MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
Briefing

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ISLAMISM IN NORTH AFRICA I: THE LEGACIES OF HISTORY

This general backgrounder is the first of a series of ICG briefings addressing the range and diversity of Islamic activism in the North African states where this phenomenon has been able to develop most fully – Egypt, Algeria and Morocco. Each subsequent paper examines with respect to one of these three countries the outlook and strategies of the main Islamist[1] movements and organisations, their relations with the state and with each other, and especially the ways in which they have evolved in recent years. The analysis focuses on the relationship between Islamist activism and violence, especially but not only terrorism, and the problem of political reform in general and democratisation in particular.

I. OVERVIEW

Islamism, terrorism, reform: the triangle formed by these three concepts and the complex and changeable realities to which they refer is at the centre of political debate in and about North Africa today. The role of Egyptian elements in the leadership of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda organisation is well-known, if not necessarily well understood. The involvement of Maghrebis in terrorist networks in Europe -- whether linked to al-Qaeda or not -- has recently been underlined by the suspected involvement of Moroccans in the 11 March 2004 attack in Madrid. Egypt itself has endured years of terrorist violence; few if any countries have suffered as much from terrorism as Algeria has over the last twelve years; and the bombings in Casablanca on 16 May 2003 suggest that Morocco is not immune.

At the same time, Egypt, Algeria and Morocco have all been sites of important attempts at pluralist political reform. Morocco's political system has exhibited a measure of party-political pluralism since the early years of independence. Egypt experienced political pluralism before 1952, and under both Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak a degree of pluralism has been allowed at some periods only to be stifled at others. In Algeria, formal party pluralism was introduced in 1989 and has survived although it has fallen far short of substantive democracy.

Yet, debate over these issues has become bogged down in a welter of fixed but erroneous ideas. One is the notion that posits a simple chain of cause and effect: absence of political reform generates Islamism which in turn generates terrorism. This simplistic analysis ignores the considerable diversity within contemporary Islamic activism, the greater part of which has been consistently non-violent. It also overlooks the fact that the rise of Islamist movements in North Africa has not been predicated on the absence of reform, but has generally occurred in conjunction with ambitious government reform projects. The expansion of Islamic political activism in Egypt occurred in the context of President Sadat's audacious economic and political opening -- *infitah* -- in the 1970s; the spectacular rise of the Islamic Salvation Front (*Front Islamique du Salut*, FIS) in Algeria in 1989-1991 occurred in the context of the government's liberalisation of the political system and its pursuit of radical economic reform.

The problem of reform, therefore, has not been its absence so much as the particular character of the reform projects that have been adopted by North African governments, the political alliances and manoeuvres in which they have engaged in the process, and their complex, unforeseen and sometimes disastrous consequences.

[1] In the usage adopted by ICG, 'Islamism' is Islam in political rather than religious mode: 'Islamist movements' are those with Islamic ideological references pursuing primarily political objectives, and 'Islamist' and 'Islamic political' are essentially synonymous. 'Islamic' is a more general expression: usually referring to Islam in religious rather than political mode but capable, depending on the context, of embracing both (e.g., references in the text to 'Islamic activism').

The problem of Islamism has not been its doctrinal outlook -- this has been varied and variable -- so much as the difficulty the Egyptian, Algerian and Moroccan states have had in accommodating the more dynamic forms of non-violent activism and, in particular, their inability to integrate a major Islamic movement into the formal political system. Egypt has refused to legalise the Muslim Brothers. Algeria, having legalised the FIS and allowed it to contest and win two elections, then decided it could not cope with the consequences and took the fateful decision to dissolve the party. Morocco has consistently refused to legalise the "Justice and Charity" movement led by Sheikh Abdesselam Yacine. Whatever justifications have been advanced for these decisions, it is likely that a major element of the rationale has been the essentially pragmatic concern that their special resonance and dynamism rendered these movements so indigestible that their legalisation threatened to destabilise the political system.

This consideration should not be dismissed. While arguments about stability can be overstated and abused, how democratic reform in North Africa can be achieved without destabilising the region's political systems is a fundamental and entirely valid question which has received far too little attention. A striking feature of the debates in the West and the region alike has been the prevalence of ideological as opposed to political arguments. The various actors have been preoccupied with questions of legitimacy -- who are the real democrats? who has the right to participate in the political game? -- rather than policy -- how should the form of government be changed? what specific reforms are desirable and feasible?

A new approach is required in both Western and North African discussions of political reform and the place and potential role of Islamist movements, not least because of the following changes in the outlook and behaviour of Islamic political activists in the region over the last decade.

Clarification of the distinction between religious and political activism. Where in the past many Islamic movements tended to combine and confuse religious and political objectives, some now explicitly limit their objectives and activities to the religious sphere, while others define themselves as political movements or parties with political, not religious, objectives. Accommodating Islamic political movements within the formal political systems of North African states is still controversial but these movements are not the source of the terrorism problem. One corollary is that the distinction between moderate and radical Islamic activism is of limited analytical value, and the tendency to identify religious activism with moderation and political activism with radicalism is misconceived. The violent forms of Islamic activism are the product of a radicalisation of the most conservative trend in religious activism. Though their objectives may be 'political' in the broadest sense to the extent that that they aim at overthrowing, installing or disrupting governments, they do not seek to win elections or argue for government policy change: their motivations remain essentially religious. Tendencies that dismiss, ignore or simply have no faith in political action are, when stirred up, most likely to resort to violence because they have no other option.

Adaptation of Islamic political movements to democratic principles and the national idea. Islamic political movements in North Africa no longer condemn democracy as un-Islamic or counterpose the idea of an Islamic state to the states which actually exist. In fact, they explicitly reject theocratic ideas and proclaim acceptance of democratic and pluralist principles and respect for the rules of the game as defined by existing constitutions. Their opposition to regimes has accordingly changed, focussing on the demand for justice and the need to apply the constitution properly (or, at most, to revise it), rather than replace it wholesale. At the same time, they no longer counterpose the supra-national Islamic community (*umma*) to the nation-state, but accept the latter both as legitimate and the main framework of their activity. These changes are reflected in their attitude to law. While continuing to demand the application of Islamic law (*Shari'a)*, they acknowledge the need for it to take account of contemporary social realities and, consequently, for interpretative reasoning (*ijtihad*) and deliberative processes to play their part in its elaboration. It is becoming inappropriate to characterise these movements as fundamentalist or even as wholly conservative. They defend conservative positions on certain questions but a striking feature is their revival, after a long eclipse, of the ideas of the Islamic modernism movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This is important because the central features of the original Islamic modernist current were precisely its predominantly positive orientation to elements of Western scientific and political thought, its concern to adapt Islamic legal traditions to contemporary social and political conditions and its close

relationship to the nationalist movements. The weakening of modernist nationalism in North Africa was a major factor in the eclipse of Islamic modernism and the rise of conservative and anti-Western Islamic activism. For the recent recovery of modernist ideas within Islamic political movements to bear fruit requires a broader recovery of the national idea in North African political life.

