

## Disaggregating the Islamist Movements

Paper written by:

Mustapha Kamel Al-Sayyid,  
Professor of Political Science,  
Director, Center for the Study of Developing Countries,  
Cairo University

Presented to the Conference on  
Roots of Islamic Radicalism,  
Yale, New Haven,  
May 2004

How radical are Islamist movements?. The general perception of Islamist movements in the West ,if not Muslims in general, is that they are all radicals, in the sense that they accept no compromise with whom they believe to be their adversaries and are inclined to use violence in settling political disagreements with those who hold other beliefs or support opposed viewpoints. Such perception did exist long before events of September 11 in the US, was reinforced by recent deadly explosions in Spanish trains attributed to a group of Muslims mostly of North African origins. How far is such an understanding correct?. This is the major question addressed in this paper. It strives to answer this question by defining the notion of radicalism, then by examining the Islamist movements in a number of Muslim countries in order to find out whether such understanding applies to any of them or all of them, and concludes by suggesting the possible causes that some sections of such movements espouse beliefs and resorts to methods of action that could be described as “radical”. Examples of Islamist movements are drawn basically from Egypt, but also from countries far apart as Algeria, Pakistan and Malaysia in the hope of discovering through the comparison some clues to the roots of “radicalism” among their adherents. Egypt and Pakistan are chosen because they occupy prominent positions in the history of Islamic movements. Egypt was the scene of the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, correctly described as the Greatest modern Islamic movements. Pakistan is the country of Abul A’ala Maudoodi whose radical ideas inspired the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb, the ideological “godfather” of many radical Islamist movement.

### **The notion of “radicalism”**

The term “radical” is defined by Encyclopedia Britannica to mean in politics “one who desires extreme change of part or whole of the social order” (EB, 1994, ). The term was used in the British and French context originally to refer to different groups of people whose ideas

have been commonly accepted later on and became a mainstream principle of political life in Britain and France. The first person to be described as radical was Charles James Fox who called in England of 1797 for a “radical reform” which implied granting universal manhood suffrage. According to the same source the term was understood later to denote “all those who supported the movement for parliamentary reform”. (Ibid). In France, similarly the term was used before 1848 to refer to supporters of universal manhood suffrage as well as open advocacy for Republican principles. The term is given a broader meaning in the US where it denotes extremism of any type whether of the left or right. Communism is an example of the former and Fascism is an example of the latter (Ibid).

Radicalism , when it came into being, was understood by the public to mean being in total opposition to the existing order or to parts of it. Thus , the term referred only to the substance of the beliefs of those who are seen to be holding extreme ideological positions, not to their methods of action. In fact, the radicals in both UK and France used peaceful methods in their struggle to get their ideas accepted by the general public in their countries. They would mobilize voters, try to transform political parties to adopt their ideas political platforms they communicate to the concerned public.

The current usage of the term extends its meaning to encompass both extremism of ideas as well as of methods. Designating any one to be radical is of course a relative matter. Much depends on who makes such judgment. What is viewed to be “radical” by one person could be an ordinary political stand for another. However, all would agree that resort to non-peaceful methods in struggle for power or in settling differences is indeed a “radical “ approach to politics, even when it is justified by the repression used by incumbent regimes or foreign occupying powers.

It is perhaps in this sense that “radicalism of Islamic movements” in current discourse in the West is understood to refer to both their ideas and methods of action. In fact, the interest in such movements has increased not when their ideas were known, but when some of the organizations belonging to these movements proceeded to armed action against their governments as well as against foreign governments.

### **Classifying Components of Islamist movements**

The major argument in this paper is twofold, that radical Islamists constitute only a small fraction of the Islamist movement in any Muslim country, and that the power of this fraction could only be appreciated when it is seen as one component of a larger movement which indirectly sustains it and could continually replenish its ranks so long as the causes that led to the radicalism of this fraction persist. Demonstrating this argument would require a careful examination of all the other components of the Islamist movement and determining the kind of relations that exist among all of them.

It will be easy to appreciate the complexity of the Islamist movement if it is seen as a social movement. Social movements have been defined by many authors, but it would be sufficient for purposes of this paper to use the definition that the Encyclopaedia Britannica offers for them as “loosely organized but sustained campaign in support of a social goal, typically either the implementation or the prevention of a change in society’s structure or values. Although social movements differ in size, they are all collective” ( EB, 1999, electronic version).

The Islamist movement, thus understood, is composed of a large number of individuals and organizations, who perform different functions, hold varied beliefs or varied interpretations of the same belief, but they share in common the wish to see their societies conforming to a certain ideal which they take to be an authentic Islamic order.

Several authors have attempted to classify Islamist movements. A usual classification is the one that divides Islamists into moderates and radicals, militants, activists and sympathizers. A most recent study of Islamist movements in North Africa suggested that Islamists belong to one of five categories:

Salafiyah ilmiyyah –Scientific Salafiyya concerned with re-establishment of the moral order that prevailed at the time of the Prophet Mohammed and who does not engage in politics, but does not mind using violence in order to get other Muslims to observe truly Islamic practices

Salafiyya Jihadiyya Militant Salafists who “ attack Western targets in a campaign rationalized in traditional doctrinal terms as a conventional Jihad in defense of Islamic world against Western aggression” ,

Modernists Political activists who are inclined towards peaceful action and who are willing to use modern ideas , techniques and organizations in order to reach their goal of an Islamist state. Militants who believe that the only way to establish a truly Islamic society is through the use of armed struggle directed mostly against their own governments.

