Islamist Mass Movements,

External Actors and

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A research report by

Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI),
the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)
and Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

Contributors

Tawfiq Aclimandos, Rosa Balfour, Nathan Brown, Battistina Cugusi,
Philippe Droz-Vincent, Khaled Hroub, Miquel Pellicer, Daniela Pioppi, Eva Wegner

Preface

Over the past few decades the role of Islamist movements and parties in the internal political life and foreign relations of Middle Eastern and Northern African countries has attracted increasing attention from policymakers, scholars and experts.

Historically, Islamist movements developed out of a long and complex political, philosophical and cultural tradition, advocating a return to the true spirit of Islam. Some of these movements have deep historical roots dating back to the beginning of the 20th century, which have a basis in a reaction to colonial cultural, social and political influences. Islamism has acquired renewed support in the past two decades, as a reaction to the political crisis in the region and some aspects of relations between the region and the rest of the world. In a way, Islamism has replaced nationalism and socialism as a mass ideology of the 21st century.

International public opinion towards Islamist movements and parties has been influenced by dramatic events such as the terrorist attacks on the United States of 11 September 2001. These have tended to overshadow the fact that many Islamists pursue their goals through peaceful political activity.

Islamist movements and parties have demonstrated the ability to develop effective political strategies, elaborate platforms for action with popular appeal and set up efficient organizational structures designed both for political and social work, thereby mobilizing large constituencies. The growing support that such movements are attracting is apparent from the impact they have on social customs in many countries, halting and reversing trends towards secularism and changing the way large sections of the population dress and behave. In most countries of the region, Islamist movements represent the only viable opposition to existing authoritarian regimes. Their vast popular support makes it important to study the attitudes of such movements to national institutions and the international system, as well as the extent to which their

policy has been influenced by external actors – principally the USA and the European Union (EU).

Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI), International IDEA and Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), with the generous support of the Italian Government, Fondazione Monte dei Paschi di Siena and the German Marshall Fund of the United States, joined in a research effort to provide an overview of the strategies and policies of Islamist movements in the internal and external political life of their respective countries. The research was articulated in case studies in selected countries with different political and economic, internal and external situations, providing an opportunity to study how Islamist movements and parties react to different internal scenarios. The Islamist movements in this study have different historical origins and cultural and social backgrounds, but all have wide support among the population, which makes them important players in their respective countries and beyond.

As international relations research institutes, CeSPI and IAI focused more on the role of Islamist movements in the complex international situation of the region and on the policies of the main external actors, the USA and the EU, towards such movements. International IDEA's mission is to support democracy worldwide, and consequently its interest has been to identify how Islamist movements relate to democracy and the role they can play in a process of democratic reform. Their vast popular support means that Islamist movements have a crucial role to play in the political life of their countries, and potentially in any process conducive to building democracy.

José Luis Rhi-Sausi
Director
CeSPI

Vidar Helgesen
Secretary General
International IDEA

Ettore Greco
Director
IAI

Acknowledgments

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AKP	Justice and Development Party
Amal	*Afwaj al-Muqawama al-Lubnanya*, Battalions of the Lebanese Resistance
CEDEJ	Centre de documentation économique juridique et sociale
CeSPI	Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale
EIDHR	European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights
ESF	Economic Support Funds
FIS	Islamic Salvation front
FMF	Foreign Military Financing
EMP	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EU	European Union
EUROMESCO	Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission
FRIDE	Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior
G-8	Group of eight (industrialized nations)
GTZ	German International Cooperation Enterprise for Sustainable Development
IAI	Istituto Affari Internazionali
ICEC	Islamic Charity Emdad
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IMET	International Military Education and Training
LCP	Lebanese Communist Party
MBE	Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt
MBP	Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine
MEDA	Measures D'accompagnement (accompanying measures)

MEPI	Middle East Partnership Initiative
MP	member of parliament
MPCD	Mouvement Populaire Constitutionnel Démocratique
MTI	Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique
MUR	Movement for Unity and Reform
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NDP	National Democratic Party
NGO	non-governmental organization
PA	Palestinian Authority
PJD	Party of Justice and Development
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
SWC	German Institute for International and Security Affairs
TIM	Temporary International Mechanism
UNFP	Union Nationale des Forces Populaires
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
USFP	Union Socialiste des Forces Populaire
USIP	United States Institute of Peace

Introduction

Rosa Balfour and Daniela Pioppi

1. Introduction

The recent electoral successes of Islamist movements in the Arab world have stimulated a broad political and academic debate which revolves around two main antithetical positions. The first position supports a possible democratic conversion of at least some of the Islamist political movements through their integration into liberal reform processes. By contrast, the second sees political Islam as irreconcilable with liberal democracy and thus considers the authoritarian regimes of the region to be necessary defenders of the secular state from anti-democratic fundamentalism, which would have a negative impact on local populations as well as Western interests in the area. The debate is further complicated by the superficial level of empirical knowledge of the strategies and political programmes of Islamist movements and by culturalist interpretations based, for instance, on the idea of Islamic exceptionalism.

Yet the 'democratization' analytical framework through which political change in the Arab world and the developing world in general has been analysed since the end of the Cold War has demonstrated a number of shortcomings. While not questioning the possibility of a democratic Arab world some time in the future, and recognizing the nobility and value of the democratization goal of many international governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), we argue that democracy is not the current game in town. Neither the Arab governments nor the major external actors, such as the United States or the European Union (EU), are prioritizing the genuine democratization of the region. The democratization theory as an analytical tool has overlapped dangerously with blunt political propaganda on the part of Arab regimes and their Islamic and non-Islamic oppositions, and external actors – creating confusion and a misinterpretation of the concrete dynamics of change in the Arab world.

On the basis of these premises, we believe that a step back from the democratization paradigm is needed in order to understand, first, what is really going on in the Arab world and, second, the political role that Islamist mass movements are playing or can potentially play in their respective contexts. This more cautious approach is also useful for supporters of democracy. Only a detailed observation of local political dynamics and actors without predetermined ideas can one day clear the path to democratic goals. Therefore, in order to understand the role that Islamist movements have or can have in their political contexts, and in order to evaluate Western policies towards them, it is necessary to start from a non-ideological and non-West-centric analysis of the ongoing structural changes in these countries, giving precedence to empirical data collection over normative schemes.

2. The political context: Modernization of authoritarianism

There is a growing consensus between analysts of the Arab world that the dominant trend of change in the region can be understood as a *modernization of authoritarianism*.[1] The political and economic reforms introduced in most Arab countries since the 1970s, and which gathered pace after the end of the Cold War, have achieved a degree of liberalization, but this has not led to a real process of democratization. Conversely, this form of liberalization has legitimized an adjustment of internal power structures which makes them more compatible or brings them into line with the international (dis)order without altering, and sometimes even reinforcing, the authoritarian character of the regimes (Guazzone and Pioppi, 2009).

The lack of systemic transformation from authoritarianism to democracy does not imply a lack of change among the regimes. On the contrary, they have proved to be highly flexible. Over the past 30 years, Arab countries have seen changes in the composition of their elites and in the social bases of their regimes, as well as in institutional and economic structures. In general, notwithstanding the significant differences between countries, empirical analyses of political dynamics in the region highlight that elites have become more articulated by expanding to include, for instance, the private sector, but also that large social sectors are increasingly marginalized.

This more elitist articulation of political structures is well illustrated by the ways in which political opposition to regimes is organized. Opposition parties are overwhelmingly centred on personalities who do not represent a social or economic base. In most countries the expression of opposition suffers from similar problems: a lack of political programmes, the use of political parties for personal aims, divisions within the parties, and frequent changes in party leadership and in political alliances. Elections thus become episodes of a 'political market' for negotiation

within clientelist networks and for the distribution of influential positions within the regime.

The Islamist mass movements and parties that have emerged as the dominant opposition actors in many countries of the southern shore of the Mediterranean are a partial exception to this trend. They have managed to exploit more effectively than other actors the opportunities offered by the processes of political and economic adjustment over the past two decades or so.

3. Main research questions on Islamist movements

For the purpose of this research project we took into consideration Islamist movements and/or parties that can be considered *mass political organizations*. Many definitions have been used in the literature to define different trends among Islamism: moderate vs. radical or extremist, reformist vs. revolutionary, peaceful/civilian vs. violent or armed movements, and so on.

While moderation and radicalism are by definition subjective and cannot be easily defined, the reformist-revolutionary divide could also be misleading in an authoritarian context and is likely to change over time within the same movement. We also decided not to exclude from our analysis mass Islamist movements with an armed wing, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, because their militias are also the product of the violent environment in which they operate.

The project tried as much as possible to avoid debate on the 'democratic credentials' of Islamist movements and to focus instead on the political role of Islamists in their respective societies, applying classic party/political movement theory. This is because, as is stated above, we find the debate about democracy sterile: in the absence of a real democratization process in the region, its conclusions can only be based on opinions and cannot be verified by facts on the ground. All the Islamist movements or parties considered in this report have agreed – sometimes long ago – to participate in the electoral process in their respective countries, and they have all, through their political programmes, statements or actual practice, conceded on at least the basic elements of a democratic system of rule, although not without a few ambiguities or steps back (Brown et al., 2006). However, due to the resilience of the authoritarian rule behind formally more participatory institutions, the Islamists' democratic strategies were not sufficiently rewarded to convince the movements or parties to continuously and unambiguously proceed in that direction.

Therefore, we find it more useful to concentrate on other characteristics of the Islamist political organizations, such as the socio-economic interests they represent or the mobilization strategies they have developed over time. Only in this way can we hope to gain insights into the potential role these movements could play in reforming the structure of power, enlarging citizen participation or including new social groups in the political system.

Furthermore, as is demonstrated in the history of European political parties, political movements can begin on a non-democratic ideological basis and gradually evolve to the point of actively participating in the democratization of their polities (e.g. the Communist Party in Italy after the Second World War).

In sum, this project starts from the assumption that Islamist movements are complex and multifaceted political actors that are continual evolving and interacting with their domestic social environment. The analysis of the political context is thus essential to understanding any specific Islamist movement's evolution, and vice versa.

Our main research questions on Islamist movements revolve around four interrelated clusters for analysis, which can be more or less relevant depending on the case study.

The first building block of our research is based on an analysis of the different components of Islamist movements or parties, taking a political economy approach: what interests or clusters of interests do Islamist movements represent in each national context? Or, in other words, what are their socio-economic constituencies? How do these relate to their political programmes and ideology? For instance, in the case of Egypt and to some extent Morocco, the major Islamist movements (the Muslim Brotherhood and the Party of Justice and Development, PJD) are faced with a contradiction between representing conservative business interests or the well-being of the middle and lower classes. Similarly, from an ideological point of view, they need to confront the contradiction between the traditional populist component of mainstream Islamism in Egypt and Morocco and the emerging neoliberal trend.

Second, the research analyses the political participation and mobilization strategies of Islamist movements and parties, examining the main strategies and targets of Islamist mobilization, and the type and degree of internal political activism. It asks whether the extended social charitable activities of Islamist movements form a basis for bottom-up political recruitment and activism, or are more of a top-down tool to build a clientelist base. It is also necessary to understand the ways in which Islamist elites gain the support of lower social strata. What kind of 'citizen model' do Islamists help to mould with their political activities?

The third area of investigation examines the ways in which Islamist movements and parties relate to the political system to which they belong, including the regimes and other political actors. How do systemic and anti-systemic trends within the same movement or party, or across different Islamist movements in the same country, relate to each other? The research takes examples from the cases of the PJD and other anti-systemic Islamic movements or factions in Morocco, the internal debate within Hamas and its relations with other Islamist groups in the Occupied Territories and the re-radicalization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

All the parties and movements examined in this volume have participated in elections in recent years. What impact has electoral participation had on their internal debates? Is the reformist trend within Islamism losing ground due to its unwillingness to confront the regime more forcefully?

It is necessary to question whether Islamist movements in general present a real alternative to the regimes and, if so, in which fields. In terms of political tactics, are there occasions of regime-Islamist alliances or collaboration? What role do Islamist movements play in the ongoing authoritarian adjustment in their respective national contexts? Are Islamists willing to cooperate with other opposition actors? If so, were they successful when they did?

The international dimension is the final area of investigation, addressing the degree to which Islamist movements develop relations with external actors and the importance of foreign policy issues to their political agenda. Questions include the ways in which Islamist movements or parties perceive external actors, the weight they give to foreign policy or regional issues and the domestic impact of regional events. To what degree are these actors modifying their positions and adjusting strategically or normatively to the positions and policies promoted by the USA and the EU?

4. Main research questions on EU and US policies

Recent global and regional developments, such as the events of 11 September 2001 and the ensuing policies on fighting terrorism, and the increased role of Islamist groups in the region through electoral processes, have stimulated an evolution in the 'status quo' policies pursued by the USA and the EU from the 1970s to the 1990s. The policy of supporting authoritarian regimes in order to contain the rise of Islamism has been questioned, not only in academic circles but also among policymakers, in terms of its effectiveness and its appropriateness.

The most important changes in Western positions were observable during 2003–2006, when the Administration of US President George W. Bush, EU member

states and the EU began, during a period of important electoral processes, to develop stronger positions in favour of greater political pluralism in the Arab world. At the same time, the USA and the EU were introducing innovations to their existing policy frameworks, developing the US Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), the G-8 Broader Middle East and North Africa initiative and the European Neighbourhood Policy of the EU.

Political reform became a theme of the new policy declarations of the West, even if the stated agendas varied between 'regime change' and engagement with new political actors. The assumption behind this research project is that political reform never became an aim of Western policy, at least as far as the Middle East and North Africa is concerned. On the contrary, and most visibly after the electoral victory of Hamas in January 2006, the most vocal aspects of what appeared to be a new strategy in favour of political pluralism and reform were cut back in favour of more traditional priorities such as the fight against terrorism and promoting regional stability (Youngs, 2006).

As is noted above, the core questions for this project are not questions of political reform. However, the supposed pursuit of political reform or democratization remains an important lens through which to try to understand Western policies. Indeed, the political reform mantra that both the USA and the EU have developed at the global level, albeit less towards Arab countries than in other parts of the world, and directed at supporting the pro-Western and liberal political representatives in third countries, has arguably been to the benefit of Islamist movements, which have used it to justify their domestic and international legitimacy.[2]

Second, both the USA and the EU have developed policies aimed at supporting the growth of civil society organizations in a bid to boost 'democracy from below' approaches, through programmes such as the MEPI or the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Given the role of Islamist organizations in civil society in the Arab world, the specific strategies, policies, attitudes and relations developed by the USA and the EU towards these political actors require empirical analysis to ascertain the degree of engagement of these two major actors with Islamist organizations.

On the basis of these premises, the first core issue to be addressed is continuity and change. To what extent and how have EU and US policies towards political opposition evolved since the 1990s? Are the new EU and US policies innovative compared to the past? In what ways has this involved developing relations with representatives of Islamist movements? What role is being recognized for the representatives of

mass Islamist movements? How do the EU and the USA define 'moderate' political movements and possible political partners?

The second level of analysis concerns actual policies, strategies and tools. Empirical research focuses on mapping the variety of strategies in place on the part of US and EU actors. These include not only the formal policies developed in Washington and Brussels, including their aid and cooperation programmes, but also the activities of other actors. In the European case, the EU member states and their bilateral relations demonstrate a mixed picture of ad hoc strategies and initiatives that is further complicated by an exploration of the activities of party and non-governmental foundations.

These two levels are necessary in order to understand the impact of EU and US policies on the political dynamics of the region and on the evolution of mass Islamism. The USA and the EU have important leverage in the region and their policies (e.g. political support or boycott of an opposition actor or regime) are likely to have a considerable impact on the future development of mass Islamist movements and the political evolution of their respective national contexts. For instance, US support of the PJD in Morocco contributed to the success of the party in remodelling its image as a 'reformist and democratic actor', but is also exposing the party to growing criticism from its opponents; and the international boycott of Hamas is possibly weakening the more political and pragmatic wing of the movement.

It is therefore important that our project analyses in each national case the impact of external support for or opposition to mass Islamism in terms of the fulfilment of Western interests, regional stability and the evolution of these movements in their national contexts.

5. Structure of the book and methodology

The book is organized in seven chapters, of which four are dedicated to the case studies, on Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon and the Occupied Territories of Palestine, and three to the international dimension (US and EU policies towards Hamas, EU policies towards the Islamist movements in Morocco, Egypt and Lebanon, and US policies towards the Islamist movements in Morocco, Egypt and Lebanon).

The selection of national case studies is justified on the basis of, first, the presence of a mass Islamist movement with an important role in national politics: The PJD in Morocco, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in the Occupied Territories of Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon; and,

second, by the fact that the chosen national political contexts are very different indeed. They therefore represent a good regional sample for measuring the impact of different international policies and local political contexts on the evolution of Islamist political movements or parties.

Morocco is a traditional monarchy (Makhzen-tribes) with an indirect system of rule, and began a transition process in the 1990s. Egypt was a prototype of the 'radical' nationalist populist regime in the 1950s and 1960s. It went through a policy shift in the 1970s and 1980s, but is still a 'strong' state based on the power of the bureaucracy, a hegemonic party and the military. The Occupied Territories of Palestine represent a non-state context with a lopsided process of state formation during the Oslo Process years as well as being a case of longstanding conflict. Lebanon is a communitarian state which suffers from very strong external interference in domestic politics.

All the case studies presented in the chapters of this book benefited from field research carried out by their respective authors in the countries concerned.

Endnotes

[1] See, e.g. Diamond (2002), Albrecht and Schlumberger (2004) and Bicchi et al. (2004).

[2] See also Lübben (2008).

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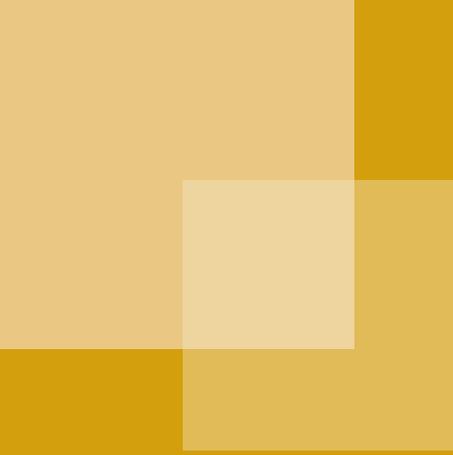
Chapter 1

Hitting the glass ceiling: The trajectory of the Moroccan Party of Justice and Development
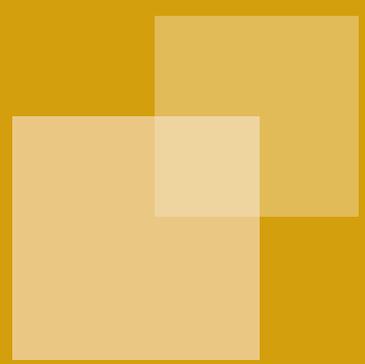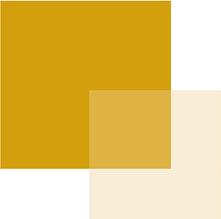
Chapter 1

Eva Wegner and Miquel Pellicer

Hitting the glass ceiling: The trajectory of the Moroccan Party of Justice and Development

1. Introduction

This chapter analyses the evolution of the Party of Justice and Development (PJD), the Moroccan Islamist party, from its origins in the 1990s until 2007. The analysis focuses on the political context in which the party operates, its decisions and mobilization of resources, and its electoral support.

In the case of the PJD, these factors converge to give a trajectory of rise, transformation and stagnation. In the early years, the PJD expanded its organization and small support base, established a reputation as a 'clean', democratic, serious and hardworking party, and experienced a marked rise in electoral support. Although the party went through a difficult period after the terrorist attacks in Casablanca in 2003, there was a widespread belief that it would win the largest number of seats in the 2007 parliamentary elections, and the party was preparing itself to play a leading role in government. In the event, however, the PJD did not win, and its support declined compared to the previous electoral contest.

To explain this trajectory, this chapter focuses on three interrelated factors. The first factor is the political context, and especially the interactions between the PJD and the regime. This aspect is crucial because the regime, as Morocco's most powerful actor, defines the framework for and threshold of permissible action for legal political actors. The second factor is the evolution of party organization – its size and degree of institutionalization and internal democracy and its relationship with the Islamist movement.[1] These factors shape the party's capacity for electoral mobilization. The

third factor is the party's political choices: its themes and the intensity of mobilization. These three elements form the background against which the changing patterns of electoral support for the PJD are discussed.

The chapter places little emphasis on the role of external actors and events in the evolution of the party or on its 'foreign relations'. These are less important to the evolution of the party, compared to the other case studies in this book. Furthermore, foreign policy is a domain reserved for the monarchy, into which legal political actors hardly ever venture.

The chapter is based on field research conducted over several years. This includes interviews with party leaders and members as well as the analysis of party or movement documents. The analysis is also based on electoral data and census data, which include socio-economic information about different electoral districts.

Section 2 provides a brief description of the emergence of the different strands of the Moroccan Islamist movement. Section 3 discusses the origin of the PJD and its performance in the 1997 elections. Section 4 analyses the political context, resource mobilization and party decisions, and compares the PJD's electoral performance in 1997 with 2002, and section 5 addresses these themes for the period from 2002 to 2007. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the reasons behind the stagnation of the PJD.

2. Background: The Moroccan Islamist movement

The Moroccan Islamist movement surfaced in the early 1970s. The two strands that emerged, Justice and Charity and the Islamic Youth, both drew on the ideology of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood of the time. They embraced a radical social critique and defiance of the ruling elites and, in the case of the Islamic Youth, also embraced violent action. The political context was one of almost complete closure of the political system. King Hassan II had declared a state of emergency in 1965 and engaged in repressive campaigns against the parties of the national movement – the Istiqlal and the leftist National Union of Popular Forces (Union Nationale des Forces Populaires, UNFP). Hassan II governed and legislated personally from 1965 to 1970. His rule was based on the military and the establishment of a vast clientelist network.[2]

Today, the Moroccan Islamist movement is dominated by two organizations: Justice and Charity and the Movement for Unity and Reform (MUR), a non-violent successor to the Islamic Youth. Both organizations are outlawed in spite of repeated attempts to obtain legal status. Justice and Charity started out as the one man enterprise

of Abdelsalam Yasin, an inspector in the ministry of education. Inspired by the writings of Hassan Al-Banna, the founder of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, he wrote an open letter to the King in 1974 entitled 'Islam or the deluge'. In this now famous letter, he linked the economic and social problems in Morocco to the wealth of the King, addressed the King in a paternalistic and violent manner, and advocated a return to Islam (Munson, 1991). King Hassan II responded to the letter by detaining Yasin in a psychiatric hospital. After his release, Abdelsalam Yasin continued to promote an Islamic polity and, from 1981, Yasin began to build an organization with a structure similar to that of the Muslim Brotherhood.[3] The organization is mostly based in big cities, especially Casablanca and Rabat (Shahin, 1998). Its sources of income are membership contributions and the sale of Islamic material, such as books, video and audio tapes, and Islamic clothes (Tozy, 1999a).

Justice and Charity has always embraced non-violent means, but it also rejects the conditions of electoral participation – public acceptance of the religious legitimacy of the monarchy and its dominance of the political process. It has suffered sporadic repression, including the occasional banning of its newspaper and, more seriously, the complete dissolution of the association and arrest of all the members of the Guidance Bureau as well as scores of followers in 1990. Yasin himself was placed under house arrest in 1984, where he remained until 2000. More recently, the organization has been persecuted since the terrorist attacks on Casablanca of 16 May 2003. Nadia Yasin, Yasin's daughter and the best known representative of the movement, has challenged the monarchy by demanding a republic.

The Islamic Youth was founded in the early 1970s by Abdel Karim Muti', who was also an inspector in the ministry of education. The public part of the group, a religious and educational association, was legal for a number of years (Shahin, 1998). Underneath this organization was a clandestine structure, which Tozy describes as a paramilitary organization with a membership made up predominantly of high school students (Tozy, 1999a). The Islamic Youth was banned in 1975 – following its alleged involvement in the assassination of a leader of the syndicalist movement – and Muti' fled to exile. After a period of persecution, the majority of its members founded a new organization in the early 1980s, which was eventually renamed the Movement of Unity and Reform in 1996. These pre-MUR organizations underwent several ideological changes, which included the democratization of organizational structures, the rejection of violent means and eventually the adoption of the aim of founding a political party and participating in elections.

The Moroccan Islamist movement has been less researched than those of the Mashrek and little is known about the profile and numbers of its activists and sympathizers – particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. Three points can be made with

some confidence. First, compared to many other Middle East and North African countries, the Moroccan Islamist organizations are small. Although figures are not available, Moroccan Islamist organizations do not reach the countryside. Nor do they have powerful charity organizations, like those in Egypt or Jordan. Second, active support for the predecessor organizations of the MUR and for Justice and Charity came mainly from students and some public sector employees. Only a limited number of independent preachers reached out to peddlers, shopkeepers and workers (Munson, 1986). Third, surveys have found that the Islamist movement had a large number of potential sympathizers. Nachtwey and Tessler, for instance, cite a survey of 1000 households in Rabat undertaken in 1996–1997, which suggested that almost half the respondents (men and women equally) were potentially supportive of Islamist platforms.[4]

3. The starting configuration of the PJD

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Moroccan Islamists applied for the legalization of a 'Party of National Renewal'. The application was rejected by the interior ministry, however, invoking the prohibition of religious parties (Tozy, 1999a). Instead, the regime allowed the MUR to integrate with a dormant political party, the Popular Constitutional and Democratic Movement (Mouvement Populaire Constitutionnel Démocratique, MPCD). Although this party lacked any organizational structures, its charismatic leader, Dr Abdelkarim Khatib, had good connections to the palace. Officially, the MUR 'merged' with this party in 1996 when some of its core leaders were appointed to the MPCD executive bureau at an extraordinary party congress. Investment in the MPCD's structures, however, had begun in 1992, when MUR members and leaders founded or reanimated local MPCD structures in the large and medium-size cities where the MUR had its own supporters.

Participation by the Islamists in the 1997 elections in the form of the MPCD did not attract much attention at the time. Much more important was the so-called alternance government, which supposedly ended 40 years of conflict between the monarchy and opposition parties, and, more generally, a political liberalization which generated hopes that Morocco was engaging in a process of democratization (Tozy, 1999b). The alternance government was led by the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (Union Socialiste des Forces Populaire, USFP) the leader of which, A. Youssoufi, was appointed Prime Minister. It also included all the former opposition parties, such as the Istiqlal and the ex-communist Party of Progress and Socialism. The broader process of political liberalization enacted by Hassan II during the 1990s aimed to stabilize the political system in the face of severe social and economic crises, which had led to repeated and serious rioting. The process included freeing political prisoners, increased press freedom, and constitutional reform to increase the power of

political parties and parliament. Against this background, the low-key participation of the new Islamist party was not big news.

The 1997 elections can offer a picture of the initial electoral support for the PJD. This picture, however, although useful, is limited and distorted for at least two reasons. First, the elections were heavily manipulated. According to the Country Report on Human Rights Practices by the US Embassy, most independent observers concluded that the election results were strongly influenced, if not predetermined, by the regime (US Department of State, 1998). Second, detailed electoral data are lacking and the data available cannot be easily linked to census data with socio-economic characteristics. Nonetheless, the results do provide some hints about how the PJD started out: even if widespread fraud makes it likely that the PJD had more support than the election results suggest. It is reasonable to assume that, at least in the places where it won, it had substantial support.

The party fielded candidates in 142 of the 325 electoral districts, a coverage of 44 per cent. According to the official results, the PJD received a total of 264,324 votes. This gave the party nine parliamentary seats, less than 3 per cent of the total. The majority of PJD candidates who won seats were members of the MUR's first and second most important committees, the Executive Bureau and the Shura Council, respectively.

The PJD's meagre success can be attributed to two key factors, the first of which, as is mentioned above, was electoral fraud. The regime's ability to influence the election results was so much in the mind of the Islamists that they confessed to being not unhappy with their performance, as they had not been sure whether they would be allowed to win any seats at all.[5] At the same time, it is reasonable to assume that the PJD's electoral performance was not only the work of Hassan II and his powerful minister of the interior, Driss Basri. The second factor was the PJD's lack of mobilization capacities and visibility. As is mentioned above, the final, official deal with Dr Khatib was only agreed just before the election and thus the power of the Islamists inside the party had not been consolidated and the mobilization capacities of the party organization were limited.[6] The MUR itself was not an organization with a large membership that could be immediately mobilized as voters and the official time for campaigning was limited to two weeks before the election. In fact, it is worth noting that the votes cast for the PJD were well below what one would have expected from the above-mentioned surveys. Unless these severely overestimated the overall level of Islamist support, the PJD had failed to become visible to many Islamist sympathizers. The electoral results thus also reflect the ad hoc character of the PJD's mobilization and its lack of mobilization capacities.

The first column of Table 1.1 shows the districts where the party won its seats. The clearest trend is that these were highly urbanized: four of them were in Casablanca, the largest Moroccan urban settlement, and one each in Fes, Agadir, Tangier and Oujda, which are all comparatively large cities. A natural way of going beyond the urban character of PJD support is to analyse its support in Casablanca. The exercise is difficult using the 1997 results, but some insights can be derived. In Casablanca, the PJD obtained seats in the districts of Bab Jadid, Sadri-Raja, Al Idrissia and Bouchentouf. Bab Jadid belongs to Casablanca Anfa, a notably well-off part of the city. Al Idrissia and Bouchentouf can be explicitly identified in the 1994 census (within the prefecture of Al Fida Derb Sultan), making it possible to derive a more detailed account of their profiles. Table 1.2 shows the socio-economic profiles of these districts compared to the average in the prefecture of Al Fida Derb Sultan and compared to the average in Casablanca. Al Idrissia appears to be slightly better off than the average in terms of literacy rates, education levels and access to household goods. Bouchentouf, in turn, appears to be slightly below average in most indicators. The differences, however, are not large. Both are fairly average parts of Casablanca:

Table 1.1 Districts where the PJD obtained its largest percentage of votes, 1997, 2002 and 2007

	1997	2002	2007
1	Sadri-Raja (Casablanca)	Al Ismailia (Meknes)	Larache
2	Idrissa (Casablanca)	Moulay Rachid Sidi Othmane (Casablanca)	Oued zem-Bejaad
3	Dchira (Agadir)	Inezgane-Ait Melloul (Agadir)	Rabat-Challah (Rabat)
4	Sidi el-Mendri (Tetouan)	Fes Jdid Dar Bibagh (Fes)	Skhirate-Temara (Rabat)
5	Bouchentouf (Casablanca)	Sidi Bernoussi Zenata (Casablanca)	Rabat-el Mouhit (Rabat)
6	Tanger Boukhalef (Tanger)	Tanger-Assilah (Tanger)	Hay Hassani (Casablanca)
7	Chrarda (Fes)	Ain Sebaa Hay Mohammadi (Casablanca)	Fes-Janoubia (Fes)
8	Oujda Bouknadel (Oujda)	Al Fida Mers Sultan (Casablanca)	Kenitra (Kenitra)
9	Bab Jedid (Casablanca)	Beni Mellal	Ain Chock (Casablanca)
10		Anfa (Casablanca)	Fes Chamalia (Fes)

Table 1.2: Profile of selected districts won by the PJD in 1997 (Numbers indicate percentages)

	El Idrissia	Bouchentouf	Prefecture Al Fida-Derb Sultan	Casablanca Region
Unemployment	24	26	25	22
Analphabetism	28	32	30	31
Schooling rate	91	89	90	89
WC	96	96	96	91
Bathrooms	27	15	21	32
Slums	1	2	2	12
Villa/Appartements	4	9	9	23

neither particularly badly off nor particularly well off. Overall, the PJD appears to have gained its initial support in the median/average districts of Casablanca, possibly with some bias towards slight affluence.

In sum, the PJD started its life essentially as an appendix of one strand of the Moroccan Islamist movement, the MUR. It participated in elections for the first time in a liberalizing political context. Reflecting the profile of the supporters of Islamist movements, the constituencies it represented were clearly urban and tended towards the middle class.

4. The consolidation of inclusion and the rise of the PJD, 1997–2002

Political context

In the initial years of formal political participation, still under the reign of Hassan II, there was a general consensus in the PJD that a key aim was to consolidate the regime's inclusion decision. In order to solidify this decision, the PJD supported the alternance government even if that government was led by the Left, which it opposed on ideological grounds.[7] Hassan II had asked for a consensual alternance and, by being part of it, the party wanted to show that the Islamist movement was constructive, rather than a 'current of refusal'.[8] Another step in this direction

was its decision to accept its partial coverage of electoral districts. This decision had been taken and carried out in 1997, but was officially adopted by a party congress in 1999.