Differentiation within Islamic religious movements between violent and non-violent tendencies. Most Islamic religious activism is non-violent and no threat to the state, public order or individual human rights. But the problem of violence is nonetheless rooted in the outlook and impulses of certain, quite specific, Islamic religious movements. The two tendencies which matter in this context are the Salafiyya movement, which has become broadly (although not wholly) identified with the Wahhabi tradition in Saudi Arabia, and the distinct current of activism inspired by the Egyptian Islamic thinker, Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966).

The Salafiyya movement today is fundamentalist and very conservative. It is also disinclined to acknowledge or attach value to national identities and emphasises instead the supra-national Islamic identity and community. For the mainstream of the movement, dominated by religious scholars --*'ulama* -- and so sometimes called the *Salafiyya 'ilmiyya* (the "scholarly" or "scientific" Salafiyya), the impulse to violence is rooted in its ambition to dictate, control and correct individual behaviour, and takes the form of occasional punitive actions against individuals or groups regarded as "bad Muslims". This form of violence is notably found in Algeria and Morocco, especially in the shanty-towns and run-down housing estates on the edges of big cities; however deplorable, it poses little threat to North African governments or Western interests.

Recourse to violence as a primary strategy is the defining characteristic of a particular wing of the Salafiyya movement known as the *Salafiyya jihadiyya* (the "fighting" or "warrior" Salafiyya).[2] It originated in the war against the Soviet-backed regime in Afghanistan and took root across North Africa as Arab veterans of that conflict returned home. Extremely conservative if not reactionary, the *Salafiyya jihadiyya* typically attacks Western targets in a campaign rationalised in traditional doctrinal terms as a conventional *jihad* in defence of the Islamic world against Western aggression. In contrast, violent movements that have targeted North African states have mostly been oriented by the not at all traditional doctrines of Sayyid Qutb. The main violent movements in Egypt have all been Qutbist; while some in Algeria have described themselves as Salafi, they, too, have been heavily influenced by Qutb's ideas.

Defeat of Qutbist movements in Egypt and the reorientation of *jihadi* energies to the international plane. The main violent movements in Egypt, *Tanzim al-Jihad* (the Jihad Organisation) and *Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya* (the Islamic Group) have been defeated but they have reacted in different ways. The *Jama'a* has engaged in ideological revision and its leaders have effectively repudiated their earlier outlook. The Jihad Organisation, on the other hand, has invested its energies in the international *jihad* spearheaded by Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda, in which it is now fully incorporated. This reorientation of Egyptian *jihadi* energies to the international plane, which began in the 1980s and was consummated in 1998, means that the activists involved have abandoned the earlier Qutbist perspective of overthrowing the Egyptian state, but not totally and perhaps only temporarily.[3]

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[2] *Jihadi* (or in its feminine form, *jihadiyya*) is the adjective derived from *jihad*, which literally means effort or struggle. Many Islamic thinkers distinguish "the greater *jihad*", the spiritual effort of the believer seeking salvation, from "the lesser *jihad*", which refers to the armed defence of the *umma* (the community of believers) against outside threats. It can, according to some thinkers but not all, include offensive military action to expand *dar al-Islam* (the Islamic world). The adjective *jihadi(yya)* is used in this report to refer exclusively to groups and individuals who resort to armed actions.

[3] A fifth trend, which falls outside the scope of this series of briefings, is linked to other changes taking place. This is the increasing importance of elements drawn from the North African diaspora in international *jihadi* activism. A large number of Muslims arrested across Europe and in North America on terrorism charges since 11 September 2001 have been of North African, and especially Maghrebi, origin. In many if not most cases, they have been first or even second generation immigrants, and thus products of the North African diaspora rather than firmly rooted in their (or their parents') countries of origin. Detached from their original national backgrounds, they have generally been influenced by the trans-national forms of Islamic activism, especially the Salafiyya movement, which give them a stable, if rather abstract, Islamic identity, as members of the international *umma*, wherever they find themselves. As such, their outlook is a direct product of the processes of globalisation, and includes a strong disposition to identify with embattled Muslims elsewhere. With the proliferation of theatres of

These developments have important policy implications:

- The adaptation of Islamic political movements to democratic principles and the national idea means that North African governments can no longer seriously invoke previous anti-democratic or anti-national ideologies as sufficient justification for continuing to refuse these movements democratic rights, let alone for not implementing broader democratic reforms. While opponents will naturally continue to harbour suspicion of their motives and sincerity, Islamic political movements should be judged by their behaviour, not by the intentions their adversaries attribute to them.

- Secular or other self-consciously modernist forces and organisations which have traditionally been extremely hostile to Islamist movements can no longer invoke the allegedly obscurantist, medieval or intolerant outlook of those movements as grounds for their own intolerant refusal to engage in serious political argument with them. The fact that Islamic political movements are displaying a new flexibility and open-mindedness in their approach to the question of law means that it should be possible for all tendencies in North African politics to begin to engage in much-needed debate on the steps required for the development of law-bound government.

- More generally, the debate over democratic reform in North Africa can and must now get over the stumbling block of political Islam and focus instead on the structural obstacles to democratic development within North African political systems, such as the absence of checks on executive power, the role of the military, the weakness of representative assemblies and the dependent nature of the judiciary.

- This discussion should also focus critically on the extent to which the external parameters of policy making in North African states constrain democracy. The ways in which globalisation has eroded national sovereignty, so that crucial policy areas are no longer the subject of domestic political decisions, has been a much greater constraint on democratic reform than is generally recognised. The economic policy prescriptions of Western governments and international financial institutions have tended to pre-empt and preclude domestic political debate over economic and social policy. This has encouraged domestic political controversy to focus on the far more septic issues of identity and legitimacy, and it is in part the politicisation of these issues that explains the rise of radical Islamism in the region and the degree to which exclusive, intolerant and illiberal attitudes have poisoned North African political life.

- Western policy makers also need to recognise that other policy choices towards the Middle East and North Africa have contributed to the rise of anti-Western and terrorist trends of Islamist activism. They must face the fact that the Palestinian question has been a major stimulus for the emergence of violent tendencies, especially within Egyptian Islamism,[4] and acknowledge a major share of responsibility for the rise of a *jihadi* wing to the Salafiyya movement, which they actively sponsored in Afghanistan from 1979 onwards.

- Western policy makers also need to reconsider their attitude toward nationalism in North Africa. The conventional attitude has been hostile, for two main reasons: first, because nationalism has been identified with authoritarian rule and thus seen as an obstacle to democratisation and, secondly, because it has been identified with economic policies and practices considered inimical to free trade. While there is some truth to both perceptions, Western views have overlooked other fundamental points: first, the historical role of nationalism in generally moderating Islamist ideas and activism; secondly, the need of North African regimes for nationalist legitimacy if they are to withstand, let alone domesticate, Islamist oppositions; thirdly, the need to sustain the national idea and national

conflict involving Muslim populations (Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, Iraq and, of course, Palestine), the militantly activist minority within the North African diaspora is increasingly inclined to be drawn into the form of international Islamic activism developed by al-Qaeda, irrespective of developments in their countries of origin.