Finally Diaspora Muslim activists who try to maintain an Islamic identity in non-Muslim countries to which Muslims have migrated which are mostly Christian societies in Europe and North America.(ICG,2004, I, 3)

The authors of this classification used two criteria in classifying Islamist movements, mainly the substance of beliefs of adherents to these movements as well as their methods of action in pursuit of their specific goal.

Fred Von Der Mehden, describing Islamists in Malaysia, he divided them into four categories: radicals, traditionalists, fundamentalists and accommodationsits( F.V.Der Mehden in Esposito, 1987, 184) Such classifications are not adequate to portray the complexity of the Islamist

movements. They overlook the indirect contribution of two other strands in that movement, one coming from the ruling elites themselves, and the other is provided by apolitical Muslims. The first of these two groups help the Islamist movement by propagating through official media and institutions ideas glorifying a return to a “Golden Age of Islam” , thus unwittingly serving the cause of oppositional Islam by making some of the arguments of the latter acceptable to the large masses. The second group provides sympathy to the activists and militants as they are seen as good Muslims sacrificing their efforts and even their lives for a noble cause.

One may even suggest a fifth category made up of people who could be considered as “Secular Islamists”. They are the people who are willing to accept temporarily a separation of religion and state to advance the chances of Islamists’ domination of the political system of their countries. The Justice and Development Party of Turkey is the perfect example of such group at present. It does not even have the label Islamist in its official name. Given the history of people who formed this party and the specific characteristics of the Turkish political system, who could deny that such a party is in fact very much of an Islamist party, but which has to make necessary and painful concessions in order to survive.(R.Quinn Mecham, 2004)

Why would some people belong to one of these categories rather than any of the others? Why should some Muslims adopt the militant path as the way to realize their ideal Islamic society?. Many hypotheses could be suggested to provide some clues to the answer of the second question. The following analysis would emphasize three variables that might be relevant in this respect, mainly, the impact of particular interpretations of Islam , the social background of adherents to the different categories and finally the type of political system under which Islamist movements operate, and particularly the mode of integration of the Islamists into a legitimate political process.

The four countries from which examples of Islamist movements are chosen in this paper are selected because all have important Islamist movements, but they differed in their mode of integrating the movement in their political systems. They also dealt with the tension provoked by the rise of the Islamist movement in different ways, and their ruling elites seem to be immune for the time being from any serious threat to its power. They serve therefore as a field of study of the various conditions that could give rise to Islamic radicalism or could do the opposite by attenuating such radicalism.

### **Establishment Islam and the role of the State.**

In all four countries, the state played a crucial role in the rise of the Islamist movement, particularly its activist faction. This role was played out in different ways, some of which were quite direct , others, no less important, were carried out indirectly. The government of Egypt under President Anwar El-Sadat released Muslim Brothers from prison and allowed them to

publish a monthly and to take part in political activities in the hope of counter-balancing the influence of the Nasserites and the left. The latter were critical of Sadat's policies, particularly what seemed to be a deviation from policies of his predecessor Gamal Abdel-Nasser. In Algeria, it is claimed that President Chadli Bendjedid was hoping to use the Islamists to limit powers of the ruling FLN, or National Liberation Front (A.Basbous,2000,119). In Pakistan, several Presidents, particularly Bhutto(1971-1977) and Zia ul-Haq (1977- ) made concessions to the Islamist movement to the point of adopting laws inspired by the movement's interpretation of Islamic Shari'a ( Kemal A.Faruki in J.Esposito, 1987,57-76). Finally in Malaysia, young leaders of the Islamist movement ( Pan Malay Islamic Party) were integrated by Mahatir Mohammed, the former Malaysian prime minister in both the government and the ruling party UMNO (Malay-Muslim United Malay National Organization). Anwar Ibrahim the former leader of the the Islamic Youth Organization had occupied several ministerial posts in the cabinets of Mahathir, ranging from culture, youth and sport, , agriculture, education and finally becoming vice-premier for the economy before his disgrace and trial immediately after the Asian financial crisis of 1997 (F.V. Der Mehden in J.Esposito, 1987, 183).

Besides, all four states helped the Islamists indirectly by accepting some of their demands. They thus introduced legislative measures and adopted policies in response to calls by Islamists. They accepted implicitly that part of the Islamists' platform. President Sadat got the media to remind the Egyptian people that his name was Mohammed Anwar El-Sadat. He called himself the Pious President. He also coined the slogan that development of Egypt should be based on Science and Faith. One year before his assassination , he got the constitution of the country to be amended so that its second article would elevate principles of Islamic Shari'a to a basic source of legislation. In Algeria, Houary Boumediene, Algeria's second president allowed the religious hierarchy to enjoy large influence within ministries of Education, Religious Affairs and Justice. His successor Shadli Benjedid introduced in 1984 a family code that reflected Islamists' conservative interpretation of Islam on personal status matters (Basbous, OP.cit,142). A full program of Islamisation of state and society was gradually carried out in Pakistan under both Bhutto and Zia ul-Haq. In Malaysia , the government emphasized the Islamic character of the state in many ways. The Constitution of 1957 provided for Islam as a religion of the federation, the Sultan to be the head of Islamic religion, and protection of Muslims from proselytizing while allowing fro freedom of worship for other religions. Some states adopted statutes that punish Muslims for deviating from moral teachings of their religion. The Federal government attempted however to develop a synthesis between Islam and modern practices and institutions particularly in education and economic fields ( Der Mehden, op.cit.183-198). Governments of the four countries did not want to leave interpretation of Islam to be the monopoly of opposition groups that claim to be striving to build an authentic Islamic society. All had at their disposal religious institutions and members of the clergy who were willing to offer them, very often but not always , the kind of interpretation they like. The Egyptian government, under the monarchy before 1952 and