The accession of Mohammed VI to the throne in 1999 generated a freer political climate – at least in the early years. Decisions by the new King, such as the lifting of Sheikh Yasin's house arrest, the forced resignation of Driss Basri, Morocco's interior minister of almost 30 years and a symbol of human rights violations and electoral fraud, and the formation of a commission to compensate victims of torture, as well as his discourses on a new concept of authority suggested that the margin for political action had increased (Desrues and Moyano, 2001; Howe, 2005). For the PJD, this did not lead to a much more assertive stance towards the regime – the decision to limit the number of candidates, for instance, was maintained for the 2002 elections. However, it allowed the party to become more assertive towards other political actors, and it left the alternance government over concerns about its level of popular support.

It is important to note that the decision not to be confrontational towards the regime was a deliberate choice made by the party. The Islamic Action Front in Jordan, for instance, followed another path when mobilizing against a core regime policy, the peace treaty with Israel. The PJD, in contrast, has not stepped over the threshold of acceptable mobilization – either in its level of intensity or in the topics it chooses to campaign on. Its key aim is to consolidate its inclusion in political institutions and thus its legal status.

The preference for 'playing it safe' vis-à-vis the monarchy is, among other things, the result of factional alignments inside the PJD. Two main groups within the party have generally coincided on their preference for a careful game with regard to the regime: the old Islamist leaders and the technocrats. Some of the older leaders have not explicitly called for changes to the system, but tended to view the role of the PJD as more of a political instrument that, alongside the Islamist movement organizations, injects more Islamic values into policies. The PJD technocrats, in turn, wanted a much greater role for parliament and the elected government, but wanted to achieve these changes through an increase in popular support which would allow them to form a cohesive government rather than by directly confronting the monarchy. Only a third group, the radicals, [9] who so far have not influenced the party leadership, has been ready to denounce more openly interference by the regime in party affairs or laws restricting civil liberty, and has sometimes rejected swallowing restrictions on mobilization.

Mobilization resources

From the beginning, and particularly since the 1999 party congress, PJD technocrats aimed to develop the party organization into a strong mobilization tool. This meant, first, to increase the party's human and infrastructural resources. In view of the importance of grass roots mobilization, the relatively small size of the MUR and the fact that the majority of MUR members were not interested in – although not against – party politics, the party needed to recruit and retain committed members. The PJD invested in recruiting and educating new members, opened and equipped new party bureaux, and founded ancillary organizations for the youth, women and sympathetic cadres. It raised income through membership fees and the state's party financing.

Second, party organization was developed to serve as a tool to provide credibility for the PJD's message on its difference from other actors and the legitimacy of its leadership decisions. Thus, the PJD developed a forceful discourse on internal democracy and respect for party rules. This had practical consequences. In a complete overhaul of the old party statutes and practices, the PJD set up comparatively democratic internal structures for selecting leaders and electoral candidates. At the 1999 party congress the party presidency was not up for grabs – it was reserved for Dr Khatib, the party's founder. Competitive elections were held, however, for the vice-presidency and the rest of the executive bureau. Importantly, the base had a strong say in choosing the candidates for the 2002 parliamentary elections. This stood in stark contrast to the party's previous practices – in 1997 candidates had been selected by the party leaders – and to those of most other Moroccan political parties.[10]

These investments in the organization certainly increased the party's mobilization capacities and improved its standing among Moroccan political actors. It also began to put some distance between the PJD and the MUR as organizational boundaries started to solidify and new members and candidates, not affiliated to the MUR, gained in importance. This is shown in the profile of the affiliations of the PJD's candidates for the 2002 elections.[11] Only 56 of the party's 194 electoral candidates (excluding the female national list) indicated an affiliation with the MUR. Another 28, where their affiliation is unknown, may in reality have been MUR members. Of the rest, 51 candidates indicated an affiliation to various other Islamist 'cultural' associations and 44 candidates appear to have had no link whatsoever with the Islamist movement. Overall, less than half the candidates had an MUR affiliation. Had the party base in 2002 been strictly composed of MUR members or been unequivocally loyal to the MUR, it is unlikely that they would have selected movement outsiders to represent them in parliament to such a large extent. These trends point to a process of increasing distance that would later lead to a full separation. For

the 2002 elections, however, the party could still count on the MUR for electoral mobilization. The MUR was an organizational resource, although one that made some demands regarding the party's choices.

Mobilization choices

As is mentioned above, the PJD never openly criticized or confronted the regime beyond the acceptable level. Instead, faithful to its initial electoral campaign, the PJD essentially mobilized for and gained support on topics such as authenticity, identity and proximity. This made itself felt in the sometimes populist interventions of its members of parliament (MPs), such as denouncing the government's cooperation with the 'Zionist entity', or in symbolic actions such as the PJD leader and movement veteran, Abdelilah Benkirane, insulting an 'improperly dressed' journalist in the parliament.

The most important and visible mobilizations in these years were the street protests against the reform of the personal status code as part of a government project to improve the legal situation of women in Morocco. These protests were organized and carried out jointly with the MUR and other Islamist groups and culminated in a large demonstration in Casablanca on 12 March 2000.[12]

As well as these more spectacular events, the PJD cultivated its image as a party of proximity with the people, an important issue in a country where the majority of the people distrust politicians and view political parties as tools through which politicians advance their personal interests. The PJD established an image as hard-working defenders of the citizens' interests. PJD MPs, although not very numerous, asked the largest number of oral questions between 1997 and 2002 and a large number of written ones. They were also active in constituency service, opening bureaux in their electoral districts in which they collected the demands of citizens and then accounted for their actions regarding a particular question. The existence of these bureaux, their responses to requests, and the fact that MPs did not change their mobile phone numbers after the elections, stood in marked contrast to the established Moroccan political parties.

The PJD's platform for the 2002 election, although longer and more sophisticated, covered essentially similar themes to those of 1997: authenticity, justice and reform.[13] The campaign also mirrored the 1997 one, with door-to-door canvassing by MUR and party activists and a substantial media campaign by *Al-Tajdid*, the MUR's newspaper. A lot of emphasis was placed on the differences between the PJD and other Moroccan parties, its sincerity and proximity with the people.

Electoral support in 2002

The 2002 elections can be used more productively than those of 1997 to understand the type and levels of support for the PJD. These elections were more transparent, albeit still with important deficiencies, and based on districts that can be linked quite reliably to the municipalities in the 2004 census.[14]

The number of votes obtained by the party increased dramatically relative to 1997. The figure more than doubled, to 595,459, giving the party 42 parliamentary seats out of 325.[15] It is likely that part of this increase in votes was linked to the decrease in electoral fraud by the regime, while another part could be attributed to a comparatively small increase in the party's coverage from 44 per cent to 61 per cent. At the same time, it is likely that the way the PJD positioned itself in the Moroccan party landscape – as the new, clean party that lives up to its promise of proximity – appealed to the voters. Moreover, its organizational investment had increased its electoral mobilization capacities. Indeed, local leaders felt that their constant activity over the years had allowed them to mobilize voters more easily in the elections.[16]

It is not clear how consciously the PJD's mobilization choices were tailored to a particular electorate, whether they simply reflected what the party leaders intuitively felt would appeal to Moroccan voters, or they just reflected the leadership's own policy preferences. In any case, after the 2002 elections party leaders believed that they had gained support beyond their core Islamist supporters, namely from citizens to which the PJD's message of honesty, anti-corruption and transparency appealed or who were simply disaffected with other parties. Indeed, party leaders were aware that these different groups had different expectations of the party. According to party leaders, the party's core voters were Islamist activists or strong sympathizers and expected policy gains in terms of 'Islamic values'. Some voters did not care much about these values or policies but hoped that PJD participation in government would reduce corruption. Others, in turn, wanted an improvement in socio-economic conditions, that is, better public services and job creation.[17]

What were the socio-economic characteristics of the people who voted for the PJD? In which type of district did it obtain the most support? Table 1.3 shows the profile of the districts in which the PJD did not stand in 2002, and of those in which it obtained the least and the most support (less than and more than 6 per cent of registered voters, respectively). The patterns in the table are clear. The districts in which the PJD fielded candidates tended to be more urban, and to include people with higher levels of education, lower levels of poverty and better houses. On the reasonable assumption that the PJD mainly stood in places where it knew itself and/or the Islamist movement had an infrastructure, the party's choices already

Table 1.3: Profile of 2002 districts showing PJD coverage and electoral performance (Data on illiteracy, college and poverty are percentages)

PJD Votes	Not covered	Low	High
Number of districts	35	28	28
Urban	40	48	80
Illiteracy	51	47	33
College	2,9	3,6	7,6
Poverty	17,2	17,3	8,9

reveal that it thought that its support was weakest among the rural, uneducated and poor population. The evidence in Table 1.3 shows that this perception seems to have been correct. Comparing the places where the party fared best and worst, it is obvious that it did better in more urban and better educated areas. Overall, it is clear that the urban bias of PJD support remained in these elections. Moreover, the figures in Table 1.3 suggest that the PJD, in its coverage, had already surpassed the organizational infrastructure of the Islamist movement and was attempting to expand. This is shown by the fact that the districts in which the PJD stood but was not successful (column 2) had profiles closer to those in which the PJD did not stand, rather than to those where it was successful.

The districts where the party obtained most support reveal additional interesting information (Table 1.1). The 10 districts where the PJD obtained the largest percentage of votes in 2002 (of registered voters) were located in or around Casablanca, Meknes, Fes, Tangier and Agadir. With the exception of Meknes, these are the same areas in which it was successful in 1997. This suggests that support for the MUR remained crucial for the party's success *and* that the party's 1997 MPs had done their job to the satisfaction of their voters, possibly helped through their constituency service. Interestingly, the same areas appear in the next ten districts in 2002 (those in positions 11 to 20), although the area around Rabat is a prominent addition to the list. It appears that Rabat was becoming more prominent as a source of support.

A useful way to move beyond the obvious urban bias of PJD supporters is to look at variations in PJD support in Casablanca. Figure 1 relates the percentage of votes obtained by the PJD in different Casablanca districts to the level of literacy in those districts. Districts in Casablanca with more illiteracy tended to support

the PJD more. The same pattern emerges when considering other (unreported) indicators of affluence, such as the percentage of homes with bathrooms or satellite dishes in the district. The electoral districts in 2002 were highly aggregated so these results need to be treated with caution. Moreover, the trend shown in the figure is not enormously strong. Nevertheless, the same overall trend appears moving beyond Casablanca. Among the largely urban districts where the PJD obtained good results, those districts where its results were best tended to be less well off than the rest. Overall, it appears that the PJD had little success among the rural, largely illiterate, population, but that in the urban areas in 2002 it did have appeal in the poorer districts.

5. Hitting the glass ceiling, 2002–2007

Political context after the Casablanca attacks

The terrorist attacks in Casablanca on 16 May 2003 were the most decisive event in shaping the PJD's itinerary in the 2002–2007 period. Simultaneous suicide bombings targeted a Jewish community centre, a Spanish restaurant and social club, a hotel and the Belgian consulate, killing 43 people and injuring over 100. Politically, these attacks led to a general crackdown on Islamist groups and to restrictions on civil liberties.

For the PJD, the attacks became a resource for the party's opponents, which had felt threatened by its success in the elections. Left parties ran a campaign against it, holding it morally responsible for the attacks and calling on it to apologize to the Moroccan people. The regime made it difficult for the PJD to distance itself publicly from the attacks by not allowing it to declare – like all the other parties – its opposition to terrorism and its solidarity with the families of the victims on the national TV stations, and by banning the anti-terrorism demonstrations the PJD wanted to organize. It also used the PJD's vulnerability after the attacks to intervene in party affairs by having the rather outspoken party leader, Mustapha Ramid, removed as chair of the parliamentary group and by signalling to the party that he could not be the party's president.[18] Moreover, it forced the party to reduce its coverage in the communal elections of September 2003 to only 16 per cent of the available seats, and to enact a system of partial coverage in large and medium-sized cities that would prevent it from gaining the city hall in these towns.[19] A PJD leader admitted that they had been 'contacted by the ministry of interior', even if the party tried to portray these decisions as autonomous ones taken for the 'good of the Moroccan people'.[20] Opposing these restrictions might have come at the cost of a party ban.

Figure 1: Votes for the PJD plotted against illiteracy levels in Casablanca in 2002
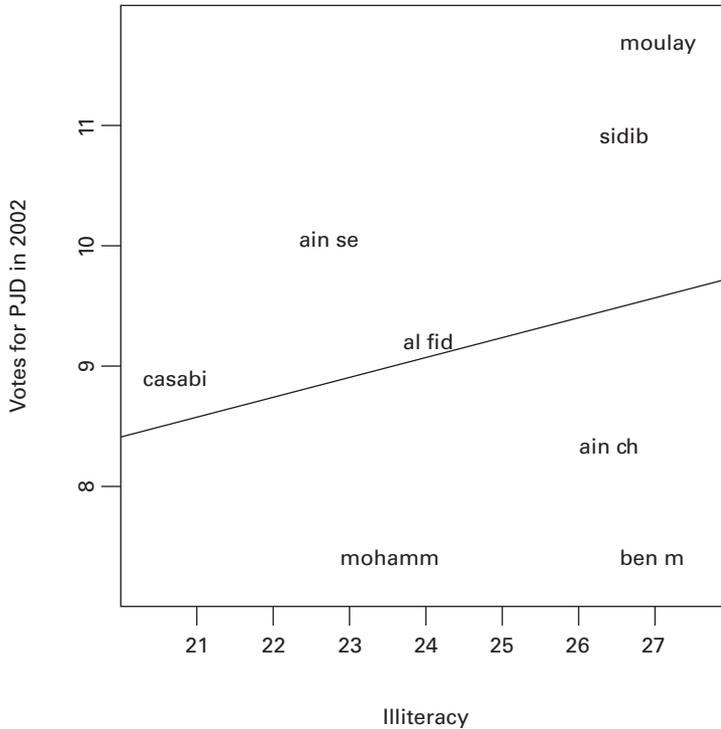
This context led to changes in the party's organization, its relationship with the Islamist movement and the topics around which it centred its mobilization. As to the currents inside the party, the events of 16 May 2003 led to an increase in the power of the technocrats, and their later decline as the party failed to win the 2007 elections.

Mobilization resources

The leadership aimed to maintain the party organization as a mobilization tool. It sought to combine the involvement and loyalty of the party's base with relatively predictable outcomes regarding the selection of leaders and candidates. The 2004 party congress was used as an occasion to demonstrate the organization's internal democracy and activism. The congress was attended by 2000 delegates and was an

important event in Moroccan politics, in which parties are more often than not weak organizations that have postponed their congresses for years. The election of a new leadership by the congress delegates also stood in stark contrast with the autocratic structures of most Moroccan parties, where a new leadership mostly follows the death of the former leader (Willis, 2002).

The decisions associated with saving the party's legality, however, forced the party to become more autocratic, as the leadership believed that the necessity of these decisions would not be well understood by the base. Postulating that there was a need for an equilibrium between the 'interests of the party and the interests of the militants', the leadership adopted several strategies to defend what they viewed as the interests of the party. The selection procedure for the candidates for the 2003 local elections gave much less power to the party base than in 2002. In fact, the leadership intervened strongly in the selection, eliminating names from the lists and parachuting technocrats and some women into secure positions. In 2007, the leadership intervened less, de facto, but the selection procedure for the candidates was similar. Additionally, the election of the new party leadership in 2004 was filtered through the party's national council, which pre-selected three candidates for final election by the congress. Whereas the 1999 congress had taken vital decisions, such as the limited level of campaign coverage, the 2004 congress was more a discussion forum than the party's most vital legislative body. Finally, the National Council – a body that supposedly supervised the General Secretariat – was often convened with too little time to elaborate counter-proposals to those of the General Secretariat.[21]

Most of these instruments to decrease the influence of the party base on vital decisions were hidden in complicated procedures and many members still – rightly – viewed the PJD as a party where the base had a say, but the decrease in power was real and had consequences. Although it cannot be quantified, the leadership's opinion after the 2007 elections was that members' willingness to campaign had been jeopardized.[22] Ultimately, this implied that the party had become less useful as a mobilization tool.

A second loss in this period was the MUR, which withdrew its support before the 2007 campaign. Behind this was the decreasing influence of the MUR on PJD decisions combined with increasing unhappiness about the content of some of these decisions.[23] The decrease in influence resulted from the solidification of organizational boundaries between the MUR and the PJD, itself a consequence of increased formalization and respect for party rules, the development of a separate organizational identity and the party opening up to new, non-MUR, members.

Mobilization choices

After 16 May 2003, the PJD changed the themes of its mobilization. It stopped any mobilization on identity and liberalization issues and focused instead on development and management topics. The halt called to identity and liberalization issues was most strongly shown in its acceptance of the 'anti-terrorist' law and its vote in favour of a new personal status law. The anti-terrorist law was a step backwards on civil and political rights. Party leaders had argued that the criminal code covered terrorist crimes sufficiently and had strongly opposed the bill when it was proposed by the government in the spring of 2003. After 16 May, the party believed that it could not afford to be seen as opposing anti-terrorist legislation and endorsed the bill in parliament. Similar thoughts were behind the PJD's vote for the change to the personal status code that the King proposed in the autumn of 2003. Although the content of the law was similar to the one the Islamist movement had denounced as un-Islamic and as promoting immorality, the PJD now endorsed it in parliament, describing it as a pioneer project that served the family and women and constituted a qualitative gain for the whole of the Moroccan people.[24]

This type of decision obviously does not indicate a genuine shift in the PJD's political convictions but was deemed necessary to appease the palace and the political elites. That identity and political liberalization topics were substituted with management and development themes, rather than something else, however, resulted from the ascendancy, if not domination, of technocrats in the PJD leadership. The new preference for management and development was, for instance, shown in the party's platform for 2003 and the way in which it campaigned. It focused mainly on improving public services and fighting corruption. In the campaign meetings, the emphasis was on the ability and educational level of the candidates – instead of grand speeches there were lengthy power-point presentations from the candidates.[25] As to local governance, it appears that the PJD abstained from pushing morality or campaigning against alcohol, even though the party governed Meknes, the city of Morocco's greatest wine producing region.[26]

At the national level, the PJD focused on becoming an acceptable future governing party. In 2005, five members of the party's general secretariat travelled to Europe to meet politicians and explain its political positions, with a view to reducing fears abroad. Among others, the delegation travelled to Morocco's crucial trade and aid partners, Spain and France, meeting or attempting to meet with senior politicians there (Boubekeur and Amghar, 2006). In 2006, Secretary General El-Othmani visited the United States, meeting, among others, members of Congress.

After 2006, such public relations activities became even more necessary. In April 2006, a poll by the International Republican Institute made headlines in the

Moroccan press.[27] The poll found that the party could gain up to 47 per cent of the popular vote. Although the party did not think it would gain that many votes, it did its own polls and believed it would gain around 60 to 70 seats (Dahbi, 2007; Boudarham, 2006). The PJD hoped to lead the Moroccan Government and did not want to jeopardize its status. Even though it felt that it had regained the acceptance of the Moroccan elites by 2004,[28] it remained fearful of mobilizing the street.[29]

The 2007 electoral platform – its content and the way it was designed – reflected perhaps most strongly the PJD's technocratic shift and its ambition to govern. The party established 36 commissions, which spent almost six months polling Moroccans regarding their main concerns, examining national and international constraints, and designing its positions in various policy areas – including targets. In contrast to 2002, Islamic issues and constitutional changes were not mentioned in the PJD's 2007 electoral platform. Instead, it stressed issues such as health, education, employment and investment. In contrast to previous elections, the MUR did not support the PJD's campaign. In the run-up to the 2007 parliamentary elections, there were no media campaigns and no door to door campaigning by the MUR. The MUR even refused to officially endorse the PJD and also forbade its preachers from advocating for the PJD in their sermons. To make this point even more visible, the MUR's own leadership was forbidden to run in the elections.

Electoral support in 2007

Of the three elections analysed in this chapter, the 2007 elections yield the most reliable analysis. First, the elections were considered by international observers, overall, to have been transparent (NDI, 2007a and b). There were some isolated irregularities and widespread accusations of vote buying, but systematic fraud was ruled out.[30] Second, the electoral districts can be easily merged with the 2004 census data, as the administrative boundaries were the same in both years.

The PJD obtained more votes than any other party, although this did not translate into the highest number of seats in parliament. The Istiqlal party won the elections. The turnout was extremely low at 37 per cent of registered voters, including those casting null votes. In some districts, particularly well-off districts with high levels of education, turnout was as low as 20 per cent.

According to official figures, 503,396 people voted for the PJD. This was not so different from the number of votes the party received in 2002. However, a closer look at the data suggests that support actually decreased. The PJD increased its coverage in 2007, standing in all districts, thereby increasing its votes in a 'mechanical' way. That the total number of votes remained the same means that the party lost support

in the areas it had previously campaigned in. In contrast to its rise between 1997 and 2002, the PJD had thus failed to successfully mobilize its voters in 2007.

After the elections, party leaders blamed their electoral failure first and foremost on vote buying practices. In their analysis of their electorate, they all agreed that their core constituency was the educated middle class. For them, the poor was a 'fluid group' that was ready to sell its votes to other parties.

The analysis of the electoral results of 2007 is largely in accordance with these ideas and yields additional insights. Table 1.4 shows the profiles of the districts where the PJD obtained high and low levels of support in 2007, adding in the third column the two districts with very high levels of success, Larache and Oued Zem-Bejaad. The districts where the PJD obtained high support were more urbanized, with higher levels of education and more resources than those in which they obtained little support. This is the same pattern as that found in 2002. Overall, support for the PJD remained essentially urban.

In contrast to this pattern, the third column shows that the places where the PJD did unusually well were not the most urban, educated, and so on. Quite the contrary, these are 'average districts' in terms of all these variables and were not among the PJD's top ten districts in 1997 or 2002 (see Table 1.1). Why was the PJD so successful there? One plausible answer is local governance. Among the few places where the PJD managed to lead the city government in 2003 were Ksar al-Kebir and Oued Zem, the two largest towns of the electoral districts of Larache and of Oued Zem-Bejaad, respectively.[31]

Table 1.4: Profile of districts in 2007 by PJD electoral performance. (Data on illiteracy, college and poverty are in percentages)

PJD Votes	Low	High	Very high (L & OZB)
Number of districts	68	24	2
Urban	45	79	50
Illiteracy	48	33	50
College	4	7	3
Poverty	16	10	15

Another remarkable observation regarding the 2007 results is the substantial change in the districts where the PJD fared best, compared to 1997 and 2002. By 2007, the list is no longer dominated by Casablanca, Fes, Agadir and Tangier. Most notably, after Larache and Oued Zem-Bejaad, the three districts with the highest levels of success are all in or around Rabat. Districts in Casablanca and Fes fall outside the top five, and districts in Tangier and Agadir are around 20th position. Comparisons between Rabat and Casablanca in 2002 and 2007 are enlightening. In 2002, the PJD obtained an average of 9.3 per cent of votes in Casablanca as opposed to 7.2 per cent in Rabat and Sale. In 2007, the order had reversed, with 6.4 per cent for Rabat-Sale and only 4.5 per cent for Casablanca. This change in the locations of electoral support, which had been constant in the two previous elections, is likely to be linked to the loss of the MUR as a source of credibility and assistance with electoral mobilization. It appears that this loss was strongly felt precisely in the places where the PJD started out strongly.

Figure 2: Votes for the PJD plotted against illiteracy levels in Casablanca in 2007
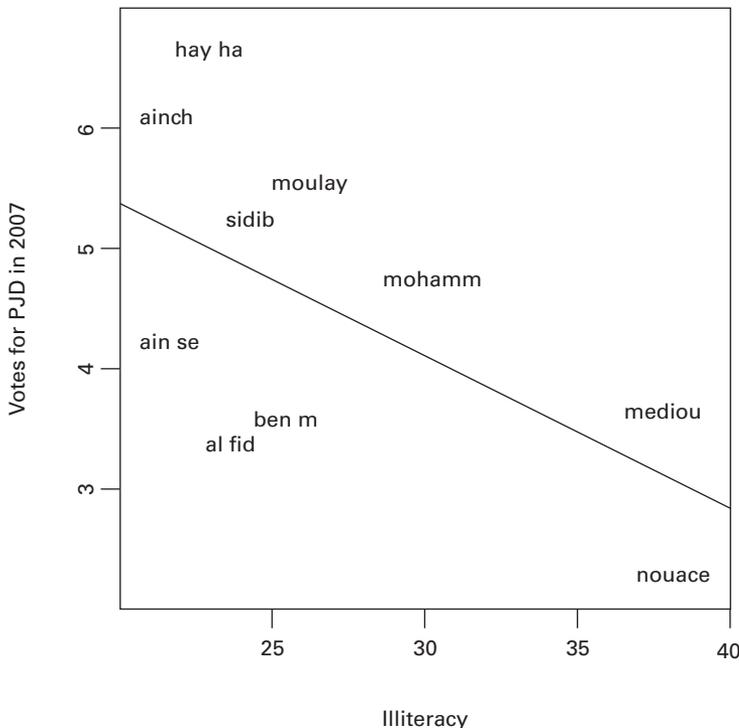
While the overall pattern of the factors behind PJD support remained the same (the importance of urbanization, education, etc.), the geography of the most successful areas changed. Did this also apply in Casablanca, a particularly relevant area? Figure 2 shows the relation between votes for the PJD and levels of illiteracy in different districts of Casablanca for the 2007 elections (the equivalent of Figure 1 for 2002). The relation is clearly negative, with the PJD obtaining more votes in districts with higher levels of literacy. The pattern is repeated using other indicators of wealth and affluence. In 2007 the PJD was more successful in the better off areas of Casablanca, and least successful in areas with a predominance of bidonvilles, or shanty towns. In these areas, the percentage of support was close to the overall average across Morocco of around 3 per cent. These results contrast sharply with those for 2002. Indeed, the pattern reversed from 2002 to 2007, with the appeal of the PJD moving in Casablanca from poorer areas to wealthier areas. The PJD lost support everywhere in Casablanca, but particularly in the less well-off quarters.

6. Discussion and concluding remarks

In 2002, the PJD was set on of what looked like a promising trajectory. It had invested in its organization, which was growing and internally institutionalizing. The party had worked continuously to create an image of being 'clean', and of good management and hard work. It complied with the rules of the game, not crossing the 'red lines' associated with formal political participation in Morocco, and thereby protecting the legal status of its organization. It had followed a strategy that focused on increasing electoral support and it seemed that the strategy was paying off. There was a widespread consensus that the party would win the largest number of seats in the 2007 parliamentary elections, and the party was preparing itself for this event.

The PJD, however, did not win the 2007 elections and, as we have shown, even lost support. A discussion of the reasons why the promising rise of the PJD came to a halt highlights the relevance of the themes in this book.

The most immediate reasons why the PJD did not win the 2007 elections have to do with the intensity of its electoral mobilization or, rather, its lack of it. Two types of actor are worth emphasizing in this respect: PJD members and the MUR. PJD members were less prone to mobilize for a party that had become less transparent and democratic in itself, and one in which they felt they had less of a say in its decisions. The procedure to select the candidates for the 2007 elections allowed for more intervention by the party leadership than that of 2002. This had caused so much unhappiness that party leaders even refrained from exploiting it completely. As the leaders themselves observed, why would a member do the door-to-door canvassing for a candidate that he had not chosen?[32] This lack of enthusiasm in PJD

members was even more damaging in the light of the withdrawal of support by the MUR, in itself a substantial loss of mobilization resources at the disposal of the party. The consequences of the withdrawal by the MUR probably went beyond the intensity of electoral mobilization and included credibility costs, the absence of a media campaign in favour of the PJD similar to that of 2002 and surely the loss of the 'physical' support previously provided by the MUR. As one party leader mentioned, MUR members were 'more disciplined', that is, if they were told to cover neighbourhoods they could be relied on to do this.[33] The fact that the districts where the party was most successful remained similar from 1997 to 2002 but then changed substantially in 2007 highlights the importance of the MUR's withdrawal to the 2007 results.

The changed themes of mobilization were probably a second important reason for the 2007 'failure'. The party changed its emphasis from identity issues to management issues. According to a party leader, this might have been an unpopular shift, particularly with the poorest segments of the population.[34] The evidence presented above suggests that in Casablanca the PJD lost support particularly in the poorer districts. More evidence is needed but, if correct, this points to an interesting puzzle. A National Democratic Institute (NDI) report (NDI 2007a), based on focus groups, concludes that the main concerns of citizens were related to socio-economic problems rather than identity issues. The fact that an Islamist party may have lost a substantial amount of support precisely by shifting its emphasis from identity to 'good management' seems to be at odds with this evidence. One possible answer is that the PJD addressed socio-economic problems in an increasingly 'realistic' style, being aware of budgetary constraints and fearing to make populist promises that it would not be able to keep. A second answer to the puzzle may be linked to the importance of credibility in such systems, a topic that is developed below.

All these choices can be, at least partially, explained by two key and interrelated features of the environment: an authoritarian setting and a predominance of clientelistic linkages. The first way in which this setting is relevant is as mediator for the effect of the 16 May terrorist attacks in Casablanca. This event is of the utmost importance for understanding the trajectory discussed above, but its importance is not direct. As is discussed above, the PJD took a number of steps to preserve its legality that did not correspond to either its policy preferences or the strategy it had devised to increase its power in the future. The party's endorsement of the personal status code must have alienated core voters who cared about the Islamic part of the PJD's agenda. In turn, the reduced and increasingly partial coverage in the 2003 communal elections deprived the PJD of an opportunity to gain experience and support through governing more municipalities. Of course, these were deliberate choices by the PJD. Had it been willing to jeopardize its legality, it could have been

more assertive towards the regime. By that time, however, the PJD had invested so much in its organization that it appears that this was no longer an option for the majority of party leaders.

The authoritarian setting mattered because of its impact not only on party choices but also on the expectations of citizens regarding what a party of government can actually achieve in Morocco. Previous expectations of the alternance government had changed to frustration. The failure to change the socio-economic and political situation in Morocco was viewed as a failure of these parties but also sharpened awareness that the power centre remained outside elected institutions. This was probably relevant in discouraging middle class segments from seeing the PJD as a viable alternative with the capacity to change things. The very low turnout in the 2007 elections and the fact that turnout was smallest in urban middle class districts is evidence of this effect.

The clientelistic environment also posed an important problem. It is generally difficult for a programmatic party to survive in a clientelistic environment. When one can sell one's vote, what incentive does one have to vote for a programmatic party? The ideal situation would be for others to vote for the programmatic party that promises good management and then to sell one's own vote. A possibly more relevant factor regarding clientelism in this context is linked to credibility. In a context where linkages between citizens and parties are largely clientelistic and where the typical exchange is votes for patronage, money or other types of favours, it is extremely difficult for a new party to convince citizens that it is different. Unlike the argument above, this is not related to whether a party *can* change things but to whether it *would* change things if in power. Indeed, the typical attitude towards politicians is that they are egoistic and cannot be trusted. In that respect, the loss of the MUR would have been particularly painful for the PJD, because it provided credibility to the PJD's claim to be different to the standard Moroccan political party.

Endnotes

[1] The analysis of the PJD's organizational development and its relationship with its founding organization is based on Wegner (forthcoming).

[2] For a longer discussion of the background to the Moroccan regime and the Islamist movement see Wegner (forthcoming).

[3] Justice and Charity is led by the Supreme Guide and a guidance bureau composed of six members. The smallest units are cells (families, composed of 10 members),

followed by branches (composed of three to 10 families) and regional councils (composed of the leaders of three to seven branches). It has specialized committees for teachers, students and women. The Supreme guide appoints all the regional cadres.

[4] As Nachtwey and Tessler (1999: 60) acknowledge, the quoted survey had limitations: 'Support for Islamist movements and platforms' was measured by constructing an index combining the responses to questions on the degree to which religion should guide administrative and political matters. Clearly, such responses may reveal potential support for an Islamist movement but are by no means a sufficient condition. For instance, high scores could just as easily translate into votes for the *Istiqlal* Party.

[5] Author interview with a PJD leader, 6 November 2003.

[6] Against the preference of the Islamists, the MPCD had boycotted the communal elections in the same year. MUR members participated as independents and won around 100 seats as municipal councillors.

[7] The PJD called its position 'critical support' and held no ministry in the alternance government. Nevertheless, it voted in favour of most government bills and was publicly associated with the government.

[8] Author interview with a PJD leader, 7 March 2003.

[9] We call this group radicals using the meaning in the democratization literature, rather than the literature on 'Islamists and democracy'. In both types of literature, radicals are less willing than moderates to compromise with the authoritarian incumbents. Importantly, radicals in the democratization literature are those who are less willing to give up on democratic principles, while in the literature on Islamists and democracy, radicals are viewed as less prone to accept democratic values.

[10] On the typical practices and the organization of Moroccan parties see Willis (2002).

[11] These profiles were published by Al-Tajdid before the 2002 parliamentary elections and compiled by the authors.