[4] The Palestinian question heads the list of issues invoked by the Egyptian Islamist Ayman Al-Zawahiri in his 1996 treatise *Shifa' Sudur al-Mu'minin* (The Cure for Believers' Hearts). Al-Zawahiri's thinking has arguably determined the outlook of al-Qaeda to a large degree; see Maha Azzam, "*Al-Qa'eda: The Misunderstood Wahhabi Connection and the Ideology of Violence*", London, Royal Institute of International Affairs, Middle East Program Briefing No. 1, February 2003.

identities as the common ground on which religious and political pluralism can develop in a climate of tolerance.

II. SOME SOURCES OF CONFUSION

For two decades, the standard approach of Western analysts has been to make an issue of *political* Islam or Islamic *fundamentalism*, which are often identified with one another[5] while counterposed to Islam in general, and to classify variations within this category in terms either of a simple dichotomy (moderate vs. radical) or a simple spectrum: moderate/radical/revolutionary (or extremist), the resort to violence being the defining characteristic of the latter. In fact, however, political and religious radicalism do not necessarily go together.

Religious radicals may be politically moderate or conservative, and political radicals may be moderate or conservative in religious matters. Moreover, moderation or radicalism in doctrine are not necessarily guides to moderation (flexibility, pragmatism) or radicalism (intransigence, militancy, violence) in behaviour.[6] It is also worth noting that on many points of doctrine there is often little disagreement between the spokesmen of mainstream Islam – notably the *'ulama* (religious authorities) employed by the state – and the state's Islamist or *jihadi* adversaries. Finally, it is important to distinguish between different types of violence -- vigilante policing of morals, political strong-arm tactics, riots, guerrilla warfare, targeted assassinations, indiscriminate terrorism -- and the reasons why certain groups resort to them.

Two other features of Western commentary have tended to sow confusion. The first has been the notion that, throughout the Middle East and North Africa, Islamist activism has been confronting secular regimes. This idea has been a prominent feature of commentary on Algeria. The template has been the avowedly secularist Ba'athist regimes in Iraq and Syria, but also Egypt, where Nasser's nationalist regime brutally suppressed the Muslim Brothers from 1954 onwards and where Sayyid Qutb reacted by condemning nationalism as the principal force promoting anti-Islamic tendencies in Egyptian society and the Muslim world as a whole. In fact, however, the Egyptian state has never been secular, even under Nasser,[7] let alone his successors, Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak. It was Sadat, known as "the pious President", who was assassinated by Islamists, and it was against Mubarak's regime, despite its tolerance of Islamising tendencies in society, that Islamists violently rebelled in the 1990s.

There has never been any basis for regarding Algerian nationalism as secular, and the state has been self-consciously Muslim since 1962. The fact that forms of Islamist radicalism have become a problem for the Moroccan state, which even Western observers do not characterise as secular, should make it clear that the notion of an opposition between Islamism and secularism is an obstacle to understanding the Islamist dispute with the state in North Africa.

The second notion has been the posited opposition between Islamism and nationalism. Here Western commentators have been on firmer ground. In the writings of Qutb, most notably, this opposition is clear and profound. But it has rarely been absolute in practice, and in many cases it has been heavily qualified; the FIS, in particular, was an offshoot of the Algerian nationalist tradition as well as of Islamist thought and activism.[8] It is, therefore, not surprising that an important recent development has been the increasingly explicit reconciliation of certain Islamist movements to the idea of the nation.

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[5] A notable exception is the French scholar Olivier Roy, who distinguishes between what he calls "political Islam or Islamism" and "neo-fundamentalism or Salafism"; see his *L'échec de l'Islam politique* (Paris, 1992), in English as *The Failure of Political Islam* (London, 1994), and *L'Islam mondialisé* (Paris, 2002).

[6] See Hugh Roberts, "From radical mission to equivocal ambition: the expansion and manipulation of Algerian Islamism, 1979-1992", in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements* (Chicago, 1994), pp. 428-489.

[7] For Nasser's religious policy, see Malika Zeghal, "Religion and politics in Egypt: the ulema of Al-Azhar, radical Islam and the state (1952-1994)", *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 31 (1999), pp. 371-399.

[8] Roberts, op. cit., pp. 455 ff.; see also Roberts, *The Battlefield: Algeria 1988-2002. Studies in a Broken Polity* (London, 2003), especially chapter 4, "Doctrinaire economics and political opportunism in the strategy of Algerian Islamism".

III. VARIETIES OF ISLAMIC ACTIVISM IN NORTH AFRICA

Islamic activism in North Africa has not been a unified movement. It has only appeared so to certain outside observers and to those who have been opposed indiscriminately to all its numerous varieties, namely North Africa's small secularist intelligentsias. While all brands of such activism reject secularism, they differ sharply over numerous issues. The main varieties of activism are:

- the *Salafiyya* movement;
- the Society of the Muslim Brothers and its derivatives; and
- the Qutbists, i.e. a variety of groups oriented by the teachings of the late Sayyid Qutb.

It is important to distinguish between these three tendencies because they have different political implications. That they should have been confused in the past is understandable, in view of the degree of their historical overlap**.** For example, the Salafiyya movement has gone through several distinct phases since its inception in the late nineteenth century; the Society of the Muslim Brothers was an offshoot of its second phase following World War I. The Muslim Brothers in Egypt and its sister-movements elsewhere (notably Algeria) now distinguish themselves sharply from the contemporary Salafiyya, but they did not always, and they still acknowledge a historical connection to the Salafiyya of the 1920s and 1930s. Similarly, the Qutbist tendency, the main source of violent activism in Egypt and Algeria, has long been distinct from the Muslim Brothers (MB), despite the fact that Sayyid Qutb was himself a leading MB member until his death in 1966.

In short, in recent years, a major process of clarification has been taking place in North African Islamic activism. The main agents of this have been the Muslim Brothers (in Egypt and elsewhere), as they have progressively committed to a distinctively political project and dissociated themselves from both apolitical forms of religious activism, notably the Salafiyya, and violent and anti-constitutional forms of activism, notably the Qutbist groups.

