'a Islamic National Consensus Movement and the *Salafi* Movement stated that it was "unacceptable to offer support for killing innocent Muslims, no matter what the justifications are". Even though some militant Islamist groups exist in Kuwait, the majority of the Sunni and Shi'a Islamists favour peaceful means and parliamentary representation. Both Shi'a and Sunni Islamists denounced the 11 September attacks in 2001.

Sunni movements

Islamic Constitutional Movement (MB)

Badr Ahmad al-Nashi

www.icmkw.org

The Islamic Constitutional Movement is regarded as the political arm of the Muslim Brothers. The Kuwaiti Muslim Brother organisation was formed in 1952 as the “Islamic Guidance Society” (*jam'iyat al-irshad al-islami*) later renamed the Social Reform Society (*jam'iyat al-islah al-ijtima'i*), which focused on social, educational and charitable activities. The Kuwaiti MB participated in elections for parliament, but focused much of their activities on cultural and religious issues. This changed after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the establishment of a political wing, the Islamic Constitutional Movement.

The ICM was founded in March 1991 after the liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi occupation and participated in the drafting of the document called “The Vision of Future Kuwait” which gathered virtually all political powers and personalities in Kuwait. Through its link with the Social Reform Society, which is the largest NGO in Kuwait, ICM has a huge and organised grassroots base and is extremely well funded. Most members of ICM are also members of the Muslim Brothers. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, however, caused a serious rift between the Kuwaiti MB and the international movement due to the latter’s failure to support the American intervention against Iraq.

The stated aim of ICM is to make Islam a part of politics according to the rule “Enjoining what is good and discouraging what is evil” (*al-amr bil ma'ruf wal-nahy 'an al-munkar*) and according to the Islamic *Shari'a*. The ICM seeks to realise this through legal means and political participation. Ahead of the 1992 election the ICM was convinced that parliamentary work was one of the most important means to realise their goals. The ICM has been represented in parliament since 1992. Its best election result so far came in 2006 when it won 7 seats in the National Assembly. In the elections on 17 May 2008 the party suffered a major setback, and managed to hold on only to 3 seats.

According to Badr al-Nashi, the current party leader, the parliamentary experience has not changed the ideology of ICM. However, he stated that the participation has increased ICM's interest for political reform and development, while previously the Islamists had focused more on general issues of morality and social reform. The priorities of ICM as currently formulated are political reform and an anti-corruption campaign, though its programme still accords importance to moral reform founded on Islamic values, “including protecting the younger generations from westernisation attempts”.

In its first election campaign in 1992 ICM participated under the slogan “Islam for safety and construction” (*al-islam lil-amn wal-bina'*). The “safety” part was based on three pillars; the unification of the people and justice (*adala*) between them, a revision of the military institution, and unification of the Gulf countries.

As members of parliament and as ministers, the ICM Islamists consistently speak in favour of democracy. Their aim is to “achieve a real *shura* system that guarantees peaceful rotation of power”. The party supports democracy, the participation of the people, and dialogue. It rejects any forms of terrorism and extremism. The ICM also respects the Kuwaiti constitution. The movement has declared that “by its name and its design, (it) has faith in the constitution, and believes it to be the central pillar of politics in Kuwait. It is the true authority for dealing with the most important national issues, even those connected with the head of state”.

The Secretary-General, Bader al-Nashi, has said that the ICM wants to “initiate political discussions at all levels in a bid to adopt a multi-party political system in Kuwait,

and to guarantee rotation of power within a clearly defined parliamentary system.” He has also stated that the party “does not object to asking any Kuwaiti to participate in the cabinet. ICM believes that all Kuwaitis want to serve their homeland regardless of their social or political affiliation.”

The party is also positively inclined towards coordinating with other political forces. For instance at the inception of the ICM it cooperated with other forces in writing the document “The Future Vision of Kuwait” after the freeing of Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. The prominent ICM parliamentarian Nasir al-Sani' has stated that there is common ground between the nationalist and Islamist political forces and that the ICM wants to coordinate with the others.

At the end of December 2006 the ICM offered an initiative for reform including completely applying the Islamic *Shari'a*. The initiative also supported a complete adherence to the constitution, complete respect for the rule of law, and the complete independence of the judiciary.

The ICM has had an ambivalent approach to the issue of women’s political rights. When the Kuwaiti emir tried and failed to give women political rights in 1999, ICM MP Mubarak al-Duwaila stated that the movement supported the right of vote for women but not the right to contest elections. In 2002, Nasir al-Sani' stated that Islam believed in the positive role of women in society. However, he voted against a bill giving voting rights to women in Kuwait. He stated that “in a conservative society where women enjoy so many rights, we need to have certain conditions for them to get into politics and the law did not have them”. However, al-Sani' expressed hope that women would get the right to vote "at the right time in a democratic way". According to some reports the Kuwaiti Muslim Brothers in 2002 were in favour of giving women political rights, but their political arm ICM voted against it. In March 2004 (when it seemed that women might attain the right to vote anyway), the ICM said that it would study and assess its position towards the political rights of women. In the end the party announced its support for a bill that would give women both the right to vote and to stand for parliament.

When the National Assembly in 2005 at last granted political rights to women, the ICM and the other Islamists managed to add the phrase “according to the stipulations of the *Shari'a*” to ensure that the law did not violate the Islamic identity of Kuwaiti society. When the law was enacted the ICM respected it and spoke in favour of participation of women in the parliament. Yet it did not field any female candidates for the 2007 election. The ICM states that this is something that needs to proceed slowly and to be carefully studied.

After Kuwaiti women were given their political rights, the ICM initiated a campaign to recruit women in order to create a strong electoral base. Many women now participate in the grassroots activities of the ICM. Some of them are outspoken critics of what they see as some party leaders stubborn refusal to come out in clear-cut support of full political participation or women.

The ICM defended the cooperation agreement between Kuwait and the United States following the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi occupation. The party stated that Islam allows help from non-Muslims if it is necessary. It warned the Kuwaiti people about forgetting their Arab and Islamic identity, but claimed that the presence of foreigners was an unavoidable and necessarily result of the Arab states' inability to protect Kuwait.

Salafis

The two Gulf countries Kuwait and Bahrain are atypical in that they have what me might term legalist *salafi* parties, *i.e.* groups with a *salafi* outlook towards religion who have chosen to

avoid armed struggle and to further their cause through participation in the political system and running for elections. The *salafis* of Kuwait were earlier gathered in the “Society for the Preservation of the Islamic Heritage” (*jam'iyat ihya' al-turath al-islami*) but in the course of the nineties split into a number of groups because of political and intellectual disputes. In the parliament of 2006-2008 *salafis* combined held 6 seats. In the 2008 elections they made remarkable progress, retuning with 10 MPs. At the moment of writing information about how these are allocated between the various *salafi* organisations is not available.

The Islamic Salafi Association (al-tajammu' al-islami al-salafi)

The Islamic *Salafi* Association was formed immediately after the liberation in 1991, and is the more traditional of the two main *salafi* political groups. It had two members in the 2006-2008 parliament, Ahmad Baqir and Ali Salih. Ahmad Baqir earlier served as Minister of Justice and Minister of Religious Endowment and Islamic Affairs (2001-2006). He has been an MP since 1985.

The Association clearly takes care to distance itself from *jihadi salafis*. In 2003 Ahmad Baqir warned the youth against *fatwas* that are directed against rulers of the Muslim people. He said that these *fatwas* are issued by persons without the necessary scholarly qualification. He denounced an assault on citizens and residents in Saudi-Arabia and stated that “those who were killed were persons whose blood it is prohibited to shed whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims permitted to reside in Muslim lands.” The *salafiyya* ideology of the Association is more expressed in a focus on details of social morality. Ahmad Baqir in the 1990s, together with people who later joined the rival *salafi* group tried to form a committee to monitor the ethical behaviour of people and prevent them from involvement in vices (see below).

The Salafi Movement (al-haraka al-salafiyya)

The *Salafi* Movement broke away from the Association in 1996. The group is also known as the “scientific *salafis*”, on account of their somewhat more modernist approach. The Movement has been represented in parliament since 1999 through Walid al-Tabataba'i, who was their only representative until 2006. Al-Tabataba'i is a professor of Islamic studies who was educated at Cairo's al-Azhar University. In the 2006 election two of the movement's candidates won a seat: al-Tabataba'i and Abdallah al-Abdali

In 1999 Abd-al-Razzaq al-Shayiji, one of the founders of the movement, stated that the goal of the movement was “propagating Islam and defending Islamic thought with words and writings, as well as through other available lawful methods”. The movement was founded as a defence against “the rising tide of secular currents hiding under modernism and liberalism”. The movement operates within the constitutional frame and the Kuwaiti laws and follows the “*Salafiyya* approach” which he describes as “a sound understanding of Islam. Separating politics from Islam means secularism. *Salafiyya* combines authenticity and modernism. It goes along with the age without violating the canons of the Shari'a. It adopts modern political means to reach legitimate ends. To use peaceful instruments of pressure like peaceful demonstrations, and engage in constructive scientific criticism of the authority under the freedom of the press is part of the *Salafiyya*”.

According to the MP al-Tabataba'i the *Salafi* Movement calls for “a civic state based on laws taken from the Islamic *Shari'a* according to a constitutional system allowing for

transparency in power”. He has stated that the Islamic view of freedom implies that “that man is free to everything, except what God has forbidden.”

Despite the *salafis'* traditionally harsh anti-Shi'a stance, al-Shayiji has expressed a positive willingness to cooperate with the Shi'a current in Kuwaiti politics. He stated that the movement would cooperate with “whoever seeks the wellbeing of the society, even if we differ with him essentially”. However, it will not cooperate with violent groups, as it condemns violence and advises violent groups to change their course.

The group has long been opposed to granting women political rights. In 2003 its general secretary, Hakim al-Mutayri, stated that the majority of the Islamists are not against the vote for women, but that they are opposed to women as members of parliament. Al-Shayiji was against giving women the right to vote in 1999 as this would cause the “discipline of the *Shari'a* to disappear”. The most prominent of the Islamist *Salafi* movement's MPs, Walid al-Tabataba'i showed ardent opposition to the political rights of women. In 2000 he stated that a woman was not allowed to be a member of the National Assembly, as that implied holding a public office. He also said that the presence of women in the assembly could lead to vice since men and women would get together. Al-Tabataba'i was still against giving women political rights in 2005 and stated that “those who allow the endorsement of this law want the spread of same-sex relationships, the break-up of society, and the spread of ideas that destroy the family”. However, after women were given their political rights he said that the Islamic movement agreed to the membership of women in parliament, but they should not be in a position of leadership.