[12] The opposition to the Islamists mainly targeted the right of women to conclude marriages without a marital tutor and the abolition of polygamy.

[13] On the 2002 elections see Willis (2004).

[14] For details of the merging of the two types of data see Pellicer (2008).

[15] According to rumour and the allusions of one party leader, the PJD won the elections but after being convoked to the ministry of the interior on the night of the elections agreed to take third pace.

[16] Author interviews with PJD local secretaries, 6 December 2003, 12 November 2003, 9 November 2003 and 18 November 2003.

[17] Author interviews with PJD leaders, 17 November 2003, 4 September 2003 and 6 November 2003.

[18] Ramid had, for instance, denounced the 'undemocratic' way in which the PJD was treated after 16 May 2003 and the pressure from the ministry of the interior.

[19] In Casablanca, the PJD stood in 8 of the 16 city districts, in Fes 4 of the 6 and in Marrakesh, Rabat and Salé 3 of the 5. No seats were contested in Tangier because local party leaders refused to comply with the partial coverage system.

[20] Author interview with a PJD leader, 12 November 2003.

[21] Author interview with a PJD provincial secretary and member of the National Council, 6 December 2003.

[22] Author interviews with PJD leaders, 1 and 2 November 2007.

[23] The reasons behind the MUR's decline in influence are related to the organizational development of the PJD and conflicts between the two organizations. These themes are discussed at length in Wegner (forthcoming).

[24] See *al-'Asr*, 17 October 2003 and *al-Tajdid*, 13 October 2003.

[25] Although not a universal view, these observations apply as much to poor neighbourhoods, such as Yaqub al mansur in Rabat, as to better off ones, such as Meknes.

[26] See 'Meknès, cœur des paradoxes marocains', *Le Monde*, 7 September 2007.

[27] See *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*, 14 April 2006. It went unnoticed that the poll asked for the voters' preferences if voting were mandatory. Thus, the result probably reflected the fact that Moroccans consider the PJD the least bad of the political parties, not that voters would turn out massively to support it.

[28] The King had sent a note to the PJD congratulating the party on its party congress, and the USFP had sent a delegation to the congress.

[29] E.g. it abstained from organizing public meetings or demonstrations against a highly unpopular increase in the Value Added Tax, even though it opposed the bill in parliament. Author interview with a PJD leader, 2 November 2007.

[30] Vote buying does not create problems of reliability because it expresses voter preference: to sell his vote rather than cast it on programmatic terms.

[31] Ongoing research by the authors on local governance in Morocco suggests that mayors in these two cities strongly focused on increasing spending on infrastructure, and that they did so dramatically either by borrowing (Ksar al-Kebir) or by the sale of resources (Oued Zem).

[32] Author interviews with PJD leaders, 1 and 2 November 2007.

[33] Author interview with a PJD leader, 3 November 2007.

[34] Author interview with a member of the PJD National Council, 10 August 2008.

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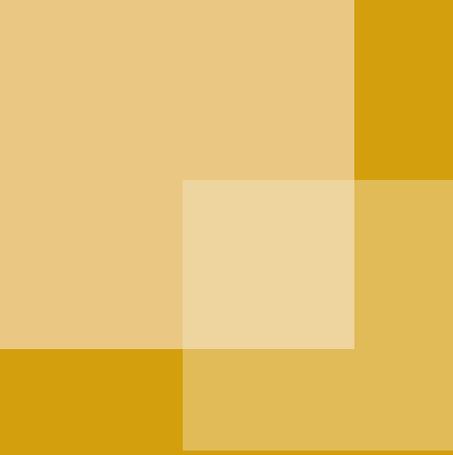
Chapter 2

The Muslim Brotherhood and political change in Egypt

Chapter 2

Tawfiq Aclimandos
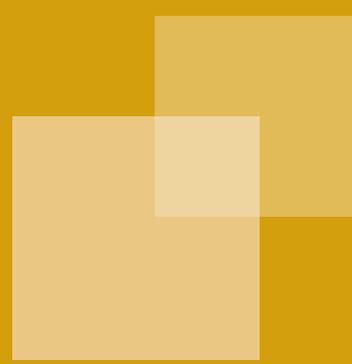
The Muslim Brotherhood and political change in Egypt

1. Introduction

Several questions should be tackled at least briefly in the context of a text discussing change, such as the relationship between economic change and political change and which of the two has priority. It was possible to ignore the question a few months ago, but the extent of the rise in the prices of petrol and foodstuffs, the progress of inflation and the multiplication of strikes following the deterioration in living conditions in Egypt raise it once again – and acutely. The majority of observers think, rightly or wrongly, that the 'social question' is the principal political question of today. The problem is whether it makes a democratization or liberalization of authoritarianism more urgent or if, on the contrary, it requires a temporary hardening of the regime in order to gain time to allow any economic reforms to bear fruit.

I have preferences, but few answers of which I am certain. In effect, the problem of economic and social reform has at least two facets. Moreover, the economic and social programme of the main opposition force, the only one capable of constituting an alternative government – the Muslim Brotherhood – does not shine with clarity. That said, one can single out certain problems and start to provide answers.

First, it is clear that the regime has failed with regard to the question of social inequality. The 'objective situation' of the labour market plays against the lower levels of the middle classes and the disadvantaged. In effect, the demand for jobs is much greater than their availability. Moreover, the policies in place since the Nasser era have consisted of offering the workforce protected jobs requiring low, or even zero,

productivity. Now what is on offer is badly paid jobs with little or no protection which require considerable work to compensate for the low level of productivity. This objective situation is aggravated by the regime's class alliances and by the fact that the upper ranks of the hierarchy of the National Democratic Party (NDP) have been taken over by capitalists anxious to defend their own interests.[1] It remains to be seen whether the Muslim Brotherhood is capable of doing better. I am sceptical, without being able to offer a hard and fast opinion. On the one hand, redistribution requires a developing economy, which in turn requires peace and the influx of foreign capital, and the Brotherhood's position as regards Israel or the banking system is not reassuring. Furthermore, a study of the positions taken by the Brotherhood's members of parliament finds two contradictory tendencies: some support economic liberalization and maintaining the course set by the NDP, even if they prefer to base themselves on Arab and Islamic capital rather than capital from the West. Others support the defence of state primacy and of the disadvantaged. One must recognize nevertheless the importance of the Brotherhood's social work. In brief, as regards social inequality, supposing that the objective constraints and pressures of globalization make even more choices and alternatives possible, the Brotherhood has a slight advantage.

Second, as far as the pursuit of reforms liberalizing the country's economy are concerned – namely trying to abolish or gradually to rationalize subsidies, privatize public sector undertakings, lessen the bureaucratic burden on the economy, remove obstacles complicating the creation of enterprises or the pursuit of normal activities and promulgate legislation favourable to investment – it is clear that the adversaries of such an agenda are very much in the majority. Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, Minister of Defence, for example, has often shown in meetings his hostility to privatization, which amounts, in his view, to putting strategic sectors, which are widely defined, 'under the control' of foreign capital, which would potentially also be Jewish capital. The general behaviour of President Mubarak is that of a sceptic and he often reigns in reform in the name of social peace or security considerations. Observers think that the attitude of the two men reflects the general mood of the army, the multiple security bodies and senior parts of the civil service. Public opinion as a whole, for similar nationalist considerations or through fear of the impact of the privatization on its buying power, is very reserved.

More generally, these policies amount to a dismantling of the clientelistic networks of the state apparatus, which perceive themselves, probably rightly, to be among the principal losers in such reforms. In other words, they are unpopular as much among society as among the state apparatus and its upper ranks. They are, however, necessary. At the moment, the reformers are very much in the minority. The son of the President, Gamal Mubarak, aspires to the succession and seems to want to see

the bulk of the unpopular measures adopted during the lifetime of his father. The Prime Minister, certain members of the government and senior members of the civil service as well as the businessmen who control and finance the party also support reform. Some authors think that the rural middle classes have profited greatly from the rise in the prices of foodstuffs and more generally from liberalization, but this remains to be demonstrated. Here also, as regards economic reform in the strict sense, it is very difficult to form a judgement about the intentions of the Brothers. There is some doubt, however, about their attitude to foreign capital, the banking sector, the regime's international alliances and peace with Israel, which are preconditions for the pursuit of reforms. Neither the worst nor the best is certain, but almost none of the Brothers are competent economists. In sum, the dossier of 'economic reform' gives an advantage to the regime in place, since one has the impression that the majority of serious reformers are in its camp.

It is necessary, however, to emphasize a number of insoluble problems. Corruption has reached such levels that it is naive to think it can be reduced. It might offset the deficiencies of redistribution, but it introduces terrible unknowns and creates terrible dysfunctions. I do not see how weak productivity can be remedied in the immediate future. The regime skirts round or postpones the difficulty by contenting itself with encouraging the inflow of capital. Finally, subsidies, which distort all market mechanisms, have acquired too much quantitative importance to be removed. The recent increase in petrol prices aggravated inflation, even though they remain a great deal lower than international prices. Petrol subsidies cost the state more than the budgets of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health put together. Finally, demographic growth puts terrible pressure on the 'social system' as a whole, complicating the task of any reformer.

It is important to bear in mind that the regime is anxious. It buys social peace by drastically increasing salaries and maintaining subsidies at absurd levels thanks to the manna of the privatizations. This, however, is not infinite. I think that the emergence of a dramatic social question increases the regime's instinctive hostility to any experience of relative liberalization, and a fortiori of democratization, as a result of the current situation. It remains to be seen if this strategy is the right one, or if it reflects a culpable blindness. On the other hand, certain information reported in the press leads to the conclusion that the Presidency is in the process of exploring or testing the way to an agreement with the Muslim Brotherhood. It might be possible to obtain the agreement or silence of the Brotherhood as regards the question of the succession of Gamal Mubarak in return for a price which remains to be determined, the preference of the regime being a simple agreement on permission to establish a political party. Certain statements of middle-ranking Brotherhood officers lead one to think that the Brotherhood would also like to have permission to publish a

newspaper or to see 'their file' managed by the NDP or even by the Presidency rather than by State Security and the security bodies.[2]

2. Political change

It remains to be seen whether the Brothers would accept such a bargain, which would at best divide their bases of support. The creation of a party is a concept which requires further elaboration. Either it is a question of accepting the Brothers as they are, that is, a secret Brotherhood which only welcomes pious Muslims, with opaque financial resources, that does not distinguish between preaching and political action but surfs on the resources offered by the amalgamation of the two and by the seduction of the utopia of a radically different society, and whose 'international organization' contravenes Egyptian law. In this scenario, the price to pay for the regime would be exorbitant, but this does not mean that it will not pay it or that the Brothers will be happy with such an agreement. Alternatively, the regime could make it understood that it will respond favourably to a request for regularization of the Brotherhood if it puts itself 'in conformity' with Egyptian law, in other words, if politics and preaching are clearly separated, if the international organization is dissolved, if the party welcomes Egyptians whatever their allegiance and whatever their religious outlook, and if an effort at financial and organizational transparency is made – and here the price to pay for the Brothers would be exorbitant.

To put things differently, there is consensus within the academic and expert communities as to which measures should be adopted in the case of Egypt in order to encourage political change which reconciles stability and liberalization, or even democratization. The most recent report of the International Crisis Group is a perfect illustration of this (International Crisis Group, 2008). It lists recommendations addressed to the Egyptian authorities and others as regards the Muslim Brothers. Beyond the fact that no mechanism or process of execution is suggested, it remains to be seen whether the measures advocated are feasible and, for certain people, desirable. In other words, is reform of the NPD, the security services, the Muslim Brothers and al-Azhar possible and, if so, to what extent? A further related question is whether the material, ideological and subjective aspects (which hinder this stabilization or liberalization, and which are, from this point of view, dysfunctional), have any correspondence, function or utility. In other words, is their elimination possible and without any cost to the stability of the system?

3. Reform of the Muslim Brothers: Preliminary considerations

There is academic consensus over the need to distinguish between and separate Brotherhood and Party, and preaching activity and political activity, and to invite

or encourage the Brothers to accept without reservation the notions of citizenship and the equality of all citizens without distinction as to race, sex or religion. There is also consensus about distinguishing, within the Brotherhood, between ideologues and pragmatists, between theocrats and democrats,[3] and between the generations of the 1960s, who were arrested in 1965, and those of the 1970s, who were students at that time and the spearhead of the Islamization of the university. It is said by way of general explanation that the intermediary officers of the Brotherhood, those who are today in their early to mid-50s, have political experience, are pragmatic and have accepted without reserve the notions of democracy and citizenship. Unfortunately, their rise is hindered by the presence in the upper ranks of 'nasty theocrats'. The views of leading experts are sometimes more nuanced and subtle but, despite their efforts, do not completely escape from such a framework or statements.

My main reservation centres on the distinction between preaching and politics. To believe that preaching as it is seen by the Brothers is not a political programme or is not a guideline for political action is to delude oneself. There are two possible scenarios. In the first, the Brotherhood must content itself with reforming morals, doing social work and making long religious speeches and leave politics to the professionals who come from its ranks and who accept democracy, citizenship, the alternation of political power and all that is good. However, the Brotherhood was founded in order to accomplish a utopian and theocratic project and to gain power in order to restore the grandeur of Islam and to build the perfect Islamic city, while serving at the same time as a model, defender and propagator of Islam. In this scenario, reform implies asking the Brotherhood to disappear, to disband itself or at least to change its method of recruitment and its relationship to reality – to turn its back on its raison d'être and the motivating utopia which allows its militants to endure a life of police harassment and professional problems, and to channel its energy into the consolidation of a social system which it does not like and which in its eyes is not completely Muslim or even worse.

Alternatively, the theocratic project must be that of preaching, the meaning and essence of the Brotherhood's social action, while the democratic and 'citizen-related' project must be that of a party, which would be the political arm of the Brotherhood. In other words, one would separate the two discourses and types of practice which one sees within the Brotherhood *and* give primacy to the democratic discourse and practice. The Brotherhood would perhaps, or even probably, accept the transformation of its political section into a Party, although some doubt it, but it will certainly not accept giving primacy to the political, democratic and citizen-related discourse,[4] and even less abandon its project of an Islamic state applying sharia law. To distinguish between politics and preaching will not make the utopian project disappear, nor will it resolve the problem of the compatibility of that project with a democratic credo and democratic practices.

The distinctions between the different sensibilities and movements within the Brotherhood must be examined. First of all, it is necessary to distinguish, without always separating them, 'bodies of ideas' and 'types of motivating feeling'. Neither are sufficient alone for the analysis below, thus it is necessary to look at both.

It can be said that the ideology of the Brotherhood is poor.[5] Its principal thinker remains Sayyid Qutb. Islamist theorists who attempt to reconcile democracy and Islamism do not generally come from the ranks of the Brotherhood. On the other hand, and to be more nuanced, it should be pointed out that one of the principal references of the Brotherhood, Sheik Yûsuf al-Qaradâwî, has been very much affected by the fact that the application of sharia law has served to legitimize hateful regimes and tyrannies (e.g. in Sudan). He has clearly noticed that 'without freedom' nothing is possible. Nevertheless, there is a great difference between that and stating that viable or coherent solutions have been found. It should also be emphasized that the Supreme Guide supports discreetly and to as great an extent as possible Brothers who are democrats, and that he listens to them. He seems to think that democracy and Islamism can make good bedfellows, and that democracy can be theologically founded, but I am not sure that he really understands the 'cost' of democracy, or that if he does he is ready to pay it.

The feelings which justify entry to the Brotherhood and which it encourages, develops and mobilizes are first of all religious. They have their admirable side: individual and collective self-perfection; a relationship to central values which demands action in their defence; a spirit of sacrifice, altruism and abnegation; service of the religious, of society and of the poor; proselytism and a desire to found a radically different society and regime. They also have their odious side: intellectual and mental rigidity; arrogance and hate-filled mistrust of the other, whether that be a 'bad Muslim' or a non-Muslim; a desire to punish and humiliate dissenters; a cult of force; a war-like relationship to reality which justifies lying; and, above all, adhesion to a view of society which amounts to saying at the very least that Islam does not have the place which it should through the fault of actors who embody evil. These feelings, laudable or detestable, may be political but they are not democratic.

Some further remarks are necessary. Democratic Islamists are perhaps incoherent, but they are often sincere. The distinction between ideologue and pragmatist can result in error, above all if it is taken to imply that ideologues are by necessity theocrats and conservatives, while pragmatists are necessarily democrats. In the internal debates of the Brotherhood, of which the press catches an echo, the young democratic bloggers are sometimes rightly reproached with being idealists and with lacking a sense of reality.[6] The new member of the Guidance Bureau, al-Katâtnî, who passes for one of the Brotherhood's 'hard line conservatives', is described by Nathan Brown as

'pragmatic'.[7] A colleague tries to skirt round the difficulty by distinguishing within the conservatives between those who are political (e.g. the deputy Supreme Guides al-Shâtir and Muhammad Habîb) and those who are just preachers (e.g. the Secretary General Mahmûd 'Izzat). Once again, this appears to turn a blind eye to the fact that preachers have a political programme and political conceptions.

One final point is important when speaking of change. Is the Brotherhood in crisis? If so, does this crisis call into question its ethos or vocation? Any answer must be speculative. My answer is the following: the Brotherhood is possibly, or even probably, faced with serious difficulties, but these are due to police harassment, massive arrests[8] and the regime's hostility, and not to the amalgamation of preaching and politics or to its totalitarian tendencies. Its principal ideological weakness will soon no longer constitute a handicap: the Brotherhood has always been perceived by large parts of the population as espousing a project which is hostile to the modern Egyptian nation state and as being dangerous for the 'national link' between Muslims and non-Muslims. Today, the modern nation state remains perhaps a normative value, but its 'effective incarnation' (the certainly clientelistic and probably irrational state) has been discredited, and the national link has been considerably weakened as a consequence of the emergence of communitarianisms.

The Brotherhood's recruitment has strengthened considerably since 2005. The number of people making contributions has at least doubled, if not more. Entire regions, particularly in the Delta, appear to have been won over to the Brothers. The Brothers' discourses, except the most radical,[9] can, as a result of the Islamization of society and the emergence of demented jihadist Salafi discourses, appear moderate. On the other hand, it seems probable that the proceedings of 2007 and the confiscation of undertakings and goods belonging to the Brotherhood have caused serious financial difficulties. It is clear that internal communication and consultation and the human interaction necessary for ongoing activities suffer from the constraints of secrecy, which makes gatherings impossible. For example, the Brotherhood's current Consultative Council, its parliament or central committee, was last elected in 2005 but has never met, and its members do not know each another, which complicates elections to the higher level, the Guidance Bureau, whose members have to come from this Council.[10]

Finally, the press frequently takes delight in the 'blue' and 'green' democrats, the young bloggers, and regularly reports an insurrection of young political wolves or even the grass roots. It often gives disappointed defectors the chance to speak. This is often cited in support of arguments to the effect that the Brotherhood is ossified and that its militants are increasingly conscious of the fact. It seems clear to me that the hierarchy sometimes, or even often, disappoints the more moderate, at other

times the more enthusiastic, sometimes the more democratic and at other times the supporters of recourse to violence which would legitimize state repression. It also seems clear to me that the importance of the young democrats is overestimated and that there are few significant defections. It remains to be seen whether the vigour of the internal debates is a sign of life or ossification.

4. The Brotherhood: Elements of a first phenomenology

This section outlines aspects of the Brotherhood which emphasize its size, its internal organizational logic, its relationship with ideology, the importance and centrality of the religious, its sectarian socialization, the relationships of force between its different sensibilities and its relationship with violence.

The men who undertook to reconstruct the Brotherhood in the middle of the 1970s did not agree among themselves on its vocation. The majority wanted to make it a sort of Leninist party, a secret, hierarchical, disciplined, idiosyncratic body preparing itself for jihad against regimes. The others, who were in the minority but were necessary, being men of prestige with access to those close to Sadat, wished to renounce violence and to found a mass movement 'welcoming into its bosom all that Islam can welcome', that is, any Muslim who observed the *'ibâdâts* (prayer, fasting, zakât, etc.). A compromise between the two options was achieved. The Brotherhood had two irons in the fire. It participated in parliamentary and mayoral elections and cultivated its dimension of 'mass Brotherhood', but at the same time it prepared a 'great evening', infiltrating crucial sectors of the state apparatus and of civil society in order to prepare a general strike which would bring the regime down. Plans to this effect were discovered in 1992 at the house of the strongman al-Shâtir. Neither those who describe it as a mass movement nor those who see it as a party with Leninist tendencies are wrong.

The relationship with ideology is complex. On the one hand, it is not true to say that the Qutbist ideology has been irredeemably eroded. On the other, it seems clear that the Brothers are diverse, and the writings of the Brothers well illustrate this diversity. I have suggested elsewhere[11] a difference between three types of militant: the democratic Islamist, who does not see how a modernized sharia and democracy are incompatible; the Salafi Islamist who wants above all to destroy the prevailing order and whose relationship to reality is founded on intensely negative feelings; and the Salafi Islamist who wants to construct a traditional Islamic society. It is necessary to bear in mind, however, that the latter two types constitute a great, even overwhelming, majority, and that everyone shares two fundamental beliefs, which Qutb formulated in a celebrated but debatable manner – that Egyptian history from 1882 to 1970 is that of a retreat of Islam

from public life which has had disastrous consequences, and that a society which does not apply sharia law is not truly and completely Muslim.[12]

The Brotherhood recommends certain works as reading for militants destined to rise in the hierarchy. In these works there is no avoidance of reflection on democracy or the consequences of the sociological pluralism of societies. The explicit project is that of the defence of Islam and of the construction of a perfect, theocratic and total, not to say totalitarian, Islamic society. The discourse on the 'other' is often hate-filled. In other words, if one excludes those who handle political questions, the Brotherhood's hard core and apparatchiks, without being monolithic, seem less plural than one might think.

My colleagues and other observers distinguish between three types of ideology or sensibility within the upper ranks and officers of the Brotherhood. Some, in the minority, are democrats; others are Salafis; and others again Qutbists. To be Salafi is, generally, to be attached to the example of the *salaf*, the pious ancestors, and to radically distrust influences from elsewhere. More precisely, it is to adopt a position, a method and a corpus which consist in privileging a literal reading of the sacred texts and in making absolute, often by mimicking, the (real or supposed) practice of the pious ancestors by systematizing it into a coherent corpus and a grandiose construction. The Salafi position has several varieties both within and outside the Brothers, and some are very hostile to the movement founded by al-Bannâ, which they reproach with having accepted impious and sacrilegious innovations such as elections. Others, sometimes the same people, reproach Qutb and the Qutbists with not systematically practicing a literal reading of the texts and with being guilty of *ta'wîl* (interpretation, hermeneutics).

To be Qutbist is to be a disciple of Sayyid Qutb, the greatest of the Brothers' theorists. In his view, Allah, knowing his creatures well, denied them the right to make Law. He is the legislator. His law is the only one to guarantee justice. Any society or human gathering which arrogates to itself the right to make law perpetuates injustice and iniquity within it, is not Muslim and is even apostate. An avant-garde will withdraw, as in the past the Prophet exiled himself at Medina, prepare itself, fight and return to conquer such impious societies and to re-establish the sovereignty of God. This 'great narrative' has the same structure as that of Leninism. History has a meaning which remains hidden until unveiled by a thinker, and this thinker will inspire an avant-garde of initiates to realise utopia.

There is much debate about the relative importance and weight of the Qutbists and Salafis. According to some, the former control the apparatus and only co-opt the latter as a facade or 'shop window', allowing the former to range more widely and

seduce a certain type of sensibility. According to Tammâm, the Salafi component of the Brothers has progressed a great deal, as has its influence, and has corrupted the message of the Brothers.

Without denying the importance and the relevance of these distinctions, I believe that they should be placed in context. It is not impossible to reconcile Qutbism and Salafism, and there are several ways of doing so. Furthermore, it is difficult to identify from their writings the attitudes of authors and officers of the Brotherhood. Finally, and crucially, the programme of indoctrination and 'training' internships for militant Brothers integrate elements borrowed from both.

In an interview given to *al misri al yawm* on 5 October 2008, Sheik al-Qaradâwî tackled the question of the programme of education, the *manhaj tarbawî*, of the Brothers, which he criticizes. According to him, the Council of the Brotherhood is not on a single ideological and doctrinal line (*khatt fikrî*), and many new ideas have penetrated the Brothers. Some such ideas come from the Salafi movement and suffer from the defects of the majority of those who adhere to it, namely severe rigour (*tashaddud*) and literalism. The Salafis are Brothers who live, or lived, in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait. Their attitudes are manifested in the questions of political pluralism, women and minorities. Other ideas come from Qutb's late writings and include *takfîr* (the affirmation that the 'other Muslim' is apostate), and breaking with society and arrogance while refusing *ijtihâd*, the doctrinal application which allows and thinks about evolution.

According to al-Qaradâwî, the *manhaj tarbawî* of the Brotherhood integrates Salafi and Qutbist ideas. Jordanian Brothers, who were and are very attached to Qutbism and its ideas, were given the responsibility of defining this *manhaj*. For Qaradâwî, this integration of different elements means that the Brothers' reading lists include contradictory teachings which trouble the minds of the militants. Here one reads that *shûra* is compulsory, there it says the opposite; obedience is sacrosanct and that the rule of the majority is one of the imported illnesses which have attacked the Islamist body. It is necessary that the imam consult, but in the end he decides alone and is obeyed. This, al-Qaradâwî explains, is a theorization or legitimization of tyranny. He indicates that Farîd 'Abd al-Khaliq, a former member of the Guidance Bureau close to the founder, al-Bannâ, is of the same opinion. He concludes by stating that he is very happy to hear that militant Brothers buy his books: 'they are included on their reading list, even if it is not the Brotherhood's official authorities who were responsible'.

A combination of plurality of sensibilities (pure Qutbists, pure Salafis, eclectics and democrats) and the idiosyncratic relationship to ideology of the Brotherhood's hard

core, on the one hand, and the need to combine preservation of the internal cohesion of the Brotherhood and seduction of national and international public opinion, on the other, has as its consequence a permanent waltz of statements and retractions and above all a predilection for the corruption of language. Certain terms frequently used by the Brothers are given so many interpretations that they cease to have meaning: *hizb madanî*, imprudently translated by some as 'secular party', can mean that, but can also mean a party not run by *ulemas*, or a party not run by soldiers. One cannot advocate a higher council of *ulemas* attending to the *marja'iyya* and at the same time support a repudiation of theocracy. There are many more examples.

I prefer to emphasize three other problematic discursive attitudes. As a curious side-effect of the renunciation of violence, the Brothers now understand any political action as a form of jihad. As a consequence, they privilege a warlike relationship with reality. More interesting for my argument, they accept that recourse to lying is legitimate, or even desirable, in several cases. Second, the Brothers often have recourse to an argument of authority. They can be heard to say 'that is a *fiqhiyya* question', that is, it is doctrinal. This amounts to saying that it is not political and is not open to discussion. Finally, religious distrust as regards the notion of individual interest and personal ambition complicates the processes of democracy and consultation. A classic legal principle is *tâlib al wilâya la yuwallâ*, he who seeks a duty or office may not attain it, because this implies that he is 'interested'. This complicates all electoral processes. In theory, solutions can be found, but in practice they reinforce both the gain and the risk.

It is necessary to understand that methods of recruitment and socialization are centred on religious activities and the mosque. One does not join the Brotherhood: it co-opts you. The criterion for the selection of recruits is their observance of religious obligations.[13] According to available accounts, the Brotherhood is all-encompassing and helps recruits while structuring their environment gradually and without their knowledge. Holiday camps allow members from different provinces to get to know one another, reinforce solidarity between militants and encourage the control of the 'centre' and internal communication.

The socialization of the Brothers can easily be sectarian. One can only have friends who are Brothers, marry the sister of a Brother, be employed by a company belonging to a Brother or to the Brotherhood, make loans to Brothers, and so on. Clearly, the loans which the Brotherhood permits are at the same time an encouragement, a reward and a means of control. It is necessary to see that this socialization does not exclude public activity or involvement in bodies or institutions such as university, hospitals, trade unions and, of course, mosques.

The mosque is also the privileged place for the communication of the Brothers' message to the wider environment and public opinion. It is important not to delude oneself by stating that the regime's repressive practices explain this (mosques, in this type of analysis, are the only space which the forces of order do not dare attack).[14] Recourse to the mosque helps to make the Brothers' discourse sacred, or at least reinforces the general impression that it tries to serve religion and as such deserves indulgence and understanding.

Two problems remain: those of violence and international organization. The question of violence was raised once again in 2006, in three stages: first, the state security apparatus expressed its concern in the press; second, the Supreme Guide announced that he could send 10,000 *mujahids* or fighters to Lebanon to aid Hezbollah; and, third, the existence of 'militias' trained in combat techniques but not in the handling of weapons was discovered at the time of a forceful demonstration in the grounds of the University of al-Azhar. The Brothers have not committed acts which overstep the 'threshold' established in Egypt in the past three decades, although they have the material structures, as well as a doctrinal corpus, which would allow them to do so. This evolution is characteristic of the problems which the Brotherhood poses to the Egyptian political system. This army without arms produces potential combatants which it keeps under control. To aim a severe or decisive blow at the Brotherhood, supposing that this were possible, would risk 'unleashing' persons trained in combat techniques. On the other hand, the Brothers occupy a niche which allows them to act as competition to other potential jihadist groups, inasmuch as they offer a product, preparation for combat, which answers a social demand that they maintain and encourage.

Little is known about the international organization of the Brothers. The international branches of the Brotherhood date from the time of the founder, Hasan al-Bannâ, who created a section dealing with relations with the Muslim world, the principal officers of which were Mustafa Mu'min and Sa'id Ramadân. The latter played a crucial role in the construction of organizations outside Egypt. Above all, Arab and Muslim students residing in Egypt were recruited. Nasser contributed to internationalizing the movement by exiling the Muslim Brothers. The exiled Brothers set up associations, societies and cultural centres which would become the infrastructure of the international organization. They implanted themselves in Europe, first in Geneva and then in London and Munich.

When the international organization was created by Mustafa Mashûr in 1981–82, it was not a top-down invention, but the decrees which established it resembled the Brothers' branches and also other Islamic organizations independent of the Brotherhood, which had the same programme.[15] The 1990 Gulf War weakened the

international organization, since the Brothers were divided over the attitude to adopt according to their nationality. The Kuwaitis withdrew. Other developments de-legitimized and then weakened the hold of the Egyptian Brothers on the international organization, and the different branches claimed ever greater autonomy.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the organization of the Brothers resembles the Socialist International more than the Comintern. Nevertheless, 'Akif, the Supreme Guide, is trying to give it a second wind. Hosam Tammâm, the leading expert on the question, thinks that the attempt is bound to fail, and his reasoning is convincing. However, history is not always reasonable.

There remains the delicate question of relations with jihadist Salafis and with al-Qaeda. This question has been raised again, after the Supreme Guide stated that 'Bin Laden is very certainly a *mujahid*, there is no doubt as to his sincerity in the resistance to occupation to bring him closer to God. Al-Qaeda as an ideology and organization is the daughter of injustice and corruption, and I support its struggle against the occupant, but not against the peoples'.[16] State Security regularly reports that the Brothers send some of their militants to be initiated in combat techniques in camps abroad, and at least one jihadist group dismantled in Egypt included in its ranks two Brothers.

Nothing has the force of proof: even if 'Akif said what he was thinking, that does not imply that there are relations between the two groups. As a general rule, the information supplied by State Security is reliable, but that does not mean that it always is, and I do not remember having read that the training camps were al-Qaeda's. Finally, the presence of two Brothers with the jihadist militants can be explained in different ways: defection of dissidents or, on the other hand, an attempt to convince those militants to rejoin the Brothers, and so on. On the other hand, the hierarchies of the Brothers and al-Qaeda have clearly known each other well ever since the glory days of the struggle against the Soviet Union. One can imagine that they sometimes speak to each other. Common points between the most radical of the Brothers and the jihadists of al-Qaeda can be enumerated, but the two groups are different and at war and, unless there is proof to the contrary, the Brothers cannot be held responsible for the acts of the terrorist international.

5. Environment and recommendations

In conclusion, I think that no serious discussion has taken place as to the effect of the reorientations of government policy on the organizational and ideological evolution of the Brotherhood. It seems clear that there can be no lasting political stabilization without the integration of the Brotherhood into the political game, but to make the

government and the regime alone responsible for this lack of integration seems to me misleading, useless and unwise. Even more unwise is the maxim according to which liberalization of political life will favour the more moderate and allow for a movement towards the centre on the part of the Brotherhood. Examples furnished by recent Egyptian history demonstrate the opposite, if they demonstrate anything at all. Far be it from me to advocate a tough attitude, but it is dangerous to have illusions. A liberalization of political life will, at least initially, encourage the extremes.