under the republican regime since 1953, could use a number of institutions for this purpose. These institutions included century-old ones that were brought under its control gradually with the coming of a modern state institutions to the country at the time of Mohammed Ali in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as new organizations that it established in order to extend its control over religious affairs. The old institutions included both Al-Azhar University, whose chief is appointed by the President of the Republic, before the posts of rector and chief scholar<sup>1</sup> were separated under Gamal Abdel-Nasser in 1961. The second post is that of the Mufti, who is the final authority over the interpretation of Islamic religious matters. One of the new institutions that were created by the revolutionary regime of army officers in 1953 was the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, which is oriented more towards foreigners, explaining Islam to them and bringing young people to study Islam in Egypt. Interestingly enough, the first head of this council was Anwar El-Sadat, who became President of Egypt seventeen years later. Another new institutions was the Ministry of Waqf- religious properties- which came into being before the revolution of 1952 for the specific purpose of running religious properties. The head of this ministry was usually a member of the clergy, whose views counted also as being credible reading of religious texts.yet a third institutions was the College of Islamic Studies that was expected to offer a modernist interpretation of religion

These institutions offered the government of Egypt whatever it wanted from them. Shaykh Al-Azhar. The grand professor of Al-Azhar claimed in 1962 that fighting Israel was an Islamic duty. The person occupying the same post argued in 1979 that making peace with Israel was quite compatible with Islamic teachings. A minister of Waqf lost his life in 1977 when he published a book arguing against claims of a militant Islamist organization that the government of a Muslim country must rule on the basis of Shari'a, otherwise it would be usurping powers of Allah. Members of the clergy belonging to these institutions, and who interpret religious teachings the government way, would find pages of newspapers, most of which indirectly controlled by the government as well as waves and screens of the electronic media, also owned by the government, open to them to propagate views on religion acceptable to the government.

Government 's reliance on such institutions to offer a mantle of religious legitimacy to her own policies and actions allowed these institutions to wield a measure of autonomy. Some of their members may express views not to the liking of the government, with the government tolerating such autonomy for a time, until the person dies or is replaced by another clergyman more sympathetic to government views. That was the case of the late Shaykh Gad Al-Haq who led AL-Azhar institution in the 1990's and expressed views at variance with wishes of the government on a number of issues, including interest payment by banks, which he considered incompatible with Islamic teachings. He was opposed on this matter by Shaykh Tantawi , who occupied then the post of Mufti. The government waited for the death of Shaykh Gad Al-Haq and replaced him by Shaykh Tantawi. ( CPSS, 1995, 76).

---

<sup>1</sup> This second post is held by a senior member of the clergy who is presumed to be an authority over r-religious affairs. His name in Arabic is Al-Ostadth al-Akbar , the grand professor-

One would find similar institutions in the other three countries, although they would normally attach great importance to the views of Muslim clergy in Egypt because of the contribution of Egyptian institutions, particularly Al-Azhar, one of the world's oldest universities, in training religious scholars and clergy people for other Muslim countries. In fact, the teaching of Arabic in post-independence Algeria was carried out by Egyptians, many of whom were either graduates of Al-Azhar university, members of or sympathizers with the ideas of the Muslim Brothers, Egypt's mainstream politico-religious organization. Government-controlled religious institutions in Malaysia included the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs (founded in 1968), the Islamic Research Center and Institute of Islamic Mission and Training (1974), besides the department of religion of the Prime Minister's Office (1976). (Deliar Noer, in M.B. Hooker ed. 1988, 199). All these institutions supplement the role of governors, Sultans of the different negeri (states) who are supposed to be guardians of the Islamic religion. (Ibid, 199). In Pakistan, the function of providing the state's own interpretation of Islam was entrusted to a new organization established by Ayub Khan in 1959, namely the Institute of Islamic Research, which was initially headed by Fazlur Rahman who became later professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Chicago. Rahman was entrusted by Ayub to offer a more modernist interpretation of religion to counter the relatively conservative one articulated by Islamist parties, particularly the Jamaat-I-Islami (Islamic Party). (S.V.R. Nasr, in J.L. Esposito, 1997, 141-145).

In their attempts to provide their own interpretation of Islam, the four governments were responding to specific situations which varied from one country to the other. The Egyptian government was eager under Nasser to use Islam mainly as a tool of her foreign policy, and – under Sadat – to gain a measure of legitimacy to undermine nationalist-socialist foundations of legitimacy of the Nasserites. Algerian leaders until 1991 considered the enhancement of the teaching of Islamic religion to be a way of asserting the country's national identity, since the Algerians were called Muslims by the French before independence. A similar situation prevailed in Pakistan as well which separated from India over the issue of religion. As in Algeria, to be a Pakistani, meant to be a Muslim as well. Finally, Islam was very important in Malaysia as a basis for solidarity among the Malays in their attempt to gain for themselves what they would consider a fair share of their country's power and wealth. They believed that their share was disproportionately smaller than that of citizens of Chinese and to a lesser extent Indian origins. (Von Der Mehden, Ibid, 183).

### **Apolitical Islam or Islam in daily life**

Foreign visitors to Muslim countries since the 1980's would soon remark the increasing manifestations of the powerful presence of Islam in the daily life of their citizens. The external

signs of such presence are numerous. A large number of females, young and old, are veiled. More mosques are being built. Observance of religious rites is rising. More people fast during the month of Ramadan. The sale of alcoholic drinks is banned during this month and restaurants and coffee shops are closed during the day time. The Friday prayer is attended by large numbers of people who would crowd streets of major cities as the mosques cannot accommodate all of them. The number of Muslims who go to Mecca for Hajj-pilgrimage- has put much pressures on Saudi authorities that they decided to fix a quota for each country not to be exceeded. Islamic charitable associations are mushrooming, many of them use the mosque as a center for their medical, educational and social activities, without necessarily getting an official permission from the government to undertake. The number of religious books on sale exceeds in some countries the number of books dealing with other matters. Recital of the Quran is often heard from many stores at different times of the day particularly in the morning.