A. THE SALAFIYYA

The Salafiyya movement today is widely perceived as oriented to Saudi Arabia and closely associated with, if not identical to, Wahhabism, the austere fundamentalist tradition which has long been dominant there. Wahhabism and the Salafiyya movement have, since the events of 11 September 2001, been the targets of attacks in the English and American media that have blamed them for the terrorism of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda and related movements. In fact, this form of terrorism has emanated from a distinctive wing of the Salafiyya, the so-called *Salafiyya jihadiyya* or "warrior Salafiyya", which developed, with active Western sponsorship, in the context of the war in Afghanistan in 1979-1990.[9]

The mainstream of the Salafiyya, sometimes called the *Salafiyya 'ilmiyya* – "the scholarly (or scientific) Salafiyya" – can certainly be described as anti-Western, in that it is vehemently critical of Western materialism and seeks to defend the Muslim world against what it considers to be the corrupting effects of contemporary Western culture. But, far from being a source of militant political opposition to North African governments, it is explicitly apolitical and, if anything, a source of support for the status quo. Egyptian analyst Diaa Rashwan told ICG, "the Salafiyya today represents the forces of social and religious conservatism in Islam".[10] The main preoccupation of the movement is with the social behaviour of people (not their beliefs, let alone the piety or impiety of states), and the thrust of the movement is to correct behaviour in order to make it conform to the example of the Prophet and his companions, the four "rightly-guided caliphs" (*al-Rashidin*), the venerable founding fathers (*al-Salaf al-salih*) of the faith.

In this respect, the contemporary Salafiyya is far removed from the earlier phases of the movement. As conceived in the late nineteenth century by its initiators, the Persian Shi'i Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897) and the Egyptian Sunni Mohammed

[9] As already noted, the terrorism of al-Qaeda also owes a great deal to the involvement of Ayman Al-Zawahiri's wing of the Egyptian *Al-Jihad* organisation, and thus to the influence of the Qutbist vision; see Maha Azzam, op. cit.

[10] ICG interview, Cairo, 24 September 2003; Diaa Rashwan is a researcher at the Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo and a specialist on contemporary Islamist movements.

Abduh (1849-1905), the Salafiyya was an essentially modernist movement[11] explicitly opposed to the principal forces of conservatism in the Muslim world. It sought to promote a renewal of Islamic civilisation on the basis of a selective adoption of Western science and European political ideas, including constitutional government and democracy, while simultaneously modernising Islamic law.[12] Subsequently, in the turbulent circumstances following World War I,[13] it evolved under Abduh's successor, the Syrian Sunni Rashid Rida (1865-1935), in a conservative and anti-Western direction and tended to align itself with the resurgent Wahhabism of the new Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.[14]

In the Maghreb, however, the Salafiyya movement in the 1925-1940 period was a peculiar synthesis of modernist and Wahhabi ideas. Its main thrust was a religious reform -- *islah* -- which asserted the orthodoxy of scriptural Islam against the mystical Islam of the Sufi orders and the popular cult of the saints,[15] which it condemned as heresy. In these respects, it drew on classical Wahhabi themes. At the same time, it was by no means wholly conservative, but linked scriptural Islam with education, schooling, promotion of literacy and fostering of the Arabic language and culture. The modernist wing of the Salafi reformers in Algeria and Morocco ended up quite naturally in the nationalist movements seeking independence from French rule from the mid 1940s onwards. It was the more conservative wing that gained ascendancy after independence, however, with negative consequences, especially on national education curricula.[16]

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[11] For a thorough discussion, see Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1789-1939* (Oxford, 1962, revised edition, Cambridge 1983), especially chapters V-IX.

[12] The last point was particularly important. The reformers wanted to overcome the divisions within the Muslim world between Sunni and Shiite and also to transcend the distinctions within Sunni Islam between the four legal schools or rites (*madhahib,* sing. *madhhab*), namely Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki and Shafe'i, in order to modernise Islamic law in general. At the same time, they identified the leaders of official Islam, the doctors of law -- *'ulama* -- as a main force of conservatism. These were associated with one or another particular *madhhab* and its corpus of time-honoured legal doctrine. The reformers' insistence on the need for interpretative reasoning -- *ijtihad* -- in law threatened the *'ulama*'s traditional authority in that domain. The movement's reference to "the venerable ancestors" (*al-salaf al-salih*) thus invoked the era of Islam before the differentiation into rites or schools had occurred and the Sufi orders had been founded, in order to outflank the conservative religious establishment without incurring the charge of heterodoxy.

[13] Namely, the disintegration of the Ottoman empire, followed by the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924; the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement to establish British and French protectorates over Syria, Palestine and Iraq, and the consequent failure of the Arab Revolt sponsored by the British to realise the hopes for a unified Arab state; and the Balfour Declaration in 1917 proclaiming a Jewish National Home in Palestine and British sponsorship of Jewish settlement in the area.

[14] This 180-degree turn did not lead to a formal split in the movement because it occurred over a decade or more and was masked by continuity in the movement's leadership, since Rashid Rida had been a close disciple of Mohammed Abduh. As Malcolm Kerr noted, "Rida's intellectual career symbolises in some ways the failure of the whole Islamic modernist movement. Without any particular shifts in doctrine, his position evolved, under pressure of circumstances, from that of liberal reformer to radical fundamentalist to orthodox conservative". See Malcolm H. Kerr, *Islamic Reform:Tthe Political and Legal Theories of Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Ridâ* (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 15-16.

[15] Known in the Maghreb as "le maraboutisme", a French word derived from the Arabic *murabit* (whence the French *marabout*; plural *murabitun*), the term used to refer to hereditary saintly families in the countryside, where the *murabitun* acted as the local embodiments of Islam and intermediaries with God for illiterate populations without unmediated access to Scripture; see Ernest Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas* (London, 1969).

[16] These negative effects were not only that Salafi teaching promoted a conservative and anti-Western outlook, but also that Salafi historiography concentrated largely on Islamic (or, at most Arabo-Islamic) history at the expense of national history, and treated the latter as merely a rather unimportant part of the larger history of the Arab world and the Islamic *umma*; see Hassan Remaoun, « L'intervention institutionnelle et son impact sur la pratique historiographique en Algérie: la politique 'd'écriture et de réécriture de l'histoire', tendances et contre-tendances », *Insaniyat: Revue algérienne d'anthropologie et de sciences sociales*, 19-20, January-June 2003, pp. 7-40. The greater part of the Algerian and Moroccan literature on the history of these countries produced since independence has been written in French; but, given the Arabisation of subjects such as history and religion in Algerian and Moroccan schools and the scarcity of modern works on Maghrebi history in Arabic, most Algerian and Moroccan children leave school knowing little of the history of their own countries. At the same time, in so far as the Salafiyya movements in the Maghreb produced historiographical literature of their own, this tended relentlessly to apologetics, concerned above all to rebut European (especially French colonialist) theses. What has been true of the teaching of history has been true also for other subjects. Mohammed El Ayadi of the Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Université Hassan II, Casablanca, who has studied the standard school texts in Morocco today, told ICG, "in school they teach exactly the same thing as the Islamists, not only in the books used to teach Islam, but also

In general, however, involvement in the nationalist movements had a moderating effect on the outlook of Islamic reformers in Algeria and Morocco. Figures influenced by the Islamic modernism of Al-Afghani and Abduh -- Allal al-Fassi in Morocco[17] and Larbi Tebessi in Algeria[18] -- personified the synthesis of reform and nationalism. Nationalists with other ideological outlooks were able to co-exist and work with the Islamic reformers within the nationalist movements.[19] This broadly harmonious co-existence of nationalism and Islamic activism in the Maghreb continued into the post-colonial period in a way and to a degree not generally appreciated. When nationalism went into eclipse, however, it could no longer exercise a restraining or moderating influence, and the resurgence of Salafi activism, notably in Algeria in the late 1980s-early 1990s, exhibited a conservative anti-Western outlook as well as hostility to the nation-state. The latter aspect owed much to developments in Egyptian Islamism.