Second, the Egyptian societal, cultural and political contexts must be studied in order to understand the problems and dilemmas of the Brotherhood, and to avoid deluding oneself. The conjunction of the social crisis, the side-effects of an incontestable modernization (e.g. the liberation of women makes men more rigid) and dominant political languages create an explosive situation which it is necessary to approach with the greatest prudence, all the more so since the institutional legacy – the condition of the state institutions and apparatus – is not exactly the high point of the Mubarak era.

I would like to emphasize a problem which is directly related to this study. When one asks a security officer why political activities are not tolerated within the university, trying to 'explain' to him that without such toleration the legal non-Islamist opposition parties cannot overcome the Brothers, he replies that, 'If we authorise political activities, we will not see a development of non-Islamist parties, but of jihadist movements'. Recent history shows him to be right. The Brotherhood has this problem: at the current time, it must be careful not to be overtaken on its right by different jihadisms, Salafisms – and al-Azhar.

In the same order of ideas, a popular fallacy is that the continual, permanent and limitless development of the security services is due to a caprice of the leader, and has 'no objective necessity'. I know that institutions can create functions and needs which they themselves satisfy, and that the presence of security bodies allows for the development of the issues which legitimize them. I know that the predominance of such bodies corrupts and has a number of irremediable side-effects. But to insist that the problems have been invented by those who have created these apparatuses and given them their full powers is to commit an error.

More generally, it is necessary also to understand that, in order to have a favourable outcome, democratization presupposes state institutions which are rational and legal, as well as powerful, and that the Sadat and Mubarak eras have been marked by an erosion of state authority and a collapse in the quality of its services. The concomitant ideas of the nation state and the rule of law have ceased to have 'credible and real incarnations'.

As for recommendations, I must confess that I am not used to making any. Egyptian society is like a house of cards, and it is impossible to know where to begin. In certain respects it resembles the society of 1952, with two contesting sides, neither of which is capable of settling the social question in a satisfactory way. One side is first and foremost perceived as an aggregation of material and economic interests, powerful or otherwise, a space of management of both the means of allocation of material resources and mediation between state and society. The other side has the incarnation of the norm and of hope for a different society. Unemployment and corruption seem impossible to stamp out. The state, suffering from terrible demographic growth, but also following a long series of choices which have been judicious over the short term but problematic over the long, no longer provides basic services. Intellectual life is interesting, but lacks a grip on reality. Extreme ideologies are spreading in large parts of society. In the past, the army cut the Gordian knot and overthrew the old regime. Today, it can no longer play the same role, and the security services are in general capable of preventing a coup d'état.

What to propose? As will have been understood, the author is in favour of helping the state to improve its performance and its governance. A policy of encouragement should allow a series of smaller reforms, themselves allowing the gradual construction of spaces of law. It will, however, be necessary to raise the question of the political. I do not believe that one can bring pressure to bear on the internal dynamics of the two sides. That seems, in any case, impossible as regards the Brothers, to whom Western governments have nothing to offer and from whom those governments can hope for nothing. Any ostensible support for one side is problematic, even if, to my surprise, Ayman Nûr has never suffered from his reputation (I refer to his rating in public opinion) as a 'US favourite'. The best solution consists in letting the wind blow where it will, and in hoping that the success of the economic reforms will allow risks to be taken as regards opening up the game.

Endnotes

[1] For different electoral reasons, this situation should endure. In fact, the disintegration of traditional clientelistic networks strengthens the phenomenon of the buying of votes. Increasing numbers of voters vote more and more often for a candidate who pays a sum of money on the day of the election. In this game, businessmen have a certain advantage.

[2] It is necessary to point out that during September 2008, some prominent Brothers, claiming to speak in the name of several officers of the Islamist movement, asked the hierarchy to 'disengage' from institutional political life for a long period, and to privilege religious preaching and social work. Without pre-judging the future of the

debate and its outcome, this seems to imply that the regime's severe blows against the Islamist movement have done more damage than I previously thought.

3 Some refine further by distinguishing between Salafis, Qutbists and democrats. See below and Aclimandos (2007).

4 Certain Islamists attempt to get out of the impasse by making a distinction between democracy as a series of institutional mechanisms and rules of the game allowing an alternating of political power, and democracy as a philosophy/ideology, an ethos, a relationship to the world and a discourse on sovereignty. They would fully accept the former (subject to reservation) and reject the latter. I believe that there is a 'motion of synthesis', a minimum agreement within the higher authorities of the Brotherhood and in particular the Guidance Bureau. It remains to be seen whether the distinction is relevant, by which I mean whether democracy as a mechanism presupposes democracy as a philosophy/ideology. The question is complex, but I reserve my position, all the more given that the traditional corpus of sharia does not, in many areas, have the same conception of public freedoms and the equality of citizens as that of their defenders.

5 This point merits a detailed discussion, which it is impossible to have in this context. I will hide therefore behind the testimony of the great Lebanese theologian Radwân al Sayyid set out in his article in *al Hayât* of 8 June 2008: 'it was very tiring to discuss with him, as for that matter with the great Islamists about their conception of the State. They would insult the State of such and such a prince, or praise the purity of that other one, while reciting verses of the Koran and the life of 'Umar Ibn al Khattâb! If I were to say to them that the discussion should be about the nature of the State and its relationship with religion, they would reply that the State, in Islam, is necessarily civil, and that the argument was about the *marja'iyya* (foundation, reference framework) [it should be understood that the non-Islamists, according to the Islamists, do not want Islam to be the foundation]. Yes, elections are not bad; the public and its opinion (*al jumhûr*) are a docile instrument in the hands of the media. That's how they think about it, while 60% of the people are on their side. What would they say if they were against them!'.

6 *al dustûr*, 29 October 2007 recounts a meeting between a member of the Guidance Bureau, Mohammad al-Mursî, and 25 young bloggers.

7 See *al dustûr*, 20 June 2008.

8 It can be said that these arrests are at the same time arbitrary and targeted: arbitrary, in that they are very often a matter of continual harassment aiming above all to prevent the Brotherhood from regaining its breath, and targeted in that they often strike key actors, such as officials of the administration, internal communication or finance.

[9] These are not as much in the minority as is claimed. According to an article published in Rôz al Yûsuf on 30 January 2008, at the time of a meeting attended by the Guidance Bureau and some researchers, 'friends' of the Brotherhood, one of the researchers said to another that he saw no difference between Mahmûd 'Izzat and Dr Fadl, the latter being the jihadist theorist who had made doctrinal revisions in an attempt to 'rationalize' jihad.

[10] See the important article by Rafîq Habîb in *al dustûr* of 5 July 2008. Habîb, a Protestant Coptic intellectual, is very close to the Supreme Guide Mahdî 'Akif. It seems to me that the article reflects the views of the latter.

[11] Consultancy of Aclimandos for the Strategic Affairs Delegation, French Ministry of Defence, September 2005.

[12] The success of Sayyid Qutb and the danger which he represents resides in the choice of the very strong term *jâhiliyya* (state of pre-Islamic ignorance and impiety) to describe societies which do not apply sharia law. Author interview with Farîd 'Abd al-Khâliq.

[13] Such observance also plays a role in the criteria for promotion, as does one's behaviour during trials such as prison.

[14] The founder of the Brotherhood, Hasan al-Bannâ, who did not live, whatever one might say, under an oppressive authoritarian regime, also placed the mosque at the centre of his system.

[15] This category includes the *jamâ'a islâmiyya* of Pakistan, founded by al-Mawdûdî, the *al hizb al islâmî* of Malaysia and the party of Erbakan.

[16] Quoted in *al misrî al yawm*, 22 May 2008.

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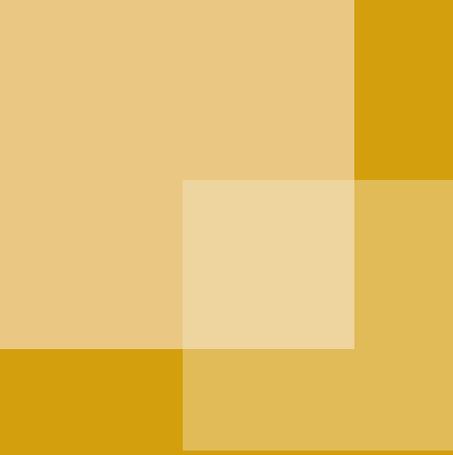
Chapter 3

Anatomy of a political party: Hezbollah – sectarian upshot or actor of change?

Chapter 3

Daniela Pioppi
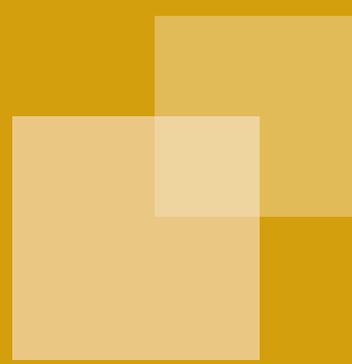
Anatomy of a political party: Hezbollah – sectarian upshot or actor of change?

1. Introduction

Hezbollah has attracted the attention of much of the world in recent years, first, for its unexpected resistance to the Israeli onslaught in the summer of 2006 and, more recently, for its takeover of much of West Beirut after the internal Lebanese crisis precipitated in May 2008. This Shi'a militia party has ignited passionate debates not only in Lebanon and the Arab world, but also in academic and official circles in Europe and the United States. The question is whether Hezbollah should be considered a representative of a re-emerging Arab nationalist front, or is only an armed sectarian offshoot ready to serve the interests of hostile regional powers.

Hezbollah was first known for its kidnappings of Westerners and its military operations against Israeli and Western armed forces in South Lebanon in the 1980s. Today it is the largest and most prominent Lebanese political party with political, social and military branches. The earlier widespread perception of Hezbollah as a fanatical religious organization, a surrogate of Iran, which sought to impose an Islamic Iranian republic model on Lebanese society has given way to a more complex picture in post-civil war Lebanon.

This chapter discusses Hezbollah's mobilization strategies, social basis and role in the Lebanese political context, in an attempt to determine whether this Shi'a party offers an element of innovation with respect to the traditional Lebanese patterns of communitarian mobilization, and, if this is the case, whether there is room to believe that Hezbollah could play a positive role in the transformation of its political context.

Positive role does not mean a democratizing role, at least in the short term. Instead, I mean the role of reformer of the political system in a way that is more conducive to mass political mobilization and participation from below. More specifically, is it true to say that Hezbollah mobilizes or politicizes social strata that are or were normally excluded from politics? Does the party encourage horizontal forms of mobilization rather than communitarian affiliation? Could the political experience of Hezbollah be exported outside the Shi'a community? Do the political practices and actions of Hezbollah help or hinder the reconstruction of the Lebanese state?

This chapter compares Hezbollah to other Islamist movements in the Arab world and to the other Lebanese political parties and organizations. It concludes by analysing how the characteristics of Hezbollah play out in its political context.

2. Hezbollah as an 'unusual' Islamist party

There is substantial agreement in the literature that Islamist movements and parties today represent the main – and sometimes only – form of political opposition to incumbent authoritarian regimes in the Arab world and that, as such, they are crucial actors in the future transformation of their societies. This is because Islamism is the only form of opposition that is organized, efficient and, most of all, mass-based. Since the global decline in secular leftist ideologies, which began in the 1970s, mainstream Islamism – both in its Sunni and Shi'a versions – has represented the most important example of what Sigmund Neumann calls 'parties of mass or social integration'.[1] Mass integration parties are important tools for the politicization and inclusion of lower social strata in active politics (Pizzorno, 1966 and 1996: 961–1031), especially in strongly unequal societies like those in the Arab world.

Hezbollah, itself an Islamist party,[2] has many characteristics in common with other Islamist organizations, both Shi'a and Sunni. As well as sharing the tenets of Islamist ideology, it is a mass-based party with extensive social and cultural branches. However, it also has some unusual traits that make it different from fellow political organizations. As is demonstrated below, the first peculiarity of Hezbollah is its early awareness of the need to accommodate a pluralistic society. The second is that Hezbollah benefits from the political and material support of Iran, and also from the rich intellectual background of contemporary revolutionary Shi'ism. The third difference is that, as it is first and foremost a nationalist resistance movement, Hezbollah finds support from a broader non-Islamist and, even if less so, non-Shi'a constituency.

International IDEA

Anatomy of a political party:
Hezbollah – sectarian upshot or actor of change?

Representative of a part of Lebanese society

Much of the literature on Hezbollah analyses the history of the party from an ideological point of view (al-Agha, 2006; Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002). Many scholars have underlined the evolution and gradual moderation or increased pragmatism of Hezbollah's political practice through various 'ideological shifts'. However, Hezbollah has demonstrated a strong dose of political pragmatism since the beginning. Its evolution would be better understood by taking into consideration, on the one hand, the movement's gradual increase in complexity with its acquisition of a large social constituency and, on the other hand, the changing political situation in Lebanon from one of overt civil war to a return to electoral politics.

The first document produced by Hezbollah was the *Open Letter to the Oppressed* in 1985.[3] In the words of Naim Qassem, Hezbollah's Deputy Secretary General, the letter marked the organization's shift from 'secret resistance activity that ran free from political or media interactions into public political work' (Qassem, 2005: 98). The letter could be considered today the founding document or 'manifesto' of Hezbollah, although recent rumours suggest that an ideological revision is imminent.

The letter states openly that Islam is a comprehensive religion and that, as a consequence, the ideal political model is the Islamic State, in this case an Islamic republic based on the Iranian model. As the document clearly explains, however, the Islamic State could not be imposed by one group over others:

> […] we don't want to impose Islam on anybody, as much as we don't want others to impose on us their convictions and their political systems. We don't want Islam to reign in Lebanon by force, as is the case with political Maronism today. […] we call for the implementation of an Islamic order on the basis of direct and free choice as exercised by the populace, and not on the basis of force, as others might entertain […].[4]

This vision rests on the conviction that without appropriate circumstances, like those which existed in Iran in the wake of the revolution, any revolutionary activity towards establishing an Islamic State would result in chaos and civil war (*fitna*). The goal of an Islamic State thus remained in the intellectual realm, but was relinquished in the political programme from the beginning because of the perceived unfeasibility of establishing an Islamic State in multi-confessional Lebanon (Qassem, 2005: 30–34; Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002: 34–59). The idea of an Islamic State is rejected not only by other faith-based communities (Sunnis, Christians, Druzes, etc.) but also by a significant portion of the Shi'a community itself.[5]

This demonstration of political pragmatism and 'moderation', compared to the political statements of other Islamist movements in other more homogeneous social settings is due to the religiously varied Lebanese context in which Hezbollah was established and has had to operate. A member of Hezbollah's Politburo provocatively specified to this author that Israel taught Hezbollah a lesson, demonstrating how dangerous it could be to build a state and a society based on a single ethnicity or religion, be it Jewish or any other.[6]

Hezbollah's practice was and remains in line with the party's declarations. During the civil war, before the advent of the 1989 Taif agreement, Hezbollah could be defined as an anti-systemic and revolutionary party. In fact, Hezbollah believed not only that the system of government was illegitimate, but also that it could only be reformed through external action (Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002: 26–27). The party's hostility, however, rested on its opposition to the principle of political sectarianism, the rejection of Maronite sectarian privileges and Shi'a under-representation, and on the collaboration of Amin Gemayel's government with Israel.[7] Hostility did not rest on the un-Islamic character of the Lebanese state. After the Taif agreement and the end of the civil war, Hezbollah's perception of the state underwent a significant transformation. Even if the most salient feature of Lebanon's post-civil war political system is – as is clear today – the strengthening of political communitarianism (Picard, 2002: 155–159), the new constitution allowed for a more equitable distribution of power among the sects by assigning 50:50 communal quotas to Muslims and Christians in parliament, and reducing the power of the Maronite President of the Republic in favour of a multi-sectarian cabinet.[8]

Hezbollah continued to reject the 'sectarian essence' of the system, but not its institutional structure. The party recognized the post-Taif multi-confessional Lebanese state and in 1992 decided to participate in the first post-civil war national election, thus transforming itself from a anti-systemic party of total refusal to an anti-systemic party of protest (Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002). More than an 'ideological shift' or a 'Lebanonization', the party's changing attitude to the Lebanese political system should be explained as a strategic choice made in the light of the end of the civil war and the changed political circumstances.

The Iranian heritage

Hezbollah's special political and ideological link with Iran is well known. Hezbollah was established with the financial and organizational help of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards.[9] This relationship provides Hezbollah, for better or for worse, with a unique set of characteristics and powerful tools.

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The Open Letter states clearly that the Iranian revolution is a source of inspiration for the new political and military organization and also that legitimate leadership is bestowed on the Jurist-Theologian, who is considered the successor to the Prophet and the Imams (following the Imam Khomeini's concept of the *Wilaya al-Faqih* or the 'ruling of the jurisprudent').[10] The party has been widely accused of being dependent on Iran and Syria,[11] and of serving a foreign agenda against Lebanese national interests. In this scenario, the Secretary General and the Consultative Council would receive direct orders from Tehran or Damascus. The relationship with Iran, however, has not prevented Hezbollah from acting as a Lebanese organization in both its strategy and its political programme. Hezbollah's rank and file and upper echelons are all Lebanese. The party certainly refers to a regional and international environment in its political programme, but does so from a Lebanese perspective and not as an international organization. The alliance with Iran (and that with Syria) is perceived as an alliance against US and Israeli hegemony in the region, which in Hezbollah's view restricts Lebanon's sovereignty.[12]

This notwithstanding, Hezbollah is well aware that the *Wilaya al-Faqih* concept and its close relationship with Iran could undermine its image as a true Lebanese nationalist movement. Hezbollah recognizes the *wilaya* (political authority) of Ali Khamenei, the current Grand Ayatollah and Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the successor of the Imam Khomeini, although the former does not have the same standing and charisma as the father of the Islamic revolution. As explained by Shaykh Naim Qassem, Khamenei's authority counts primarily when the party leadership is confronted 'with essential issues or overtures that might affect any of the working principles or requiring knowledge of legislative jurisprudence' (Qassem 2005: 56). In these cases, 'the party would take the initiative of requesting clerical permission that would provide legal sharia grounds for executing or ceasing a certain action' (Qassem 2005: 56). There is a certain ambiguity in this relationship, although members of the party cleverly compare Hezbollah's relationship with Iran to the relationship that Christian parties have with their church (the Vatican or other) or to the relationship that Communist parties had to the former-Soviet Union.[13] Apparently, however, Hezbollah asks for advice only on crucial matters and only once the Party's upper echelons have already reached a decision. Khamenei's advice is given, at least officially, only at Hezbollah's request and only as a form of legitimization of the majority decision already taken. This was the case with the party's decision to participate in the 1992 elections. Khamenei's advice was given only after an intense internal debate and a vote which had already opted for participation (Qassem, 2005: 187–192).[14]

As well as political 'advice' – or control as Hezbollah critics would allege – Iran provides an important financial contribution to Hezbollah, even if the party can also rely on

various sources of domestic funding.[15] The exact amount of the Iranian contribution is not known, but the financing is not kept secret. Scholars estimate the Iranian funding at approximately USD 1 billion per year. Reportedly, this amount does not include Iranian spending on military apparatus and Islamic resistance activities (Hamze, 2004: 63).[16] These funds, efficiently used by the party establishment, give Hezbollah a strong tool to operate in Lebanese society, as is illustrated below.

Last but not least, in addition to the financial support and political guidance through the *Wilaya al-Faqih*, the relationship with Iran (and more generally with militant Shi'ism) has provided Hezbollah with a rich intellectual background, especially compared to the ideology of Sunni Islamist movements. Due to the heritage of the Iranian revolution and, for instance, of scholars such as Ali Shariati,[17] Hezbollah has borrowed some elements of an 'Islamized' leftist and anti-imperialist ideology which fit well with the Lebanese Shi'a notion of deprivation and oppression, but it also has an appeal to the disenfranchized masses in the Beirut suburbs or in South Lebanon.

Compared to the socially conservative Muslim Brotherhood, for instance, Hezbollah's language is much more against established social hierarchies, even if 'class conflict' is not encouraged.[18] In Hezbollah's official documents, political programmes, leaders' speeches, and so on, it is quite common to read words such as 'oppressed' (*mustad'afin*), 'social justice' or 'fight against imperialism'. Hezbollah follows a form of what has been called 'Islamic socialism': the principle that the *zakat* and *khums* (Islamic duties) and the normal taxes paid by believers, coupled with strong redistributive state policies, will guarantee the welfare of the community and prevent the division into classes. The accumulation of wealth through monopoly, usury and dishonesty is prohibited.[19] Hezbollah's provision of social services – that is, education, health and housing – is organized following these lines and has served the most deprived of Lebanon.

The academic literature on Hezbollah's economic programme is scarce, as both the party and its observers concentrate on resistance activities rather than domestic politics per se. Hezbollah's officials have declared on many occasions and in interviews with the author that the aim of the party is a strong Lebanese state with strong social welfare. They also stress their opposition to indiscriminate privatization and liberalization.[20]

However, this programme is difficult to verify. Hezbollah did not become interested in gaining a ministerial post until after the Syrian withdrawal in 2005, and even then only to protect its resistance activities. Hezbollah's members of parliament (MPs) play a mainly passive role, accepting or rejecting the proposals of other MPs. For instance, Hezbollah voted against the Hariri governments' budgets in 1992, 1996 and 2000.

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From Hezbollah's point of view the Hariri governments treated the country as a business acquisition: '[the Lebanese cabinets have acted as] boards of directors, not as responsible government accountable to the people'.[21] The party's parliamentary election programmes give – as a leftist party would do – special attention to the reinforcement of public social welfare – public education, health and social security – and the fight against corruption, on which Hezbollah can claim a much better record compared to Amal (Afwaj al-Muqawama al-Lubnanya, Battalions of the Lebanese Resistance) or the Hariri bloc.[22] Hezbollah's programme at the municipal level is analysed below.

Hezbollah as a nationalist force

Hezbollah's raison d'etre is its jihad against the Israeli occupation of Lebanon. Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 in order to destroy the infrastructure of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and occupied the south of the country until its unilateral withdrawal in 2000, after determined and efficient military resistance from Hezbollah.

Military jihad, in contrast to spiritual or moral jihad, is defined by Hezbollah as a defensive war against aggression and occupation and is viewed as the duty of every Muslim. It cannot be directed internally, not even against oppressive or illegitimate regimes. The only exception to this rule is when regimes are perceived as collaborators with the enemy and thus to represent a danger to the cause of resistance, as was the case under the presidency of Amin Gemayel in the 1980s (Qassem, 2005: 39–43) or, more recently, in May 2008 when the Hezbollah military apparatus was threatened by the decision of the Siniora Government to remove the airport security chief (a Hezbollah man) and the party's parallel telephone system.[23]

Hezbollah's approach to the Israeli-Arab conflict is political rather than ideological. Hezbollah officially claims that it is impossible to negotiate with Israel because negotiation would imply the implicit recognition of the 'Zionist entity' (Qassem, 2005: 164; Saad Ghorayeb, 2002: 151). However, the argument against negotiations is political and strategic and mainly based on a critique of the Oslo peace process, which did not halt Israel's colonial expansion and did not create the conditions for a sustainable Palestinian state. There is no mention in Hezbollah's discourse of a divine prohibition on negotiations.[24]

Its military efficiency and political-strategic approach mean that Hezbollah is widely perceived in the region as an Arab nationalist movement. There was a sudden surge in popularity after the Israeli withdrawal in 2000, and even more so after the Israeli war of the summer of 2006 and the unexpected Hezbollah victory.[25] Posters of Hassan

Nasrallah, the party's Secretary General, were seen everywhere in the Arab world, from Ramallah and Gaza City to the streets of Cairo.

It could be said that Hezbollah is the only Islamist party, with the partial exception of Hamas, to attract nationalist, non-Islamist and non-Shi'a sympathizers. Hezbollah's success in turning the picture in Arab-Muslim society upside down, from a widespread feeling of defeat into a victory against Israel, has earned the party an enthusiastic following in countries across the region. *Al-Manar*, Hezbollah satellite television, is widely watched as the main pro-Palestinian and Arab nationalist channel in the Arab world.[26] Hezbollah has done more to combat Israel than any other Lebanese or Arab force.

3. Hezbollah as an 'unusual' Lebanese political actor

The Lebanese political system is characterized primarily by communities seeking protection and the distribution of benefits. The creation in the 19th century of charitable institutions, parties, trade unions, and so on, only extended the sphere of action of communitarian patrons.

Lebanese political clientelism has proved to be quite an efficient way of dealing with modernity and has certainly impeded the creation of a strong, centralized and authoritarian state, like those in other countries of the region. However, it has also made democratic participation on an individual basis almost impossible, and created major obstacles to horizontal political mobilization and favoured corruption and favouritism.[27]

The Lebanese political system is based on a precarious balance between its different communitarian components. The Lebanese civil war was fought to undermine the privileged status of the Maronites. In the post-civil war period, the decision to maintain the communitarian system was motivated by fears that behind the demands for secularization and majority rule was the ambition of the representatives of the majoritarian community – the Muslims and more precisely the Shiites – to impose their values and laws on all Lebanese (Picard, 2002: 170). Although demographic data are not available, many believe that the Shi'a community is by far the largest in the country. From this perspective, Shi'a leaders are motivated in calling for non-sectarianism because it might in the end allow them to impose an Islamist political system by the force of numbers.

Hezbollah is often portrayed as a typical 'sectarian' party, a reflection of the Shi'a community and of Iran's long hand in Lebanon, and a powerful tool for the Shi'a 'conquest' of the political system (Perrin, 2008). This picture might have some

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elements of truth, but a more careful analysis brings to the fore other interesting characteristics that make this party an unusual Lebanese political actor with the potential for innovation in its political context. First, in contrast to all other Lebanese political actors, Hezbollah cannot be identified with a notable *Zaim* or family. Certainly, Nasrallah has an important role and has in the past 15 years built his own power base inside the organization,[28] but Hezbollah would clearly survive Nasrallah's death and was not created by him or his family. As is demonstrated below, Hezbollah is a mass political party with a rigid hierarchical structure that emphasizes collective leadership. Second, in contrast with other Lebanese political organizations, Hezbollah has developed anti-sectarian and anti-clientelist patterns of mobilization, which are at least partly the result of the Shi'a community's recent development, but which also have an impact on the way the party is perceived by outsiders and, more generally, on the party's political strategies.

Hezbollah as a mass organization not centred on a Zaim

Hezbollah was founded as a small guerrilla group but rapidly became a mass political party in the 1980s and 1990s. The internal organization of the party resembles that of socialist and communist parties in other historical and political settings. The party has a very efficient hierarchical structure led by a Consultative Council (*Majlis al-Shura*). The Council is made up of seven members and is elected every three years by a 200-member Central Council (*al-Majlis al-Markazi*).[29] The Consultative Council is made up of Shi'a clergy and lay members, with the clergy in the majority by a ratio of up to five to one. Lay members or the non-ulama have to demonstrate faith in Islam and belief in the *Wilaya al-Faqih*,[30] on top of their other skills in social affairs, health, finance, and so on. The Consultative Council is responsible for administration, planning and policymaking. Its decisions are final and religiously binding on party members. Decisions are taken either unanimously or by majority vote. In case of a deadlock or a split, matters are referred to the *Wilaya al-Faqih*, the highest religious-legal authority of the party. Hezbollah leadership is therefore collective rather than individualistic or family-based. This remains the case despite the fact that the present Secretary General has been in charge since 1993.

The day-to-day management of the party is entrusted to the executive administrative apparatus, which is divided into five councils: the Executive Council, the Politburo, the Parliamentary Council, the Judicial Council and the Jihad Council. Each council is usually led by a member of the Consultative Council. Of the five councils, the most powerful are the Executive and the Politburo.

The Executive Council supervises the daily activities of the party's various units in its regions, sectors and branches. These units, each dedicated to a specific field of

activity, are: the social unit, responsible for the welfare of Hezbollah members, martyrs' families and the needy in Hezbollah-controlled areas; the Islamic health unit; the education unit; the information unit, Hezbollah's television channel, al-Manar, four radio stations and five newspapers; the syndicate unit; the external relations unit; and the finance unit. The Politburo is not a decision-making body, but an advisory body that supports the work of the Secretary General and the Consultative Council.

The military and security apparatus of Hezbollah relies on a largely invisible organizational structure, which makes it extremely difficult for its enemies to penetrate the party – as Hezbollah's success in the 2006 war demonstrated.[31] It is divided into the Islamic resistance (*al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya*) and internal security *(Amn al-Hizb)*. Unlike the other organs of the party, the military and security apparatus is under the direct control of the Consultative Council and the Secretary General. The internal efficiency and integrity that characterize the party might also be – at least in part – the result of being constantly in danger of new and deadly attack from Israel. Maintaining well-trained and efficient administrative and military wings thus becomes a vital necessity and an 'efficiency' logic must prevail over a 'clientelist' one if the party is to have a chance of survival.

The size of Hezbollah's membership is estimated at more than 200,000 (Hamze, 2004: 74). This makes the party the largest among all Lebanese political parties and factions, including Amal. The party's political and military apparatus is active in regions that have a Shi'a majority, that is, the South, the Beq'a and Beirut. To become a full member of the party, it is necessary to go through two stages of initiation by the party's local reinforcement and recruitment section. The first stage, reinforcement (*ta'bia*), lasts at least one year. During this period, new recruits are taught Hezbollah's ideology and culture. The second stage is discipline (*intizam*). During the year of *intizam*, recruits are taught the party's discipline and receive a military training. The end result of this stage decides the role of the individual in the local branch of the party. Those who excel in military activities will become fighters. Others will serve in the political or social units of the party.

Although figures are not available on the socio-economic status of Hezbollah's members, Hamze affirms after field observation that the party's rank and file come from two rough categories: the 'oppressed', that is, those from the lower Shi'a social strata, mainly poor peasants in the South and the Beq'a and urban poor in Beirut; and the Shi'a petty bourgeoisie, made up mainly of shopkeepers, owners of small and medium-sized businesses, small-scale landowners, professionals, teachers and clerks (Hamze, 2004: 76).

Beyond Hezbollah's full members, there is a mass of sympathizers who share many of the ideas and activities of the party. In a multi-confessional society such as Lebanon, it seems necessary to accommodate in a loose structure individuals or groups that support the party without imposing the party ideology on them. This is the role played by the umbrella organization Islamic Current (*al-Tayyar al-Islami*).

Finally, a highly relevant aspect of Hezbollah's organization is the network of charitable associations and institutions linked to the party through the social, Islamic health and education units. The Lebanese state does not provide enough social services to its citizens and each community in Lebanon has developed its own system of social safety nets, usually organized through extended families or clans. These private charities or benevolent societies are also an important source of political patronage. Hezbollah's social institutions, however, are the most respected and efficient and stand out both quantitatively and qualitatively with respect to those organized by other communitarian parties or movements. Hezbollah provides an array of social services to its constituents, such as construction companies, schools, hospitals and micro-finance initiatives. These tend to be located in predominantly Shi'a areas, but are open to anyone requesting help regardless of their political views or religion. Much of the funding to support these institutions is raised domestically, but Hezbollah also receives substantial levels of funding from Iran. Many of Hezbollah's social institutions were initially funded by Iran or are Lebanese branches of Iranian organizations. This is true of the Martyrs Association, which was created in 1982 by Khomeini and operates as a sister organization to an Iranian organization with the same name. The Islamic Charity Emdad (ICEC) was created in 1987 with Iranian financial support but today depends heavily on volunteer labour.[32] The Jihad al-Bina Development Organization, which was created by Hezbollah, has reconstructed large areas and repaired much of the damage caused by war. These institutions are linked to general Shi'a activism and are an important tool for mobilization.

Hezbollah's anti-sectarian and anti-clientelist patterns of mobilization

Hezbollah's emergence as a successful guerrilla movement was due not only to the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon or Western, Syrian and Iranian interventions in the country, but also to the general political mobilization of the Lebanese Shi'a community, which began in the 1960s.

Until the 1960s, the Shi'a community had been organized around two poles: an aristocracy made up of tribal chiefs in the Beq'a and great estate owners in the South, and the lower peasant strata. The estate owners were among the richest in Lebanon but were accustomed to an inferior position in the political system and the state

apparatus. When Shi'a middle and lower middle classes emerged due to professional and educational advancements and income derived from emigration, they were eager to win their share of economic and political power. Shi'a mobilization coincided with great social changes and urbanization and was initially dominated by secular ideologies such as socialism and communism (the Lebanese Communist Party, LCP, and the Organization for Communist Labour Action) and, to a certain extent, Arab nationalism (in its Nasserist and Ba'athist versions). The decline of Arab nationalism after 1967 and the Iranian revolution of 1978–79 opened a second phase of political mobilization, this time based on religion but still inspired by leftist and anti-imperialist ideologies, and fed further by the traditionally underprivileged status of the Shi'a community in Lebanon (Norton, 1987; Deeb, 2006).