This phenomenon of the “return of the sacred” has been described, if not necessarily documented under all its manifestations by many authors for the countries under study. The causes of this upsurge in external manifestations of religiosity have been an object of wide speculation. There was no common explanation for this phenomenon that would apply to all Muslim countries and Muslim communities. It was attributed- among other variables- to a profound economic, social and political crisis in Egypt in the wake of the country’s military defeat in the third Arab-Israeli war of 1967(Carlyle Murphy,2002,25-40), to a deliberate effort on the part of some clergymen to get Algerians de abide by correct rules of Islamic behavior (Servaine Labat 1995199-208), and to determination of the Malays to affirm their specific identity in the context of inter-ethnic competition for power and wealth in Malaysia ( Roy F.Ellen in M.B.Hooker, 1988, 53-58). Some of these causes would probably apply to several countries, as the feeling of a profound moral and social crisis.

However, a legitimate question, in the context of a paper on the Islamist movement is the extent to which such “Apolitical Islam” relates to “political Islam”? Is it correct to include apolitical Islam as one of the components of Islamist movements?. The answer is not easy. It could be argued that it is from these apolitical masses that the sympathizers with and potential voters for the Islamist movement are found. It is also this collective adherence and strict observance of Islamic teachings which drives otherwise “secularist” governments, as those of Sadat ,Bhutto and Mahathir to make the effort to demonstrate their Islamic credentials in the face of a skeptical public in their respective countries.

#### The Activists or the Mainstream Islamic Organization

Despite this presumed complexity of the Islamist movement, the public as well as specialists would tend to identify the Islamist movement in each of the four countries with one mainstream organization, believed to be “the mother organization” from which all other organizations split or founded by its former members. Thus the Islamist movement in Egypt is championed by the Muslim Brothers, in Pakistan by the Jamaat-e-Islami, known as Pakistan

Muslim League, in Algeria by Front Islamique du Salut – Front of Islamic Salvation- and In Malaysia by the Parti Islam se Malaysia or the Islamic party of Malaysia. Such organizations are correctly described as mainstream for several reasons. They attract the largest number of members, compared to other Islamist organizations. They act as umbrella organizations , sponsoring other bodies undertaking activities in many varied fields. When they contest elections , they either come as second only to the ruling party in their countries, or even capture the majority of votes in fair and free elections. In fact, as it is well-known, one of these organizations did already defeat a ruling party in local and regional elections in June 1990. It was poised to capture the majority of seats in the parliament but was deprived of its electoral victory through a military coup d’etat that suspended indefinitely a second ballot in January 1992. This latter organization known as FIS remains banned in Algeria till the present time. Another mainstream organization , namely the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt is also legally banned, although the Egyptian governments under Presidents Anwar El-Sadat-(1970-1981)- and Hosny Mubarak preferred to keep it in the “gray zone”, allowing it to operate, contesting legislative elections as well as those of professional associations, while continuing to harass its members all the time. Finally, these organizations are considered mainstream as they adopt ideologies and policies accommodating the political system existing in their countries, not sharing the view of other Islamist organizations which do not see the point of participating in elections which they would not be allowed to win. They thus embark upon armed struggle as a way of seizing government power .

These organizations are willing to adapt their ideological platforms and tactics to changing conditions in their own countries. The Muslim Brothers in Egypt declined to participate in elections before the Revolution of July 1952, and opted for the status of an association rather than a political party. Its leadership maintained this position throughout the 1970’s after the release by the late President Anwar El\_Sadat of its leaders from prison. However, they decided since 1984 to contest parliamentary elections and would like restrictions on the formation of political parties included in the Law of Political Parties in Egypt of 1977 to be lifted, so that they would be recognized as a party.<sup>2</sup> The Muslim League of Pakistan was allegedly opposed to the establishment of the state of Pakistan in the early years of the Pakistan Republic, but it changed this position later. The PAS in Malaysia moved to emphasize less religious questions following its electoral defeat in 1986. Finally , even the FIS of Algeria , while banned by the Algerian government, came in 1998 to condemn armed struggle which was launched by many of its members following the indefinite postponement of a second round of elections in 1992.

Definitely, FIS of Algeria was electorally the most successful of Islamist organizations. It won the majority of votes in all electoral districts which have more than 20 000 inhabitants, including of course the large cities. It got the following results

---

<sup>2</sup> The Law of Political Parties in Egypt .No. 40 for 1977 bars the establishment of parties that discriminate among people on the basis of religion.. See The Government Printing Authority. Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt. Cairo-1991P.106, Article 4(Third)

Size of electoral district	% votes obtained by FIS	% votes obtained by FLN
Above 50 000 inhabitants	93.6	3.2
30 000-49000	89	5.5
20 000-29000	75.8	10
10 000 - 19000	63.6	23
Less than 10 000	42.8	43.4

Source: Labat.Op.cit.179.