Al-Tabataba'i seems to be one of the most conservative MPs regarding behaviour and morality. He proposed a bill in parliament for implementing *Shari'a* penalties and he stated that there was much more crime in the Islamic world after the suspension of the Islamic penal code. Al-Tabataba'i has been Chairman of the “Committee against Unacceptable Phenomena in Society” and is in favour of monitoring people's sexual behaviour.

Al-Mutayri was opposed to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and said he would prefer the Iraqis themselves to overthrow the dictatorial regime. He warned against the return of colonialism and called for “peaceful political reforms to allow the Gulf people to govern themselves and elect their representatives freely under a constitution”. Al-Shayiji wrote an article in the newspaper *al-Watan* in April 2003 where he stated that Israel was behind the US invasion of Iraq since the US Middle Eastern policy is determined on the basis of Israeli interests. The *salafi* movement issued a *fatwa* coinciding with the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, prohibiting Muslims to assist the US in its military operations, even if only by word of mouth. Al-Tabataba'i for his part, however, defended the presence of Americans in Kuwait ahead of the US invasion of Iraq as “a necessity caused by the attitude of Iraq.” He stated that he had reservations about the impending invasion but if the troops would withdraw immediately after overthrowing Saddam Husayn and would establish a free and democratic regime the *Salafi* Movement would not oppose it.

Shi'a movements

The National Islamic Association (al-tajammu' al-watani al-islami)

The National Islamic Association is the main Shi'a Islamist group. In the 2006 election it won two seats (Adnan Abd al-Samad and Ahmad Ali Abdallah Lari), while two independent Shi'a Islamists also won seats. In the last elections Shi'a Islamists combined had 5 deputies elected.

The National Islamic Alliance like its Sunni counterparts supports gradual Islamisation of laws. In fact on most issues related to this, and related to the traditional

conservative view of women's place in Kuwaiti society, the party has lined up with the Sunni Islamists.

Lately, tension seems to be growing between the regime and the Shi'a population. Following the assassination of the high-ranking Lebanese Hizbullah official Imad Mughniyyeh in February 2008, commemorative rallies were organised in Kuwait. These were clamped down on by the regime, and al-Samad and Lari were arrested, together with other prominent members of the Shi'a community, and accused of belonging to an underground group working to overthrow the monarchy, the previously unknown Kuwaiti Hizbullah. The Alliance has earlier been described as followers of Ayatollah Khomeini.

BAHRAIN

Bahrain is a small island state in the Persian Gulf, with a population of merely 700 000, one third of whom are immigrant workers with virtually no rights. Among the indigenous Muslim population it is estimated that between 55 to 70 percent are Shi'a Muslims, belonging to the Twelver-Shi'a or *imami* sect which they share with most Iranians and the majority in Iraq. The remaining population is Sunni Muslims. However the rule of the country has since the late 18th Century been in the hands of the staunchly Sunni Khalifa family, who have supported themselves mainly on their Sunni co-religionists.

Like the situation in Lebanon and Iraq (and to an extent Kuwait) the strong Islamist movement of Bahrain is divided into separate Shi'a and Sunni organisations. Like in Kuwait the Sunni branch is itself divided into an *ikhwani* wing linked to the international Muslim Brother network, and a *salafi* wing. Indeed the existence of legalist *salafi* political parties, as mentioned above, is a distinctive mark of the Gulf region.

Together the Islamist parties have a clear majority of the representatives in the Bahraini National Assembly elected in 2006, but have to share their power with an appointed Consultative Council. Due to lack of cooperation, primarily between Sunni and Shi'a, the potential for Islamist exercise of power is not realised. This has to do with doctrinal differences, but clearly foremost with real differences of interest in the population, with Sunni fears that an assertive Shi'a opposition intent on gaining the position they think is their natural right as a majority, might threaten the interests of the Sunni community.

Shi'a movements

Al-Wifaq National Islamic Society (jam'iyyat al-wifaq al-watani al-islamiyya)

Ali Salman

www.alwefaq.org

The *Wifaq* society is currently the main expression of the movement for greater rights for the Shi'a majority. Many of its activists are former members of the Bahrain Freedom Movement, which led Shi'a activism in the 1990s. The party is led by a young cleric, Ali Salman, and enjoys close relations with the Shi'a clerical establishment. The party has had a rocky relationship with the authorities. Salman spent several years in exile in Dubai and London, but since his return in 2001 the relationship has stabilised.

The parliamentary elections in 2002 were boycotted by the party together with some other smaller parties, but it participated in the local elections the same year. In 2006 the *Wifaq* decided to participate in the parliamentary elections and made a very strong showing, winning 17 of 40 seats in the elected lower house of parliament. Since they ran only 18 candidates, it would seem that their grasp on the majority Shi'a population might potentially bring them into power if the political system was fully democratised. The party received 62 percent of the votes cast, but constituencies are designed so as to avoid a Shi'a majority in parliament. The *Wifaq* has a strong organisation, with 65 000 registered members by 2005. It has a strong basis among business people and the educated middle class, but its influence also extends to poor farmers in the villages. Contrary to movements like the Lebanese Hizbullah, the party does not seem to be linked to any particular *marja'al-taqlid*.

Leaders of the party, among them Manama major Murtada Bader, has called for the segregation of Bahrainis and foreigners living in the capital, claiming that the foreigners were

transforming parts of the city into criminal dens. This resulted in an outcry from local human rights group.

Until now the party has fielded no female candidates, but Ali Salman has said that the party would possibly include women on their tickets in future elections, given that they had a fair chance to secure victory in the districts they were running.

Sunni movements

***National Islamic Minbar* (MB)**

Salah Abd al-Rahman

www.almenber.org

The National Islamic *Minbar* (pulpit) is the political wing of the *Islah* Society, which is the local branch of the Muslim Brothers. The *Minbar* is chaired by Salah Abd al-Rahman. The group participate in elections and have 7 members in the current parliament.

The party could be labelled conservative, opposing the signing of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as they claim it is in contradiction with Islam, and leading campaigns to heighten public morality. However they have supported campaigns to grant women political and personal rights. The *Minbar* has promised to include women on their election tickets, but after an electoral pact with the much more conservative *al-Asala* party only males were included in the last elections.

The group has been at odds with the Shi'a *al-Wifaq* over several issues, from the support of Sunni insurgents in Iraq to their backing of a unified personal status law.

Al-Asala Islamic Society

Ghanim al-Buaneen

Al-Asala (authenticity) is the political wing of the *salafi* Islamic Education Society and is headed by Ghanim Al-Buaneen. The party espouses a very conservative variant of Islam. In the latest elections they secured 5 seats after having formed an electoral alliance with the *Minbar*.

The society opposes political participation for women, but does not rule out cooperation with women elected from other parties. The party has cooperated with *al-Wifaq* on several issues, most notably those relating to the fight against what is seen as moral laxity. However, their *salafi* outlook prevents closer cooperation with Shi'a Muslims whom they see as at best misguided. As for *al-Minbar*, they are viewed as competitors, but this has not hindered them from cooperating on a host of issues as well as forming an electoral alliance with them.

The *Asala* has been actively campaigning against witchcraft and has sought to introduce legislation to make the widespread practice of sorcery and fortune telling a criminal offence.

QATAR

(Yusuf al-Qaradawi)

Qatar has a small population of a little less than one million, two thirds of whom are migrant workers. It is the most Western-oriented of the Gulf states, and the headquarters of the American forces in the region are located here. It is also among the wealthiest countries in the world, and the home of the al-Jazeera satellite TV channel which is one of the most outspoken media outlets in the region.

There seems to be no formally organised mainstream political Islamist organisation in Qatar at the moment. The Muslim Brothers in Qatar reportedly decided to dissolve their organisation in 1999 and continue their work as a more loosely coordinated Islamic intellectual trend. The stated reason for this was that the Brothers had become a rigid and static entity that burdened the development and effectiveness of the Islamist project. Government pressure may also have played a role, though. Qatar does not allow political parties, and has had no representative institutions, although in 2008 the first-ever elections to a consultative council are to be held.

Although Qatar has no active indigenous Islamist movement, it should be noticed that the influential cleric and preacher Yusuf al-Qaradawi, of Egyptian origin and a former member of the MB, is based in Qatar. Qaradawi is one of the leading proponents of the moderate *wasatiyya* tendency, which has greatly influenced Islamist thinking across the region (cf. under Egypt).

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) differs from the other Gulf states in that it is a Federation of seven emirates, each ruled by a hereditary ruler. The emir of the largest and richest emirate, Abu Dhabi, serves as president. The UAE is also special in that over 80 percent of the population of 4.5 million is made up of non-Emirati migrant labour.

Substantial information concerning Islamists in the United Arab Emirates is hard to come by. Despite the first-ever election being held to one half of the seats in the Federal National Council in 2006, political parties are not allowed to exist. The Muslim Brothers are said to have a presence in the Emirates, but it takes care not to get involved in politics and is mostly concerned with ethical and social issues. However, it has been argued that one of the main reasons for not introducing fully free elections in the Emirates is a fear that the Brothers would win a significant number of seats. According to some estimates the Brothers are strong in the Sharja and Ras al-Khaima emirates, less so in the politically and economically dominant Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

OMAN

Oman is a traditional absolute monarchy in the form of a sultanate, although the current monarch, Qaboos, has instigated some modernising change and also established an elected Advisory Council with universal suffrage for both genders introduced in 2003. However the elections are tightly controlled, no parties are allowed, and anyway the assembly has no real power in relation to the sultan.

Oman has a population of 3 million, out of which possibly as many as 600 000 are expatriates working in the country, mostly coming from the Indian subcontinent. Accounts of the distribution across religious denominations vary wildly. Yet according to the dominant view the majority of the population (estimated by most sources at 70 percent) belong to the *Ibadiyya* sect. The *Ibadiyya* is a subdivision of the largely extinct historical third major branch of Islam besides Sunni and Shi'a, the *Khawarij* or *Kharijiyya*. Oman is thus unique as a *Khariji* majority state. The sultan belongs to the Al Bu Sa'id dynasty ruling from the capital Masqat (Muscat) since 1749. While the dynasty is itself *Ibadi*, for a while during the 19th and 20th century, a schism existed where many *Ibadis* based in the interior of the country insisted on being ruled only by their own chosen *imam* or religious leader (who happened to be drawn from an alternative branch of the Bu Sa'id). The father of the current sultan put an end to this situation in the 1950s and expelled the last imam to exile in Saudi Arabia, after which the capital has exercised firm control over the whole country. There is also conflicting accounts of the religious composition of the non-*Ibadi* population, yet most hold the Sunnis to be the second largest Muslim community (some even consider them to slightly outnumber the *Ibadis*), followed by the Shi'a.