At the beginning of the 1970s, the majority of the rural under-proletariat mobilized behind the Movement of the Deprived (*Haraka al-Mahrumin*) of Imam Musa al-Sadr, and after 1975 the traditional aristocracy was rapidly sidelined in the management of community affairs. At the beginning of the civil war, representation of the community was divided between the official clergy and the secular movement around Amal, the civil and military organization of the Movement of the Deprived. At the end of the decade, three events radically changed the picture and created the conditions for the founding of Hezbollah: the disappearance of Imam Musa al-Sadr, the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon. Under the leadership of Nabih Berri, Amal slowly became a conservative Shi'a movement, allying itself with the status quo and anti-Palestinian forces during the civil war. The organization was unable to contain the more militant young activists inspired by the events in Iran. Hezbollah emerged at the beginning of the 1980s as a marriage between the more radical Lebanese Shi'ite militants and Islamic Iran, and grew to become the most influential Shi'ite militant movement in the region, inheriting and restructuring the Shi'a tradition of revolution and militancy, and channelling it into a complex mass organization.

Amal, still a powerful party today, transformed itself into the Shi'a version of a typical Lebanese sectarian party or faction. It provides various services to its supporters, including schools, clinics and hospitals, but in general has much less impact on Lebanese society than Hezbollah. It is true that Amal lacks a benefactor such as Iran, but Nabih Berri, well placed in the Lebanese political system, is an important source of 'government' funds. Amal is losing ground in the Shi'a community because it is perceived as corrupt and as having adapted to the Lebanese clientelist system.

While Amal's social activities are perceived to be top-down forms of political patronage, Hezbollah has a reputation for being an exception.[33] The party not only has an anti-clientelist and anti-sectarian programme on paper,[34] but also emerges as

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a model of active citizenship and voluntarism in its concrete activities at the local level.

Good examples of this are provided by the party's behaviour in municipal elections and local administration. Municipal elections have been contested since 1998 and are relatively free, unlike parliamentary elections which before 2005 were heavily influenced by Syria. Hezbollah has placed great importance on the political context of municipalities, because it is capable of winning the government of cities without having to compromise with a coalition cabinet, and also because providing services to the population at the local level is a tenet of faith and an important point of its programme. Hezbollah's municipal electoral programmes have placed great emphasis on the active role of citizens in the economic, social and developmental spheres, aimed particularly at the most deprived. The party introduces candidates on a non-sectarian basis, emphasizing honesty and seriousness in municipal work. The provision of services to the population at the municipal level is one way in which the party can and has struck at the heart of the old Lebanese and new *Zuama* clientelism (Hamze, 2000: 741–745).

Of course, Hezbollah is a Shi'a party both ideologically – in its reference to Shi'a revolutionary thought – and socially, as its constituency is almost 100 per cent Shi'a. This sectarianism is not exceptional in Lebanese politics. However, at least until Israel's unilateral withdrawal from South Lebanon in 2000, Hezbollah enjoyed widespread cross-community support brought about by its 'Lebanese resistance' against Israel and by the party's reputation as a good and honest administrator.[35] Recent events, however, have contributed to a gradual change in this perspective.

4. The Lebanese impasse and the potential role of Hezbollah in the Lebanese context

As it is illustrated above, Hezbollah has certain characteristics that make it a special or unusual actor with respect to both Islamist movements and the Lebanese political scene. With respect to other Islamist organizations, since its foundation Hezbollah has had a stronger idea of the need to accommodate a pluralist society thanks to the multi-confessional environment in which it operates. It also has a special relationship with Iran, which provides the organization with a rich ideological background as well as important political and financial support but also leads to political control and dependency. Finally, the jihad against Israel has given the party a nationalist and anti-imperialist programme that can also be embraced by non-Islamists. With respect to the Lebanese scene, Hezbollah is the only political party to have a complex mass structure not centred on a notable family. The party could also claim to have an anti-clientelist and issue-based programme free of factional sectarian interests.

How do all these characteristics play out in practice? The results of our analysis are somewhat mixed. On the positive side, there is a highly efficient mass organization that mobilizes the lower social strata and reproduces a model of individual responsibility and active citizenship as opposed to favouritism and clientelism, as well as of political activism as against the individual passivity implicit in communitarianism. It also offers a broad horizontal base of action for different constituencies through its nationalist programme. This not only constitutes a valuable experience that can be reproduced outside the Shi'a community, but could also be important in terms of skills, know-how and 'ethics' in public administration and therefore, at least indirectly, for the reinforcement of the Lebanese state.

There is, however, an ambiguity and more than one contradiction between, for example, Hezbollah's 'leftist' language and the fact that Hezbollah is a religious party. There is a contradiction between Hezbollah's clearly anti-sectarian programme and actions and Hezbollah's constituency, which is 100 per cent Shi'a, and the party ideology, which clearly refers to Shi'a identity and experience. On the negative side there are fundamental issues such as the fact that Hezbollah cannot claim the universalism of secular parties, and the close ties with Iran through the *Wilaya al-Faqih* and the clerical leadership of the party in general.

How these contradictions are resolved depends not only on Hezbollah's strategic decisions and its internal evolution – although it could be argued that there are limits beyond which the party's evolution would bring about the party's dissolution – but also on the regional and domestic situation and the impact of external actors' policies. Recent events have had an impact on Hezbollah's political trajectory. The Lebanese crisis, which began in 2004, has shaped Hezbollah's potential role in Lebanon.

The international-regional situation did not help the Lebanese internal reconciliation process. On the contrary, it exacerbated the internal polarization – acting negatively on Hezbollah's own strategies and the way in which Hezbollah is perceived by other Lebanese political actors.

The regional chaos ignited by the US occupation of Iraq, by the hostile US approach to Syria and Iran and by the disastrous conduct of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has opened a new phase of regional and national confrontation largely based on sectarian politics. The sudden interest in Lebanon by the United States and France since 2004 is only one chapter in a longer story. Since 2005, and even more so since the 2006 Israeli war, Hezbollah has feared exclusion from the national arena and international isolation. Since the withdrawal of Shi'a ministers' from the Lebanese Government in November 2006, the country has been in a political deadlock between two opposing blocs with different regional and international alliances – the

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14 March coalition on one side and Hezbollah and its allies on the other. In May 2008, after an armed confrontation, the two blocs reached a temporary compromise, electing a successor to President Emile Lahoud and forming a government of national unity to take the country to the 2009 elections. The elections, however, heavily determined by the country's confessional system, did not resolve the political impasse.[36]

The difficult situation of recent years has led Hezbollah to reinforce its relationship with an over-nationalist Iran and to 'clearly fall back on sectarianism […] utilizing the Shi'a community as insurance' (Leenders, 2006: 38–56). Hezbollah's leadership is very aware of the 'sectarian danger' for both Lebanon and the region. It accuses the USA and Israel of playing the old colonial card of sectarian divisions in the region.[37] The political alliance with the former General, and current leader of the Free Patriotic Movement, Michel Aoun is important to the party precisely because of its trans-sectarian character.[38] The alliance was cemented in February 2006 with a 10-point document[39] and weathered the summer 2006 war and ensuing events. Beyond its cross-sectarian value, the alliance is also based on a common nationalist, anti-corruption and social-justice programme.

A central issue in the Lebanese impasse is the question of the disarmament of Hezbollah. The Taif agreement imposed the disarmament of all Lebanese militias, with Hezbollah as the only exception because of its role in resisting Israeli occupation. After the Israeli withdrawal of 2000, Hezbollah became 'a rebel without a cause' at least in the eyes of other Lebanese actors (International Crisis Group, 2003). The party continued to justify its existence as an armed militia by mentioning the ongoing danger posed by Israel to Lebanese sovereignty (i.e. Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace and waters, the Palestinian refugee problem, prisoners, the Sheeba Farms, etc.) as well as the Lebanese army's inability to defend the country. In addition, the deterioration of the situation in the occupied territories and the outbreak of the second intifada did not help the normalization of relations.

The issue of disarmament rose up the Western agenda. United Nations Security Council resolution 1559, adopted at the initiative of the USA and France, called for Syrian withdrawal and for the full implementation of the Taif agreement, and thus for the disarmament of all militias.[40] The main Lebanese political actors established a modus vivendi after Syria's withdrawal, notwithstanding the growing polarization in the country and the region. Hezbollah participated in the 2005 government and in the 'national dialogue' with the result that the Siniora government agreed to refer to Hezbollah not as a militia, but as a 'national resistance group' – effectively making Hezbollah not subject to resolution 1559.

After the 2006 Israeli war, a ceasefire in conjunction with United Nations Security Council resolution 1701[41] was imposed on the two contenders. Hezbollah was permitted to retain its arms. The UNIFIL 2 mission enjoys good relations with Hezbollah in the South and so far there have been no incidents.[42] Hezbollah has welcomed international intervention as long as it does not aim to disarm the resistance. Leenders notes that Hezbollah has regained its cause (Leenders, 2006: 38–56), or, better, it has demonstrated that its cause has always been there.

The current situation, however, is not promising. Hezbollah has on various occasions declared that it is willing to disarm in favour of a sovereign Lebanese state with an army capable of defending its territory and its citizens. It is impossible to verify the sincerity of this statement but the reality is very far from such a situation. Since Syria's withdrawal, Lebanon has become a multilateral 'neo-trusteeship' in economic (its foreign debt, etc.), political (the external alliance of government and opposition groups and the international tribunal under Chapter 7 of the United Nations Charter) and military (the UNIFIL 2 peace mission and Israeli violations of sovereignty) terms (Picard, 2009).

In May 2008 Hezbollah 'turn[ed] its arms inwards' (International Crisis Group, 2008) in a demonstration of force which has certainly unblocked the political impasse over the presidency, but has also had a heavy political price in terms of Hezbollah's credentials among non-Shi'a Lebanese and, more generally, in the Arab world. Recent events do not favour a peaceful disarmament of Hezbollah, or the development of a climate of reciprocal trust between different Lebanese fronts. Hezbollah believes that its arms are the only form of Lebanese resistance against Israeli violations and the only way to ensure the party's survival in a hostile environment. Under present circumstances it will not disarm spontaneously.

In conclusion, it seems that Hezbollah could be an 'actor of change' on the Lebanese political scene in a way that is more conducive to mass political mobilization and participation from below. What is more problematic is whether the political experience of the party could be exported outside of the Shi'a community, and this will also depend on how much the party could encourage horizontal forms of mobilization across communitarian affiliations. In this context of communitarian reinforcement, any Hezbollah move would be looked at with suspicion as it would be interpreted as a sectarian strategy disguised as 'resistance', 'majority rule',[43] and so on.

Other authors have argued that a de-communitarization of Lebanon would be impossible without a parallel secularization,[44] which of course is not compatible with the Hezbollah Islamist project. At the same time, the evolution of the Shi'a Islamist

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project would also depend on the evolution of the Lebanese political situation and, as Picard also notes, on the Shi'a community's own evolution. Two facts should be mentioned in this respect. The first is that the Shi'a community is far from being a monolithic actor: there are differences among regions and classes, and between quietists and radicals, communists and nationalists, clients of prominent families, and so on. The second regards the dynamics at work within the Shi'a community. On the one hand, there is a move towards more group cohesion and reinforcement of identity, while, on the other hand, there is a move towards the breakdown of traditional structures. While the first dynamic could work in favour of Islamization, the second favours secularization (Picard, 2002: 172).

Endnotes

[1] That is to say parties that organize the life of their adherents from the 'cradle to the grave' creating strong political identities. Neumann (1956).

[2] See the definition of Islamism in the introduction to this book.

[3] For an English translation of the document see al-Agha (2006: 223–238).

[4] From a theological point of view this is based on the Quranic verse 'Let there be no compulsion in religion' (Quran, 2:256) quoted in the open letter of 1985. English translation in al-Agha (2006: 228).

[5] In an opinion poll carried out at the beginning of the 1990s, only 13 per cent of the Lebanese Shi'a community was in favour of an Islamic State. Judith Harik's 1992 study, quoted by Saad-Ghorayeb (2002: 35).

[6] Author interview with Ghaleb Abu Zeinab, Beirut, May 2007.

[7] Amin Pierre Gemayel was the President of Lebanon from 1982 to 1988.

[8] Taif also foresaw a phased removal of sectarianism from the system, although the recommendation only remained on paper.

[9] For an account of Hezbollah's foundation see Norton (2007) or Hamze (2004).

[10] English translation in al-Agha (2006: 223–224).

[11] Hezbollah's relationship with Syria is strategic rather than ideological. During Syria's occupation of Lebanon, relations between the regime and Hezbollah were often strained. Syria protected the movement, ensuring it could retain its arms against Israel, but it also ensured the party would not become too powerful. Syria currently supports Hezbollah logistically by allowing military and financial assistance to cross into Lebanese territory.

[12] Author interview with Ghaleb Abu Zeinab and Ibrahim al-Mousawi, editor of al-Intiqad, Beirut, May 2007.

[13] Author interviews with party officials, Beirut, May 2007.

[14] Qassem's chronicle of the events leading up to Hezbollah's participation in the 1992 elections is considered by Norton to be a sincere and accurate account.

[15] The financial contributions to the party from well-off Lebanese living abroad or by believers or the party's adherents through Islamic duties (*zakat* and *khums*) are very important. Hamze (2004: 62–63).

[16] Apparently, there was a 70 per cent decrease in direct Iranian financial support under the presidencies of Rafsanjani and then Khatamy in the 1990s, but most Iranian funds come from institutions under the control of Supreme Leader Khamenei rather than the President of the Islamic Republic.

[17] Ali Shariati (1933–1977) was an Iranian sociologist and a revolutionary.

[18] See also chapter 2 in this book.

[19] See the official Hezbollah websites <http://www.hizbollah.tv> and <http://english.hizbollah.tv/fileessays.php?fid=22> as well as Hezbollah's statements and political programmes in al-Agha (2006: 223–278).

[20] Author interviews with party officials, Beirut, May 2007.

[21] Hamze (2004: 121), quoting *al-Ahd*, 6 November 2000, p. 6.

[22] The full translated texts of Hezbollah's electoral programmes since 1992 are in al-Agha (2006: 223–278).

[23] For an analysis of the May 2008 crisis see International Crisis Group (2008).

[24] Proof of this is provided by Hezbollah's willingness to negotiate with Israel on prisoner exchanges and on the 'rules of the game' in conducting the conflict. Author interviews with party Officials, Beirut, May 2007 and Qassem (2005: 164–168).

[25] As is stated by Ehud Olmert, Israeli Prime Minister during the war, the aim of the Israeli military operation was the 'removal' of Hezbollah from Lebanon. After 34 days of war and naval blockade, a ground invasion and air force attacks, leading to approximately 1200 Lebanese deaths, thousands of wounded and almost one million displaced persons, Hezbollah remained in place and emerged politically victorious.

[26] See the al-Manar website in Arabic and English at <http://www.almanar.com.lb> and Hamze's account of Hezbollah's Information Unit. Hamze (2004: 58–60).

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[27] For introductory readings on Lebanon's political system and its contemporary history see Corm (2003), Picard (2002) and Salibi (1993).

[28] Nasrallah was elected as the party's Secretary General for life in 2001.

[29] The information in this section is from Qassem (2005: 59–66) and Hamzeh (2004: 44–79).

[30] Disagreement with the *Wilaya al-Faqih* concept implies expulsion from the party. Author interview with Party Officials, Beirut, May 2007.

[31] See the analysis of Hezbollah's victory in Crooke and Perry (2006).

[32] In 2006 only 90 employees of Emdad were paid out of a total of 440. Deeb (2006: 90).

[33] See also Picard (2002: 153).

[34] See the electoral programmes in al-Agha (2006: 247–277).

[35] Author interviews with Farid al-Khazen, Talal Atrissi and Saad Kiwan conducted between 2007 and 2008.

[36] In June 2009, the pro-Western 14 March coalition led by Saad Hariri won 71 of 128 the seats in parliament, while the rival 8 March alliance, led by Hezbollah, secured 57. Saad Hariri was nominated as prime minister. See Cammett (2009).

[37] Author interviews with party officials, Beirut, May 2007.

[38] Author interviews with party officials, Beirut, May 2007. Aoun, a Maronite who had been in exile in France since the early 1990s, returned to the country just in time for the 2005 elections, which were held after Syria's final withdrawal. While many Aounists were in the anti-Syrian 14 March front, Aoun's Christian rivals had no intention of granting Aoun a place in government, a move that would have cleared his way to the presidency. This induced Aoun's alliance with the 'pro-Syria' 8 March front.

[39] The full text of the agreement is available in English at <http://english.hizbollah.tv/essaydetailsf.php?eid=4442&fid=25>.

[40] United Nations Security Council resolution 1559, 2 September 2004, available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_resolutions04.html>.

[41] United Nations Security Council resolution 1701, 11 August 2006, available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_resolutions06.htm>.

[42] The Italian army is generally very positive about its cooperation with Hezbollah and praises Hezbollah's discipline, accountability and efficiency. Author interview with Lieutenant General Giuseppe Maggi, Torino, October 2008.

[43] The party is very cautious in this respect. The official position is that Taif 'consensual democracy' is currently the best possible political system. Author interviews with party Officials, Beirut, May 2007.

[44] See, e.g. Corm (2003).

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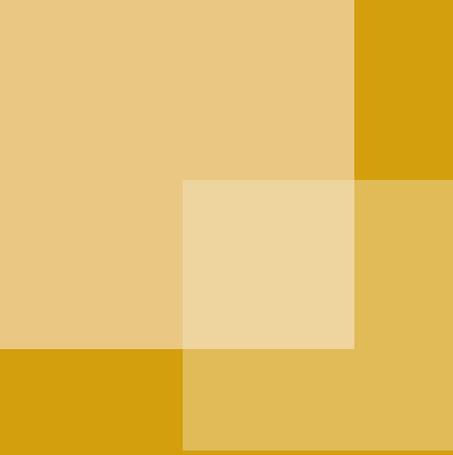
Chapter 4

Palestinian Islamism: Conflating national liberation and socio-political change

Chapter 4

Khaled Hroub
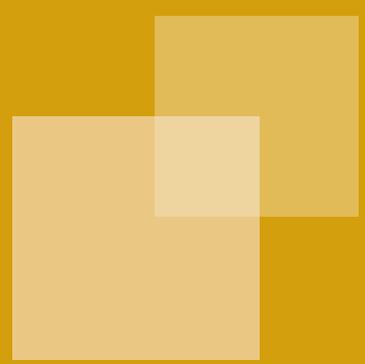
Palestinian Islamism: Conflating national liberation and socio-political change*

1. Introduction

Contemporary Islamist movements are the contextual product of political, social and economic influences, which have forced responses and immediate adaptations using and misusing historical, religious and cultural legacies that have been accessed, made available and reproduced as never before in the modern world. Understanding the context in which a certain Islamist movement has evolved is a key entry point to comprehending the holistic trajectory and the constituent units of its project. The Palestinian Islamists of the 20th century and the present day, in particular the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood and its offspring, Hamas, are an exemplary case in point.

Using context as a principal analytical tool, this chapter discusses the evolution and internal processes of transformation in the Palestinian Islamists, beginning at their inception in the 1940s and ending with Hamas's electoral victory in December 2006 and its military takeover of the Gaza Strip in June 2007. Although the focus is on more recent history, beginning with the establishment of Hamas in 1987, the discussion delves into the evolutionary phases that predated this fundamental turning point. The chapter traces the long journey of Palestinian Islamists from a weak and

marginal force, sometimes accused of acquiescing in the Israeli occupation and displaced outside what would become the 'Palestinian revolutionary legitimacy', to their relentless march to secure a place for themselves at the heart of this 'legitimacy' using bullets and ballots. During this decades-long journey, the Islamists have had various goals and strategies, reactions, and modes of relation with different local, regional and international actors, all of which deserve to be addressed.

A central question in any discussion of Hamas, or of any other Islamist movement, is whether the movement is religious or political. Another intense debate that cannot and should not be avoided, and affects policies on as well as perceptions of political Islamist movements, is over engagement versus isolation. The issue of engagement becomes more pressing in cases where Islamist movements would win free and fair elections, or win a major share of the popular vote, which would naturally suggest – or even impose – a power-sharing formula. What further complicates this issue is the perception among Islamists as well as many others that their engagement or isolation is effectively decided by Western powers.

This leads to frustration that even if power were won through democratic elections, 'Western legitimacy' must be bestowed on the winners, endorsing or stripping them off their victory. In particular, considerable frustration is felt towards the European Union (EU) because it is seen by Islamists and others as more pragmatic and 'principled', and less ideological than the United States.[1]

2. Early emergence, late influence

The historic roots and causes of the emergence of Palestinian Islamism in recent decades as a powerful political, military and social force converge and diverge with those that have been behind the rise of other Arab Islamisms. In a typical Arab/Muslim societal setting, the rise of any Islamist movement is a reaction to a blend of processes, including the challenge of Western modernity, the failure of other reformist or revolutionary ideologies to tackle social, economic and political challenges, the predicament of the post-colonial state or the politics of opposition against an oppressive status quo. In the Palestinian case, an additional reality has played a crucial role in the formation and orientation of Islamist movements: the Zionist project of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine in 1948, its momentum in the country in the early 20th century and the consequential Israeli military occupation and control of Palestine and the Palestinian people. This Israeli occupation has been the greatest shaper of most, if not all, the Palestinian political formations that have appeared. Resisting the occupation has become not only the instigator of many political and armed movements, but also the prime measure of popular legitimacy and identified with their very purpose. In the context of resistance the Palestinians

have imported various ideologies, from Marxism to Pan-Arabism to nationalism and then Islamism, all moulded and reproduced in tandem with nationalist aspirations and meant to help the fight against the Israeli occupation. At least in part, therefore, the employment of Islamism by the Palestinians since the 1980s is replicating previous failed employments of other ideologies in order to achieve Palestinian self-determination.[2]

The term Palestinian Islamism could imply various groups and broad definitions. In this chapter, however, the focus is limited to Hamas and its mother organization, the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine (MBP). Groups and manifestations of Palestinian Islamism other than the MBP have always come second to the power and influence of the Palestinian Muslim Brothers. The three main formations that are visible in the map of Palestinian Islamism are Hizb al-Tahrir, the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine and the Salafi groups. Hizb al-Tahrir, the second-oldest Islamist party in Palestine, was established in Jerusalem in 1952 as a splinter group of the MBP but is incomparable nowadays in strength and popularity to the MBP/Hamas.[3] The Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine, another splinter group from the MBP which formed in the early 1980s, enjoys only meagre support when measured against the broad support for Hamas.[4] The Salafi groups in Palestine are the weakest of all the above. They are marginal in terms of popular support, take no part in any electoral process and have no record or experience in resisting the occupation.[5]

The history of the MBP dates back to the end of the 1930s when the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (MBE), founded in 1928, sent envoys and leaders to surrounding countries on a mission to increase its outreach by setting up local branches. Representatives of the Egyptian organization visited the Palestinian cities of Gaza, Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa and Nablus in the late 1930s and early 1940s. By then, the MBE was very popular in Egypt, functioning in public and attracting members from all strata of society.[6] The Palestinian members of the Muslim Brotherhood inaugurated their official headquarters in Jerusalem in May 1946 (El-Awaisi, 1998: 150–71).

Palestinian cities in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s – especially Jerusalem, Jaffa and Haifa – were vibrant with political activism, mostly driven by defiance of the British mandate and the mobilization of Palestinians against the looming threat of the Zionist movement in Palestine.[7] Most of this activism, however, was unarmed, including that of a newly established Muslim Brotherhood Association in Palestine. Another interesting aspect of most Palestinian associations at the time was their limited representation of society as a whole. Their leadership and most of their members were drawn from the upper middle class and from 'notables'. Part of the activism was more of an assertion of the social position and prestige of these notables than a

sincere effort or sacrifice.[8] To a certain extent, this also applied to the MBP, where the leading figures, especially in Jerusalem and Gaza, already enjoyed an elevated social position. In common with several other 'socially elevating' organizations, joining the MBP in the 1940s would entail no sacrifice but bestow additional social status.[9] The situation regarding the composition of the leadership and membership reversed from the early 1950s, when the ranks of the MBP were filled by members drawn from poorer classes and refugee camps after the expulsions from Palestinian cities before, during and after the 1948 war. When Hamas emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s, it had a diverse membership. Most of the members and leaders of Hamas were drawn from the lower middle class, the poor from rural areas who had migrated to the margins of Palestinian cities or those who had lived in refugee camps for many years. At the same time, however, members and leaders with urban and upper class backgrounds were playing a no less important role (Mishal and Sela, 2000: 13–26). Between these two periods, a rapid process of internal mobility displaced the prestige-oriented leadership in favour of more revolutionary and disadvantaged groups.

From a comparative angle, what differentiates the composition of the Islamists from that of the nationalists and leftists is the continued coexistence between the well-off and the poor in the ranks of the MBP. Any class-based perspective was portrayed as a Marxist and therefore anti-religious perception of the make-up of society. The MBP, and later Hamas, therefore managed to maintain a healthy circle of wealthy landlords and businessmen around themselves who, through religious practice even if not always through active membership, found in the MBP and later Hamas clean hands to channel assistance to poor Palestinians.[10]

The MBP remained a marginal force on the Palestinian scene until the late 1970s. One major explanation for this is the apolitical approach that it adopted over a long period of time. Since its inception, the MBP mostly engaged in religious and social activism, in reality not reflecting the 'comprehensiveness' of the ideology of its mother organization. The Egyptian movement was established to reinstate what Hasan Al-Banna, the movement's founding leader, perceived as the holistic nature of Islam, encompassing the mundane and the divine. To bring society back to its Islamic origin, Al-Banna promoted activism in the social, cultural, religious, political and military spheres (Al-Banna, n.d.). Advancing a certain form of activism and slowing down another should be commensurate with allowing a given set of conditions, confirming a contextual perception of the evolution and practice of the MB in general.

The adoption of military activism by the MB in Egypt and later in Palestine was therefore based on careful contextual calculations, most notably of capabilities and

cost-benefit analyses. As a result, the strategy of the Palestinian branch of the MB was based on postponing military activism until the 'conditions were ripe'.[11] Instead, they focused on the Islamization of society. Indeed, the trajectory of the MB, with some occasional exceptions, was marked by non-violent and non-confrontational methods regarding the Israeli occupation. From the establishment of Israel in 1948 to the founding of Hamas in 1987, the Islamization of society through social, religious and charitable work was the focal strategy of the MBP. The MBP attributed the 1948 defeat to society's deviation from the true path of Islam. The Islamists believed that bringing society back to Islam was key to ever being able to fight back and liberate Palestine.

After the 1948 war and the creation of Israel, what remained of 'historic Palestine' was administered by Egypt, in the Gaza Strip, and Jordan, in the West Bank of the River Jordan. For reasons of geography and access, the MBP in the Gaza Strip was closer in organizational ties and influence to the MB in Egypt, whereas the MBP in the West Bank became part of the MB in Jordan.

After the 1967 war, Israel occupied the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, ousting Egypt and Jordan, respectively, and the entire territory of mandated Palestine fell under the military control of Israel. The MBP in both areas drew closer and later formed a single organization. However, the MBP's notions of confronting the Israeli occupation even in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank remained postponed until such time as Palestinian society was 'changed' and 'ready' for the war of liberation.

During the 'Jordanian rule' of the West Bank, the MBP had allied itself to the Jordanian regime on the grounds of a common enmity to Nasser in Egypt. King Hussein of Jordan brought the MB in Jordan and Palestine close to him in order to keep a check on the leftist and pan-Arab nationalists seeking to topple his rule and create a republic. This alliance, however, added to the unpopularity of the MBP among many Palestinians.[12]

The prioritization of the MBP agenda under the overarching mantra of first morally or spiritually 'preparing the generations for the battle' cost the Islamists dear. In the decades in which the MBP strictly adhered to this avoidance of confrontation with the Israeli occupation, the Palestinian national cause was vehemently fought for by nationalist and leftist forces using armed resistance.[13]

From the early 1950s, armed groups of various political orientations started to emerge and fight under the banner of the 'liberation of Palestine'. Therefore, the leadership of the Palestinians and their aspirations for national rights landed in the hands of those groups which fought Israel militarily from the beginning, the very

same groups that would form the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the mid-1960s, an umbrella front for all Palestinian resistance movements. The Islamists excluded themselves from the PLO even before they were excluded by others, having little interest in joining a coalition of communist and secular nationalist parties. Their weakness coupled with their marginalization and refusal to engage in armed resistance hardly gave the MBP a ticket to join the PLO at the time.[14]

The PLO soon became the embodiment of Palestinian legitimacy and leadership. By staying outside the PLO umbrella, the Islamists had to fight on more than one front while all the time desperate to gain popular legitimacy without active resistance to the Israeli occupation. During the 1960s and 1970s, the PLO managed to capture the imagination, support and even revolutionary romanticism of Palestinians by being the bridge to their aspirations for the liberation of Palestine. By adopting the 'popular war for liberation' as its strategy, it both reflected and built the Palestinian psyche in a way that was extremely difficult to challenge. Without being democratically elected, the PLO not only enjoyed an uncontested legitimacy and claim to be the representative of the Palestinian people,[15] but also became the source of any collective legitimacy. Thus, the Islamists were perceived by many Palestinians, and certainly by nationalist (Fatah) and leftist parties, as having placed themselves completely outside the collective national effort against the Israeli occupier. In later stages, the issues of legitimacy and representation of the Palestinian people became hotly contested between Hamas and the PLO, even more so after the victory by Hamas in the 2006 general elections in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

What further weakened the political and popular influence of the MBP after the mid-1950s was their bloody confrontation with Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Nasser, with his pan-Arabism, was perceived by many Arabs and most Palestinians as the pan-Arab leader and as a hero who stood fast in the face of Israeli and Western imperial policies in the Middle East. The internal Arab forces that confronted Nasser the most – the MB organizations, some Arab communist parties and conservative regimes in the Gulf – suffered great losses at the time at the popular level in the Arab world and perhaps beyond. The MBP's conflict with Nasser and its reluctance to engage in armed struggle against the Israeli occupation combined to create a perception among many Palestinians that the MBP was not only accommodating the ongoing occupation but also interested only in attacking nationalist and leftist Palestinian groups, the hitherto bearers of the flag of resistance against occupation. This remained a principal characterization of the MBP until the second half of the 1980s, when the MB decided, under a multiplicity of pressures, to undertake a major shift in its strategy; that is, to engage in the confrontation against the Israeli occupation by all means, starting with its participation in the first intifada

in December 1987. A new context once again imposed its diktats, compelling the Palestinian Brothers to acquire a new image and approach.[16]

3. 'Neo-Islamism': The emergence of Hamas

The 1979 Iranian revolution deeply influenced Palestinian Islamists, as it did many other Islamists and non-Islamists around the world. It injected a great sense of determination to effect change through revolution and resistance rather than slow social change. By the early 1980s, many members of the MBP wanted their organization to adopt the Iranian model and engage in full-scale confrontation against the Israeli occupation. As the leadership insisted on adhering to the same old strategy of effecting bottom-up change, angry members split and formed an organization of their own: the Islamic Jihad in Palestine. This group, although it has remained small in size and influence to this day, became a catalyst in the MBP's internal transformation into Hamas in 1987.[17]

Many leaders of the MBP believed that they would lose more people to either the Islamic Jihad or other emerging groups if they persisted any longer with their non-confrontational strategy. In the summer of 1985, an internal deliberation acknowledged the need to adopt a major shift in strategy and called for preparations – but left the timing of implementation open – for confrontation with the Israeli occupation (Hroub, 2000: 35). In December 1987, when the Palestinian intifada erupted, Hamas was declared the military branch of the MB. By internally transforming itself and creating Hamas, the Palestinian MB was responding to surrounding pressures and giving up some of its traditional ideology. A few years later, around 1992–93, the creation of the Izz Eddin Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, led to another transformation that would turn Hamas into a political party (Hroub, 2000: 242).

In contrast with the traditional thinking of the MBP, the emerging Hamas in 1987 reshuffled its priorities, ushering in a new phase in Islamist activism in Palestine: 'neo-Islamism'. The notion of resistance against the Israeli occupation lay at the heart of this reshuffle, in parallel and sometimes at the expense of priorities on social change. Islamists realized that by adopting military and confrontational stances against Israel, they could gain a short cut to the hearts of the people. After the emergence of Hamas a process began of conflating military resistance with social change and Islamization. It was as if an already embraced but long shelved strategy had been activated rather than a completely new one introduced. The dormant and much praised history of participation in the 1948 war now became a reference point from which Hamas declared its descent.[18]

The Palestinian Islamists wanted to rid themselves of their past image of being inactive against the occupation, and started to amass 'resistance legitimacy' and to compete with PLO factions on their historical ground. Ironically, by the end of the 1980s the PLO had started to make a major shift in its own strategy in the opposite direction: from armed struggle to peace negotiations. In 1991, the PLO attended the Madrid Peace Conference, which was sponsored by the USA in the aftermath of the first Gulf war to bring peace between the Arab countries and Israel. The PLO initiated negotiations with Israel and in 1993 the Oslo Agreements were concluded. By then, Hamas had fully developed into a resistance movement, effectively inheriting the strategy of armed struggle from the PLO. Based on this new 'resistance capital', Hamas began to compete with the PLO over 'Palestinian legitimacy' and the 'representation of the Palestinian people' and became louder in its refusal to acknowledge the PLO as the 'sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinians'. The Oslo process was meant to conclude with a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip by 1999, but it failed to do so. Instead, a second intifada erupted in 2000, giving Hamas a chance to further enhance its resistance image and to build its political and military capabilities.