The big electoral districts included 28 of the 30 big cities of Algeria. FIS emerged after these elections as the most popular party among urban population of the country. Its electoral successes were repeated a year and half later when legislative elections were held. FIS got 47.27 % of the vote and 188 seats in the first round of that election in 1991. It needed only twenty eight seats to be able to get an absolute majority in the 430 members People's Assembly if a second round were held on January 12, 1992. The Algerian military command , concerned that its material and political privileges would be lost if a second round is won by FIS, it overthrew President Shadli Benjedid and postponed indefinitely the second round and outlawed FIS. The military rulers of Algeria did not allow the electoral process to be restored until 1995, making sure that FIS would not be legalized again even after they agreed to release its leaders from prison.( Labat, op.cit.223). However, other Islamist parties were allowed to contest presidential and legislative elections held since the restoration of the electoral process in 1995. In the last of these elections, two of the Islamist parties authorized by the Algerian government , namely the Movement of the Peace Society and the Movement of Islamic Renaissance got 7% and 0.6% of the seats in the Popular National Assembly respectively corresponding to 38 and 1 seats . This share of the 380 seats of the Assembly was far less than their share in past legislative elections when the first had 69 deputies and the second 33 deputies in the Assembly elected in 1997. ( www.electionworld.org) Judging by these results, one would say that support for these parties is declining in Algeria. FIS remains outlawed.

Mainstream Islamist parties in Pakistan are only second to FIS in terms of their electoral successes. They constitute the largest bloc in the National Assembly of Pakistan. Three of them control no less than 46.4% of the seats in the Assembly elected in 2002. The largest of these is definitely the Pakistan Muslim League( Quaid-e- Azam) which got 25.7% of the seats ( 69 out of 342) , followed by the United Action Council of Pakistan with 11.3% of the seats ( 53 ) , and the other faction of the PML led by former prime Minister Nawaz Sharif ( 9.4% and 14 seats). Dissensions among these parties do not allow them to turn their parliamentary majority into a coalition government with two other smaller Islamist parties as well as other parties that could agree with them on a common program.(electionworld.org).

The two other Islamist organizations in Malaysia and Egypt fare less well in elections , though for different reasons. The PAS of Malaysia got only 15.8% of the seats ( 7 out of 219 in the last legislative elections in that country held on March 21, 2004. The Muslim Brothers won 17 out of 444 seats in the People's Assembly elections held in Egypt in October-November 2000. It is true on the other hand that the two parties come second to the ruling parties in the two countries, namely the coalition known as Barisan Nasional led by UMNO in Malaysia and the National Democratic party In Egypt. Although there were some complaints about fairness of elections in Malaysia, these elections would be judged to be far fairer compared to elections in Egypt characterized by the heavy handed methods used by security forces which even prevent people from going to vote in electoral districts with large support for the Muslim Brothers. Besides, PAS had overwhelming support in three states in Northern Malaysia and it could run governments in different periods in these states. Muslim Brothers in Egypt have not been allowed to turn their overwhelming local support into control of local administration in any district again due to heavy handed methods used by security forces.

By accepting to contest elections and to abandon the use of armed struggle in their quest for power, such parties do not meet one criteria of radicalism. It is true that opponents of these organizations often accuse them of either engaging in violent resistance to their governments or being sympathetic to other Islamist groups who tend to use armed struggle as a method of action. Such charges were leveled at the Muslim Brothers, PAS and also FIS immediately after the annulment of the legislative election of 1991-1992. However, none of these charges have been proven in the last decade for the MB and PAS , and probably also for FIS since the amnesty announced by President Bouteflika since he came to power in 1999.

The ideology of these groups has gone through a major transformation since they came into being. All of them seem to accommodate themselves to the existing political system in their own countries, although they remain committed to the goal of establishing an Islamic state, where Shari'a is the major , if not the unique , source of legislation. It is the ambiguity surrounding their interpretation of Shari'a which mobilizes their opponents and turn important sections of the middle classes against them , to the point of welcoming an authoritarian government rather than seeing them in power. This is particularly the case in Algeria, Egypt as well as Pakistan.

The most recent statement of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt of their ideas of reform comes a long way from their past statements , not only of the 1940's , but even those of the 1970's in which they rejected party systems. The statement declared by Mr. Mahdi "Akef, the new General Guide, asserts commitment of the Brothers to a number of principles including respect of the popular will, alternation of power through the ballot box, freedom of establishment of political parties, people's representation through an assembly elected regularly for a definite period of time, freedom of opinion "within public order and morality and fundamental foundations of society". Their ideas on economic reform as explained in that statement are close to the welfare state known in Capitalist countries in which state

ownership is limited to public utilities and “vital establishments”. The statement explains rights of women , without recognizing the principle of complete equality between men and women. It does the same also when it considers the status of Copts, who should have the same rights and obligations as Muslims. Very little of this part of the statement could be considered radical. Definitely, liberal critics of the Brotherhood would have liked them to state unequivocally their respect for equality of the sexes and the principle of citizenship as a basis for defining rights and duties of all the people who belong to the national community with no distinction as to sex or religion. Qualifying freedom of opinion to be within “public order and morals and fundamental foundations of society” leaves the door open for restricting such right when its exercise is arbitrarily

viewed by the government to be in violation of these limits. However, critics of the Brothers found most disturbing the declaration by the Brothers that their goal is” to strive to establish “Allah’s Shari’a” since it is the Brothers’ belief that it is the only effective way out of all the domestic and external problems suffered by Egypt. This goal could be attained through “ the formation of the Muslim individual, the Muslim home, the Muslim government, and the state that would lead all Muslim states , to bring them together, restore their glory, recover their lost territory and stolen land, and carry the banner of the religious call so that the world would be a happy place under Islam’s good and teachings”.(Ikhwan on line, march 3, 2004).