B. THE MUSLIM BROTHERS

The conservative and anti-Western evolution of the Salafiyya movement after World War I underlay the outlook of Hassan Al-Banna (1906-1949) and the Society of the Muslim Brothers (*Jam'iyyat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*), which he founded in Egypt in 1928 and which grew into the country's most dynamic social movement in the 1930s and 1940s. The Society became the main rival to the Egyptian nationalist movement that Saad Zaghlul (1857-1927) launched immediately after World War I by founding the *Wafd*.[20] In fact, the *Wafd* and the Muslim Brothers were both offshoots of the Salafiyya movement;[21] while the former demonstrated wide popular support in the 1920s, the rise of the latter subsequently took much of its potential audience, so that it became increasingly identified with the Westernised middle classes. The Brothers' vision was one of resisting Western cultural influence rather than adapting to it; whereas Al-Afghani and Abduh had sought to modernise Islam, Al-Banna's project was rather that of "Islamising modernity".[22] This involved organising explicitly Islamic frameworks such as charities and mutual-aid and educational associations for the purpose of socialising the lower classes in Egypt's cities while projecting Islam as an all-inclusive and self-sufficient system of *din wa dawla* (religion and state) or even *din, dunya, dawla* (religion, world, state).

The positive engagement with European thought which characterised the early Salafiyya had thus given way to a very different, essentially defensive, attitude that turned its back on European thought and resisted Western ideas and culture in the name of Islam.[23] Where Al-Afghani had argued that constitutional government as in European states was necessary to progress, an idea retained and championed by Zaghlul's *Wafd*, a characteristic

in the discourse on social realities, history, and political life. No other kind of knowledge is taught"; ICG interview, Casablanca, 30 July 2003. The long-term effect of these tendencies on Algerian and Moroccan public opinion has been serious.

[17] Allal Al-Fassi (1910-1979) was a leader of the Salafiyya movement in Morocco and played a central role in the founding of the nationalist *Istiqlal* (Independence) party in 1944; see Mohamed El Alami, *Allal El Fassi, patriarche du nationalism marocain* (Rabat, 1972), pp. 46-47.

[18] Sheikh Larbi Tebessi (1891-1957) was the leader of the nationalist wing of the *Association des Oulemas Musulman Algériens* (AOMA) founded by Sheikh Abdelhamid Ben Badis (1889-1940) as the organising vehicle of the Islamic reform movement in Algeria in 1931; Tebessi assumed the presidency of the AOMA in 1954 and led it into the revolutionary National Liberation Front (*Front de Libération Nationale*, FLN) in 1956. Arrested in April 1957, he was never seen again.

[19] ICG interview with Redha Malek, Algiers, 14 July 2003. A leading civilian member of the wartime FLN and of the modernist wing of the Algerian political élite, he was Algeria's ambassador to the U.S. in 1980 and head of government from 21 August 1993 to 11 April 1994.

[20] *Wafd* literally means "delegation". Zaghlul led an Egyptian delegation to the Versailles Conference in 1919. Disappointed by their reception, he launched a nationalist party called *Wafd* that same year, the name expressing his conception of the party as representing the Egyptian people in negotiations with the Great Powers, primarily the British.

[21] Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, op. cit., p. 15. Zaghlul had been a disciple of Al-Afghani in the 1870s and a pupil of Abduh (Hourani, op. cit., p. 210); he worked with Abduh at intervals thereafter and shared his modernist outlook, which included support for the Egyptian national idea. Al-Banna was influenced more by Rida's vision, and the pan-Islamic element in this was interpreted to imply reservations about or even hostility to nationalism.

[22] Nazih Ayubi, *Political Islam: religion and politics in the Arab world* (London, New York, 1991), p. 213.

[23] Al-Afghani was a cosmopolitan figure, much travelled and well versed in European writings; Abduh also travelled widely, learned French and had numerous European authors such as Rousseau and Tolstoy in his library (Hourani, op. cit., p. 135). In contrast, Rida made only one brief visit to Europe and "seems to have read little or nothing in European languages" and "disliked the social life of Europeans" (ibid., pp. 235-236).

Muslim Brothers slogan in the 1928-52 period was "*Al-Qur'ân dusturna"* ("the Quran is our constitution"!). In place of Abduh's concern to reform Islamic law, the thrust of the Muslim Brothers was not so much to adapt the *Shari'a* as to champion it against Western legal systems.

The fact that Muslim Brothers strategy today incorporates the themes of the original Islamic modernist phase of the Salafiyya, including Western constitutional and democratic ideas, accordingly is an historic change and implicit abandonment of key elements of Al-Banna's outlook. This process has gone further among the derivative movements outside Egypt (notably in Algeria) than in Egypt itself. [24] This is in part because the Islamic modernist perspective survived as a strand of thinking in the Maghreb and produced in Algeria a major figure in the Afghani-Abduh tradition, Malek Bennabi (1905-1973),[25] at a time when this tradition had been eclipsed in Egypt. But long before the Brothers began to evolve away from the illiberal aspects of Al-Banna's thought, they had clearly dissociated themselves from the very different outlook of their other most celebrated thinker, Sayyid Qutb, whose writings have inspired the most extreme trends in Islamist radicalism across North Africa since the 1970s.

C. QUTB'S VORTEX

When the Free Officers seized power in Egypt in 1952, they were in contact with the Muslim Brothers, who supported their coup and sought a role in the new order. But relations soon broke down; the Brothers were banned in January 1954 and, after an alleged assassination attempt on Nasser, many were imprisoned and several leaders were executed. Sayyid Qutb, who had belatedly joined the MB in 1951 and had taken part in discussions with the Free Officers in 1952-1953, was arrested and spent ten years in prison. His writings, notably *Ma'alem fi 'l-Tariq* (Signposts on the Road),[26] represented a massive radicalisation of the Brothers' outlook and a revolution in the doctrine of Egyptian Islamism that committed the movement to absolute opposition to the Egyptian state. Released in late 1964, he was rearrested on charges of leading a fresh conspiracy against the regime in September 1965 and hanged in August 1966.