A large part of the success of Hamas was due to the PLO's failure to bring about tangible solutions to the problems of the Palestinian people. Since 1988, the PLO has officially agreed the principle of a two-state solution, confirming its de facto recognition of Israel.[19] In 1993 the PLO risked its legitimacy and gambled its long-term legacy by signing the Oslo Accords, seen by many Palestinians as compromising basic and minimum Palestinian rights. By the time of the second intifada, which gave Hamas lifeblood for many years to come, the peace process on which the PLO had gambled its legitimacy and reputation had become a complete failure. The settlements in the West Bank that were supposed to be dismantled as a result of Oslo had doubled in size, and the situation of the Palestinian people had worsened in almost all respects. All this had weakened the legitimacy not only of the PLO but also of the peace process itself. Hamas was able to cultivate the fruits of these successive failures from 1991. By exerting no pressure on Israel, Western policies contributed to weakening the moderate camp within the Palestinians. Out of the debris of this series of failures, the rise of Hamas was natural.

4. The trade-off between liberation and social change

During the failure of the PLO and the peace process, the Palestinian neo-Islamists, while also capitalizing on their successes in the field of resistance represented by the first and second intifadas, never stopped their bottom-up social and religious work. The process of the re-Islamization of Palestinian society and identity has moved forward hand in hand with resisting the occupation. This has included gradual,

direct or indirect attempts to replace the notions, concepts and symbols that used to be the accepted manifestations of Palestinianism. In tandem with the reshaping of its role and image in the wider Palestinian arena, Islam, as understood by Palestinian neo-Islamists has been brought centre stage not only as it is related to the conflict with Israel, but also as it is related to the shaping of the future of Palestine and Palestinian society.[20]

In this process, the effort towards liberation has become further intermingled with the effort towards social change. The political capital that the Islamists have been accumulating through their new resistance strategy has been used to achieve aspects of their agenda for social and religious change. The distance between liberation and social change keeps changing and sometimes becomes extremely blurred.

The shift in the distance between these two priorities corresponds to two modes of reception in Palestinian society. The mode of resisting Israeli occupation is positive and the Islamists gain credit for that. The trade-off is that Palestinians seem to allow their Islamists liberal limits of tolerance with respect to their agenda for social change. However, if the Islamists were to press too strongly the idea of Islamicizing in the narrow sense of the word, the mode of reception in what is a rather composite Palestinian society would change in ways that would not be completely favourable to the Islamists. Along the same lines, if there were to be a concrete solution to the conflict of the kind desired by the majority of Palestinians, the two modes of reception would be most likely to change in a way that would be unfavourable to the Islamists.

This general trajectory of the dynamics between resistance or national liberation and social change has its variables according to time and space, power and actor, and context and pressure. The policies and strategies of Hamas between 1987 and 2007 have differed – sometimes sharply so – according to these variations. Hamas opposed the Oslo Agreements of 1993–94 and insisted on maintaining its resistance strategy, even if this was perceived by the PLO and the Palestinian Authority after 1994 as being detrimental to Palestinian national aspirations.[21] However, elected Hamas, in power since 2006, has a completely different policy. Effectively, it has halted its resistance project in the military sense to give its government the time and space for political success. Two years after assuming power, Hamas went so far as to accuse those groups and factions that kept launching rockets against Israeli towns after the June 2008 ceasefire of damaging the national Palestinian interest and serving the Israeli occupation.[22] This position stunned many Palestinians because the specific action of launching rockets was exactly what Hamas had been doing in previous years while the PLO/Palestinian Authority was attempting to achieve the 'national interest' by non-military means.

Such a trajectory represents a sharp turn from those long periods when the Islamists were either a secondary force in the Palestinian polity or in opposition after the 1993–94 Oslo Agreements. This is not to say that the social change agenda has enjoyed more space since Hamas has assumed power. In fact, Hamas's religious and social concerns have been toned down in order to fend off fears among many Palestinians that Hamas in power would mean a forced Islamization of society. In addition, the pressures on the Hamas Government, regionally and internationally, which culminated in an almost total blockade, left Hamas with other major and pressing concerns to deal with. What is significant to bear in mind, perhaps as a summation of what seem to be sharp oscillations between opposing approaches, is that Hamas, and the Palestinian Islamists of the MBP before it, have shown a great measure of context adaptability. They have promoted a multi-track agenda combining social change, religious propagation, political participation and military engagement, although not necessarily with the same momentum at any given time. The flexibility in moving back and forth between these tracks and across them, speeding one up and slowing another down, while justifying all manoeuvres using religious rulings and fatwas, is one of the most salient aspects found in the study of its political behaviour.

In terms of its views of the West, Hamas, like other Islamists, has shown variation and change. There is a conventional tension between the West as the source of science, advancement and modernity and the West as the colonial project that never stops imposing its hegemony on Arab and Muslim countries. However, in the Palestinian case, Islamists also see the West as the main backer of Israel, something which further complicates their conception of various Western manifestations. What has been remarkable, however, is the rapid moderation of the Hamas discourse on the West in recent years, particularly since winning the 2006 elections. In the first place, a clear and favourable view of the European Union has been formulated compared to the persistently negative view of the United States. Second, and as a result of becoming a leading party deeply engaged in politics, Hamas has faced the intractability of international affairs and their bearing on the Palestinian cause. This has led to a more nuanced discourse and more even-handed policies towards Western powers. The chances of a new Palestinian Islamism evolving, more moderate and less ideological – Erdogan rather than Taliban in bent as some Hamas leaders keep reiterating – have therefore increased.[23] The rhetorical language of the 1988 Hamas Charter, in which all Western powers were portrayed as conspirators with the Zionist movement against Muslims, Arabs and the Palestinians,[24] has been replaced by rational and critical discourse.

5. Post-2006 Hamas and the New Palestinian Legitimacy

Over the decades, 'Palestinian legitimacy' has derived from tacit agreements and coercions among Palestinians. As a result, the terms legitimate and legitimacy have become integrated with the national cause and involve furthering national goals and enhancing the resistance strategy against the Israeli occupation. The legitimate leader or organization is the one that holds the banner of resistance and revolution, advancing and bringing closer the goals of liberation. Thus, the identifier of legitimacy is the measure of its resistance against the occupier. A leader or party would suffer great damage to its legitimacy if it were perceived as not resistant, which was long the case for the Palestinian Islamists. Sets of mechanisms and practices, as well as symbolism, bureaucracy and evolved norms and modes of conduct, had all institutionalized 'Palestinian legitimacy' in and around the PLO until the Palestinian Authority was created by the Oslo Agreements.

Part of the Oslo process was to organize presidential elections and elections to a Legislative Council with limited powers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, bringing the Palestinian polity, or most of it, into a new phase of legitimacy in terms of definition and source. For the first time since 1948, national Palestinian legitimacy was based on popular will expressed through a democratic electoral process, not exclusively on revolution and revolutionaries, albeit with the major flaw of excluding the Palestinians in the diaspora. In theory, the source of this legitimacy was supposed to be the people not guns. In practice, Palestinian legitimacy has since moved on to integrate electoral legitimacy with the legitimacy of resistance.

It is argued above that the Islamists' strategy of morally 'preparing the generations' without engaging in resisting Israel created a devastating image of them among broader Palestinian constituencies. In those days, of course, the Islamists had no illusion about daring to claim either to represent the Palestinian people or to be a part of the Palestinian resistance legitimacy. On the other hand, the infrastructure of social and organizational work that the Islamists created over almost three decades yielded a powerful grass roots network. In the late 1980s, this network gave Hamas a concrete base that enabled the movement to challenge the PLO factions in fighting the Israeli occupation. It took Hamas almost 20 years – from the transformation of the Islamists into Hamas in late 1987 to the 2006 Hamas victory in the elections – to cross the resistance threshold and move to the heart of Palestinian legitimacy. In two decades, it had to build up enough 'resistance capital' to erase the 'idle' past of its founding MB fathers who had opted for a non-violent approach.

During those long years, the Hamas discourse and its practice evolved from rhetorical and ideological in tone to the more pragmatic and political. The years

2005 and 2006 can perhaps be seen as the time in which Hamas showed its most moderate and pragmatic face. In 2005, Hamas decided to stand in the elections of January 2006, the same type of election that it had denounced in 1996 as part of the rejected Oslo Agreement. Along with that decision, Hamas declared its willingness to join the PLO, dropping a number of 'old and classic' reservations, including the objection that the PLO is a secular organization. Moreover, it agreed to a unilateral truce, stopping all suicide attacks inside Israel and giving the movement the space to breathe and prepare for the electoral battle.[25] The electoral platform of the Hamas, 'Reform and Change list' was surprising in terms of its new discourse – maximizing realistic politics compared to the movement's previous literature and containing a minimum of religiosity.[26] Throughout all of the above, a process of continuous negotiation between the political and the religious seemed to be taking place within the movement.

Only by accounting for these changing contextual determinants is it possible to understand certain, sometimes surprising, moves by Hamas. Any attempt to understand them solely from an ideological perspective by, for instance, measuring them against the 1988 Hamas Charter would be greatly misleading.

In those two years, cost-benefit calculations led Hamas to reconsider major strategies and make the necessary shifts to meet emerging circumstances. At every sudden change in the course of events, Hamas would respond more according to objective elements than a pre-set ideological or religious catalogue. The tension inside Hamas between the political and the religious has been there since the movement first appeared, but it has been more or less visible depending on the political conditions. In certain periods Hamas could ease the tension, allowing the movement's political and religious drives to complement each other. At other times, this coexistence between the two has proved difficult, forcing Hamas to give priority to one or the other, conditioned by the issue at hand. However, this process has not involved consciously choosing between two competing options. If it had, it would have faced strong opposition as many people in Hamas would argue that there should be no decoupling between politics and religion and that, if a seemingly political decision is taken, it should not be seen as religion-free.

As a result, the process is very subtle and there is no sifting of the political and religious components of a certain move – no comparing them – followed by advancing one or the other in a mathematical way. Negotiating the political and the religious takes place within Hamas, and many other Islamist movements, at the subconscious level – gradually and indirectly. It involves tacitly approving the continuous process of smuggling the political into the realm of the religious in response to new pressures and circumstances. Thus, it is a process that combines rational choice calculations,

spontaneous acceptance of non-religious assessments or alliances and a parallel justification and legitimization process that reproduces political choices and decisions in religious clothing in order to sell them to Hamas supporters and constituencies. This process of prioritizing the political over the religious culminated when Hamas won the election and faced the dilemma of forming a Hamas-led government.

Since that Hamas victory, Palestinians have entered a new phase in their internal politics – a new Palestinian legitimacy in the making. The principal marker of this new legitimacy is the fact that Hamas has become an integral part of it. Even after the great losses that Hamas has suffered and the strategic mistakes it has made, Hamas is now a powerful movement that competes for and claims representation of the Palestinians. In resistance as well as in democratic elections, it has accumulated the legitimacy capital that makes the staunchest of its enemies incapable of questioning its central role in the Palestinian polity. Any reunification of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (after the military takeover by Hamas of the Gaza Strip in June 2007) will leave Hamas at the heart of the political process and decisionmaking. Many Palestinians and other regional and international players have come to believe that since the 2006 elections, the days when the PLO enjoyed an exclusive monopoly over Palestinian legitimacy are over. It is a new reality that external actors can do little about; they can ignore it but they cannot change it.[27]

There are many implications of the formation of a new Palestinian legitimacy with Hamas as a part. These can be discussed at the level of Hamas itself, at the Palestinian national level or at the level of the conflict with Israel. Internally, over the past two years, Hamas has been undergoing its greatest phase of tension between its constituent political and religious parts. A more political role for the movement governed by being part of the 'Palestinian Legitimacy' has resulted in a greater politicization of its programmes and membership. The political realities of the Palestinian situation, with all their compromising and less religious dimensions, have made further and wider inroads into the heart of the rank and file of the organization

At the national level, many Palestinians see in Hamas's participation in the political process and in decisionmaking pertaining to the national cause an injection of strength to the collective position. The 'chain of concessions' that the PLO had been making to Israel for the past two decades has come to an end, as Hamas argued with the support of many Palestinians. Others consider the elevation of Hamas to occupy a central place at the top of the Palestinian political hierarchy as a measure of radicalization that will further complicate the future choices of Palestinians. What is almost certain is the long-term change in the make-up of the Palestinian leadership and in its legitimacy.

The most important implication of the period since the 2006 elections relates to the future of the conflict and of peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Any process that would conclude in a sustainable peace deal between the two parties has to be 'legitimized' and approved by the Palestinians. Since the January 2006 Hamas victory, it is inconceivable that any partisan consensus or referendum on any agreement could proceed without the endorsement of Hamas.

Before the elections, and especially during the Arafat years, one of the premises on which the peace process of the Oslo Accords was built was the conclusion of a deal with the charismatic Arafat as a prerequisite for Palestinian consensus. Arafat had the leadership, legacy and aura to sell or impose any deal on the Palestinians. Things have changed. Arafat is no longer around to impose deals on the Palestinians and, in the meantime, Hamas has become far stronger and is now backed by electoral as well as resistance legitimacy. Any move forward should start from this point in order to secure the required collective consensus and legitimacy from the Palestinians.

The context post-January 2006 and post-June 2007 (the Hamas military takeover of the Gaza Strip) has also had various bearings on the social and religious thinking and practice of Hamas. Some segments in the movement, the more conservative and religiously rigid, had thought that, with the acquisition of power mandated by popular electoral support, Hamas could and should press for a greater Islamization of society. These strata in Hamas understood its victory more as public support for the social and religious ideals of the movement. Other, more sophisticated, Hamas leaders are aware that many Palestinians voted for its political and military stance, and are not particularly impressed by its social and religious agenda. A considerable number of Palestinians were punishing Fatah, Hamas's main rivals, by casting their votes for Hamas – a fact that many Hamas leaders are well aware of. These occasional and temporary votes tipped the balance of power, giving Hamas an unexpected and surprising victory. Thus, it would be a grave strategic mistake to build on this fragile victory hard choices that require more solid and broader grounds of support. This awareness explains, at least in part, Hamas's reluctance to advance any overt social or religious agenda, even in the Gaza Strip where it dominates all aspects of public life.

On the ground there was a certain, perhaps ironic, social reality in play. While the sophisticated view within Hamas, which advocated non-aggressive social and religious policies, seems to have oriented the movement in these areas, avoiding imposing laws or starting on an official or a semi-official Islamization campaign, the atmosphere in the Gaza Strip in particular shifted towards conservative views and practices. The economic embargo has worsened the daily life of ordinary Palestinians, driving them closer to religion as the only refuge when the entire world

has turned its back on their misery.[28] Those who supported Hamas tended to display more Islamic appearance and practices, and those who feared Hamas started to adapt their practices to appease local Hamas elements as a harassment-avoidance strategy. While no regulations were drafted by the Hamas-controlled Legislative Council to superimpose any codes of religious practice, the brutality by which Hamas controlled the Gaza Strip militarily created a great sense of intimidation there. Many ordinary Palestinians opted not to irritate Hamas's men by wearing clothes or conducting practices that would be seen by them as un-Islamic. A de facto Islamization of Palestinian society in the Gaza Strip has taken place. This is a process that deserves special research on its own in order to identify the elements of indirect pressure and the agencies that have operated around the aegis of Hamas power but without being officially linked to it.

Endnotes

[1] On the question of Western policy towards Hamas in particular and with reference to the issue of engagement see the insightful analysis of Brown in chapter 5 of this book.

[2] For broader perspectives on Palestinian nationalism and its variants see Sayigh (1997).

[3] In a November 2008 poll conducted by the Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Hizb al-Tahrir was not specified in the question 'Which Palestinian faction do you trust most' but included in the category 'Other Islamist Factions', which scored only 3.9 per cent compared to 16.6 per cent for Hamas and 2.4 per cent for Islamic Jihad. See <http://www.jmcc.org/publicpoll/results/2008/index.htm>. On Hizb al-Tahrir in Palestine see Milton-Edwards (1996: 64–72).

[4] See <http://www.jmcc.org/publicpoll/results/2008/index.htm> on the level of popularity. For more on the Islamic Jihad Movement see Hatina (2001).

[5] On the weakness of the Salafis in Palestine see Hroub (2009).

[6] On the history of the MBE see Lia (1998).

[7] See Khalidi (1997), especially chapters 6 and 7, and Nafi (1998), especially chapter 6.

[8] For more on the composition of these formations, see Al-Hout (1986).

[9] Unpublished MBP archives from the 1940s, retained by the author, provide evidence of this predominantly upper middle class and upper class formation of the society.

[10] Based on the author's personal contact with and knowledge of Hamas leaders and members over the past two decades. See also Hroub (2000: 1–41).

[11] It should be noted here, however, that the engagement of the MBE in the Palestine issue and resistance against the British mandate was strong in the 1930s and 1940s, and is widely acknowledged. One of the most detailed accounts of the participation of the MB in the war of 1948 is Al-Sherif and Al-Sibae (1984). Both authors were senior members of the movement and engaged on the Egyptian and Syrian fronts, respectively. See El-Awaisi (1998).

[12] On the relationship between Jordan and the MB before and after the 1967 war see Cohen (1982). See also Milton-Edwards (1996: 84–90).

[13] Later on, Hamas leaders justified the strategy of their brothers during that period as being part of the resistance since it was meant to confront the 'bad influences of the Israeli occupation on Palestinian society'. This is, for instance, the account of Khaled Mishael, head of the Hamas Political Bureau. See Mishal, K., 'Hamas Movement and the Liberation of Palestine: Interview with Ghassan Charbel' [in Arabic], *Al-Hayat*, 26 February, 2006, p. 29. In a detailed document issued by the Hamas Political Bureau in June 2000, Hamas chronicled the movement's evolution in five successive phases: the movement's historic roots, 1946–1967; the Phase of Preparation for Launching the Movement's Project, 1967–1980; the founding phase, 1980–1987; the launch phase, 1987–1994; and the post-Oslo phase, 1994–2000. This chronology, although helpful, especially because it is the official Hamas version, should be viewed with a critical eye. Examining the details of each phase, one gets the sense of a pervasive attempt to reconstruct the near past to serve the present image of Hamas. The full text is in Tamimi (2007: 271–83).

[14] In the late 1960s and the 1970s, Palestinian Islamists saw the PLO as a collection of atheists and secularists who would gain nothing for Palestine because of their anti-religious beliefs. Examples of this widespread view are found in Abdualla Azzam's writings, speeches and sermons. Azzam was a leading MBP figure before leaving to join the jihad in Afghanistan in the early 1980s. He was assassinated in Pakistan in 1989.

[15] Although not a single internal Palestinian political body could compete with the PLO on the issue of representation of the Palestinians, Jordan managed to rival the PLO until 1974.

[16] The Palestinian Islamists responded almost immediately to the intifada. Intense internal and external debates and unbearable pressure to take part in the intifada contributed to the Brothers' decision to form Hamas. See Hroub (2000: 36–42).

[17] The first writings of Fathi al-Shikaki, the founder of the Islamic Jihad in Palestine, praised the Iranian revolution as a model for the Palestinian. See al-Shikaki (1979). For a fuller analysis of the formation of the Islamic Jihad Movement see Hatina (2001).

[18] In the Hamas Charter, made public in August 1988, there is much emphasis on the 'links of the same Jihad chain', where Hamas is the natural heir to the struggle and military resistance of the Muslim Brothers and their participation in the 1948 war.

[19] In Algeria in November 1988, the Palestinian National Council, the Palestinian parliament in exile controlled by the PLO, issued the 'Declaration of Independence' after intense deliberations. The Declaration called, officially and collectively, for the first time, for the creation of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip only, covering an area of 22 per cent of the historic land of mandated Palestine. The Declaration represented a historic turning point in the struggle of the Palestinian national movement, as it indirectly acknowledged the existence of Israel on the remaining 78 per cent of the land.

[20] See Barghouthi (2007: 4) and, on the general theme, see Lybarger (2007: 1–26).

[21] Hamas outlined its rejection of the Oslo Agreements in numerous statements. Among the most important official statements are 'Memorandum from Hamas about the Latest Developments', 8 February 1993; 'Resistance and Struggle will Remain the Only Dialogue with the Occupier Enemy', 20 February 1994; 'No for Compromises, Yes for Retreating from the Sin of Oslo', 28 February 1994; and 'The Hamas Position on Self-Rule Authority', 7 July 1994. These statements were issued in Arabic.

[22] Leaders of Hamas issued several statements to this effect after the ceasefire. See the website of Al-Jazeera, 26 June 2008, <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/E20B985E-F67C-4062-8F70-3A834EE966AE.htm>.

[23] Ahmad Yousef, adviser to Ismail Haniya, the Hamas Prime Minister, invokes this comparison to assure all parties that the Hamas line is moderate and closer to the experience of the Turkish Islamists than to that of the Taliban. Author interview in Gaza City, 7 March 2007.

[24] See the part of the Charter on 'Forces Abetting the Enemy'.

[25] These three decisions shaped the course of events on the Hamas side. The author has discussed them in detail elsewhere. See Hroub (2006a).

[26] For extended analysis of Hamas's electoral platform see Hroub (2006b: 6–28). For the full text of the document see Tamimi (2007: 292–316).

[27] The author has analysed elsewhere in detail the implications of the Hamas victory for all parties concerned, including the movement itself. See Hroub (2008).

[28] Reports about the magnitude of the humanitarian disaster resulting from the Israeli and international embargo of the Gaza Strip are numerous. See, e.g. Oxfam (2008). In April 2008 former US President Jimmy Carter described the blockade of the Gaza Strip as a 'crime and an atrocity', see http://www.globalresearch.ca/index. php?context=va&aid=8739

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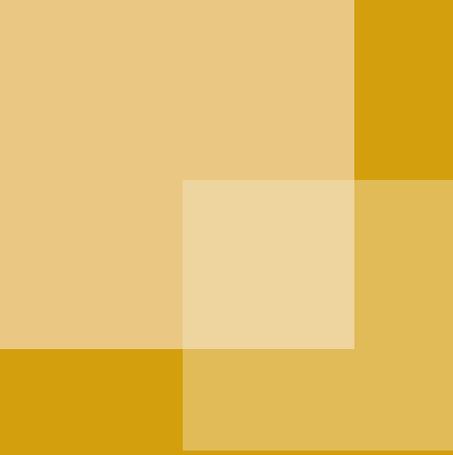
Chapter 5

Principled or stubborn? Western policy towards Hamas

Chapter 5

Nathan Brown
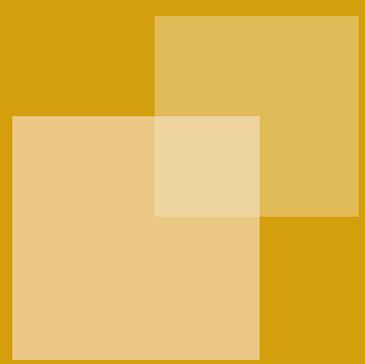
Principled or stubborn? Western policy towards Hamas*

1. Introduction

The policies of the United States and the European Union (EU) towards Hamas have never been made in isolation from other concerns. They have evolved in the context of policies on three critical regional concerns. First, that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, since the Madrid Conference of 1991, the 'peace process' which seeks a negotiated solution to this conflict has cast Hamas in the role of threat and spoiler. Second, that, as terrorism has steadily grown as a Western concern, with especially notable increases in the salience of the issue in the 1980s and then again after the events of 11 September 2001, Hamas has often figured as an archetypical terrorist group. Third, that, since the tremendous wave of interest in democracy and political reform, which began in the 1990s, surged in 2002 and peaked in 2005, Hamas has again emerged as a spoiler, seeming to demonstrate the risks of an overly strong emphasis on the need for political openness and electoral democracy. In addition to these three factors, Hamas also emerged in the context of other regional concerns: its alignment with Iran and Syria, for instance, has made it noxious to the US leadership and some European governments. However, these regional concerns have generally been secondary to the primary concerns with peace, terrorism and democracy.

If policy towards Hamas has evolved in the context of changing policies in all these areas, it has not evinced any flexibility. All concerns have led to the same result – a set of policies designed to contain, combat or marginalize Hamas. The policy has grown increasingly rigid and there have been moves – especially in the USA – to codify it in legislation. The rising prominence of Hamas and the increasing attention of senior leaders to the organization has eliminated much nuance from the policy and discouraged any attempts to explore less pugnacious options. Especially after the electoral victory of Hamas in 2006, there was some evidence of discomfort in some European circles about the strictness of the resulting policy choices. Some reservations have also been expressed in the USA about the policy but, to date, such discussion has largely been confined to think tanks and former officials; there has not yet been any discernible impact on decisionmakers.

For all their toughness, however, these policies can demonstrate little success. The softer or more nuanced approaches favoured in some European capitals would not necessarily have brought substantially different results, but as Hamas entrenches itself more deeply in Gaza the call for fresh approaches may finally give advocates of less harsh policies an opportunity to test their alternatives, at least in some limited ways.

This chapter: first, examines the evolution of US and European policy towards Hamas over the past two decades, showing how the evolving context has produced tougher policies but ultimately provoked a debate about the effectiveness of those policies; second, provides a detailed analysis of the current policy and set of tools – diplomatic, assistance, security and legal – deployed against Hamas; and, third, makes an assessment of the impact and effectiveness of these policies, demonstrating that while they have had some effect, they have contained or moderated Hamas only for short periods.

2. Changing context: Stiffening policies

Over the past two decades, the political context of policy towards Hamas has grown more complex as a growing list of regional concerns have forced Western powers to confront a movement that was virtually ignored when it was founded. The growing salience of these concerns has led policy on Hamas to take an increasingly prominent role in regional diplomacy and to occupy a more significant amount of attention at the most senior political levels.

Evolving political context: Peace process, terrorism and reform

Hamas was born at a time when there was no viable peace process and the West Bank and Gaza had erupted in a violent uprising against Israeli occupation. Although Hamas emerged out of the Muslim Brotherhood, and ultimately all but supplanted that organization in the West Bank and Gaza, it rejected the traditional Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood prioritization of personal and social reform over politics and resistance.

It is important to note, however, that while Hamas emerged and grew rapidly in the period of the first intifada, or uprising, there has never been any organization legally recognized as Hamas in either Israeli or – later on, after the emergence of the Palestinian Authority as an autonomous administrative and law-making entity – Palestinian eyes. There are a host of nongovernmental associations, such as the Islamic Complex or *al-Mujamma` al-Islami*, sometimes translated as 'Islamic Centre' in Gaza, associated closely or less directly with Hamas. A list of candidates organized and sponsored by Hamas but with no legal relationship with the movement, called 'Change and Reform', was registered for the local elections in 2005 and the parliamentary elections in 2006.

Since Hamas, although increasingly viable by any measure, does not exist in a formally legal sense, external actors often have the option of overlooking the organization, meeting with its leaders or activists, for instance, as individuals. This has led to innumerable questions about implementation when decisions have been taken to bar any contact with – or take severe actions against – the organization. Long before such strictures were put into effect, however, the legal ambiguity of Hamas led to difficulties for decisionmakers and officials in the West, Israel and Palestine.

It soon became impossible to ignore Hamas completely. The first policy concern that led policymakers to confront Hamas was the *peace process*. In 1991, an international conference in Madrid launched a complex set of negotiations aimed at a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in all its aspects. The slow pace of that process led Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the body now accepted internationally as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, to open direct talks, culminating in the Oslo Accords. The Accords created an interim Palestinian Authority (PA) to rule Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza while Israel and the PLO negotiated a final peace agreement. A robust international effort of diplomacy and assistance began to ensure that the negotiations and the PA were successful.

Hamas stood outside of all this process, never having joined the PLO and rejecting the formula of 'land for peace' on which the peace process was based. When Palestinians voted in the 1996 elections for a president and a Council, which quickly evolved into a Palestinian parliament, Hamas stood aloof. Armed clashes broke out between PA security forces and Hamas activists shortly after the PA was established. While those clashes eventually abated, Hamas continued to criticize the entire Oslo process and, rather than suspending attacks on Israeli targets, Hamas initially expanded them – at times quite clearly directing murderous and even suicidal violence against civilians. Thus, Hamas stood as a clear opponent of the peace process and, since the principal Israeli motivation in entering the peace process was to secure the Jewish state's security, suppression of Hamas violence became, in the eyes of Israel at least, an integral part of the peace process.

Internationally sponsored diplomacy gave general support to the Israeli position. The Oslo Accords involved Palestinian security guarantees to Israel that, however vaguely specified, led to pressure on the PA to move against Hamas. Much later, the Road Map of 2003, endorsed by the USA and the EU, gave much more specificity to Palestinian obligations in this respect, requiring in its first phase that the PA 'dismantle terrorist infrastructure and Palestinians declare an unequivocal end to violence and terrorism and undertake visible efforts on the ground to arrest, disrupt, and restrain individuals and groups conducting and planning violent attacks on Israelis anywhere' (US Department of State, 2003).

Thus, the first concern – the peace process – led directly to the second international concern related to Hamas: *terrorism*. Here again, however, the significance of Hamas was not immediately apparent. The emergence of Hamas coincided with the eruption of the first intifada and also occurred at a time when the USA treated the PLO and many of its constituent parts as a terrorist organization. Initially, therefore, Hamas did not stand out as extreme in its method but only in its platform and rhetoric. The insistence of the USA on viewing terrorism as a central security concern – a perspective that began to take root in the late 1960s and gained increasing traction in the 1980s – was not shared by all European governments, many of which tended to emphasize the political rather than the security dimensions of the conflict.

As the peace process took hold, however, terrorism came to be seen as the major obstacle to progress by almost all relevant international actors, and Hamas was viewed as its most truculent practitioner. In the 1990s, a trend emerged especially in the USA of combating terrorism not merely by diplomatic and security measures but also by legal tools – and Hamas was an early target of these efforts. The eruption of the second intifada provoked different reactions, but many in the USA and Israel

placed even greater emphasis on the issue of terrorism, insisting that no return to a political strategy could take place until violence and terrorism ceased. The attacks of 11 September 2001 led to an even more visceral horror at the kinds of violence employed by Hamas and other Palestinian actors, leading to the declaration of a 'global war on terror'.

The third concern that affected policy towards Hamas was the interest in *Arab political reform*. However, whereas the peace process and the evolution of the war on terror led to a steadily growing fixation on Hamas, the emphasis on political reform proceeded while ignoring Hamas until the fateful Palestinian parliamentary elections of January 2006.

Political reform was not a major issue for external actors until the early years of the last decade. In the 1990s, when the PA was constructed with international assistance, little high-level attention was paid to issues of governance. There was an often unspoken but very clear decision that strong Palestinian leaders were necessary for the peace process to succeed. Anything that restricted those leaders, such as independent judiciaries, legal procedures, instruments of political accountability or local elections, was a distracting nuisance at best and would simply have to be postponed. There was even strong – if occasionally embarrassed – international support for some of the cruder authoritarian practices that emerged in the PA and tolerance for the corrupt pattern established.

In 2002, international supporters of the PA suddenly swung behind the cause of political reform. There were several motivations – a US decision to bypass and undermine President Arafat, a European interest in building strong Palestinian institutions and a grudging Israeli recognition that a functioning PA was better than social and political collapse. Palestinian reformers who had been languishing in international obscurity – supported by a small host of assistance programmes – suddenly found themselves embraced and their agenda adopted by powerful international actors (Brown, 2002; Brown, 2005; Brown, 2007).

Hamas was sometimes a victim of the PA's harshest practices, much to the satisfaction of the external sponsors of the peace process, but when the EU endorsed an ambitious reform programme for the PA – especially with its May 2002 decision to condition financial assistance on an extensive series of reforms – closely followed by a less gentle but also far less specific US endorsement of the cause, Hamas seemed to disappear as a concern. Nowhere did the reform advocates take full account of how skilfully Hamas could deploy the reform issue. When the movement, running under the banner of the Change and Reform electoral list, swept the 2006 elections, the USA and the EU were confounded. Without hesitation and embarrassment, the USA

quickly abandoned any meaningful commitment to reform. The EU showed slight hesitation and embarrassment but basically followed suit.