All such statements leave much room for interpretation, and overlook the right of Non-Muslims to lead their own lives according to their own beliefs in a Muslim country. This view was already expressed by Mr.Hussein Abdel-Razeq, Secreatry General of the leftist Tajammo’ Party in Egypt. Dr.Essam El\_Erian, a leading spokesman of the Brothers replied to this critique arguing that political parties and movements of the country should emphasize what they have in common, while maintaining each their specific views on other matters. ( Al-Ahali, March 2004).

This kind of ambiguity is to be found as well in the political platforms of the mainstream Islamist organizations in other countries . Thus, the site of the Pakistan Muslim League explains the political framework of Islam to be based on three principles of “towhid (Oneness of Allah), risala (Prophethood) and Khilafa (Caliphate). The last of these principles means :

“representation. Man , according to Islam, is the representative of Allah on earth, His vice-gerent: that is to say, by virtue of the powers delegated to him by Allah, and within the limits prescribed, he is required to exercise Divine authority”( .jamaat.org/islam/humanrightsPolitical.html).

The document of the Pakistan Muslim League goes on to say that this understanding of Khilafa is the point of departure of democracy in Islam. But it hastens to add that there are differences between Islamic democracy and Western democracy.

“ the latter is based on the concept of popular sovereignty, while the former rests on the principle of popular Khilafa. In Western democracy the people are sovereign; in Islam sovereignty is vested in Allah and the people are his caliphs or representatives. In the former, the people make their own; in the latter they have to follow and obey

the laws ( Shari' a) given by Allah through his Prophet. In one, the government undertakes to fulfill the will of the people; in the other the government and the people have to fulfill the will of Allah”

(ibid).

Many Muslims have no problem being governed by the Will of Allah. The problem is that the interpretation of this will is not a matter of personal knowledge of and aptitude to understand God's teachings. Experience has demonstrated that in many Muslim countries few clergymen claim to have the monopoly of such privilege. Their interpretation led to serious violations of rights of Muslims. The Example of Wilayat Al-Faqih in Iran is quite eloquent in this regard.

In another part of this statement , the explanation of rights of non-Muslims living in a Muslim state renders their status to be far inferior to that of a full citizen.

“Islam has also laid down certain rights for non-Muslims who may be living within the boundaries of an Islamic state and these rights necessarily form part of the Islamic constitutions. In Islamic terminology, such non-Muslims are called dhimmis (the covenanted), implying that the Islamic state has entered into a covenant with them and guaranteed their protection”

The statement does indeed say that the dhimmi's life, property and honor are to be respected and protected

“in exactly the same way as that of a Muslim citizen .Nor is there difference between a Muslim and non-Muslim citizen in respect of civil or criminal law”( Ibid).

The statement stopped short of recognizing complete equality between Muslims and non-Muslims who share life in the same country. Nor does it mention equality in political rights.

It would not be difficult to find the same ambiguity in platforms of either FIS or PAS. This point has been well-elaborated in other writings and there is no need to elaborate it further for these two organizations in this paper.

The mainstream organizations strive to present themselves as poly-class organizations. Although they do not use the class terminology, they like to be seen as integrative bodies, the authentic representative of the Islamic Umma, with no distinction as to the social status, color or language. However, in practice they are more representative of certain sections of their societies than others. In Egypt, the Muslim Brothers have a major constituency within the middle class with its two fractions, the educated professional people as well as private entrepreneurs. Professional syndicates of medical doctors, engineers, scientists and even lawyers and associations of university professors have been strong bastions of the Brothers.(CPSS, 1995). In Pakistan, similar groups seem to be sympathetic to the Muslim League. The directory of the League gives a list of organizations and associations “conforming with Jamaat –e-Islami”. These include religious scholars, boy students and girl students, lawyers, farmers, religious boy students, business community homeo doctors, workers and agril-scientists.(Ibid.[www.jamaat.org/directory/affiliates.html](http://www.jamaat.org/directory/affiliates.html)).

As for Malaysia, PAS appeals more to certain categories of Malays, particularly in the states of Kelantan and Terengganu, characterized by slower economic development compared to other states ( J.C.Yong Liow, 2004, 362). Finally in Algeria FIS found much support within the Arabic speaking lower middle class and urban poor (Labat,178-185).

### **Islamic Militants**

The fourth component of Islamist movements is truly radical in both ideology and methods of action. Islamists who belong to this trend do not accept any compromise with Western-style parliamentary systems, as they do not believe in elections as the way to realize their ideal of a Muslim society. They tend to view non-Muslims as enemies of Islam who should not be trusted. They believe that they should be either eliminated from Muslim societies or accept an inferior status. In their ideal Islamic state, teachings of Islam are strictly interpreted, with those who deviate from such teachings subject to punishment.

Examples of such groups abound in the four states under study. They include several groups in Egypt, the two most famous ones are the Islamic Group and the Jihad Organization. They were preceded by the Technical Military College group(1975), the Group of Muslims, otherwise known as Takfir wa al-Hijrah (1977). They gave rise also either to splinter groups, or groups of their members acting under different names. In Pakistan, the best known of these groups are the movement of Mujahedeen, Islamic Armed Jihad and Jaish Mohammed who operate mostly in Kashmir. Armed Islamist groups in Algeria made their presence felt even before the rise of FIS, but they became more active in the 1990', following cancellation of the legislative elections of December 1991-January 1992. The most active of these groups were the Armed Islamic Movement –(MIA), the Army of Islamic Salvation (AIS), the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and finally the Salafi Group for Call and Fight . Even in Malaysia, some Islamists took up arms against other ethnic minorities in the country. Malaysian Islamist radicals of this type were mostly members of the Islamic Group which operates in several countries in South East Asia and another group known as Al-Ma'unah.