Little is known of organised Islamism in Oman. In January 2005 31 alleged Islamists were arrested, accused of plotting to overthrow the government through an armed uprising. Among the human rights activists who defended the 31, the most prominent is former member of the Advisory Council Taiba al-Mawali, who is described in the media as a fervent Islamist herself. All the arrested were *Ibadis*, mostly from the capital and from Nizwa, the former stronghold of the imamate. The accessible evidence indicates that rather than a *jihadi* radical group, those arrested belonged to an *Ibadi* revivalist movement, primarily concerned with revitalising and preserving *Ibadi* religious identity, felt to be under pressure from the regionally dominant Sunni denomination.

YEMEN

Yemen is a republic with a population of 22 million people, consisting of the former two states of North and South Yemen, united in 1990. In religious terms it is roughly equally divided between Sunni and Shi'a, although after unification there is a majority of Sunnis, estimated to constitute 50-55 percent of the population. The Shi'a, however, have traditionally produced the rulers of Yemen. Most of them belong to the Zaydi sect, which is rather close to Sunni Islam in its doctrines, and from 1597 to 1962 the country was governed by the Zaydi Imam. This means that the Islamist movement in the country has emerged within a double set of tensions: on the one hand it expresses the contradictions between an emergent religious middle class and an established authoritarian regime, on the other it has also been shaped by the contradiction between emerging modern-oriented elites and the historically dominant social forces linked to the rule of the Zaydi imamate.

Yemeni Congregation for Reform (al-tajammu' al-yamani lil-islah)

Muhammad al-Yadumi

Muhammad Qahtan

<http://www.al-islah.net>

The *Islah* Party, as it is commonly known, was formed in September 1990, a few months after unification. At the last legislative elections in April 2003 the party won 22.6 percent of the popular vote and 46 out of the 301 seats in parliament. The party publishes the weekly newspaper *al-Sahwa*. Closely related to the party is the political think-tank the Yemeni Centre for Strategic Studies.

It is important to grasp the composite nature of the *Islah* in order to understand developments. In a sense the party resembles the Islamic Salvation Front that scored big electoral successes in Algeria before being brutally suppressed in 1992. More than a unified Islamist party it is a broad alliance, in which the three main constituents are first the Yemeni Muslim Brothers, second, a *salafi* trend led by former leader of the Yemeni MB Abdallah al-Zindani, and thirdly a number of important tribal leaders. The leader of the party from its founding till his death in December 2007 was Shaykh Abdallah al-Ahmar, the leader of the second largest and possibly most powerful tribal confederation in Yemen, the Banu Hashid. Al-Ahmar was, incidentally, leader of the tribe to which the President Ali Abdullah Saleh belongs, and a long-time Speaker of Parliament. While al-Ahmar was a Zaydi (as is the president), many *Islah* leaders were Sunnis and some rather anti-Shi'a. It seems clear that the two dominant ideological tendencies within the party are the Muslim Brothers and the *wahhabi*-inspired *salafiyya* tendency linked to Zindani. It should be noted here that in the hierarchical Yemeni society, *wahhabi* ideas carry a connotation of egalitarianism that have made them somewhat attractive to non-elite elements even in the Zaydi areas.

Interestingly the party posits itself distinctly as representing a continuation of "the two revolutions"; that of 1962 against the Imamate, and that which in 1967 gave South Yemen its independence from Britain. Not least it is interesting that the support from "our sister country Egypt" for the revolutionary regime in the North is highly praised in the programme. Given the fact that the Muslim Brothers play a central role in *Islah* this might be somewhat surprising as Egypt at this time was led by the MB's arch enemy Nasser. The explanation is probably twofold. First, this may be a price to pay in order to remain within the fold of non-systemic opposition in Yemen, and thus be tolerated by the regime. But secondly, it would also point to what might be termed opposition against descent-based authority, so prominent in a Yemen traditionally dominated by a caste-like social system. Traditional Middle Eastern

Muslim societies are often described as being characterised by much more social mobility than their European counterparts. According to the textbooks there was no hereditary social hierarchy of notice. Yemen was different. In Yemeni society up until our time a rather rigid hierarchy prevailed where positions of authority in state and government were more or less monopolised by two groups. On the very top were descendants of the Prophet, known as the *sada*, closely followed by those known as the *quda* (judges), descendants of families who had for centuries dominated the judiciary functions. Dissatisfaction with the dominance of these groups had brewed for some time and was part of the motivation of the revolution against the imamate in 1962. Although many *sada* supported the revolution the new leadership were hostile towards the remnants of the old privileges. And while the *Islah* party as such is hardly anti-Shi'a or anti-Zaydi it is widely considered to be anti-*sada* in this sense, hence its support for the revolutionary legacy and for Egypt's role in backing the revolution. The tribal leaders, the *shaykhs*, in traditional society constituted a third elite element always seeking to increase their autonomy vis-à-vis the *sada*-dominated state. Perhaps Shaykh al-Ahmar's role in *Islah* can be seen partly in this light.

In its programme the *Islah*, like most current mainstream Islamist movements, puts great emphasis on the development of democratic rule. For this purpose it calls for the strengthening of state institutions to make them independent from the persons of the rulers and for the political neutrality of the military, security and judicial establishments. Along with this goes a strong emphasis on the need for extending the effective rule of the central government over the whole of the country, an important issue in a country often described as a "failed state" precisely because central authority remains weak and many tribes are heavily armed. The desire to build centralised rule is part of the modernising agenda of the party, and is part of the reason why party members volunteered in large numbers to fight the Southern secessionists in the civil war of 1994. In the same vein the party is keen to see a rapid end to the so-called Huthi rebellion in the Northern Sa'da province (see below), provided that the solution would work to increase Sanaa's grip on the region rather than weaken it. It calls for the law to reign supreme; a law which must be based on the *Shari'a*. It calls for the peaceful rotation of power, and devotes much space in its programme to the need for developing and rooting the idea and practice of political pluralism in the country. In comparative terms, it is nevertheless noticeable that the *Islah* seems more than most other Islamist movements in the region to insist on restricting this pluralism to those parties which "adhere to Islam as faith and law". However, the latest developments in alliance building (see below) seem to indicate an increased pragmatism linked to the increasing influence of the modernist wing within the party. This wing is led by the Muslim Brother element and occupies many of the central administrative positions in the party apparatus. Among its most prominent leaders are Muhammad al-Yadumi, long-time general secretary and now deputy leader, and Muhammad Qahtan, head of the party's Political Office. The modernists typically belong to the upcoming urban university-educated elite.

In the staunchly socially conservative Yemeni society, the modernists hold many positions close to the more liberal trends within the international MB movement. For instance Qahtan has alluded that women could be political leaders, and that many of them would be capable of directing the country better than the current president, or the conservative Islamist al-Zindani. In fact in February 2007 the modernists managed to have al-Zindani ousted from his long-time position as head of the *Islah*'s Shura Council.

A very important development in the latest years has been the establishment of an alliance with other opposition parties, the so-called Joint Meeting Parties, which resulted in the fielding of a common opposition candidate, Faysal bin Shamlan in the 2006 presidential elections. Bin Shamlan got a healthy 21.8 percent of the vote, but more importantly the cooperation between the parties has continued. The bloc consists of a number of parties of

which the two most important are the former bitter rivals, the *Islah* and the Yemeni Socialist Party, which historically emerged from the former government party of the Southern People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. The alliance also includes the main Nasserist party and two minor party's of mainly Zaydi membership. It is the Muslim Brother wing that has spearheaded *Islah's* commitment to this alliance with its former foes.

Hizb al-Haqq

Hizb al-Haqq (The Party of Truth) was formed in 1990, and in part expressed a reaction on the part of elements within the Zaydi *sada* against a growing Sunni Islamism perceived as hostile. The first manifesto explicitly warned against increasing *wahhabi* influence in the country. At the same time the party distanced itself from imamate ideology; its main founder Ahmad Muhammad al-Shami arguing that it had been wrong for the *sada* to assume leadership of the state (and in particular in hereditary form, which was seen to contradict original Zaydi doctrine). Instead the *sada* ought to concentrate on religious studies and act as moral guardians of society. Actually the distinction between *Islah* and this party is hard to gauge from programmatic statements. *Hizb al-Haqq* has a quite similar rhetoric, calling on the one hand for the implementation of the *Shari'a* and on the other for a fight against corruption and monopolisation of power by incumbent state elites. The party had two representatives in the first post-unification parliament, and took part in government in the nineties.

The developing relation between Zaydi and Sunni Islam in Yemen is highly complex. A certain Zaydi revival is underway, as seen for instance in yearly rituals marking the birthday of Imam Zayd ibn Ali¹⁴, heavily attended by *Hizb al-Haqq* members. But there is hardly any call for a return to the imamate. Since 2004 an armed Zaydi rebellion has raged in the Northern province. The rebel leader Husayn al-Huthi, killed in battle in 2004, was a former MP for *Hizb al-Haqq*. Probably the rebellion should not be seen as any attempt to re-establish Zaydi control over Yemen, but rather as a defensive reaction, partly protecting the local power of the Huthi clan against the encroachment of the central government, partly defending Zaydi interests against what is seen as aggressive Sunni proselytising.

Likewise the *Hizb al-Haqq* itself is best seen as a defence of Zaydi identity, combined with an effort to protect the interests of, and chart a new role for, the *sada*.

¹⁴ The grandson of Husayn, whose imamate signals the Zaydi breakaway from mainstream Shi'a who stuck to his half-brother Muhammad al-Baqir.

IRAN

Iran ranks with Turkey and Egypt as one of the most populous countries of the Middle East region. With 70 million inhabitants it competes closely with Turkey for second place. With an Islamic regime resulting from a popular revolution in place for nearly three decades, the Iranian context for politicised Islam is profoundly different from all other cases covered in the present report. Although there are certain similarities with Sudan and Saudi Arabia in the sense that both have regimes heavily legitimised by the reference to religion, in Sudan Islamisation took place through military force after a *coup d'état*, and in Saudi Arabia it is a premodern monarchical system which is in place. Only in Iran politics today take place *after* a successful transformation of the state by an Islamist movement (or coalition to be precise) based, at least initially, on broad popular support.

The constitution of the Islamic Republic is an articulation of two potentially quite contradictory elements roughly linked to the two elements of its name: On the one hand there is the republican principle of the sovereignty of the people, on the other the Islamic principle of the sovereignty of God.