Given this changing context, in which Hamas has emerged as a more challenging actor for Western policy, it should be no surprise that US and EU policy towards Hamas have both followed a similar trajectory – from neglect and suspicion to enmity and hostility. In general, the USA followed this path more quickly and with fewer reservations. There have been some critical voices, particularly in Europe – and the criticisms have increased with the severity of the policy – but they have only changed the resulting policy at the margins.

The remainder of this section focuses briefly on the evolution of US and EU policy. Section 3 examines policy since the Hamas electoral victory of January 2006 and section 4 evaluates the effectiveness of these policies.

US policy

When Hamas was formed, some of its leaders, such as Ahmad Yasin, held positions in organizations that were tolerated and even legally recognized by Israel. There was no stricture against Western diplomats meeting such officials, and therefore US diplomatic personnel stationed in Tel Aviv and especially Jerusalem would have professional meetings with figures identified with Hamas. Indeed, at the time, most Palestinian political figures were identified at least informally with a party or organization – whether Fatah, one of the smaller factions, or the PLO, regarded as something of a pariah. Hamas was not singled out for isolation and contacts were maintained with individuals or with officials acting in a professional rather than partisan capacity. Even very senior Israeli leaders met with Hamas leaders.

The Oslo Accords turned the PLO and Fatah into fully legitimate political actors in Western eyes and the USA into the overseer of a peace process that omitted Hamas. This made such low-level contacts seem less routine or innocuous. Hamas made clear that it would continue to attack Israeli targets, and the US attitude began to harden. In 1993, a round of diplomatic contacts was held with Hamas leaders in exile in Jordan, but this marked virtually the end of any direct contact between US officials and Hamas (Hroub, 2000). In 1994, Hamas, which had never been punctilious in exempting Israeli civilians from its violence, announced that it would respond in kind to Israeli settler Baruch Goldstein's massacre of Palestinian worshippers in Hebron. In January 1995, US President Clinton responded with an Executive Order designating Hamas, along with seven other Palestinian, two Arab and two Israeli organizations, as a threat to the Middle East peace process. Hamas and others were

deemed guilty of acts of violence that 'constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy and economy of the United States', leading the president to 'declare a national emergency to deal with that threat' (US Department of the Treasury, 1995). The order imposed financial sanctions on the organizations and anybody assisting them. Later that year, the USA barred Musa Abu Marzuq, a Hamas leader, from entering the country, eventually branding him a 'specially designated terrorist' and deporting him to Jordan.

The USA took its own punitive measures, but also it made clear that it backed the PA wholeheartedly in any efforts it might make to suppress Hamas and other violent opponents of the peace process. For instance, the PA established a State Security Court to try those accused of violence against Israeli targets. The Court shocked many by holding trials immediately after an arrest, often in the middle of the night, and without any clear procedures or safeguards. Despite such behaviour, US Vice President Al Gore greeted the creation of the Court as a positive step in a widely noted statement in 1995.[1] The USA also intermittently applied diplomatic pressure on Jordan and Syria to crack down on Hamas operations in their countries, with considerable success in the former case but little in the latter.

After the eruption of the second intifada in September 2000, and especially after the attacks of 11 September 2001, US punitive actions against groups and individuals deemed terrorists sharpened considerably. On 23 September 2001, President George W. Bush issued a more sweeping executive order that extended sanctions to a broad array of groups suspected of connections to Islamist groups including al-Qa`ida, Hezbollah and Hamas (US Department of the Treasury, 2001).

By the time of the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections, therefore, the US policy was clear: Hamas was to be diplomatically isolated and actively combated, and US allies should enlist in efforts against the group.

European policy

EU policy generally followed the same contours as US policy. EU member states each had their own individual policy, of course, while simultaneously working to hammer out a set of common positions through the EU. The EU was broadly supportive of the peace process, worried about terrorism and increasingly supportive of political reform. But while EU member states, both individually and collectively, followed a path similar to that of the USA, they displayed some significant differences. For instance, some states, especially in northern Europe, were far more willing than the USA to engage in issues connected to political reform and human rights in the 1990s. When the EU as a whole swung behind political reform in 2002, it did so with a

little less fanfare but far more attention to detail (and far greater harmonization with Palestinian priorities) than the newly enthusiastic Bush administration.

With regard to Hamas, European states also showed some diversity. This was perhaps most prominently the case with the United Kingdom, which, although very closely aligned with the USA in matters of policy, allowed a top security official, Alastair Crooke, to meet with Hamas leaders. Crooke's policy prescriptions, which amounted to an insistence that Hamas could be and should be engaged with, had little impact on the UK, but they did reflect a broader policy debate in European circles than that which occurred in the USA.

Despite this debate, the events of 11 September 2001, coming so soon after the eruption of the second intifada, led to a hardening of the European position. On 27 December 2001, the European Union finally followed the step taken almost seven years previously by the USA by imposing financial restrictions on dealings with terrorist organizations (Council of the European Union, 2001). Even here, however, the EU's step proved more limited since it designated only 'the terrorist wing' of Hamas – identified as the 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades – rather than the entire organization. (The EU list also included the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, which are affiliated with Fatah.) In 2003, the EU gradually supplemented the list, adding, for instance, the Holy Land Foundation, a charitable organization headquartered in the USA which President Bush had closed down in 2001, accusing it of funding Hamas. At the end of 2003, the EU finally modified its wording to designate Hamas as a whole, 'including' the `Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades (Council of the European Union, 2003).

By the middle of the decade, the broad outlines of a common policy were clear: Hamas was a terrorist entity and an enemy of peace, and the PA had to be reformed in part to give Palestinians an alternative to such movements. While there was some debate at the margins in Europe, by the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections there was a transatlantic consensus that Hamas was not a partner to be engaged with. While the USA, after some hesitation, and the EU did not object strenuously to the participation of Hamas in local elections in 2005, there was little interest in or hope of pulling the organization into the political process.

3. Analysis of current policies, strategies and tools

The policies adopted in Washington and European capitals were predicated not simply on the view of Hamas as a terrorist organization but also on the assumption that it stood in opposition to the PA. In January 2006, when the Hamas-sponsored list, Change and Reform, won a majority of seats in the Palestinian parliament,

this assumption was no longer valid – Hamas stood in a position to determine the composition of the PA cabinet.

Despite the new environment, after only brief hesitation Western states decided to continue with the pre-2006 policies regarding Hamas. The growing complexity of Hamas's presence in Palestinian society and politics raised new challenges for these policies, however, leading to complications in implementation – and divergences between the USA and Europe.

The current array of common policies and tools

By 2006, the USA, the EU and European states had developed four policy tools to use to combat Hamas, or force the organization to transform its agenda and use of violent methods, all of which are still in force. There has been some variation in implementation, however, with US efforts notable for their increasing stringency.

First, no assistance was granted to Hamas or to any organization affiliated with Hamas. Given the enormous international aid programmes to Palestinian governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the deep roots of Hamas in Palestinian society, this policy raised difficulties in implementation. Refusing to give aid to Hamas was easy enough, since the organization had no legal existence and requested no assistance, but a host of Palestinian organizations, such as the Islamic Complex in Gaza, were very closely affiliated with Hamas. Others, such as the Islamic University in Gaza, were viewed as friendly spaces for Hamas to operate. Even more problematic from the perspective of implementation is the welter of local charitable associations, community centres, kindergartens and nurseries as well as other institutions, many of which have a religious colouration. None is formally associated with Hamas and most have no informal association either. Some local prominent individuals might be active in both Hamas and an NGO, but barring any organization with a Hamas member on its board or staff would be both draconian and unworkable because of the popularity of Hamas and the movement's lack of transparency regarding membership.

In the 1990s, most donors had simply made a series of ad hoc judgments about which organizations to support, but for the opponents of Hamas this proved too loose an approach. Thus, the USA led the way in the early years of the last decade by introducing a formal vetting process for Palestinian organizations. The process was opaque and the results sometimes quite strange: the Islamic University of Gaza was deemed an acceptable partner but local charitable societies in the West Bank with a far more tenuous connection with Hamas were treated as pariahs.

Second, various states took action not merely to prevent their assistance funds from going to Hamas-affiliated organizations, but also to prevent any assistance to Hamas from coming from groups and individuals on their home soil. Thus, the Al-Aqsa Foundation was shut down in Germany and the Netherlands, and Germany and Denmark charged the Foundation's leaders with criminal offences. As with the policy barring assistance, there were tremendous difficulties and anomalies in implementation, since ties between international NGOs and Hamas were often poorly documented and seemed often to rely on unverifiable claims by Israeli intelligence sources. The basis for those steps that were undertaken by administrative action, such as freezing organizations' assets, could generally not be fully examined, but criminal prosecution required a fuller disclosure of evidence and the results could be confusing – such as when leaders of the Holy Land Foundation, a large US charity, were tried for donating to zakat committees on the West Bank. These committees were described by the prosecution as Hamas NGOs but were actually chartered by Jordan and the PA and often partners with Western donors, including the United States Agency for International Development. It is therefore not surprising that the Danish prosecutions did not result in a conviction and the US effort required two trials and testimony from anonymous Israeli intelligence officials before any convictions could be obtained.

Third, Hamas was deemed off limits for diplomatic contacts. Again, Hamas's semi-clandestine status raised some implementation issues, but as long as Hamas stayed out of the PA these were not particularly severe. When Hamas stood in the local elections in 2005, capturing some municipal councils, some Western governments reacted uncertainly, sometimes sanctioning contacts with individual municipal officers in their official rather than partisan capacity.

Fourth, Western states worked to marginalize Hamas internationally. The USA again took the lead, unsuccessfully pressuring Syria to close Hamas offices in Damascus and working to persuade its allies to avoid any formal engagement with Hamas.

The January 2006 elections raised significant difficulties for each of these measures. Barring aid to any organization associated with Hamas would now mean cutting off the PA itself – a quasi-state desperately dependent on international assistance. Moving against domestic actors deemed to be aiding Hamas would now risk catching large, mainstream and respectable organizations in the anti-terrorism legal web. Maintaining the ban on diplomatic contacts would instantly transform the PA from an international ward into a pariah, and working to isolate Hamas diplomatically would now run into countervailing pressure not only from Iran and Syria but also from Turkey and Russia.

Reactions to the 2006 elections: Stricter application but the beginning of debate

Ironically, the January 2006 elections – and Hamas's triumph – would not have been possible without international diplomatic and technical assistance. It was Western diplomatic muscle that allowed the elections to proceed and persuaded Israel not to shut the process down, and the Palestinian Central Elections Commission, perhaps the most technically competent electoral administration in the Arab world, maintained its impressive levels of integrity and professionalism only with heavy Western technical and political support.

Thus, there was no basis from which to question the electoral triumph of Hamas. There were brief signs of disarray in the international front against Hamas, especially when Russia indicated its openness to diplomatic contact and some European states and, to a much lesser degree, even the USA, showed brief signs of hesitation. Recovering its balance, however, the USA rushed to persuade the other members of the Quartet (the EU, Russia and the United Nations) to issue a statement that packed some very tough conditions inside a velvet glove. The Hamas leadership was implicitly recognized as electorally victorious but explicitly told that any government it led would face severe diplomatic and financial sanctions if it did not clearly commit to non-violence, recognize Israel and accept past agreements:

> The Quartet congratulated the Palestinian people on an electoral process that was free, fair and secure. The Quartet believes that the Palestinian people have the right to expect that a new government will address their aspirations for peace and statehood, and it welcomed President Abbas' affirmation that the Palestinian Authority is committed to the Roadmap, previous agreements and obligations between the parties, and a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is the view of the Quartet that all members of a future Palestinian government must be committed to nonviolence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap. We urge both parties to respect their existing agreements, including on movement and access.
>
> Mindful of the needs of the Palestinian people, the Quartet discussed the issue of assistance to the Palestinian Authority. First, the Quartet expressed its concern over the fiscal situation of the Palestinian Authority and urged measures to facilitate the work of the caretaker government to stabilize public finances, taking into consideration established fiscal accountability and reform benchmarks. Second, the Quartet concluded that it was inevitable that future assistance to any new government would be reviewed by donors against

that government's commitment to the principles of nonviolence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap.

The Quartet calls upon the newly elected PLC to support the formation of a government committed to these principles as well as the rule of law, tolerance, reform and sound fiscal management.[2]

In March 2006, when the new Hamas majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) gave a Hamas-led government its confidence – and the government failed to meet the Quartet's conditions – immediate and severe sanctions were put into effect. The PA was now placed diplomatically off limits, its ministers shunned, and organizations under the control of the cabinet cut off from international assistance. The sanctions were even more severe than this implies, since the PA was cut off not only from international aid but also from much of its own sources of revenue. The PA was dependent for a considerable share of its operating revenue on taxes collected by Israel. Previously, when Israel had suspended the transfer of revenue to the PA, the EU had stepped in with support that allowed the PA to avoid insolvency and meet its payroll. When Israel cut off revenue transfers in March 2006, however, the EU refused to fill the gap. The PA and the entire political edifice constructed on the West Bank and Gaza teetered on the brink of collapse. At this point, European states and eventually the EU as a whole began to pursue a policy that diverged significantly from that of the USA, although a degree of coordination and amity were maintained.

The USA pursued the most stringent possible interpretation of the common policy, barring its officials from any contact with a body that answered to the Palestinian cabinet and alerting NGOs working in the West Bank and Gaza that they risked violating US law if they supported Hamas-affiliated organizations or large parts of the PA. The US Congress wrote some of these sanctions into law. A periodically updated list maintained by the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control assisted US official and unofficial actors in determining which Palestinian bodies were off limits. At the same time, contact with the Palestinian presidency and some independent bodies continued, even to the extent of generally ineffectual support and training for the security forces under presidential command, on the assumption that these might prove important in meeting Palestinian security obligations under the Oslo Accords and in any internal Palestinian armed contest between Fatah and Hamas. Immediately after the events in Gaza of June 2007, when Hamas seized control of the PA in Gaza and Fatah leader Abu Mazin seized control of the PA in the West Bank, the USA strongly endorsed the president's actions and removed sanctions on his part of the PA (US Department of the Treasury, 2008).

Implementation of the coordinated policy by the EU member states showed some internal variation but was generally slightly gentler. Although treating the Hamas-controlled parts of the PA as pariahs and barring open diplomatic contact, European decisionmakers showed far greater discomfort with the resulting fiscal and institutional crisis in the Palestinian territories. While senior US officials evinced satisfaction with the enormous pressure of international sanctions on the Hamas-led government, in Europe there was far greater fear that the result would only be chaos and radicalization. After months of political and administrative wrangling, the EU finally established in June 2006 a Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) in which Palestinian civil servants would have 'social allowances' deposited directly by the EU into their bank accounts. The TIM focused immediately on health and education, although it was later broadened, and excluded those who were hired after Hamas formed the cabinet or held bank accounts in institutions that failed to take measures against those organizations deemed terrorist.

The US-European divergence was mild. The USA reluctantly acquiesced in the TIM, and the EU generally restrained those member states that wished to relax the public diplomatic isolation of Hamas. Under the German presidency, the EU enthusiastically joined the USA in backing Mahmoud Abbas in the events of June 2007 (Council of the European Union, 2007), but it is difficult to avoid the impression that the range of opinions among European officials came to be far greater and that discomfort with the current draconian policies was far more widespread. For instance, on 21 February 2008, the European Parliament passed a resolution calling for an end to the siege on Gaza and urging a Fatah-Hamas dialogue – positions that no US official would endorse (European Parliament, 2008).

Track two and informal contacts

The mild divergence between the EU and the USA extended to clandestine and unofficial contacts. While some EU member state governments show a strong interest in informal contacts with Hamas – and a few seem to have had some non-public but official contact – the USA has shunned such meetings.

As is discussed above, the USA had not always been so strict. A number of factors seem to have toughened US actions. The rising concern with terrorism is the primary motivation, and the tremendous public controversy set off by meetings held by a small number of former officials, including former President Jimmy Carter, has probably discouraged those who might seek out discreet contact. Furthermore, the US stance on Hamas is increasingly codified in legislation rather than simply set by policy. Possible avenues for evading the US stance, such as interaction with local

officials elected on the Hamas ticket or meetings with prominent independents close to Hamas, have been eschewed.

European states have shown greater diversity. Some, such as Germany and the UK, seem to keep close to the US line. In other countries, however, there are periodic reports of contacts. A Hamas official revealed in May 2008 that officials from Norway, France and Italy had requested meetings and met with officials of the Hamas-led Gaza government (*Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 2008). France acknowledged that it had such contacts and Norway has pursued regular contacts quietly but not secretly with the Hamas leadership in Damascus. The British Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, while eschewing direct contact with his own government, has endorsed the decision of other countries to meet with Hamas leaders, implicitly viewing those countries as deputized to conduct a dialogue. Some European governments have quietly pursued the paths avoided by US officials, meeting with individuals associated with Hamas but who have a different status such as municipal council members or ministers who deny Hamas membership. Individual parliamentarians from EU member states have also shown a willingness to meet with Hamas officials (*Filastin*, 2008).

Nonetheless, the paucity of track two and informal contacts is striking. Track two diplomacy was born in part in the Israeli-Arab conflict out of the political sensitivity to public contact, especially given Arab non-recognition of Israel. Track two efforts have been sporadic between Western countries and Hamas and have been extremely scarce between Israel and Hamas. Fitful efforts, both official and unofficial, have been made to bring prominent Hamas and Israeli figures together. On the Hamas side, there is a clear reluctance and often a blanket refusal to engage in track two contacts with Israel. Intensive Hamas-Israeli bargaining has taken place, but primarily through Egyptian mediation.

The USA has appeared to remain completely aloof at the official level, but there have been increasing overtures from former officials, such as Jimmy Carter and the retired diplomat Thomas Pickering. A slightly more variable European picture does not diminish the overall effect: the treatment of Hamas as a pariah has largely been maintained even in private.

4. Impact and effectiveness

Thus, US and EU policy has been stringent and severe – increasingly so over time. There has been movement: policy towards Hamas has risen up the policymaking chain so that it is now made at the highest levels; it has also become more airtight. There is also the beginning of a debate in policy circles as well as among the broader

public about alternatives, but that debate has not had an appreciable impact on policy.

What effect has this policy had on Hamas? In general, it has not resulted in a more pliable organization or in a weaker one. It is not clear, however, that a more nuanced policy would have produced a substantially different result. In other words, the policy cannot be deemed a success but the evidence that alternatives would have been more effective is very thin. Any assessment of policy should be separated between the period before and after the 2006 elections, which were a watershed because they made it impossible to ignore Hamas and put the movement in a position of political power and responsibility for the first time.

Before 2006

Hamas emerged out of the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1980s, and it mixed the Muslim Brotherhood's traditional emphasis on social, educational and missionary activity with political work and resistance to Israel – a resistance that took violent form and even targeted civilians. It was this violence and the extreme nature of its goals that led to its pariah status.

As the Oslo process unfolded, Hamas's new found political agenda confronted it with a stark choice over whether to enter the political process created by the bilateral Israeli-Palestinian agreements. To participate would risk legitimizing agreements that Hamas had rejected and perhaps, because of the highly circumscribed nature of Palestinian autonomy, subject it to intense pressures. On the other hand, to disrupt or remain aloof from the PA would leave the field of political activity entirely open to other forces and seemed to run counter to the Hamas strategy, common to many of its sister Islamist groups, of taking advantage of any political opening.

In the end, Hamas activists were divided over how much to stress three aspects of the group's agenda: resistance, social activity and political participation. Brave statements that it could pursue all three at once could not mask tensions and debates about the relative weight to accord to each. Aware of the internal debate within Hamas, the PA and its leader, Yasser Arafat, sought to influence the outcome. On the one hand, there was a concerted effort to coax Hamas into the electoral process either directly or in a newly formed political party that would operate with the blessing of Hamas. On the other hand, the authoritarian practices emerging under the PA could show their harshest face when Hamas was involved – violent clashes between PA security forces and Hamas demonstrators began almost with the creation of the PA.

How did US and European policy affect decisionmaking within Hamas and the public standing of the organization? In general, the message that international diplomacy seemed to send was that there would be little room for a conversion from resistance to a political strategy. When Arafat worked to persuade Hamas to bless – openly or otherwise – some candidates for legislative elections in 1996, international sponsors of the peace process held back strenuous objections, but their deep suspicion of the idea probably contributed to the failure of the initiative. The international acceptance of the endless delays to the local and municipal elections, all but publicly explained by the concern that Hamas would perform well, contributed to the sense among Hamas leaders that the political option was narrow and might even be closed if they decided to pursue it.

At the same time, however, Hamas leaders had to contend with the apparent viability of a peace process that they opposed and the strong international constellation aligned in support of it. In other words, in the short term they could neither defeat the PA and the peace process nor could they join them. In this sense, the international policy worked successfully to exclude Hamas from politics, but the result was hardly to make the organization disappear. Instead, it increased its emphasis on its other fields of activity. With politics unpromising, a considerable portion of the Islamic movement made a gradual shift to an emphasis on social service. One expert on Gaza even speaks of the Islamic sector's switch from a political to a social strategy (Roy, 2000).

Hamas was not completely sidelined into social activity. Its emphasis on armed resistance hardly ceased. The movement seemed to adopt a more careful strategy. It varied the nature and form of its violent activities according to the prevailing political environment. In 1995 and 1996 a wave of violence resulted in tremendous international pressure on the PA to crack down on Hamas – and the PA reluctantly complied. Hamas found itself isolated in the realm that mattered most to the organization: Palestinian public opinion. Held responsible for disrupting the peace process, provoking harsh Israeli countermeasures and raising the spectre of Palestinian civil war, Hamas eased off its insistence on pursuing the path of resistance. The movement fiercely rejected calls that it disarm or accept the legitimacy of the peace process or even of the PA, but in the late 1990s it tended to hold its fire. The result was a period of relative calm, not only in relations between Israelis and Palestinians but also between Hamas and the PA.

Until 2000, the international isolation of Hamas could be said to have had real benefits. The movement continued to thrive but it was limited in its willingness and ability to disrupt the internationally sponsored peace process. It had been successfully kept out of the PA. However, Hamas's shift during these years was a result of tactical

calculation by the movement's leadership rather than a strategic reorientation of the movement, and the eruption of the second intifada in September 2000 set the stage for the full return of the resistance option. The next few years saw increasing Israeli-Palestinian violence with Hamas taking a leading role.

Oddly, Hamas showed more of an ability and willingness to modulate its use of violence during this period as Fatah disintegrated into a host of gangs and militias. Thus, at times when Hamas bowed to pressure – chiefly from the PA leadership – to hold its fire, it generally did so effectively. Nonetheless, the deepening Palestinian conflict with Israel vindicated in the eyes of many Palestinians Hamas's insistence that the time for resistance had not passed, and this helped to bring Hamas in from the political cold.

At this point, international isolation became harsher but ceased to have the intended effect. Rather than isolating Hamas, the movement seemed to grow in importance, stature and popular standing. This made the political option more attractive to the movement rather than less – the constraints imposed by the Oslo Accords seemed less relevant now that those agreements lay in tatters, and Hamas leaders were well aware that they would do reasonably well in any election. After prolonged internal debates, movement leaders decided to run candidates first in local elections and then in parliamentary elections, boycotting only the presidential election held after Arafat's death in 2005. In a sense, the international strategy had probably contributed to a situation in which Hamas was more attracted to politics, more confident it could avoid choosing between politics and resistance, and more likely to do well when it ran.

In 2005, long overdue elections were finally held. When the Palestinian leadership indicated that it would be better to have Hamas participate than have it disrupt the process, the international sponsors of the peace process grudgingly dropped their opposition. In reality, there were few legal tools available to prevent Hamas from participating. The result was the tsunami of the 2006 parliamentary elections.

After 2006

In the 2006 elections Hamas found that its attempt to pursue social reform, resistance and politics at the same time had succeeded, but also that this success had placed the movement in a virtually impossible position. Strong pressures pushed Hamas in different directions and it was difficult to reconcile the competing demands placed on it to govern while remaining true to its principles. At times the divisions broke out into the open, but the sharp international response to the Hamas victory and its parliamentary majority helped the movement to weather the storm, unifying it under

a more radical banner and fending off the temptation to act in a manner that would have been considered more responsible by most international actors.

The strains on Hamas came directly from its temptation to do everything at once. While its leaders insisted there was no contradiction, for instance, between electoral participation and violent resistance, the reality was that the elections could only be held under the quiet provided by a unilateral ceasefire.

The problem was not simply that the organization was pulled towards different goals, but that its diverse activities created different groups with varying priorities in the movement. The military wing of Hamas, for instance, was kept separate from other parts of the organization, chiefly because an earlier failure to do so had led to severe security breaches and made it easy for the movement to be suppressed.[3] Military commanders accepted the ultimate decision-making authority of the senior leadership but displayed impatience with normal politics. The parliamentary bloc, by contrast, as well as some ministers, such as Nasir al-Din al-Sha'ir and Muhammad al-Barghuti, were clearly highly invested in the experiment of governing and insisted that they retain a degree of freedom from the movement. Indeed, Hamas leaders who accepted ministerial posts, the movement announced, would have to step aside from their leadership role in the movement in order to avoid any conflict of interest. There were differing orientations between those on the outside, who were oriented more towards diplomatic and international activity, and those on the inside as well as between the West Bank and Gaza.

Uncharacteristically for the movement, leaders would sometimes refer to their differences in public, and on at least two critical occasions – the decision to launch an operation in which an Israeli soldier was captured in June 2006 and the extreme nature of the seizure of power in Gaza one year later – the right hand did not seem to know what the left was doing. The latter case clearly surprised some leaders, who had expected far less extensive operations aimed more at countering Fatah-controlled forces than upending the political order. Even more deliberate actions sparked clear controversy within the movement: the decision to enter the national unity government in March 2007 occasioned a bitter speech by Mahmud Zahhar, reputedly the movement's leader in Gaza, on the floor of parliament. While Zahhar voted in favour of a motion of confidence in the new government, he either refused to take part in it or was excluded and made clear his deep personal disagreement with its platform – an extraordinary move from the leader of a movement that prides itself in its discipline and unity of message.

The international environment was clearly a factor in the strategic calculations of Hamas leaders and affected the balance of forces within the movement. The sanctions,

however, acted more like a sledgehammer than a chisel. It would be pointless to deny that the diplomatic and financial sanctions had any effect. The question is whether the effects were desirable, and there are grounds for harsh judgment.

The sanctions made certain options impossible and others difficult. Hamas's first impulse after its electoral victory was to form a coalition government or a technocratic one. Fairly heavy-handed international pressure was exercised, especially by the USA, to discourage any potential partners, forcing Hamas to go into government alone. The disavowal of any attempt to devise half-steps, benchmarks or gradualism in the application of the Quartet's conditions made it difficult for those within Hamas who favoured a more forthcoming set of positions to argue that their path would have any effect. The financial boycott of all the PA (except those parts that had clear autonomy from the parliament and the ministries, such as the judiciary and presidency) coupled with the threat of sanctions against any international public or private actors dealing with the PA led to a severe fiscal crisis. The TIM lessened the severity of that crisis but still added to the enormous pressure to find a different path. The threats of non-constitutional action by the PA president – openly or obliquely endorsed by the international community – made clear to Hamas that constitutional and democratic mechanisms afforded it no protection. The decision to reject the national unity government because of Hamas's participation emboldened the opponents of that government, including most notably Zahhar. The decision to assist the security forces under presidential command clearly led Hamas to conclude that there was international support for armed action against it.[4]

The cumulative effect of all these international actions was to prevent any attempts to domesticate Hamas and to give a strong boost to those leaders who resisted any attempt to soften the group's platform. In this respect, it appears at first glance that international efforts backfired; they had precisely the opposite effect to that which was intended and contributed to the radicalization of the movement. Although such a harsh judgment is justified, it must be qualified in two ways.

First, it is not completely clear that the effect was unintended. There is strong evidence of a difference in approach between European governments, which were hostile to Hamas but comparatively open to the idea of the transformation of the organization, and the United States, which was far more suspicious of the movement and viewed it primarily through the lens of terrorism. Even within the US Government, however, there were clear differences of emphasis. While legal and political considerations left the possibility of attempts to integrate Hamas beyond the pale of long-term policy options for most senior policymakers, the radicalization of Hamas clearly complicated the short-term diplomatic process – a significant problem for those seriously invested in that process. For others, however,

the importance of maintaining a strong international position against terrorism generally and Hamas specifically, coupled with a general pessimism about any diplomatic process, led to a very different conclusion – the radicalization of Hamas, its takeover of Gaza and its ousting from the Ramallah government were hardly negative developments. They clarified matters and choices for both Palestinians and international actors, and effectively prevented any leakage in the international isolation of Hamas.

Second, while international actors certainly made it difficult for those who wished to integrate Hamas and contributed to the continued hold of radicals over the movement, it is not clear that a fundamentally different result was possible, at least in the short term. While there were ministers, parliamentarians and other leaders who clearly wished to succeed at governing, there is scant evidence (other than private conversations) that they wished to fundamentally reorient the movement's principles – and those principles included non-recognition of Israel and retention of the option of resistance. In other words, some within Hamas may have wished to suspend or soften some of its harsher goals and methods in the short term, but such leaders tended to be very vague about the possibilities for strategic rather than tactical shifts within the organization. In a real sense, organizational means and goals are not only a product of leadership intentions, they are also deeply conditioned, and in the long run perhaps even determined, by the constraints and opportunities presented to those leaders. In 2007, Palestinians frequently claimed that Hamas 'was not even given a chance'. This is true, but had it faced a gentler, more nuanced or more conditional external reaction, it is likely that any transformation in the organization would have been difficult and slow – and resisted by many within the movement.

The Administration of US President Barack Obama is staffed with figures who had no role in designing these policies and it includes a very senior official, George Mitchell, who was involved in the incorporation of pariahs into diplomacy in Northern Ireland. Thus, there is reason to believe that it would be open to experimenting with a gentler or more nuanced policy, and willing to allow for the gradual incorporation of Hamas rather than its defeat or capitulation. The weakness of the Israeli military option of defeating Hamas might also seem to suggest a re-evaluation of policy. To date, however, such a re-evaluation has not occurred. Instead, the Obama Administration has essentially continued with the policy of the late Bush years – full backing for PA officials in Ramallah, enthusiastic support for training and equipping the Ramallah-based security forces and continued sanctions against and isolation of Gaza and Hamas.

Some of the hardest edges of the Bush era policy have been removed. The president speaks of US conditions for engaging Hamas in less hectoring or threatening tones even as he repeats those conditions. The USA has worked quietly and not very effectively to ease the Israeli blockade of Gaza. The Obama Administration has continued its predecessor's support for Egyptian mediation efforts, which focused in 2009 on intra-Palestinian reconciliation as opposed to the stronger focus in 2008 on Israeli-Hamas negotiations, and it has publicly indicated some willingness to consider ways in which a Palestinian unity or technocratic government could be formed and supported. Nonetheless, it has steadily repeated the Quartet's conditions, applying them to any Palestinian government and to Hamas as a movement, shown no interest in gradualism or benchmarks in their implementation and treated the Ramallah government as the only legitimate one.

It is possible that the failure of efforts to revive a peace process would force the Obama Administration to reconsider its approach to Hamas. Should that happen, there is likely to be a number of European governments willing to ease that process. There is no sign to date, however, that any such reconsideration is taking place.

Endnotes

[1] The decision to create the courts was issued in February 1995. The next month, Gore met with Arafat and publicly announced that he 'welcomed the decision to prosecute terrorists' (*Jerusalem Post*, 2005).

[2] The Quartet Statement on the Situation in the Middle East of 30 January 2006 is available at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/60068.htm>.

[3] The formation of `Izz al-Din al-Qassam as a separate unit of Hamas came thus not so much to separate military and political wings as it did as a countermeasure against Israeli attempts at suppression. The compartmentalization of cells and units made it more difficult to unravel the organization with a few key arrests. See Abu al-`Umrayn (2001: 349).

[4] Rose (2008) details some of the US interventions in support of an anti-Hamas coup. While the article drew considerable public attention, little of what it revealed was not already widely known. There was little clandestine about the US effort. Nor was the initiative abandoned even after the disastrous events in Gaza in June 2007. Instead, US support for the Palestinian security forces under presidential command, provided with the clearly enunciated goal of strengthening them vis-à-vis Hamas, continues to this day.