Qutb's innovation in Egyptian Islamism was not a simple development of Salafi doctrine, and it owed nothing to Wahhabism. At this point, the Islamic credentials of the Saudi monarchy were not disputed and Wahhabi ideas offered Qutb no models or guidance for his opposition to Nasser's regime.[27] Instead, he borrowed his key concepts from the Indian Muslim Abu 'l-Ala Al-Mawdudi, who had developed his ideas in opposition to the modernist Muslim nationalism of Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan. Al-Mawdudi was hostile to nationalism in principle, arguing that it implied the sovereignty of the people, whereas the true Islamic state was founded on the principle that sovereignty belongs to God (*al-hakimiyya li-Llah*). He also considered that the Muslim world was losing its faith and relapsing into barbarous ignorance (*jahiliyya*) comparable to the pre-Islamic period. Whereas previous Muslim thinkers had used that term in a purely historical sense, Al-Mawdudi insisted that it was a contemporary reality. By promoting the sovereignty of the people, dethroning God and encouraging adoration (*al-'ubudiyya*) of political leaders and parties in God's place, nationalism was the vehicle of the new *jahiliyya*.

Qutb appropriated these ideas and applied them to Egypt, arguing that (i) the Egyptian state as reconstituted by the Free Officers' revolution was not Muslim but the agent of the new *jahiliyya* and the enemy of Islam; (ii) its suppression of the Muslim Brothers demonstrated its hostility to the normal and necessary practice of the religious mission (*al-da'wa*), while (iii) the brutality to which it resorted in

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[24] This is discussed in more detail in ICG Middle East Briefing, *Islamism in North Africa II: Egypt's Opportunity*, 20 April 2004, as well as the eventual third (Algeria) briefing in this series.

[25] Author notably of *Les Conditions de la Renaissance, problème d'une civilisation* (Algiers, 1947, republished 1992), and *Vocation de l'Islam* (Paris, 1954). On Bennabi, see Allan Christelow, "An Islamic humanist in the 20th century: Malik Bennabi", *The Maghreb Review*, 17, 1-2 (1992), pp. 69-83 and Hugh Roberts, "North African Islamism in the blinding light of 9-11", London School of Economics, Development Research Centre, Crisis States Program Working Paper (1st series) No. 34, October 2003, pp. 21-23.

[26] An English translation of this work is available in a U.S. edition, published under the slightly inaccurate title of *Milestones* (Indianapolis, 1990).

[27] In fact, the traffic has gone the other way: elements of the contemporary dissident trend in Wahhabism critical of, if not actively hostile to, the Saudi ruling family have incorporated Qutb's ideas.

repressing opposition testified to its barbarity.[28] It must, therefore, be denounced as impious (*kufr*) and opposed by armed struggle (*jihad*).

The concept of *al-takfir* -- the act of denouncing someone or something as infidel -- became crucial to the thinking of radicals inspired by Qutb. This was not a new concept and has a place in Salafi as well as other currents of thinking. But traditionally it has been used with great caution and only as a last resort by the *'ulama*.[29] With the younger generation of radical activists tending to scorn and outflank the traditional religious authorities, however, the concept became open to reckless and arbitrary use. Looking back on that time today, a leading Muslim Brother, Abd al-Mon'im Abu 'l-Futuh, suggested that Qutb's thinking had been misunderstood by later activists:

> Sayyd Qutb was a man of letters; he used literary expressions, and these were misinterpreted to mean calling for enmity towards society, and for violence … The notion of *jahili* societies was misinterpreted by extremist organisations.[30]

In what might be considered an alternative line of argument, Abu 'l-Futuh also suggested that "it is necessary to bear in mind the special conditions in which Qutb was writing, in prison, suffering torture, seeing his friends being killed".[31] This suggests that Qutb got things out of proportion, rather than that he was subsequently misunderstood. But the radicalising and alienating effect of repression should not be overlooked. Some leading figures in the radical movements of the 1970s had experienced Egyptian jails in the 1960s, just as some leaders of the violent movements of the 1990s had experienced jail in the 1980s. Throughout this period, Qutb's ideas had circulated among imprisoned Muslim Brothers and other Islamists, and harsh treatment had encouraged many of them to accept his judgments and vision. In this way, a distinct Takfiri or Qutbist trend, which should not be confused with the Salafiyya in general, developed in activist circles.

It is, therefore, misleading to refer to Qutb's outlook as Salafi; it had nothing in common with the vision of Al-Afghani and Abduh, owed little to Rida and marked a sharp break with Al-Banna. The fact that Qutb had (figuratively) to go to India to find his central concepts testified to the crisis if not exhaustion of the intellectual tradition of Sunni Islamic activism in North Africa. In producing Qutbist radicalism, Egypt resembled a vacuum or vortex, sucking in ideas developed in other countries and in different circumstances, but its central position in the Sunni Arab world made it the immediate source of this newly revamped radicalism for activists elsewhere.

IV. THE LATEST WAVE, MID-1970s TO PRESENT

The wave of Islamic activism which has spread over North Africa from the 1970s has had complex causes. Stimulated by the military defeat of pan-Arabism in the 1967 war with Israel, encouraged by Saudi Arabia (catapulted to a position of enormous wealth and influence by the quadrupling of the oil price in 1973) and Sadat's de-Nasserisation and rapprochement (partly mediated by the Saudis) with the Muslim Brothers around the same time, it received further boosts from three almost simultaneous events. These were (i) the Camp David accord between Egypt and Israel finalised in 1979, which delegitimised both the Egyptian state and Sadat personally in the eyes of Islamists as well as nationalists; (ii) the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79, which encouraged Islamists elsewhere (Sunnis as well as Shiites) to believe they could gain power and prompted the Saudi authorities to promote Sunni Islamic proselytism in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia (notably Pakistan) to counter Teheran's revolutionary Shiism; and (iii) the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in January 1979 and the ensuing mobilisation for *jihad*, in which thousands of young men from across the Arab world took part alongside the Afghan resistance movements.

After a lull in the mid-1980s, Islamic activism received further boosts from the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989-1991, which prompted experiments in political pluralism in North Africa in imitation of Eastern

[28] Qutb was himself a victim of this brutality and witnessed a massacre of 21 Islamist prisoners in 1957; see Denis J. Sullivan and Sana Abed-Kotob, *Islam in Contemporary Egypt:Civil Society vs. the State* (Boulder, London, 1999), p. 43.
[29] Gilles Kepel, *Jihad, Expansion et déclin de l'Islamisme* (Paris, 2000), p. 30.
[30] ICG interview with Abd al-Mon'im Abu 'l-Futuh, Cairo, 22 October 2003; he is a member of the Muslim Brothers' leading instance, the Guidance Bureau (*Maktab al-Irshad*).
[31] Ibid.

Europe; the victory of the Afghan *jihad* with the withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1990; and the U.S.-led war against Iraq in 1990-1991, which sharpened hostility to Western policy in the region, provoked huge demonstrations across North Africa and upset the Islamist-regime relationship in Algeria and elsewhere.[32]

As heterogeneous in doctrine as it was organisationally diffuse, the revival of Islamic activism across North Africa has tended since the 1980s to crystallise into five distinct trends:

- the Salafi tendency, oriented primarily to Saudi Arabia and the Wahhabi example;
- movements linked to or at least inspired by the Muslim Brothers in Egypt;
- Qutbist groups developing a variety of conceptions of *Takfir* (mainly in Egypt);
- groups of returned fighters from Afghanistan (the so-called "Afghans"), influenced by Salafism but committed to *jihad* -- hence their designation as *al-Salafiyya al-jihadiyya* -- and so inclined to rationalise their activities in the context of North African states by adopting Qutbist and *takfiri* ideas; and
- movements either oriented primarily to the particular traditions of their own countries (e.g., the so-called *Jaza'ara* or "Algerianist" grouping in Algeria) or articulating syntheses of those traditions with one or more of the above tendencies.