In general elections where everyone above 16 years old can vote the people chooses a president who appoints and himself leads the government, as well as a Parliament, the *Majles*, which legislates and controls the work of the government. Every minister must be approved by a majority within the Parliament. Yet parallel to this there exists a theocratic system based on Khomeini's idea of the government of the foremost jurisprudent, *velayat-e faqih*¹⁵. It is this position, which in the constitution is identified with the *rahbar-e enghelab*, which is the real head of state. This *rahbar* is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces and appoints the heads of its branches. He (for it is always a he) also appoints the leader of the judiciary and the broadcasting monopoly. And he appoints, directly and indirectly, the twelve members of the Guardian Council, which in addition to controlling (and often vetoing) the decisions of Parliament screen and approve or reject all candidates for political office. The leader appoints all members of the so-called Expediency Council¹⁶, an important body meant to resolve conflicts between the Guardian Council and the Parliament, and whose decisions are final. Through these mechanisms the sovereignty of God is supposedly ensured, administered by the most qualified members of the clergy.

True, the sovereignty of the people also has a role in the selection of the *rahbar*. But this happens only indirectly through elections to the specialised Assembly of Experts (*majles-e khobregan*) every eight years, an assembly that convenes for a few days each year in order to evaluate the performance of the Leader. This assembly is the one to appoint a new leader, and in principle may also depose him. But elections for the Assembly of Experts are more heavily controlled and screened by the Guardian Council than any other. In practice therefore the situation is that the popularly elected parts of the Iranian governing bodies to a large extent can be and is controlled and overruled by a self-recruiting group of conservative clergymen who purport to safeguard the sovereignty of God. Theirs is a closed circle where the Leader appoints the Guardian Council, which selects the suitable candidates for the Assembly of Experts, which in turn selects and controls the Leader.

Yet compared to the authoritarian regimes surrounding it in the region the Iranian system of government has a certain inherent strain of pluralism, and of the acceptance of the

¹⁵ This is the Persian term for *wilayat al-faqih* (cf. above pp.55-56).

¹⁶ A more accurate translation for *Majma'-e tashkhis-e maslahat-e nezam* would be "the Assembly to Determine the Regime's Interests".

solutions of political problems through the vote. A general “culture of disagreement” has been a hallmark of the Islamic regime since its inception. Whether this is inherited from the debates and pluralist hierarchy of the Shi'a clergy or not, it is a fact that after the often brutal suppression of all opponents in the early 1980s, the Islamists dominating government and public institutions continued to engage in heated debates among themselves on many central (as well as a host of non-central) questions regarding the running of the country. As the political system during the eighties went from a one-party to a none-party system when even the ruling Islamic Republican Party was dissolved in 1987, there remained within the circles of revolutionaries in power open contradictions and debates. These contradictions were embedded in a system where elected institutions, no matter how circumscribed the freedom of candidacy, were an important focus of the negotiation of real political decisions. It is important in this regard to note the remarkable degree of attention to legality exhibited by the actors on the Iranian scene; not least the regularity with which elections have been held.

The culture of disagreement works in several partly contradictory ways. At one level, by providing an outlet for differing opinions it may act as a safety valve preventing internal tensions within the ruling bloc from reaching boiling point, and it adds life to formal political processes by producing a measure of unpredictability for important decisions. At another level it creates a tendency to the continuous reproduction of divergent tendencies and of ever-shifting alliances and re-alliances of political forces. On the one hand, with such a culture in existence, the fact, for instance, that Parliament refuses to accept a number of the ministers proposed by the president does not in and of itself signify the existence of opposing blocs. It may be just a disagreement over exactly that, the naming of a minister or two. On the other hand, there is always the potential that disputes like that may initiate processes over time leading to the emergence of politically or even ideologically distinct factions.

The resultant political structure is more than anything highly complex. It involves in addition to the institutions mentioned above a number of semi-public foundations or *bonyads*, which took over most of the vast assets confiscated from the Shah and his cronies after the revolution. The institutions also interpenetrate; not least the *rahbar* has his personal representative present in all important organs of power at the national and provincial level. It is a pressing problem that the sheer complexity of the political structure adds to the lack of transparency and aids corruption. Over time the relative weight of the different institutions shift according to shifting alliances and conflicts between the persons and factions who people them.

In the turmoil of the post-revolutionary struggles over power and the bloody eight-year war with Iraq, all oppositional forces not willing to recognise the legitimacy of the *velayet-e faqih* system were excluded. Draconian means were used, famously including mass executions in 1988. The field of political tendencies that is allowed to exist, then, has grown from within the victorious pro-Khomeini wing of the revolution. This field remains highly fragmented. Yet already in the eighties two main tendencies came to dominate the political landscape; on the one hand the social radicals, who were mainly student revolutionaries fired by the Marxist-inspired interpretation of Shi'a Islam propounded by Ali Shari'ati, on the other a conservative alliance of important segments of the clergy and leading bazaar merchants. In the nineties the radicals partially metamorphosed into what is now known as the reformist trend, focussing on a call for reforms intended to strengthen human rights and democracy. The resistance they met to a large extent came from the same conservatives of the early days, but to this was eventually added a new generation of social and cultural conservatives with its main base in the Revolutionary Guards and epitomised by current president Ahmadinejad.

Neither of these wings would seem quite to fit the description of the type of Islamists that are the focus of the present report. While the conservatives are undoubtedly Islamists, they are more busy resisting democratic reform than calling for its introduction like the MB-

related movements do. And on the other hand while most of the democratic reformists remain deeply committed to religion in their private life, in politics they tend to call for a decoupling of religions from politics, so that *post-Islamists* might be a better term to describe them.

Nevertheless we have thought it of interest to give some consideration to the Iranian case. On the one hand it is often invoked in disputes over the merit or non-merit of an Islamist agenda in the other countries of the region. On the other, and for all its particularities, the Iranian experience for good and for bad may show up some of the potential direction developments under an Islamist regime might take.

What follows is a short mapping of the terrain. A plethora of trends and organisations exist. Some are rather ephemeral, some are loose alliances mostly active during election times, while yet others come closer to resembling political parties in the common sense of the words. The general picture, however, is that the organisational situation is highly fluid. Not least there is a great degree of overlapping membership between various organisations and parties within the same broad trend. The presentation here is therefore organised according to the two main blocs described above, with no full treatment of individual organisations.

Conservatives - main groups

Hezb-e Mo'talefe-ye Eslami (Islamic Coalition Party)

Habibollah Asgarowladi

Mohammad Nabi Habibi

www.motalefeh.org

Rayehe-ye Khosh-e Khedmat (Sweet Scent of Service, pro-Ahmadinejad)

Mehrdad Bazrpash

Abadgaran

Gholamali Haddadadel

Abadgaran-e Javan (Young Developers, pro-Qalibaf)

Hasan Bayadi

Jame'e-ye Ruhaniyat-e Mobarez (Society of Combatant Clergy)

Mohammad Reza Mahdavi-Kani

In 2001 the prominent reformist Abbas Abdi likened the conservative wing in Iranian politics to a Volkswagen helplessly tied to the Boeing 747 of reform. To put it mildly events since then have cast a shadow of doubt over his optimism.

In contrast to the reformists (see below) the conservatives possess political strength which in relative terms far exceeds their level of popular support. Central here is their close links to ruling circles: the *rahbar*, the Guardian Council, the Judiciary, the armed forces - particularly the Revolutionary Guards, the broadcasting monopoly, the leaders of the *bonyads* and the powerful shrine organisation of Mashhad, the *Astan-e qods*, as well as the upper strata of the *bazar* merchants; all groups who have a vested interest in the status quo. This provides the conservative wing with financial backbone, and when necessary the brute force to win the day. But also in terms of mobilisation capacity they are better off than their reformist opponents. Although the clergy is very far from united behind the conservatives, the right wing controls most of the mosques throughout the country and can use the important networks controlled by them as centres of mobilisation. In addition they can mostly count on

the support of the volunteer *basij* militia linked to the Revolutionary Guards, and on the extreme right-wing vigilantes of the *Ansar-e Hezbollah*. In most circumstances, despite the relative narrowness of their social support base, they can easily outdo the reformists in getting people out to demonstrate in the streets. In all this they are greatly helped by the obstacles put in the way of the reformists by the judiciary and the various law enforcement agencies.

The trend towards formal party formation (*tahazzob*) has come late to the conservative side but is a marked factor in the current situation, as is the willingness to appeal to popular opinion. Both these tendencies were actively promoted by the reformists since before 1997 as important steps towards the emergence of a strong civil society and laying the groundwork for a real democracy to emerge. But even with the ascendancy and subsequent fragmentation of the conservative wing (see below) it seems obvious that what we are witnessing is not a return to politics as a matter to be resolved between conservative clerics in their secluded quarters. Rather the last presidential campaign and the ensuing divisions within the victorious block have shown up an unprecedented level of openly voiced disagreement among conservatives. Both in the presidential campaign, when debating who should be the preferred candidate of the right, and in the politics of electoral alliances in later local and *Majles* elections, opinion polls were used for all they were worth. While it is hard as yet to discern real ideological differences between the various neo-con factions there seems to be a tendency towards the formalisation of differences of opinion in the form of the setting up of organisations to further a certain line.

The field is highly fragmented and alliances keep shifting. Because of the close alliance between the forces in question as long as the task was to defeat the reformists, distinction lines remain somewhat blurred, and it is not always easy to pinpoint the factional belonging of an individual. Still, among a plethora of trends and groups two main tendencies can perhaps be singled out.

One is that of the *traditional post-revolutionary rightwing*. Among lay people this finds its main expression in the *Hezb-e Mo'talefe-ye Eslami* (Islamic Coalition Party), with roots back to the 1960 anti-Shah demonstrations and with solid roots in the *bazar*. On the clerical side the mainstay of its support is found within the Tehran-based conservative clerical organisation the Society of Combatant Clergy (*jame'e-ye ruhaniyat-e mobarez*) and its powerful Qom-based counterpart the Society of Teachers of the Religious Seminary in Qom (*jame'e-ye modarresin-e howze-ye elmiye-ye qom*). It should be noted, though, that these clerical associations also have important members supporting various *neo-conservative* trends (see below). Socially the "traditional conservative" trend is close to the commercially oriented (and often land-owning) traditional economic middle and upper classes where the *bazar-ulama* alliance has lasted for generations. Media expression of the outlook of this section of the conservatives can be found in daily newspapers like *Resalat* and *Jomhuri-ye Eslami*.