What these groups have in common is their relatively small size compared to the mainstream Islamist organizations in their own countries. Their members are mostly younger than those who join the mainstream organizations. The two features are dictated by their involvement in armed struggle. They are often subject to harassment by authorities, perhaps with the exception of Pakistani groups that operated in Kashmir until very recently when the Pakistani government of General Musharraf started to restrict their activities in the aftermath of its reconciliation with India. Members of a large organization involved in armed struggle are easily identified by security forces. Old people are not usually fit for the kind of armed activities which are undertaken by members of these organizations. They are also more reluctant to engage in such activities. They have more to lose, in terms of job, wealth , family support and loss of freedom at an advanced age. The study by Nemat Guenena of the Jihad members in Egypt of the 1980's indicated that out of 101 individuals who were tried by Egyptian State Security Tribunal 44.55% were students, and 24.75% were professionals.

Workers accounted for 14.85% and farmers for no more than 1.98%. The three other categories included shopkeepers(5.96%) Police and military ( 3.96%) and unemployed (3.96%). Most of them were between 20-30 years of age , with 42.57 % being between 20-25 and 34.65% between 25-30. Those who were younger than 20 years were only 8.91% while those older than 30 were 12.87% ( N.Guenena,1986).

Similarities among these organizations probably are limited to these two features. An examination of their social backgrounds and ideological stands suggests more differences than commonalities. The leaders of Egyptian groups tended to come from middle class backgrounds, with university education. Their rank and file could come from more modest backgrounds, with the majority of them coming from some of the poorest regions of Upper Egypt. . Accounts of the social background of Algerian militants of MIA,,AIS or GIA suggest that they come from much poorer background, in Northern Algeria with the latter including not a small number of former criminals.(Martin Stone,1997,189, Olivier Roy, 1994,48-59).

Egyptian militants, as well as their Pakistani fellows were originally influenced by ideas that were articulated by both the Pakistani Abul A'ala Maudoodi and Sayyid Qutb. Maudoodi coined the term Hakimiyyah-Government of God-, which was borrowed later by Sayyid Qutb. This concept means that the truly legitimate government in any Muslim country is that of Allah, ruled by the Islamic Shari'a. A secularist government is thus viewed to be usurping the authority of God, and should therefore be removed, by the force of arms, in a holy jihad, if necessary. Local influences and interpretations were added to this basic notion. Shaikh Omar Abdel-Rahman- now in prison in the US and young leaders of Al-Jihad incorporated ideas that had originally been expressed in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century by the Muslim scholar Ibn Taymiya, who was calling on Muslims to fight the Mogul invasion of their countries, (Sayyid Ahmed,1991, Qutb, 1981) Besides such ideas, Pakistani militants were moved also by nationalism in their fight against the Indian troops in the Indian controlled part of Kashmir. Traditions of the fight against the French influenced Algerian militants in the 1990's., as well as the will to force the Algerian government to restore the legality of FIS(Stone, 179) .Finally, notions of ethno-nationalism inspired actions by Malayan militant groups.( Von Der Mehden, 184-185).

It is important also to distinguish several ideological stands within the Islamist militant faction of the Islamist movement. One strand believes that the major thrust of the movement should be the fight against impious governments in Muslim countries, governments that claim to respect Islam, but they do in fact, according to this strand, deviate from the teachings of religion and even persecute Muslim activists. Another strand would direct its energies against fellow Muslims, who are seen to be disregarding the instructions of Islam, and who engage in un-Islamic behavior such as drinking alcohol , gambling , even mixing with girls in public places or allowing their women to go out into the streets unveiled. The third trend is to be manifested in Muslim countries with large non-Muslim population or which are ruled by a foreign non-Muslim power. Armed struggle in the latter case would be directed against members of the minorities or non-Muslim foreigners.

## Conclusions

This brief analysis of the different components of the Islamist movement has demonstrated the complexity of the movement, in terms of its composition, structure, ideology and methods of action. It makes it abundantly clear that it would be misleading to assimilate all factions of the Islamist movement in any country with the militant faction that opts for the use of armed struggle in its quest for power. Such faction does not draw large numbers of Muslims. Its views on religion and its methods are usually abhorred by the majority of Muslims.

The relative importance of each of these factions varies from one Muslim country to the other, and even within the same country from one period to the other. Despite the perception conveyed by the world media, it is the activist mainstream faction which is mounting in influence in most Muslim countries at present. The militant faction has not been able to win power in most countries where it has been active. Definitely not in any of the countries under study. Moreover, it has been engaging in self-critique in some of these countries, notably in Egypt, where it has renounced its former methods of armed struggle, declaring that adoption of such methods was an error of judgment (Al-Sayyid, 2002). The mainstream trend has made electoral gains in Turkey, Pakistan, Morocco, Bahrain, and Kuwait to name only a few countries where it has emerged as the most popular political party or the second popular. It has not been able to make similar gains in other countries, because its members are continually harassed by their governments. Egypt is one of those countries where the government is concerned that once Islamists are allowed to take part in a fair and free election, they would increase their presence in legislatures and local elected bodies, if not achieve a landslide electoral victory.

Despite differences in outlook and methods of action, each component of the Islamist movement feeds the others. Apolitical Islamists would probably vote for activist Islamists. The establishment discourse on Islam, meant to discourage people from supporting activist and militant Islamists, renders their theses about the credibility of Islam as a foundation for the social, political, economic and moral order more popular among Muslim masses. An activist could become a militant when peaceful political action by Islamists is banned by the government as was the case in Algeria in the aftermath of annulment of legislative election of 1991-1992. Militants also could move in the opposite direction to become leaders of mainstream movements, as the case of former members of the Islamic group in Egypt who became leaders of the mainstream Muslim Brotherhood adequately demonstrates.