It is the third and fourth trends that have been the source of armed challenges to the state.

The Salafi tendency, as this has re-emerged since the 1970s, although championed initially by veterans of the earlier wave in some cases, has increasingly been led by younger men oriented primarily to Saudi Arabia and Wahhabi conceptions. It has differed from the earlier phases of Salafism in the emphasis it has placed on personal behaviour. Whereas Abduh and Rida were concerned to revise Islamic law, and the Islamic reformers in the Maghreb in the 1925-1954 period sought to defend their countries' Arab-Muslim identities and purify Islam by promoting scriptural orthodoxy against Sufism and maraboutism,[33] the third wave of Salafi activism has been characteristically preoccupied with "commanding what is proper and forbidding what is reprehensible" (*'amr bi 'l-ma'ruf wa nahi ani 'l-munkar*), imposing the distinction between what is licit (*halal*) and what is illicit (*haram*). It denounces misgovernment almost exclusively in terms of corruption, which it lays at the door of the personal failings of those in power, and sees the solution as their replacement by men of virtue, i.e. good Muslims.

This preoccupation with the good conduct of individuals -- in which the reference to *al-salaf al-salih* invokes the "venerable ancestors" as exemplars of correct Muslim behaviour more than anything else -- tends to reduce Islam to an abstract faith and moral code.[34] In purveying the latter, it is highly relevant to the problems encountered by uprooted Muslims in the teeming cities of North Africa. If the contemporary Salafiyya movement has made little headway in Egypt,[35] this is because it has been pre-empted by the home-grown Muslim Brothers, who have performed this function since their founding in 1928. Elsewhere in North Africa, where the social life of the recently urbanised populations is no longer effectively regulated by the traditional moral codes of extended family, village and tribe, and the state's system of law has little purchase on structurally marginal communities, the Salafi project of providing a strict, religiously legitimated, code of conduct meets a profound need.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the development of the Islamic movement in general and the Salafiyya in particular has also benefited enormously from globalisation and the political as well as social and economic implications of economic and financial structural adjustment programs. As Paul Lubeck has explained:

> Islamic affiliations and networks have global implications beyond insurgent social movements. Compared to rivals, Islamic cultural practices, ritual obligations, and institutions encourage and support an unusually high degree of geographical mobility, arising largely from trading and religious networks

[32] See James Piscatori (ed.), *Islamic Fundamentalism and the Gulf Crisis*, American Academy of Arts and Sciences (Chicago, 1991).

[33] See fn. 15 above.
[34] Roy, *L'Islam mondialisé*, op. cit.
[35] ICG interviews with Diaa Rashwan, Cairo, 24 September 2003, and Abd al-Mon'im Abu 'l-Futuh, Cairo, 22 October 2003.

> simultaneously engaged in commerce, pilgrimage service and missionary activity…. Historically, such networks institutionalised a distinct tradition of Muslim global "cosmopolitanism" and encouragement of geographical mobility prior to the era of globalisation. Thus the way in which globalisation processes articulate with this tradition of Muslim cosmopolitanism in a given social context contributes to the formation of wider, more inclusive identities among Muslims.[36]

The point here is that it has been the Salafi trend which has been best able to supply a sense of identity to Muslims on the move, combining as it does a catechism of licit and illicit do's and don'ts defining identity in terms of behaviour with a conception of a supra-national community to which Muslims belong wherever they find themselves. This explains to some extent the tendency for Muslims wherever they are, but especially economic migrants to the shanty-towns of North African cities and the depressed suburbs of European cities, to identify intensely with the cause of embattled Muslims elsewhere (Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya and of course Palestine), to experience these dramas vicariously in a way which profoundly strikes the imagination, especially of the younger generation, and so to develop the impulse to imitate them. This impulse has undoubtedly led some to get involved in *jihadi* activism in recent years.

At the same time, the factors favouring the emergence of such an abstract, cosmopolitan, Islamic identity have been greatly reinforced by the factors subverting the national identities in which previous generations had invested. One of the most important of these has been the imposition on North African governments of structural adjustment programs:

> By emasculating state capacities, structural adjustment provided a windfall of new political opportunities for Islamist movements….The social disruption caused by structural adjustment cannot be overstated. As a result of structural adjustment, state capacity to co-opt oppositional movements declined and services were increasingly restricted to urban middle class and elite areas. Income distributions polarised. Structural adjustment meant that states were unable to provide previously established levels of services or to ensure adequate supplies of commodities to all sectors of their territory and population, undermining the terms of the social compact … The political and moral vacuum opened up great political opportunities that were seized by the Islamists, who established a social base by offering social services that the various states have failed to provide.[37]

With the acceleration of globalisation since the late 1980s, the characteristic features of the contemporary Salafiyya -- its focus on the individual and personal *mores* and its indifference to national cultural contexts -- has enabled it to gain a substantial audience in the diaspora Muslim populations of Europe.[38] While this may give European governments grounds for concern in that it furnishes a potential basis for the activities of a violence-prone minority, North African governments have had reason to feel ambivalent about the Salafi trend, and even to look favourably on it to the extent that it has been conducive to the preservation of order rather than subversive of it. The Algerian government adopted a generally very permissive attitude towards the Salafi current during the 1980s, notably when Abderrahmane Chibane was minister of religious affairs,[39] while until a few years ago the policy of the Moroccan government, notably during the tenure of Abdelkebir Alaoui M'Daghri as minister of religious affairs, was to encourage the Salafiyya as a counterweight against the political tendencies of Moroccan Islamism.[40]

In so far as Salafi censoring of public morals has exhibited a tendency to violence -- muscular

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[36] Paul Lubeck, "Antinomies of Islamic Movements under Globalisation", Center for Global, International & Regional Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz, CGIRS Working Paper #99-1.

[37] Lubeck, op. cit. See also Lubeck and Bryana Britts, "Muslim Civil Society in Urban Public Spaces: Globalisation, Discursive Shifts and Social Movements", in J. Eade and C. Mele (eds.), *Urban Studies: Contemporary and Future Perspectives* (Oxford, 2001).

[38] For the progress of the Salafi trend in France and especially the Paris region, see articles -- both citing reports by the Renseignements Généraux -- in *Le Monde*, 25 January 2002 and *Le Figaro*, 7 October 2003.

[39] Ahmed Rouadjia, *Les Frères et la mosquée; enquête sur le mouvement islamiste en Algérie* (Paris, 1990), pp. 144 ff.