The conservative resurgence after the electoral successes in the early Khatami period has seen the rise to prominence of a new tendency commonly known as the *neo-conservatives*. The members of this trend had in many ways been the foot soldiers of the conservative establishment in their efforts to stifle the reformist movement. But especially from 2003 they emerged as a power in their own right (and in understanding the dynamics of the Iranian political field it is important to note that they did so through the mechanism of elections). This group is to a large extent made up of mainly non-clerical technocrats committed to public control of the economy and to continuing the current system of redistribution, strongly in favour of keeping the cultural lid tightly on, and with strong links to the powerful *Pasdaran*. The neo-conservatives are generally supported by the *Kayhan* and *Siyasat-e Ruz* newspapers as well as *Hamshahri*, published by the Municipality of Teheran, and thus under neo-con control since 2003. The social origin of the leaders of this block is generally more lower middle class, and occasionally they come from a working class or

peasant background. Their following and electoral support is markedly larger within these social groups.

However, at least since the presidential campaign of 2005 strong internal divisions within the neo-conservatives have come to the fore. When Ahmadinejad presented his first government after becoming president a majority in the neoconservative-dominated *Majles* voted down several of the ministers chosen by the president. The *Majles* has also on several occasions been harshly critical of Ahmadinejad's erratic and populist economic policies, which by many of them is given the blame for an inflation threatening to spin out of control. Within the City Council of Teheran the *Abadgaran* majority who in 2003 brought Ahmadinejad in as mayor, was split down the middle when an 8-to-7 majority of councillors, led by Mehdi Chamran, appointed his rival presidential candidate Qalibaf as the new Mayor.

Today the neo-conservative group seems to consist of three main factions. The most radical is that which is staunchly behind the radical anti-Western and populist rhetoric of President Ahmadinejad, and whose main organised expression carries the (typically Iranian) name of *Rayehe-ye khosh-e khedmat* (Sweet Scent of Service). Its main rival is a more pragmatist approach linked to the two former *Pasdaran* commanders Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, the current Mayor of Teheran, and Mohsen Reza'i. Another former Pasdaran commander and staunch conservative of the younger generation, Ali Larijani, with good connections to most factions and strong ties to the *rahbar* has recently leaned towards the pragmatists Qalibaf and Reza'i after falling out with the president over the nuclear issue. Navigating uneasily between the two wings is the mainstream of the *Abadgaran* (Developers) movement which organised the neo-conservative take-over of the Teheran City Council in 2003 and the *Majles* in 2004, and whose most prominent figure has been former *Majles* speaker Gholamali Haddadadel. To confuse matters even more, a central tendency among the pragmatists have organised themselves into the *Abadgaran-e Javan* (Young Developers).

In the *Majles* elections of 2008 these contradictions was expressed in the partial competition between two rival conservative lists. One was known as the United Front of Principlists¹⁷ (*jebhe-ye mottahed-e usulgerayan*) and united the pro-Ahmadinejad neo-cons with the old-timers of the *Mo'talefe* party and most of the mainstream *Abadgaran*. Facing it (although for instance in Teheran one third of candidates were held in common, including the shared top candidate Haddadadel) was the Broad Coalition of Principlists (*e'telaf-e faragir-e usulgerayan*).

Common to the conservatives, especially since the election of Khatami, is that they have tended to argue for an absolutist interpretation of the *velayet-ye faqih*, where the leader is somehow given a mandate directly from God or from the Hidden Imam. Whatever their religious beliefs this has obviously been a move both to counter the popular-vote-based positions of the reformists and to compensate for the lack both of charisma and of religious legitimacy of Khamene'i. This has not prevented it becoming steadily more obvious that the *rahbar* does not fully control the game, but that both the Guardian Council, the Judiciary and other centres of power operate as initiators of policy in their own right.

Anyhow it is interesting to note a marked shift in the tone of rightwing rhetoric that first became visible in the election campaign of 2003. There is now less talk of defence of culture and of religion and more of the necessity to develop the country. This shift is obviously directly connected to the rise of the *Abadgaran*. By 2004 the *Abadgaran's* main election slogan had become devoid of religious reference when they enticed the voters to vote for a "free, developed and joyful Iran" (*Iran-e azad, abad va shad*).

¹⁷ The "principles" referred to are of course those of the Islamic revolution of 1979.

Reformists - main groups

Jebhe-ye Mosharekat-e Iran-e Eslami (Islamic Iran Participation Front)

Mohsen Mir-Damadi

www.mosharekat.com

Hezb-e E'temad-e Melli (National Confidence Party)

Mehdi Karrubi

www.etemademelli.ir

Hezb-e Kargozaran-e Sazandegi (Executives of Construction Party)

Gholamhosein Karbaschi,

Hosein Mar'ashi

Sazman-e Mojahedin-e Enghelab-e Eslami (Organisation of Mujahidin
of the Islamic Revolution)

Behzad Nabavi

www.mojahedin-enghelab.org

Majma'-e Ruhaniyun-e Mobarez (Assembly of Combatant Clerics, clerical)

Mohammad Khatami

www.khatami.ir (personal website of Khatami)

While the reformists from 1997 to 2001 were vastly superior to their conservative opponents in their ability to draw electoral support, this support did not translate into organisational strength.

The reformists were earlier than their opponents in forming political parties. The most important of these in terms of representation in the reformist Sixth *Majles* (2000-2004) was the Islamic Iran Participation Front, *Mosharekat*, which together with the smaller but influential veteran revolutionary *Sazman-e Mojahedin-e Enghelab-e Eslami* could probably be said to make up the most radical wing of the reform movement. In contrast the reformist clerical organisation *Majma'-e Ruhaniyun-e Mobarez* (the Assembly of Combatant Clerics) always tended to moderation and insisted on trying to solve differences with the conservatives not through head-on confrontation and popular mobilisation, but through negotiations behind closed doors. A more ambiguous, but historically important member of the reformist coalition is the Party of the Servants of Reconstruction, *Hezb-e Kargozaran-e Sazandegi* (or simply *Kargozaran*). This small group of mostly pragmatic technocrats was formed on the instigation of Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani during his last term as president (1993-1997), and intended as a counterweight to the conservatives. The party, and its most prominent early member Gholamhosein Karbaschi, then mayor of Teheran, played an important role in securing the election of Khatami. And despite the fact that Rafsanjani himself during the Khatami presidency tended to veer over to the conservative side, the *Kargozaran* remained within the reformist fold, with several members filling central posts in Khatami's governments. Yet none of these groups had anything like an effective grassroots organisation reaching out into the broad layers of Iranian society. Mostly they remained rather loose networks among bureaucrats, academics and reform-minded clerics.

This has partly to do with obstacles on a free political life put in place by the conservatives,¹⁸ and partly with the aversion for a too disciplined organisation felt by the liberal-minded reformists. But not least it was linked to the fact that there remains in Iran a marked division between those who became from the start “insiders” vis-à-vis the Islamic regime (*khodiha*) and those who remained outside (*ghayr-e khodiha*). The current reformists were in the eighties known as the *khatt-e emam* tendency, *i.e.* those who followed the line of Khomeini. They held many positions of power and took enthusiastically part in building the in many aspects oppressive system of government that merged. When, because of conflicts over questions of economic policies, they were faced with exclusion from power after the death of Khomeini, these radicals went through a critical re-examination of their ideology. In a first important phase this was centred around the journal *Kian*, which was launched in 1992 and where the leading lights included people like Abdolkarim Soroush, Akbar Ganji, and Alireza Alavitar. From this group of thinkers there gradually emerged a programme for reform in the direction of pluralism and democracy, by way of a strengthening of civil society, human rights, and not least the right to free speech. It is perhaps ironic that these people with a history of sometimes fanatic struggle against other tendencies within the revolution in the early years should become the champions of tolerance and liberal attitudes precisely at a time when they needed such change in order to gain an opening for returning to political power. Nevertheless there is hardly any doubt that, no matter how determined by circumstance and need, they went through a deep-going reassessment of their former ideas, without which the later reform movement would never have come about. But the harshly oppressive climate during most of the eighties had gravely accentuated the divide between insiders like the radicals-now-turned-reformists and the population at large. While a majority of voters in several elections supported the reformist wing among the insiders, they never felt “at one” with them. This also meant that the reformists were more easily abandoned by the people when results were felt to be lacking.

Since the reformists opened up the discussion of issues of personal, cultural and political freedom, long considered taboo, but related to a deep urge for change within society, for a long time they were dominant on setting the agenda and the terms of discourse. This gave the reformists themselves, as well as outside observers, a feeling of the invincibility of reform. Yet that feeling represented a gross underestimation of the real power of the conservatives and of their ability to adapt.

Somehow the invincibility holds true in that the conservative discourse today is indelibly stamped with the need to relate to the questions raised by reformists. Not least the word *towse'eh*, development, has become a central feature of conservative declarations of programme. Yet the reform movement as such showed up an amazing weakness for a movement which from 1997 till 2001 had the support of close to 70 percent of voters. The lack of organised popular support linked to the insider-outsider divide goes a long way towards explaining why the reformists have not felt strong enough to challenge the conservative blocking of reforms in a decisive manner.

There was also clearly a lack of *will* to confront the conservatives. Partly this had to do with internal splits within the movement between the moderates of *Kargozaran* and the Combatant Clerics on the one hand and the *Sazman-e Mojahedin* and *Mosharekat* on the other, as witnessed in the struggle against the exclusion of candidates for the 2004 elections. The *Mosharekat* and the *Mojahedin* urged a boycott, while the Combatant Clerics were able to strike an alliance with the *Kargozaran* and some smaller groups to run a list in Teheran and

¹⁸ While the conservatives at this time possessed even less in the way of formal party organisation, under the protection of the powers emanating from the Leader's office, they were able to use for political purposes their control over the Revolutionary Guards corps, the *basij* militia, most mosques and a great deal of the popular religious fraternities known as *hay'atha*.

elsewhere under the banner “Coalition for Iran”. Yet even beyond that, common to the whole reformist camp is an aversion towards revolutionary methods. This in turn has to do both with a principled stand against totalitarian tendencies and the imposition of policies through violent means, but also probably a fear that a revolutionary deluge doing away with the Islamic republic altogether would wash even the reformists away as irrelevant. In addition the history of being a part of the revolutionary movement means that many reformists retain personal links, common prison experiences from the Shah’s time, and even family ties with many on the conservative side, a factor likely to work against too harsh a confrontation.