It is not easy to suggest the conditions which give rise to each of these factions. Establishment Islam is definitely a reaction against the rise of activist and militant Islam. Three of the countries under study, namely Egypt, Algeria and Pakistan share a deteriorating socio-economic situation of their middle classes, with no prospect of any appreciable improvement in the near future. Two of these countries restrict activities of the mainstream Islamist movement, while the democratic process is on hold in the third country i.e. namely Pakistan. It is difficult to see how the accommodating ideology of the mainstream trend of the

Islamist movement could gain more grounds under such circumstances. If the situation of the middle classes does not improve in these countries, their governments would most likely face a resurgence of the activities of militant Islamist groups in the years to come.

In this respect, it is very interesting that the only country of the four, where the mainstream Islamist movement has suffered a setback recently, is Malaysia, which is economically the most successful of the three four countries.

If the fortunes of the Islamist movement vary from one country to the other, it is wishful thinking to believe that such movement is going to vanish from the surface of the earth any time soon. Social scientists have long abandoned theories which suggested that secularism would accompany or follow modernization. At the time when US President is viewed to be newly-born Christian, and is supported by Evangelical groups, it would not make sense to dream that other peoples, who do not enjoy the material prosperity and post-modernity of US, would abandon their religions, or become less attached to it because this is conceivably the wish of US administration. An Islamist movement would continue to exist so long as there are Muslims. The accommodating trend in this movement would gain ascendancy if the domestic and external conditions that favor the rise of the militant trend, disappear or are alleviated.

Finally, it is true that this paper did not consider one dimension of the Islamist movement, which some would quickly acknowledge as an integral component of it, namely its international connections. It is well-known for example that the Muslim Brotherhood is an international movement as well, with organizational links bringing its country chapters together. Osama Bin Laden has established in Afghanistan an "Islamic Worldwide Front to Combat Zionism and Crusaders" and its actions have been tragically experienced in many countries, in Africa, North America, the Middle East and Asia. While recognizing the importance of this dimension of the Islamist movement, it has not been possible to dwell on it in this paper, for the lack of reliable information..

## References

- [.jamaat.org/islam/humanrightsPolitical.html](http://jamaat.org/islam/humanrightsPolitical.html)).
- Fred.V.Der Mehden, (1987) " Malaysia :Islam and Multiethnic Politics" in John L.Esposito. Islam in Asia: Religion, Politics and Society.New York and London.Oxford University Press.
- Kemal A.Faruki, 1987 "Pakistan : Islamic Government and Society" in J.Esposito,. Op.cit53-78.
- Nemat .Guenena(1986). The Jihad; AN Islamic Alternative in Egypt. Cairo papers in Social Science. Vol.9. Monograph 2, Summer

- S.V.R.Nasr, ( 1997) "Islamic Opposition in the Political Process" in J.L.Esposito, ed.. Political Islam, Revolution, Radicalism or Reform,Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.Pp135-158
- [www.electionworld.org](http://www.electionworld.org))
- www.jamaat.org/directory/affiliates.html Carlyle Murphy,2002,25-40
- Al-Ahali, April 4, 2004.P.12
- Al-Ahram's Center for Political and Strategic Studies.CPSS (1995) Taqir al-halah al-diniyyah-Report on the Religious Condition. Cairo, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.).
- Antoine Basbous ( 2000) L'Islamisme, une revolution avortée. Paris: Hachette Litterature.
- Carlyle Murphy(2003). Passion for IslamShaping the Middle East: The Egyptian Experience.New York:Scribner.
- Deliar Noer ( 1998) "Contemporary Political Dimesnion of Islam ",in M.B.Hooker ed.Islam in South-East Asia E.J.Brill Leiden, New York Kobenhavn and Koln.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1999
- Hay'at al-Matabi' al-amiriyah-The Government Printing Authority.( 1991) Dostour Jumhuriyyat misr al-'arabiyyah-Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt. Cairo-)
- International Crisis Group(20 April 2004) Middle East and North Africa Briefing. Islamism in North Africa I : The legacies of History
- Islamism in North Africa II: Egypt's Opportunity. Cairo/Brussels.
- Joseph Chin .Yong Liow, (2004) "Exigency or Expediency? Contextual zing Political Islam and the PAS Challenge in Malaysian Politics". Third World Quarterly .Vol 25.No.2. Pp.359-373.
- Martin Stone.(1997).The Agony of Algeria. London: Hurst &Company.
- Mustapha Kamel AL-Sayyid ( 2003) The Other Face of the Islamist Movement. Working Papers. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.No.33. January 2003.
- Olivier Roy.(1994). The Failure of Political Islam. Translated by Carol Volk. Cambridge< Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- R.Quinn Mecham, (2004) "From the ashes of virtue, a promise of light: The transformation of political Islam in Turkey" .Third World Quarterly.Volume 25,No.2.Pp.339-358.
- Rifaat Sayed Ahned ( 1991) AL-Nabiy al-musallah1-Al-Rafidoun.-The Militant Prophet –1, The Rejectionists. London:Raid El\_Rayyes Books Ltd., Qutb, 1981
- Roy F.Ellen(1988) " Social Theory,Ethnography and the Understanding of practical Islam in South-East Asia" in M.B.Hooker,op.cit.Pp50-91.
- Servaine Labat (1995) Les islamistes algeriensEntre les urnes et le maquis. Paris:Seuil.
- www.Ikhwan on line, March 3, 2004