[40] ICG interview with Mohammed Tozy, Casablanca, 30 July 2003; he teaches politics at the Hassan II University and is the author of *Monarchie et Islam politique au Maroc* (Paris, 1999).

vigilante-type assaults on courting couples, young women deemed to be immodestly dressed, and vendors of alcohol or Western videos -- it has targeted "bad Muslims" or other non-conformist individuals rather than power structures and has generally benefited from an indulgent official attitude. At the same time, because Salafi diatribes against corruption in high places have been essentially moralistic, explaining the problem as arising from individual lapses from virtue rather than failings in the political system, they have generally been unthreatening to the regimes in place, a stimulus to their own intermittent crackdowns on corruption but also an endorsement of these, unaccompanied by any serious canvassing of genuine political reform.[41]

The gulf between the outlook of the Salafiyya and that of the more political trends of Islamic activism is illustrated by the Algerian case. An Islamist party there is the *Nahda* (Renaissance) Movement (*Mouvement de la Nahda*, MN), whose General Secretary, Fateh Rebeîi, told ICG:

> Nahda has absolutely nothing to do with this current [the Salafiyya]. The Salafis concentrate on a certain number of questions of *fiqh* [Islamic jurisprudence] which are, in reality, matters of detail, such as the question of the proper way to dress, etc.[42]

For their part, Salafis generally disapprove of the Islamist parties and political movements. Their attitude was summarised by Abderrahmane Chibane, now the President of the *Association des Oulemas Musulmans Algériens*, who told ICG that he disapproved of those Muslim Brothers "who use the Islamic card in order to arrive in power, as other use the regionalist card" and expressed his conviction that:

> Islam should not be put to the service of a man, a group or a party. To fight on the political terrain for the light of Islam to illuminate a country, a nation, that's good, that is what our association does. On the other hand, to use Islam and the Muslims as a card in order to arrive at … partisan ends, this is really infamous.[43]

In short, the contemporary Salafiyya has been notably apolitical as a rule and has tended to replicate across North Africa the traditional attitude of the Wahhabi movement towards the Saudi monarchy: very conservative on points of doctrine and strict in matters of morals, but not presuming to intrude on the political sphere let alone seriously question the state's fundamental arrangements. This rule began to break down following the emergence of divisions within Saudi Arabian religious circles in the wake of the 1990-1991 Gulf War and especially the establishment of U.S. military bases in the country. The latter development exposed the Saudi rulers to criticism from the Wahhabi *'ulama* and ensured new recruits to the *jihadi* trend within the Salafiyya. But the outlook of the *jihadi* Salafis has also been fundamentally apolitical: prompt to engage in armed activity in the name of *jihad*, they have generally been uninterested in non-violent forms of activism and explicitly hostile to political action.

Neo-liberal economic policies were adopted in North Africa with Western approval, beginning in the early 1970s with President Sadat's *infitah* (opening). Structural adjustment programs were accepted later under Western pressure. The expansion of the contemporary Salafiyya movement occurred in the context of accelerated globalisation vigorously promoted by Western policy. The genesis of a *jihadi* wing of the Salafiyya movement occurred in the mobilisation for *jihad* in Afghanistan under Western sponsorship. And the aggravation of the already problematic relationship between the Islamist movements and North African states occurred in the context of the US-led war against Iraq in 1990-1991. Western policies played a major role, in other words, in all these developments, which simultaneously tended to diminish national sovereignty, weaken the national idea, and fuel the emergence of virulent forms of Islamic activism in North Africa.

These were the main circumstances and trends which formed the background to the dreadful eruptions of Islamist violence in the 1990s in Egypt and Algeria. That the events of the last decade or

[41] A characteristic example of Salafi preaching was provided by the late Fqih Zamzami (d. 1989) of Tangiers, who acquired notoriety and considerable popularity in Morocco in the 1970s and 1980s for his forthright denunciation of immorality and corruption and his criticism of the excessive inequality between rich and poor. But he never sought to found a political movement and never attacked the monarchy. See Henry Munson Jr., *Religion and Power in Morocco* (New Haven, London, 1993).

[42] ICG interview with Fateh Rebeîi, Algiers, 4 August 2003.

[43] ICG interview with Abderrahmane Chibane, Algiers, 13 July 2003.

more should have concentrated minds and prompted rethinking in Islamist circles is perhaps not surprising. But that this should have taken the form of a revival of the Islamic modernist outlook and agenda with its positive orientation to aspects of Western thought is remarkable and promising. How this has happened and how it should be evaluated will be discussed in subsequent briefings in this series that will concentrate on the individual countries of the region. But a crucial question can be posed at this juncture: will Western policy towards the region, in the context of the war on terrorism, encourage this new development or sabotage it?

V. CONCLUSION

Western policy makers need to re-think their conceptual categories and policy priorities where contemporary Islamic activism in North Africa is concerned. Refusal to distinguish between the different currents would not seriously jeopardise the promotion of democratic reform in conjunction with the prosecution of the war against terrorism in North Africa if the pursuit of these objectives could rely on the support of strong and broadly based secularist movements. Given the weakness of such movements, however, Western policy makers must either begin to appreciate the differences between the various strands of Islamic activism or abandon the democratisation objective for the foreseeable future.

In so far as their principal preoccupation since 11 September 2001 has been violence and terrorism, it is the apolitical rather than the political varieties of Islamic activism that have been the source of the problem. To posit a dichotomy between an innocuous Islam qua religion and an obnoxious (and potentially violent if not terroristic) political Islam is to employ a schema which does not apply to contemporary North Africa, where the question of how non-violent forms of Islamic activism are to be accommodated within the public sphere in an orderly manner must be faced.

To the extent that the presence of vigorous Islamic movements has furnished North African governments with grounds, or at least pretexts, for restricting or postponing indefinitely the substantial political reforms which Western governments have urged them to adopt, Western policy choices have themselves contributed to the impasse. To affirm this is not in itself to condemn those past choices, but to recognise that they have had awkward consequences for other governments. For Western policy discourse thereafter to frame the problems of violence, terrorism and the absence of democracy in Muslim countries in terms which render Muslim governments alone responsible is to encourage those government to nourish persistent suspicion of Western policy motives and advice. In particular, it is to encourage them to identify Western proposals for political reform with recipes for destabilisation, and to resist them.

One of the most important negative consequences of Western policy has been the way in which the moderating and restraining influence of the nationalist tradition on Islamist movements in North African countries has been undermined as this tradition itself has been weakened by external pressures. A shared national identity, a common loyalty to the nation state and a sense that it is able to decide and implement policy form the ground on which political and religious pluralism flourishes in Western democracies. Western policy makers should recognise that the advent of both pluralist democracy and religious tolerance in North Africa has been massively compromised by the weakening of the nationalist tradition in North African states, and they should reconsider their attitude and priorities in this regard.

Cairo/Brussels, 20 April 2004

APPENDIX

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

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