In 2008 somehow the reformist movement still seems punch drunk from its massive defeats over the last five years. The organisations listed above are still active. In addition a new party has emerged on the moderate end of the spectrum, the Party of National Confidence (*hezb-e e'temad-e melli*) set up by former Speaker of the *Majles* Mehdi Karrubi in 2004. But despite a lot of internal soul-searching, a quest for alliance-building, an increased focus on economic issues that worry the common Iranian, and a proclaimed effort at organisation building from below, so far the reformists have failed to break out of their political marginalisation. The local elections of 2006 offered a partial re-entry of the reformists to the political scene of the capital Teheran, but in the last parliamentary election in 2008 the exclusionary policies of the Guardian Council and the current government hardly gave the reformists any chance. No effective policy has been designed to challenge the obstacles put in the way of free political competition. Not least the reformists suffer from a lack of access to effective media. They remain barred from expressing their views through radio and television, and the few mildly reformist newspapers that survive, such as *E'temad-e melli*, have to exercise heavy self-censorship to stay in business.

But can current reformist weakness be explained merely as a result of forced exclusion? This seems highly problematic. Out of the three elections where the reformists suffered defeat, in two of them, the local elections of 2003 and the presidential election in 2005, there was a healthy representation of reformist candidates. Certainly obstacles were put in their way. Radio and TV remained dominated by support for the conservatives, the number of reformist newspapers remained small due to enforced closures, and often election gatherings would be harassed or even broken up by *Hezbollahi* vigilantes. Yet these problems were no greater than during the campaigns of 2000 and 2001, which led to reformist victories.

The parliamentary elections of 2004 and 2008, then, stand out as the main example of exclusion of reformists from the competition. Yet a closer look would show that this exclusion was merely part of the story. Voter participation in these elections was interestingly high. Though participation was markedly down, from 69 percent in 2000 to 51 percent in 2004 and 60 percent in 2008, it did not seem to reflect any effective boycott by all those who earlier had voted for the reformists. Part of this of course was due to the fact that some moderate reformists actually were allowed to run for Parliament. Yet when one considers that in most constituencies there were no reformist candidates, there would seem to be other factors at work as well:

- Probably there were some who voted conservative in protest because of their utter disappointment with the reformists.

- Many of the unprecedented number of first-time voters may have felt an urge to make use of their voting right. In the absence of well-known reformist politicians, their votes may have been spread out on independent candidates, securing the well-organised conservatives the necessary plurality of the vote. (In Iran it is enough for the top vote getter in the first round to have 25 percent of the vote in a constituency to be elected.)

- Despite a general tendency towards homogenisation of political culture, in many outlying and backward provinces divisions based on family, clan or tribe, rivalries between local grandees, and ethnic conflict remain important. When the reformist-conservative divide,

which dominated the scene for a while, receded, these older conflicts came to the fore, and elections became a competition for access to the power wielders in Teheran between various local interest groups. This factor most probably accounts for the high participation even in 2004 in provinces like Lorestan (62 percent), Ilam (73 percent), Bushehr (62 percent), Kuhkiluyeh (89 percent) and Sistan and Baluchestan (75 percent).

- Around every Iranian election there are persistent rumours that those who do not vote may be punished somehow. When voting the identity card is stamped. The rumours would have it that those lacking this stamp might be prohibited from travelling abroad, have their university applications rejected, be denied ration coupons etc. Though there are no credible reports of this ever occurring the rumours themselves may well induce some people to cast their vote.

- Finally many Iranians, fearful of chaos, may have showed up to vote for something rather than nothing. That is, when there is deep dissatisfaction and no real hope for change, and when all major ideologies, which have earlier been vehicles for opposition, Islam, socialism, and nationalism, seem delegitimised, people may fear the disintegration of the state. And in Iran the feeling runs deep that order is always by far preferable to anarchy.

As for the situation in the reformist camp today a common analysis is to divide this camp, understood in a wide sense, into three broad categories. At one end of the spectrum, then, are those who still believe in reform within the framework of the current constitution, by way of a partial reinterpretation of it. This entails that they do not challenge the principle of *velayat-e faqih* as such, although they want to lessen the power of the *rahbar* and increase that of the directly elected institutions. Karrubi's *Hezb-e E'temad-e Melli* clearly belongs to this trend, as does the progressively more marginalised *Majma'-e Ruhaniyun* and some members of the main reform party *Mosharekat*.

The second tendency is made up of those who believe constitutional change is both possible and necessary, while they still believe in the idea of an Islamic Republic. This would include the mainstream of the *Mosharekat* or Participation Front, as well as the smaller organisation the Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution, which is an active force within *Mosharekat*. In private, and sometimes in public, influential figures such as Mohsen Kadivar, Alireza Alavitabar and others, acknowledge that this constitutional revision should include doing away with *velayat-e faqih*. At least the *rahbar* institution should have its decision making powers removed or sharply curtailed, and a fully fledged democracy must be established, which would then remain Islamic as long as the voters' preferences of Islamic Law and of the Islamic reference in general would dictate it. But despite stirrings especially within the large student constituency of reformism, no open and concerted challenge against the *velayet* system has yet been made. This is linked to one of the major inhibitions of the reform movement: it is important to remember that this is a movement which has emerged *inside* the Islamic regime *after* the brutal and at times bloody suppression of the other revolutionary forces. This has meant that there remains a wall of distrust between the reformists and other, more anti-systemic, opposition forces. Though there has in later years been occasions of reaching out towards the liberal Islamists of the Freedom Movement and the so-called national-religious group (*melli-mazhabi*), the reformists remain hesitant to shed their established place as insiders (*khodiha*) and the limited scope of legitimate action that comes with it in order to risk their luck with the *ghayr-e khodiha* on the outside of the system. Calling consistently and openly for the dismantling of the *velayet-e faqih* would under present circumstances risk them at least being excluded from elections, and might entail severe persecution and ban on activities.

Finally there is an anti-system or secularist opposition calling for an all-out separation of religion and politics. This view certainly has lots of followers amid certain sectors of the population, not least among intellectuals and the secularised upper classes especially in

Teheran, but it is hard to gauge the overall support for such views given that formal political expression of such views in the form of for instance political parties remains illegal. As far as can be judged there is no formal organisation active on a nationwide level to give expression to this tendency. That said, it has the advantage of active broadcasting from exile groups in the US. There is also indication that parts of the student movement may be drifting in the direction of clear-cut secularist views.

Elections

Reformist dominance of the elected institutions in Iran lasted from 1997 to 2005. In one sense arguably the core period was from 2000 to 2004, when in addition to the executive powers wielded by President Mohammad Khatami and his cabinet, the reformists of the broad 2. Khordad Front also held a comfortable majority in the Parliament, the *Majles*. Yet it can be seen in retrospect that already by 1999, and despite resounding election victories both in 2000 and 2001, the foundations of the reformist sway were being undermined. Two important turning points can be identified. The first was in July 1999 when student demonstrations against the closing of the reformist newspaper *Salam* were crushed by police and rightwing vigilantes, and their great hero the reformist president did not come to their aid. It is hard to overestimate the effects of this event. In the absence of any widespread grassroots organisation of the reformist constituency, the students had been the main link to broad layers of the Iranian population in town and countryside. After the summer of 1999, as a result of what many saw as Khatami's betrayal, the students' dedication to the reformist leadership became progressively more lukewarm, a significant factor in the catastrophic election defeats that were to come from 2003 onwards. Yet the hopes of many soared high again in connection with the *Majles* elections of 2000. It was thought that with control over the legislature the reformist agenda could finally move substantially forwards. After a landslide reformist victory, however, the outgoing parliament gave a stern warning of what was to come when in spring 2000 they voted in harsh new press laws, while the conservative-controlled judiciary banned 14 reformist publications in April of the same year. When the new parliament gathered for its first session the first item on the agenda was supposed to be a revision of the press law. But when the MPs gathered they were stunned by the Speaker reading an instruction from the Leader, Khamene'i, not to debate the issue. The fact that this instruction was not challenged from day one showed up this *Majles* as an emasculated body only capable of getting across reforms that the conservatives felt like accepting.

Despite another victory for Khatami in the presidential election of 2001, by 2002 the reformist movement was by and large sapped of its dynamic force and attractive power. Pessimism and disillusionment more and more ruled the ground in the reformist camp. In late 2002 the President presented two reform bills to Parliament in a last-ditch effort to move onto the offensive. One was designed to increase Presidential powers by giving the Chief Executive the right to intervene against actions (not least by the Judiciary) which he considers to violate the Constitution; the other was set to reduce the power of the Council of Guardians to vet candidates for elections by introducing clear and objective criteria for approval or not, in stead of the current rather arbitrary judgement it exercises (*nezarat-e estesvabi*). Predictably however, after being approved by the *Majles*, both bills were rejected by the Council of Guardians. In preparing the law proposals the reformists had foreseen this course of events. Yet none of the responses aired at the time, like mass resignation from Parliament or calling for a referendum, came even close to being implemented due to internal bickering and lack of resolution.

This latest blockage, together with their dismal performance in the local elections of 2003 threw the reformist camp into open crisis. The local elections were probably the freest ever held in the Islamic republic. A number of candidates belonging to tendencies long barred from legal participation, most prominently the Freedom Movement, were allowed to stand, and even publicly to promote their candidacy. The problem was that much of the electorate, in the big cities an overwhelming majority, seemed to have totally lost interest, disillusioned by the reformist performance. Overall participation went down from a healthy 64 percent in 1999 to 49 percent four years later. This is not necessarily a catastrophic level in comparative international perspective, but what made it critical was the low turnout in the major cities, and in particular the capital. In all of the seven major cities of Teheran, Esfahan, Mashhad, Tabriz, Karaj, Esfahan and Shiraz overall participation was below 15 percent. As important, though reformists continued in control of many councils, among them half of the provincial capitals, it was a distinct trend that the popular abstention hurt the reformists the most. It was of immense importance that the conservatives of the newly formed fundamentalist group *Abadgaran* swept the elections in Teheran. The *Abadgaran* won 14 out of 15 seats on the City Council, and by the same stroke also editorial control over the country's most widely circulated newspaper *Hamshahri*, owned by the municipality of Teheran and founded under reformist mayor Gholamhosein Karbaschi.

After this eyes were fixed on the parliamentary elections of 2004. When these came, they were the final *coup de grace* for the phase when many believed in reform within the framework of the Iranian constitution. Many had feared that the elections would give the conservatives control of Parliament by default, as it were, simply because people would refrain from voting like they had done in the local elections the year before. But the conservatives were not content to bet on that option. Perhaps they even decided to press home their point by showing once again the powerlessness of the reformists. The Guardian Council proceeded to a mass exclusion of reformist candidates precisely through the *nezarat-e estesvabi* mechanism. Out of 8200 who presented their credentials 2300 mostly reform-oriented candidates were finally disqualified, among them 80 incumbent MPs including the president's brother. Somehow it was 1992 all over again. This time the argument used for disqualification was that the reformists had made statements showing they were not solidly behind the constitution, an argument not totally baseless in view of the developing critical attitude towards the *velayat-e faqih* system.

The elections predictably reduced the reformists to a weak opposition of approximately 60 MPs out of a total of 290, and established the neo-conservative factions of the *Abadgaran* as the dominant force. Voter turnout compounded the reformist defeat, if official figures are anything to go by. Though sharply down from 67 percent in 2000, at 50 percent one could hardly state that the call for boycott had met with overwhelming support. In Teheran turnout was reported as significantly higher than in the local elections the year before (30 percent against 15 percent).

Starting from the presidential elections of 2005 internal rivalry among the now dominant conservatives has been an added factor. In those elections Ali Larijani was the candidate supported by the coordination council set up to unite conservative ranks. In the actual elections Larijani did very badly. In the first round Rafsanjani topped the list, and with widespread reformist support in the second round he was considered the likely winner. His opponent was Ahmadinejad, who with the assistance of vast numbers of commandeered *basij* had narrowly secured second place in front of the moderate reformist Karrubi. In the second round Ahmadinejad cleverly played on popular perceptions of Rafsanjani as the archetype of the corrupt cleric who used his positions in the state to secure economic benefits for himself and his family. Presenting himself as the simple man of the people and calling for a drastic

redistribution of wealth in favour of the poor he won a landslide victory. Thus the executive as well as the legislative power was now in the hands of the neocons.

The local elections of 2006, albeit not fully as free as those of 2003, broadly confirmed the pattern of the previous elections in the sense of the relation of strength between reformists and conservatives. It was significant, though, that the reformists made a re-entry into the municipal council of Teheran, led by former vice-president Ma'sume Ebtekar, albeit in a minority position. Not least these elections showed up the emerging cracks in the neo-con movement, with the supporters of the incumbent mayor Qalibaf scoring a big victory in Teheran over Ahmadinejad's supporters.

Finally the parliamentary elections in 2008 confirmed both the conservative hold over the elected institutions and the continuation of a split within the conservative ranks between pro-Ahmadinejad radicals and his more pragmatist critics. The reformist managed despite the many disqualifications of their candidates to hold on to a certain parliamentary presence. Of the 290 members elected the United Front of Principlists got 117 and the pro-Qalibaf Broad Coalition of Principlists 53, while the reformists got 46 and independents of various persuasion 69 (the remaining 5 seats are allotted to the recognised religious minorities).

The nature of the alliances made (see above) makes it hard to discern the exact strength of the various tendencies. It is important to notice especially that the pragmatist-radical divide cuts well into the ranks of those elected on the lists of the United Front of Principlists. This was reflected when Ali Larijani was elected speaker of the new *Majles* with a vast majority over Ahmadinejad's favoured candidate, the incumbent speaker Haddadadel.

De facto secularisation?

While the Leader still holds a pivotal position within the Iranian political system, one may perhaps view in the latest developments a beginning marginalisation of Khamene'i. The reasons are complex but they all relate to the fact that despite the Leader's all-powerful position according to the constitution, Khamene'i lacks Khomeini's unique and unchallenged position of leadership, which enabled the *Emam* to rise above factions and arbitrate between them. Khamene'i has neither the position of a leading religious authority nor the charisma of his predecessor. For this reason he has from the beginning had to rely on powerful allies in order to gather the clout necessary to exercise his commanding role. But while until recently the Revolutionary Guards, the *basij* and the *Hezbollahis* have been content to play the role of diehard backers of the *velayet-e faqih*, now they are discovering their own power and emerge as a distinct political force in their own right. When Khamene'i then has to lean heavily on figures like Larijani and on occasion *a fortiori* on his old team mate and competitor Rafsanjani, whom he can certainly not easily control, he loses even more of the measure of autonomous scope for action he has enjoyed.

This should also be seen in the light of the long-term trend towards a diminishing role for the clergy in Iranian politics. Interestingly enough this trend has only been accentuated with the rise of the neocons. Though the number of clerics increased slightly in the 7th *Majles* elected in 2004, in the 8th *Majles*, at barely over 30 out of 290 it is lower than at any time since the revolution. As significantly, since 2005 for the first time there have been non-clerics as president (Ahmadinejad), speaker of parliament (Haddadadel, then Larijani) and secretary of the National Security Council (Larijani, then Jalili).

Yet one should notice that one important elected institution remains all-clerical and till now (perhaps this is no accident) remains outside the grip of the neo-conservatives proper. This is the Assembly of Experts, *Majles-e khobregan*, the 86-member council elected every eight years and charged with appointing (and if need be dismissing) the *Rahbar*, and overseeing his policies. This assembly has as yet been dominated by members close to the

“traditional” conservative establishment. In the elections of October 2006 it was widely believed that Ayatollah Mesbah-Yazdi, the ideologue of Ahmadinejad’ s team, would endeavour to fill the *Khobregan* with his protégées, former students at his Haqqani School. This would have enabled the neo-cons to control the Leader’s office directly and in principle to replace him, perhaps with Mesbah-Yazdi himself.

But if indeed there was such an attempt it failed miserably, and in fact it was former president Rafsanjani, these days considered close to the reformist camp, who came out on top, and was elected to take over as chairman of the Assembly when the old hard-line leader Meshkini passed away.

A MOVEMENT SUMMED UP:

Common Themes and Variations

After this tour of the countries of the region we may briefly sum up some of the main characteristics of the Islamist movements of the Middle East, and point to what is common among them and on which points they vary. This leads on to a consideration of possible directions of development, and a brief discussion of the question of the desirability and possibility of dialogue with the Islamists.

Dominating the Opposition

It has been amply demonstrated in these pages that almost without exception Islamists movements represent the main oppositional challenge to incumbent regimes throughout the Middle East. In Iran the situation differs in that Islamists of sorts have already been in power for almost thirty years. The main opposition, the reformist movement, has its roots in the radical Islamist students from the time of the revolution. Nevertheless, they have revised their views of the relationship between religion and state to the extent that they should perhaps more aptly be termed *post-Islamists*. The same would hold for Turkey, another country were Islamists could be said to be in power, but where the former Islamists of the AKP insist that they support the continuation of secularism in the country, albeit in a more liberal interpretation than that currently in place. Incidentally, the AKP, despite controlling the positions of both prime minister and president, remains if not in opposition then in an undecided struggle for ultimate power with the powerful established alliance between the military and the entrenched Kemalist elite which has ruled the country since the 1920s.

In all other cases, including among the Muslim minority in Israel, the main vibrant ideological and political force within civil society, is Islamism. For the foreseeable future, to the extent that the political regimes, whether forced to or willingly, will open up to competition, the Islamists are uniquely placed to profit. In the big picture of the region they are the only organised force for change with a substantial popular basis. It would thus seem that anyone interested in forming an idea about the political future of the Middle East, and in building relations to potential future power holders, would do well to talk to the Islamists.

Reform: Negotiating Democracy, Development and Patriarchy

A common slogan of the Islamists is that of “reform”. The envisaged reform concerns at least three levels: a call for doing away with all that hinders economic and social development, a call for introducing a democratic system of government, and a call for moral reform in which the teachings and values of Islam should set the standard.

Since the time of Hasan al-Banna, Islamists in the Middle East have been ardent advocates of rapid economic development. To promote it today they seek market-oriented reforms in states that have economies heavily dominated by the state. This goes hand in hand with a fight against corruption and the advocacy of meritocracy, since practices of clientelism, nepotism and bribery are seen as both morally wrong and as leading to economic inefficiencies that slow down economic growth. Yet while wanting the state to loosen its grip on business and trade the Islamists still wants it both to play an active role in directing

development and not least to alleviate poverty and actively promote health and education for the many, again seen both as a matter of justice and as a prerequisite for a sustained economic take-off.

In states where with few exceptions no democracy in terms of real power holders being chosen in free elections exists, the Islamists are today the main force calling for the introduction of precisely such a practice. They eagerly promote the principle that the people are the legitimate source of political power, and that power should rotate through the regular holding of elections that freely express the will of the people. Through their political work Islamists also have a democratising effect in that they mobilise people outside established power circles for political participation.

However, the Islamists insist that an essential part of, and framework for, reform is the reintroduction of Islamic moral standards, most importantly expressed in the reintroduction of the Islamic Law, the *Shari'a*, as ruling law. While this demand has been dropped by the Turkish post-Islamists of the AKP, in some form it remains among all other movements (and the principle of *Shari'a* as the main source of law is not challenged by the Iranian reformists either). But what precisely it means is the subject of heated controversy, and interpretations vary both within individual movements and from country to country. In relation to democracy the pre-eminence of the *Shari'a* raises several questions, most importantly: To what extent will it prevent women and religious minorities from enjoying full political rights? To what extent does it limit the scope of deliberation and decision open to elected parliaments? Does it involve political privileges for the clergy? In general terms there has been a clear trend in the direction of acknowledging the full political rights of religious minorities (which mostly in this region are Christians), except that many movements still hold that non-Muslims should not be eligible for the post of head of state. Most also deny that any formal political power should be given to the *ulama*. Important exceptions to this are of course some Shi'a movements like *Hizbullah* who remain loyal to the idea of *velayet-e faqih*, as practiced in Iran. But it is noticeable that something resembling a Guardian Council of senior *ulama* was included as part of the desired future set-up of government in Egypt in the draft programme of the Muslim Brothers in 2007, indicating that at least within the conservative wing of that important movement the thought of a supervisory role for the clergy is not absent.

As for the interpretation of the *Shari'a* in general it can be said that the degree of conservatism and literalism varies not least with the socio-cultural background and environment of individuals and movements. In the deeply socially conservative Arab peninsula Islamists tend to be more conservative. This is evident within the Muslim Brothers trend, but it is also no coincidence that precisely in this subregion the much more conservative *salafi* trend seems to be on the rise, as witnessed lately in the elections in Kuwait.

A particular point of internal tensions within the movement and vis-à-vis the outside world is the question of the position of women in society and politics. In ideological terms this is linked to the fact that the Islamists consider that the family, which they see as the core of Muslim society, is under attack. Since the role of the woman as mother and wife is central to their understanding of the Muslim family, and seen as precisely defined in the holy scriptures, any attempt at altering the relation between the genders in the family is suspected of aiming at undermining the family, and thereby Muslim society at large. At the same time their general drive for progress have pushed many Islamists towards the advocacy of improved education for women and greater participation in society and politics. The predominant line today involves an awkward balance between advocating full political rights for women (often with the exception that women cannot be head of state, as we have seen), and more hesitatingly their right to seek employment, while insisting on the man as head of the family, involving a right to make decisions for his wife and daughters. There are

pronounced regional differences. In the far West Moroccan Islamists have accepted quite wide-ranging changes in the family law, and have set up quite autonomous women's organisations. In more conservative Egypt women in the movement are still much more subordinate to the men, and the movement as such more sceptical towards reforms that affect relations in the family. In the East, Gulf Islamists only very recently came to accept voting rights for women, and the harsh *salafi* competition leaves its conservative stamp also on the Muslim Brothers.

Method for Change: Ballots or Bullets?

The general picture is very clear: the mainstream Islamist movements considered in this report have taken a definite stance in favour of a peaceful, gradualist road to change, and oppose the resort to violence in pursuit of political ends.

This does not mean that the question of political violence is completely off the table. In discussing this it is important to put the issue into some perspective. It is of course far easier to argue for the legitimacy of violent means in a region where virtually no regimes have ever been based on the free consent of the population. In this sense the consensus on non-violent strategies among the Islamist movements is remarkable. True, there are cases where mainstream Islamists have acquiesced in the use of violence or themselves taken up arms against regimes or against internal opponents, as in the Sudanese military coup of 1989, in the Yemeni civil war of 1994, or in Algeria after the military coup in 1992 against the Islamist election victory. But these are rather isolated examples, and seem either as deviations from the general line (Sudan) or as determined by highly particular circumstances (Yemen). The Algerian example is interesting in that it shows mainstream Islamists taking up arms as a response to their exclusion from a nascent democratic system where they had scored great successes. But though certainly such radicalisation continues to be a potential outcome of the current repressive policies against the Islamists, in fact the dominant response to repression seems to have been further consolidation of a moderate non-violent strategy. Especially the Islamists within the *Ikhwan* tradition often implement very careful tactics of self-imposed restraint in order to avoid provoking the regimes. For instance this takes the form of running only a limited number of candidates for elections, to give the impression of seeking a public voice rather than outright power. Of course such tactics are the fruit of bitter experiences of brutal repression, resulting in a wish to preserve the organisation above all else. But they link as well into a tradition of flexible tactics going all the way back to al-Banna. These tactics are also a subject of inner contradictions, where younger activists criticise the leadership for erring on the side of moderation. The younger cadres often argue for more bold political initiatives and fear that the current line of the movements risks leading to political paralysis or worse to discredit among the people and cooptation by the governments.

Perhaps the most difficult questions are raised by those cases where moderate Islamist movements have established armed wings in order to take part in a military fight against foreign occupation. While the legitimacy of this in cases like Lebanon and Palestine is not in dispute within the movements, and has a great deal of support in the wider population as well, it does imply the practical possibility of using the arms also in political struggles internal to the nation. While the official line of both Hizbullah and Hamas is that the weapons are only for use against the external enemy, both have during the last year put them to use internally. Hamas did so in Gaza to defeat the challenge from Fatah in June 2007; Hizbullah used its arms against Sunni armed groups loyal to the government in May 2008. Of course in both cases it is not clear that these incidents signal a change in strategy: In Gaza it may be argued that Hamas was defending the power granted it by the electorate, and in Lebanon it would

seem that Hizbullah was not out to establish military control over new areas, but merely to show that it would not allow the government to strip it of its military capacity, which it still insists is directed against Israel. What is of importance here is that neither in Lebanon, nor *a fortiori* in the Palestinian territories, have the government established an unequivocal monopoly of violence. In this situation the military forces built up by the Islamists to resist foreign occupation makes part of an unstable landscape. As long as strong political tensions remain among sectarian groups and political factions, the use of military capacity in settling internal scores remains a potential temptation for these Islamist movements.

Against the West and the Zionists

It is part of the birthmark of Islamism that it involves a distancing vis-à-vis Western society. The Islamists see themselves as representing the authentic identity of Arab and Muslim society, and this is an important part of the platform on which they seek moral legitimacy. This claim for authenticity has naturally involved painting a negative picture of the Other, the West. One needs not search long in programmes and other Islamist publications for depictions of Western civilisation as in a state of moral decay because of unbridled materialism and individualism. Not least this negative image of the West is used in order to defend the need for protecting the Muslim family.

But it is important to notice that this is only part of the picture. Coexisting with the negative othering of the West is the advocacy (and practice) of a whole range of values and principles which would rank high in any positive self-presentation of Western culture: democracy, meritocracy, efficiency, transparency, equality, and the general idea of progress. Besides the issue of gender relations and sexual morality, the main quarrel the Islamists have with the West is over political issues to do with Western support for authoritarian regimes in the region, American interventionist policies, and not least Western support for Israel.

The Islamists share with the majority of the population in the region a strong sense of solidarity with the Palestinians and opposition against Israel. In content it could perhaps be said that the Islamists uphold the traditional maximalist Arab stand of refusing to grant any legitimacy to Israel as a state, and considering the Palestinian struggle to concern all of Mandate Palestine. In form the Islamists to an extent use more religious references in discussing the issue; emphasising Jerusalem as a holy city for Muslims and the whole of Palestine as an inalienable Muslim *waqf*. And though the enemy is defined as Zionism, more often than not reference will be to the Jews, and the hostile language against the Jews found in certain verses of the Koran will be quoted. Again similar to broad sectors of Arab opinion many Islamists accept anti-Semitic forgeries like the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as a true picture of a world Jewish conspiracy. In later years for the first time some Islamist voices challenging this attitude can be found, but they remain in a minority.

To what extent will the maximalist view of the Islamists bring them to oppose any peaceful solution between the Palestinians and Israel? While this can only be answered by future developments of course, there are indications that Hamas, at least, are prepared to take a more pragmatic approach in practical politics. The organisation has several times announced its willingness to enter into a long-term truce with Israel if it withdraws from all of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. And if Hamas enters into an agreement most likely most of the mainstream Islamist movements across the region would accept it.

In the North African former colonies of France, the fight against Western cultural dominance has focussed heavily on the language. In particular this is the case in Algeria where Arabic by the time of independence had virtually lost its role as a language of learning

and of administration. But also in Tunisia, Morocco and Mauritania French had come to dominate the school system. Since independence governments have with various intensity implemented policies of Arabisation. Yet the language issue has become a rallying point for the increasing numbers of educated people from modest backgrounds in their challenge against the social and political dominance of the established Francophone elites.

Concluding Remark: Dialogue?

In a region where in most countries democracy is virtually non-existent, the main organised force challenging the autocratic regimes is Islamism. The main movements covered in this report have chosen a strategy for change through peaceful means. They seek to pressure the governments to implement reforms that would allow the peoples of the region to choose their leaders through free and fair elections. These facts combined should incline any institution in a country like Norway interested in the political future of the Middle East, whether governments, political parties or civil society organisations, to seek contact and dialogue with the Islamists.

Some observers, both in the Middle East and in the West, remain sceptical about the democratic credentials of the Islamists. One may hear the argument that they are only interested in increased freedom and democratic elections because this will make it easier for them to gain power in the future. It seems obvious that the distinct ideological change among mainstream Islamists in the last decades towards a commitment to democratic principles has partly been born out of bitter experience with oppressive regimes. In their search for a way out of their predicament they have discovered the usefulness and appeal of human rights and democracy. Do we have a guarantee that if Islamists take over power in, say, Egypt through elections, they will go on to establish a stable democratic system? Of course not. The study of transition processes from authoritarian regimes to democracy shows that there are many obstacles on the way. Not least a refusal by the losing party in elections and/or by the outside world to accept an Islamist victory may create a chaotic situation which is not conducive to the development of democratic practice, as the current situation in the Palestinian territories is a witness to.

Whether the Islamists themselves *intend* to stick to democratic practices is another issue. Only future practice can give us the answer. But the argument that they merely pretend to be democrats seems to lack compelling substantiation. The fact that many Islamists have come to be interested in democracy by discovering its usefulness in their fight against the regimes can hardly serve to underpin the suspicions, as it would probably hold true for the vast majority of those who have fought for democratic reforms across the globe throughout history. And on the other hand there is growing evidence that mainstream Islamists when serving in various elected offices in civil society perform distinctly better than their various competitors on the scale of democratic practices.

Anyhow it is not a question of deciding to *support* any or all of the Islamist movements surveyed. Certainly many points of disagreement between the Islamists and most Western political tendencies remain, linked to the role of religion in politics in general, and more specifically to policies towards women and towards religious minorities. In addition, although the Islamists dominate the scene, there are other competing movements working for democracy in the Middle East based on other ideologies.

But with the Islamists in a position to become an influential factor in the shaping of the future it is important to learn about them also through direct contact. A dialogue, while hardly likely to lead to complete agreement on all issues, could serve to mutually dispel misconceptions about the other, and identify the real points of disagreement. While no one

can foresee how far these real disagreements can be dissolved in the future, identifying them is a vital first step in establishing a framework where they can be handled in a constructive manner.

In deciding which Islamists to talk to a number of factors should be considered, among them legal status, relative strength of the movement, and the size and importance of the country in question. Judged from these aspects at one level of course the Turkish AKP might be an important interlocutor. Despite this party's post-Islamist nature, it is the legitimate child of an Islamist movement, and retains an important network of contacts to the Muslim Brothers-inspired movements in the region. Among the oppositional movements the clearest candidate for priority is probably the Moroccan PJD. It is a legal party with an established strong electoral support, and a record of playing by democratic rules in Moroccan politics as well as internally in the movement. Other important legal parties are the *Islah* party in Yemen, the IAF in Jordan and the Islamic Constitutional Movement in Kuwait, although the two latter seem to have lost some voter support in the latest years

Among the movements that remain illegal obviously the most important one to consider is the Muslim Brothers in Egypt. Though the movement's current precarious situation with increased repressive measures against it by the authorities makes official meeting with the MB leadership difficult, especially for government agencies, the fact that the MB has a sizable parliamentary group creates a useful channel for talks.

Finally, in order to enhance the credibility of Western parties to a dialogue it would be important to change current attitudes towards government repression of the opposition in the Middle East. While there is no reason to declare support for Islamist movements there are very good reasons to declare much more firmly than is currently done unequivocal condemnation of the repression undertaken by Middle East regimes against oppositional movements, and to protest loudly against violation of human rights also when Islamists are the targets.

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