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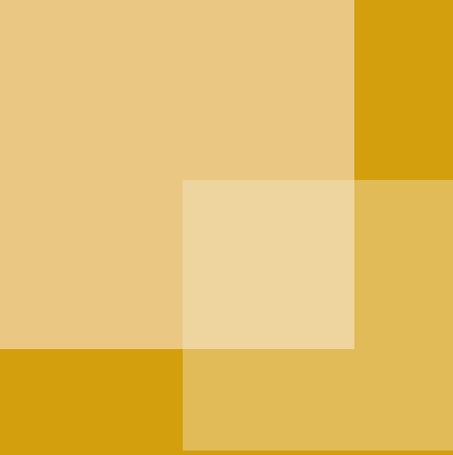
Chapter 6

Learning by doing:
US policies towards the
Islamist movements
in Morocco, Egypt and
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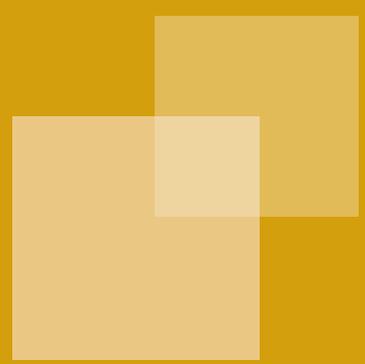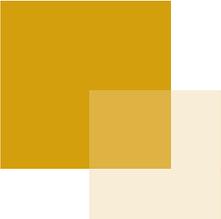
Philippe Droz-Vincent*

Learning by doing: US Policies towards the Islamist movements in Morocco, Egypt and Lebanon

1. Introduction

US decisionmakers look at the Middle East through very specific lenses and in a manner that is quite different from European countries. The main difference lies in the specific US geopolitical stance. The Middle East is a strategic area where some essential – or 'vital', to borrow the expression from numerous strategic US documents – US interests are located. The containment of perceived Soviet aggression as the central US strategic concern was replaced at the end of the Cold War by a US hegemony that was synonymous with the US 'embrace' of many Middle Eastern problems. US foreign policy has two vital objectives: to ensure the free flow of Middle East oil to Western industry and to secure the existence of the state of Israel. Hence, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the stability of the Gulf have remained the major US interests in the region. US foreign policy, however shaky in its foundations, with Arab alliances but Israel as a strategic partner, has been quite successful over the long term (Quandt, 2001). At the same time, the Middle East is in a process of change that is proceeding at a revolutionary tempo and in the long term is destructive of stability, the Iranian revolution being a first historic milestone.

US foreign policy needs a policy formula that in the first instance will be capable of dealing with this process of change while achieving US objectives in the area. As

US foreign policy in the Middle East strengthened its position, Islamism became a political contender and in some cases a direct threat making a revolutionary bid for power. Islamism entrenched itself in societal dynamics and remained a disturbing problem for the United States. These twofold and parallel developments provide us with a key to understanding important background. US policies towards Islamism are closely related to the increased involvement of the USA in the Middle East, and US thinking about Islamism emerged in times of acute or looming crises. Hence, reality was analysed using a biased focus, and US policies remained flimsy, leading to difficulties in defining the scope of the challenge (Iran and 'extremists', or other oppositional forces anchored in the stalled Middle East political processes), the nature of the challenge (centred on the Middle East or with a broader impact), its articulation with US policies or interests and adequate tools for addressing these challenges. Nonetheless, US policies towards Islamism, with all their difficulties and contradictions, do not represent an exception, but are broadly common to other issue areas or regions where the USA has strong interests.

At the end of the 1990s, with the persistent challenges emanating from the Middle East, two conflicting trends gave shape to US policies towards political Islam. On the one hand, 'hegemonic great narratives' gained increasing influence: the 'global war on terror, and democracy promotion as a response. These schemata had a strong influence, leading to a tendency to gloss over the reality of an Islamist movement in a given country and to make use of globalizing labels, with political Islam characterized as the new global threat. The postulate of a cultural-religious threat from Islamic jihadism and the equation of Islamism with terrorism have been the preferred cognitive shortcuts exemplified by the post-11 September 2001 era, and the medication of democracy promotion has become the preferred strategic answer.

On the other hand, when we get down to individual cases, such as Morocco, Egypt and Lebanon, tentative big concepts or grand narratives have not shaped policy on the ground and US policies have played on the available windows of opportunity. In the case of Morocco, an ambitious but ambivalent foreign policy has been followed, with a large ambit, from the embassy to non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In Egypt, a less coherent policy has been pursued, with far more restricted room for manoeuvre. In Lebanon, there has been a policy of enduring indictment of Hezbollah, an organization characterized as a terrorist movement.

The end result is a too often unseen evolution of US policies towards Islamism in the decade since 2000. The process does not have the linear definition of a clear-cut policy. It is the product of the huge contradictions that have surfaced at every corner of US policy in the Middle East. Beyond the high-minded proclamations of the Administration of George W. Bush and the hubris of an unbound US power, the

USA has become entangled in the Middle East at a level unknown before. Islamist advances are very much symptomatic of this strategic quagmire, even if this is not understood in such a straightforward way in Washington. However, the stirrings of a struggle for more discerning policies towards Islamism may have been bequeathed to the Administration of US President Barack Obama as the USA remains 'deep' inside the Middle East.

2. The past as a prologue: US encounters with political Islam, or the emergence of a 'problem stream' directed against US interests

Any assessment of US policies towards Islamism in a given country has to take into account important background going back to the first years of the Iranian revolution. Beginning in the 1980s, political Islam as a new major socio-political movement began its rise as the primary instrument of rapid political change. Political Islam came to install itself as a major disturbance in the Middle East status quo. The thematic of a threatening Islamist movement did not emerge all at once. The US attitude to political Islam is made up of different layers or tentative attitudes, without one building on the premises of the other. These layers of policy are not symmetric – they add their effects to or correct the previous one. In reality, the problematic has shifted at each step and there has been no complete recovery, but a picture of rifts, strains and incoherence in US foreign policy towards Islamism.

However, the context has remained pressing and the main evolutions have been prodded by severe crises. The ensuing effect on US policy towards political Islam is a progressive crystallization of some objectives regarding political Islam, but short of a clear-cut strategic focus. In the 1980s, some in US decision-making circles were investigating the possibility of harnessing the forces of political Islam for US purposes – an opinion not shared by European governments. The main threat to US interests was described as coming quasi exclusively from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Later, and increasingly after the end of the Cold War, there was a consensus among policymakers that the real threat to the status quo was from a larger force – political Islam with all its potential for change. Nonetheless, debates are still raging in order to find a policy.

The Iranian trauma and the Iranian 'hand' as the surrogate regional enemy

US foreign policy's first encounter with political Islam took place in a dramatic way, with the advent of the Iranian revolution (Sick, 1985; Bill, 1988). Following the overthrow of the Shah, one of the closest US allies in the Middle East, the whole

US web of security relationships with Israel, Turkey and the 'moderate' Arab states was left in disarray. The 'happy' status quo favourable to US interests in the Middle East came to an end with the Islamic Republic pursuing a policy of 'neither East nor West' that was hostile to the United States. The escalation of the terror campaign against the United States in Lebanon in 1983 – with the appearance of the so-called Party of God, or Hezbollah – added fuel to an image of political Islam as a disruptive and anti-Western force. Hezbollah gained the image of a terrorist organization associated with hostage taking, and an ideologically driven and Iranian-Syrian backed organization, whose unwavering rhetoric in opposition to Israel fuelled its negative image in the United States (Norton, 1999).

In the 1980s, however, Islamism was largely an academic question rather than an immediate policy concern. In the eyes of US decisionmakers', Iran was the only case – along with the so-called exports of the Islamic revolution in Lebanon or in the Gulf. In Iraq, the exportation of the Iranian revolution was 'contained' or crushed by Saddam Hussein's repression. The USA felt no need to articulate a clear-cut foreign policy towards Islamism. US decisionmakers made a differentiation between Iran and its various stooges, on the one hand, and conservative forces linked to the resurgence of political Islam and fundamentalism, on the other hand. The latter problem was dealt with at intermediate levels of political circles, with an attempt to harness political Islam to US interests with the help provided to the Afghan mujahedin, including the most fundamentalist ones, especially Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's *Hezb-e-Islami*, through Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence – a parallel with the situation in the 1950s and 1960s when Saudi Wahabbi Islam was employed as an ideological weapon in the fight against secular pan-Arab nationalism.[2] The inconsistency of an Afghan policy favouring Islamist groups and a policy of increasing hostility to the Islamic republic of Iran was not understood.

This formative encounter of US foreign policy with political Islam had extensive consequences and has left its imprint on US decision-making circles. Hezbollah has secured a position at the top of the US State Department's list of terrorist organizations. The 'Iranian hand' has been seen behind every trouble. This period has had an enduring effect on US decisionmakers. Notwithstanding the repositioning in the Lebanese political arena undertaken by Hezbollah in the 1990s, the so-called Lebanonization of a Party that has taken part in elections in the post-Taif era but has kept its arms, Hezbollah has remained in US eyes the paradigmatic terrorist organization. The traumatic events of the 1980s have had an enduring effect on a whole generation of US decisionmakers – a 'generational effect' or socialization effect. Until now, Hezbollah and Iranian foreign policies in the Middle East have been mainly interpreted through the prism of the 1980s.

Islamism as a threat in the post-Cold War era

The atmosphere evolved in a new direction in the 1990s. With the end of the Cold War, optimism prevailed in decision-making circles, as exemplified by the prominence of the vision of the End of History articulated by Fukuyama. With the passing of time, however, hopes faded and what began to be called (economic and political) globalization was no longer seen as synonymous with the end of threats and violence. Foreign policy pundits did not conduct policy, but their various characterizations had an important weight on decisionmakers. The various epigrams that came to the fore exemplified the new atmosphere: 'the coming anarchy' (Kaplan), 'the clash of civilizations' (Huntington) and 'Jihad vs. McWorld' (Barber). Two of these catchphrases from foreign policy circles draw direct reference to political Islam. One, Huntington, instead of discussing globalization insisted on calling the process 'Westernization', which breeds the reaction 'the West against the rest', the basic tenet of which was an Islamic-Confucian connection. His views may not be shared by all in decision-making circles, but they are symptomatic of an atmosphere of increasing concern with 'increased global threat'. Islamist groups therefore began to be lumped together in a single threat.

At the same time, the weight of internal factors, such as public opinion, the media, interest groups and Congress, increased on US foreign policy. In the 1990s, US foreign policy was increasingly the product of a wide range of domestic political realities. Terrorism emerged inside US territory with the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center. This event shattered the view that the USA was isolated from the vagaries of political Islam, the effects of which were already obvious in the Middle East.[3] The 1995 bombing in Oklahoma had nothing to do with Islamists – it was the work of US right-wingers, but reaction to it further exposed the negative image that began to colour the US public's view of Islam. The media constructed a vision of 'a green peril' (Hadar, 1993; Haddad in Lesch, 2003), and this did considerable damage by linking Muslims and terrorism in the minds of the average US citizen. The US Congress held numerous hearings where simplistic visions prevailed and where political Islam was equated with terrorism, The role of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich, was crucial in this respect. The US Congress was also active in devising antiterrorist legislation, in a move to embarrass the executive branch and the State Department, which were accused of downgrading the threat (Litwak, 2000). In the 1990s, Congressional hearings were rife with questions about the threat of Islamic terrorism. Anti-Iranian feeling was widespread in the Senate and the House, with alleged Iranian threats of subversion in Central Asia, North Africa and Egypt and a supposed Teheran-Khartoum connection. Shallow references to Islamic fundamentalism were used to explain everything in the Middle East from

terrorism to the lack of democracy, the role of women and the lack of economic prosperity.

Events in Egypt and Algeria added more urgency in decision-making circles. The stunning electoral victory of the Islamic Salvation front (FIS) in Algeria in December 1991 alarmed Washington, following the takeover in Sudan in 1989, in which the Muslim Brothers and the charismatic Hassan al-Tourabi had been influential. Events in Egypt heightened concern. US officials were worried by the gravity of the confrontation between Islamists and the Mubarak regime (Gerges, 1999).[4] When Islamism first began to make strides towards power in Algeria, US decisionmakers were not particularly alarmed. After the Gulf War, and the advent of the Oslo peace process, they could even envisage an Islamist takeover in the Maghreb – after all, Islamists were arguing for economic liberalization and reform. Events in Egypt, however, crystallized a nightmare vision of an Islamist takeover in the Maghreb with spillover effects on Egypt, and hence on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Debate within the administration was reflected among the public and in the 'think tank community' between 'accommodationists', who argued that the USA should enter into contacts with Islamists or fundamentalists and ought to nurture Islamist moderates, and 'confrontationists', who equated Islamism with a past 'ism' – communism. The need for a more coherent foreign policy towards Islamism was felt inside the administration and exemplified by the so-called Meridian address by Edward Djerejian, the then Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs in the State Department, in Washington in June 1992 (Djerejian, 1996). Djerejian rejected the confrontationist line and echoed the accommodationist vision, but, at the same time, he remained very careful when he stated, 'we are suspect of those who would use the democratic process to come to power, only to destroy the very process in order to retain power and political dominance. While we believe in the principle of one person, one vote, we do not support one person, one vote, one time'. President Clinton retained Djerejian during his first term. The State Department was active in convening seminars, conferences and study groups in the 1990s. Even NATO echoed this concern in the debate on its new environment, with an emphasis on the rise of Islamic fundamentalism on the southern shore of the Mediterranean.[5]

The policy formulated at the intermediate level in the 1990s by Anthony Lake and Robert Pelletreau, who replaced Djerejian at the State Department, alternated between confrontation with 'the forces of terror' and stress on the fact that US proactive positions had nothing to do with Islam, or a distinction between moderate and extremist/radical Islamists, but the US administration never specified in detail who were the moderates and who were the extremists. The Clinton Administration

often saw the Middle East in black and white terms: a divide between Islamic terrorism and moderates. At the same time, however, it demonstrated sensitivity in avoiding tarring Islam with extremism in contentions that Islamic fundamentalism had replaced communism as a threat, and issued high profile discourses on respect directed at Islam. The Clinton Administration showed flexibility and sensitivity in policy discourses, but never managed to square the circle. Regional political concerns were playing their role. Islamists were the most active forces and were trying to gain access to power. Hence, the growing perception in US decision-making circles that political Islam might be a mounting threat to US interests in the Arab world – access to oil and the US management of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The rise to power of Islamists in Turkey in 1995 further alarmed the USA. US officials were beginning to think that political change might yield fundamentalist political regimes.

The administration began to closely follow Islamism in the Gulf, in Egypt and in the Palestinian territories – with the growing influence of Hamas. The latter case was instrumental in that it shaped US visions of Hamas that reverberated on other Islamist movements. As the peace process seemed threatened, and after a wave of suicide bombings orchestrated by Hamas in Israel in March 1996, Clinton convened a conference against terrorism in Sharm El Sheikh, and Washington upgraded its punitive moves against Iran, Sudan and Islamists opposed to the peace process.[6] A security-driven approach to Islamism began to prevail. The problem 'one person, one vote, one time' encapsulated in Algeria's experience in 1990–91 crystallized for US policymakers the nightmare vision of what democracy might bring about. Whereas fundamentalists had issued moderate declarations in the 1980s (see the positions of Rachid Ghanouchi, the leader of the Tunisian Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique, MTI) – or had taken refuge in the USA (such as Omar Abd al-Rahman, the leader of the Egyptian *al-Gamaat al-Islamiyya*, who was later convicted for the 1993 World Trade Center bombing) US perceptions changed and became more security-driven. The USA did not want to be explicitly hostile towards Islamism, but a strong strain of scepticism pervaded, especially regarding the compatibility between political Islam and democracy.

Growing US fears of political Islam played into the hands of the regimes in the Middle East. During their visits to Washington in the 1990s, Arab leaders, as well as leaders from Turkey and Pakistan, argued strongly before President Clinton about the Islamist threat, especially after the attempted assassination of President Mubarak in Addis Ababa in June 1995. Israel was also active in the 1990s in promoting the idea of an Islamist threat. After the end of the Cold War, this was an essential way for Israel to defend its strategic value to the US – as a deterrent against the new transnational enemy of Islamic fundamentalism.[7] Rabin was particularly active in elaborating Israel's struggle against 'murderous Islamic terror'. Iran sparked

considerable concern in Israel – more than Iraq, which was an essential US concern in the 1990s. New ideas were circulated, arguing that Arab governments that supported the peace process, Turkey and Israel should be allied against Iran and 'Islamic fundamentalism'. Hence, it is possible to trace in Israeli decision-making circles or among Israeli scholars the birth of certain themes that entered foreign policy discourse and even US political debates at a later stage. After the end of the Cold War, the US-Israeli special relationship was also a channel through which antagonistic visions of political Islam were circulated.

These ideas gained increasing support in US decision-making circles as regional difficulties mounted, the peace process – the 1995 Wye River Agreement and numerous intermediate agreements – was derailed and the Iraq regime circumvented United Nations sanctions and remained firmly in power (Droz-Vincent, 2007). The end result of the 1990s was a self-confident US power, inundated with problems linked to political Islam's potential for change and increasingly convinced that this trend was detrimental to US interests. In a confused way, however, the parallel with the US stance towards Arab nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s is striking. As was the case when nationalist forces and military actors were vying for power and legitimacy and were challenging the status quo at a time of nascent Cold War, the Islamist 'problem', reinterpreted as an Islamist 'threat', increasingly gained a foothold in US perceptions of the Middle East. The same, recurring accusations are levelled in policymaking circles, or 'opinion leaders' circles', to borrow this suggestive expression from Paul Lazarsfeld, or even in US public opinion.[8] Is Islamism/Arab nationalism a once and for all antagonist force, or could relations be established with these emerging actors? Can the USA differentiate between moderates and radicals? Should the ideology of these movements – Arab socialism, Arab unity, Islamist theological concepts of power – be taken at face value? The overall reading of the phenomenon is influenced by the views and interests of strategic allies (the United Kingdom in the early 1950s, Israel and sometimes Arab authoritarianism in the 1990s). However, the broad vision of Arab nationalism as basically antagonistic to US interests, because of its supposed pro-Soviet tilt, is sometimes compromised at the local level. All these questions were asked at the time of flamboyant Arab nationalism, and they are back on the agenda in the 1990s. The ensuing dilemmas are quite familiar to historians of Arab nationalism.

3. Islamism as a new 'global challenge' or 'enemy': Globalizing forces and the tendency for a global reading of Islamism

The big change at the end of the 1990s was the global interpretation 'veneered' on political Islam in most analyses and perceptions: a tendency towards an interpretation of political Islam as a broad and antagonistic force for change, far beyond the 'strict'

defence of US interests in the Middle East mentioned above. Of course, foreign policy actors do not act in a purely rational way, in an attempt to exert rational control over events by adjusting means to ends and goals. Yet, foreign policy decisionmakers believe that they are acting rationally, setting broad strategic directions to explain their behaviour. These rationalizing tendencies give political Islam a strategic focus. Hence the questions that linger beneath most academic or policy debates as to the nature of Islamist movements are superseded by 'grand designs' aimed at solving 'the problem'. This speaks to policymakers impatient with details and analyses, as epitomized by successive and enduring epigrams summarizing visions with an increasingly threatening taint: from political Islam to Islamic fundamentalism, radical Islam, jihadism, Islamic terror and global jihad. The different layers of meaning in the Islamic terminology used in US foreign policy parlance, in public debates or in the media are indicative of an increasingly political securitization of political Islam. The process reaches its peak after 11 September 2001, when an obsessive 'choice of enemies' in the Middle East drove US foreign policy (Freedman, 2008).

Islamism and terrorism in the context of the global war on terror

We should not spend long in arguing that 11 September 2001 changed a lot of US perceptions of itself and others, but the remark also holds true for Islamism.[9] The near universal view among policymakers and the media after the events of 11 September 2001 was that the USA was facing a virulent and dangerous form of Islamic radicalism. Hence, the conflation of threats advanced by the Bush Administration with the so-called Global War on Terror, with al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, Iran and Islamist Sunni groups such as Hamas all lumped together as an undifferentiated enemy. To be fair, official thinking became more nuanced after officials began to realize that their declarations might hint of new 'crusades' or at a war between Islam and the West. Nonetheless. the 'aggregative' reflex remained prevalent among US decisionmakers, and the differentiation between violent radical Islamists with a global agenda (al-Qaeda), Islamists who use violence with more 'national' objectives (Hamas, Hezbollah)[10] and Islamic movements turning to ballots not bullets was not the most widespread vision in the US Government. The simple fact that Islamic movements in many countries performed well in electoral terms in the restricted openings allowed by their regimes in the 1990s was seen as a looming threat, with a vision of Islamism as inevitably 'radical', 'militant' or 'jihadist', and hostile to the West and its values.[11] Ideology is taken at face value (see below, on the role of culture). Differentiation and complexity are the preserve of experts, whereas the most influential discourse on political Islam in the US following 11 September was the product of a blooming terrorism industry. A flurry of books and articles was published on Islamic/Islamist terrorism by self-proclaimed specialists on Islam or

terrorism who have gained a kind of hegemony on the public debate in the media (Anderson, 2004).

This is not to say that the problem of violence is not serious and real, but the language of terrorism becomes the primary introductory core. Local complexities disappear under global headings, and complex local variations, motives, histories and relations are played down in favour of meta-narratives. Frame analysis reveals how these processes favour certain interpretations, determining what aspects are important, what is subject to debate and what is beyond question – what is true and false. With these perceptions, there is a tendency to maintain a distance from reality by using labels and names. It helps to offer a threatening public image of political Islam and fuel suspicion. Once assigned, the power of a name is such that the process by which the name was selected generally disappears and a series of normative characteristics are attached to the named object. Labels are viewed as objective representations of facts and not questioned once installed. Therefore, some of the writings or debates on 'Islamic' terrorism in the USA are more akin to special pleading and misconstrue the real threat.

Public opinion, or public opinion as it is reflected in the media and opinion polls, has gained a new prominence. The most important change is that the Islamist debate spills over into domestic politics, for reasons of fear (Robin, 2004). The fear of 'the next attack' drives debates on homeland security. There is a tendency after 11 September to see Islamist movements or even Islam through the lens of explosive events in the Middle East – and developments in Iraq have fuelled such visions with a so-called living room war every evening for television viewers. Foreign policy debates on Islamism in the USA are saturated with the fear of a new attack and the vision of Islamism as a violent ideology whose direct product is radical extremism. Islamism has been increasingly interpreted through the threat of the dark side of political Islam, its extremists and their theology of hate and destruction.[12]

At the same time, culture has taken on a new prominence in the US debate. US foreign policy during the Cold War was described as 'a manifest theology', which viewed the world system as a fight of good against evil – the good believing in a free market economy, free elections and (sometimes) a Judeo-Christian God, with the consequence that the USA was 'so close to God' that it was omniscient, omnipotent and benevolent. In the 1990s, the qualification 'empire' was added.[13] In the post-11 September 2001 era, the cultural schemata have been reinforced, as exemplified by the numerous dichotomous declarations issued in official US circles. These are weighing heavily on US policymakers, not so much on State Department bureaucrats as on the political layers in Washington. Bush and many decisionmakers emphasized that the USA was waging a war against global terrorism and not against Islam. They

were careful to underscore the distinction between the religion of Islam and the discourse of terrorists, but, at the same time, broad generalizations were in common use in a vision shared by the Bush Administration and many commentators – that of a conflict over abstract values and civilization. Linked to this is the 'clash within civilization thesis' in which al-Qaeda is not so much a product of a 'clash of civilizations' as a product of a clash within a civilization – the Islamic one. For instance, the 2004 9/11 Commission Report portrays al-Qaeda as a response to factors operative in the Muslim world: 'the enemy is not just "terrorism", some generic evil, but rather the catastrophic threat' (9/11 Commission Report, 2004: 271). Foreign policy is no longer the rational pursuit of national interests undisturbed by mass politics (Schlesinger, 2004; McDougall, 1997). Foreign policymakers are deeply influenced by an increasingly complex set of internal debates concerning security, homeland protection, multiculturalism, diversity and transnationalism – accused of fuelling what a 2006 National Intelligence Estimate, an official synthesis destined for the President, calls 'the metastasizing of global jihadism'.

The association of Bush and of other members of the Bush Administration with the Christian Right strengthens the sense of antagonism towards Islam. The religious schemata pervade culture and emphasize differences among cultures. Polarization has increased in US public life between the extremely religious and the extremely non-religious, and conservative activists are busying themselves in trying to rally 'value voters' (Heclo, 2007). A vision of the USA as providential or of the USA as a 'Christian nation' pervades the USA's public ethos in the context of the US contest with jihadist terrorism. A tradition of moralizing politics has been revived in the US mindset, and the men of al-Qaeda who attacked the USA delved into a tradition of division between true believers and those living outside religion in a pre-Islam situation of paganism, or *jahiliyya*, according to the tradition of Mawdudi or Qutb, drawing a sharp contrast between two ideal-type societies. Both sides construct a Manichean struggle offering narratives of defenders of righteousness. One, the USA, has defined in political-ethical terms an enemy who hates freedom, democracy and the USA.[14] The other, al-Qaeda, is in a war of the faithful against the infidel. The alienation between the USA and Islamism has peaked to a level unknown in history.

The proactive actor in the Middle East: Democracy promotion and Islamism as 'subtexts'

Broad and renewed perceptions help to foster policy changes. The post-11 September era opened with a sense of urgency, first directed at Iraq by the Bush Administration's agenda framing, but with consequences for the whole Middle

East in what Bush proclaimed as a sea change in US relations with the Middle East – a 'shock and awe' policy followed by a policy of democracy promotion (Daalder and Lindsay, 2003). A 'problem stream' containing data about various problems, first among them the Iraq regime's survival under sanctions, and a 'policy stream', US debates on the Middle East in the 1990s, meet a 'politics stream' – the Bush Administration. After 11 September, these streams were coupled together at a critical moment and the whole process of agenda setting nurtured claims for large-scale departures from past routines (Kingdon, 1984). In this context, a political system is able to create a dynamic beyond the 'normal' politics of subsystems – bureaucracy, interest groups, entrenched interests, think tanks, and so on – as well as the macro-politics of Congress and the presidency. Most issues most of the time are treated within the community of experts – issue-oriented subsystems, in the first place the State Department – but in the spotlight of macro-politics some issues catch fire, dominate the agenda and initiate changes.

Democracy promotion is based on the hypothesis that the essence of the enemy is ideological, an extreme version of Islamic fundamentalism. A chorus of US commentators blamed the spread of terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and the rise of violent Islamic fundamentalism on political repression and economic stagnation in the Middle East. Neo-conservatives criticized authoritarian Arab regimes – the Arab so-called friendly tyrants, including close allies such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, for spawning radical groups and stifling moderates. (A majority of the hijackers on 11 September 2001 came from Saudi Arabia and Egypt.) The Bush Administration accepted this analysis of 'the roots of terror' and responded to the pervasive question 'Why do they hate us?' by placing responsibility on Arab authoritarian regimes and thus linking the onus of change with the idea of promoting democracy. There should be a new social contract between Arab governments and their societies that goes beyond regime-guided limited liberalizations to include genuine democratic reform.

The new rationale of US foreign policy stated that the so-called policy of status quo was no longer sustainable. Until the end of the Cold War, the status quo was based on various Arab alliances as well as support for Israel, 'free access' to the Gulf (and its oil) and the exclusion of the Soviet Union. In the 1990s it was based on US hegemony in the Middle East. It is considered an abject failure because it did not prevent the attacks of 11 September 2001. These shattered the entrenched belief in the status quo, the rationale of which was a highly ethnocentric belief that things are complex in the Middle East, and the Middle East is a special case where status quo should be the prime objective because any transformation would usher in uncontrollable developments.[15] The USA has shifted from a cautious realism to a highly simplistic universalism – democratization or 'a forward strategy of freedom', to borrow the Bush Administration's catchphrase. To be fair, the Iraq case was the first application

of the 'Bush doctrine' to foreign policy, with its obsessive stress on putting down Saddam Hussein's regime. Most of the early endeavours of the Bush Administration were directed at Iraq, and, according to this rationale, 'liberating Iraq' would chasten despots, encourage democrats and alleviate the 'wider Arab anger' against the USA. The project of democracy promotion in the Middle East, which was placed at the centre of US foreign policy after the Iraq invasion, elevated democratization in the Middle East from an ideal to a national security imperative and to a transformational tool.[16] The Arab world's democratic deficit suddenly became the focus of heightened attention.

Islamism, understood in a globalized and securitized manner, is a kind of subtext for democracy promotion. US officials have known for some time that Islamist movements enjoy considerable grass roots support, and thus democratization increased their chances of coming to power. At the same time, however, excluding them would doom democracy. The differentiation and the disconnect between moderate Islamists and radical splinters no longer speak to Washington politics at a time when it is intolerant of nuance and filled with stark definitions of evil forces. The complex problematic of political Islam will be circumvented or superseded, according to the new rationale of democracy promotion, because there is a feeling that democratic change will alter the equation and disentangle the problems.[17] For the more ideological neo-conservative decisionmakers, the problem of Islamism will be solved by the magic of democracy – 'the sweep of democratic change' that will 'draw the swamp'. Democracy will become the norm in the Arab world (Muravchik, 2003 and 2004). For the less ideological democracy promoters, democracy is 'a basic human aspiration that is universal' and a way to avoid the Islamist conundrum. '[A]ny culture, any religion, any country level or economic development could be democratic' according to Richard Haass in an intervention at the Council on Foreign Relations in April 2002.[18]

There is a perception that Islamism is a risk that the USA should hedge against and that the overwhelming support for Islamists is in part a by-product of the lack of political freedom. The reasoning is highly circular. It places a lot of emphasis on democracy and its transformation capability. The US discourse endlessly quotes the 2002 and 2003 Arab Development Reports of the United Nations Development Programme. The official discourse is saturated with rhetorical references to civil societies playing a democratizing role, pushing governments to democratization and helping to 'reintegrate' Islamists into democratic processes, fostering development and 'creating opportunities'. All these processes are portrayed as friendly and are conducive to US interests in the Middle East. The magic circular reasoning on democracy and civil society breeding a healthy political pluralism in the Middle East acts as a convincing argument among US decisionmakers. The rationale is

not so much to take account of Islamist political vitality and to domesticate moderate Islamists, as to dissolve or circumvent the problem in democratic 'virtuous dynamics'.

These ideas were forwarded to the Europeans, who were sensitive to the Islamist problem, especially in the 1990s after the events in the Maghreb. The G-8 arena is instrumental to helping this convergence, with an active German role (Diamond et al., 2005). The whole process is indicative of the difficulties encountered by US decisionmakers when they try to move beyond rhetoric. The so-called Greater Middle East Initiative was a way to enlist the Europeans, using the G-8 Summit of June 2004 as an institutional basis, in an ambitious US-EU framework for democracy promotion. The initiative, leaked by *al-Hayat* in February 2004, faced strong criticism from Arab governments and was dubbed 'a neo-colonial project' by a Saudi foreign minister usually accustomed to more lenient formulations. It also aroused concern on the European side. The revised initiative, known as the 'Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative', formally unveiled at the 2004 G-8 Summit in Sea Island, Georgia, USA, had lost some of its edge. The idea was to build a partnership with the region and give the Middle East states what they needed to promote reforms. It tilted towards technical areas – the enduring support for civil society and a shift towards literacy, micro-finance and small and medium-sized business development – and became a partnership to circumvent the potential for change associated with Islamist actors.

Do problems foster policies? From global 'politics streams' to individual cases

Other considerations are counterbalancing global and stark interpretations. Public policies – and foreign policy towards Islamism as a case study in this chapter – do not develop in a clear-cut way, divided into a series of stages, with a problem emerging, agenda setting, policy formulation and implementation at the end. This simplistic, top-down and legalistic vision oversimplifies the usual process of multiple interacting cycles involving numerous policy proposals and statutes at multiple levels of government. Most policymakers, especially those at the working levels of the bureaucracy, work differently and are little influenced in their day-to-day work by global public imagery. Other considerations enter the equation. This is not to say that some policymakers do not consider US interests in the Middle East in their wider sense and are not submitted to global interpretations, with their slippery meaning. We must recall, however, that problems are dealt with at a more pragmatic level. This trend and the tendency to global interpretation presented above, are both playing their role in a push-pull mode of influence, allowing different 'windows of

opportunity' in the interaction between US foreign policy and political Islam, with all its diversity.

4. Two contrasting paths: Egypt and Morocco, supposed Islamist democrats without democracy

The Moroccan and Egyptian cases should be examined in parallel. The Moroccan regime strengthened its hold on power in the 1990s. The regime is surfing the wave of change, which now has an international component of democratic and economic globalization, without losing its exclusive hold on the 'fundamentals', maintaining for the regime its exclusive preserve on power. Economic reform and improved governance are not discourses that come only from outside, external democracy promoters or international economic organizations, or from inside, social mobilizations and political opposition, but are astutely used by the royal Palace. The royal centre has learned how to benefit from the new discourse on reform to foster change in the polity without losing its exclusive preserve on the whole system.[19] By providing impetus for change in the polity according to the new international global discourse on civil society, governance, economic liberalization and the private sector, the regime can square the circle and avoid being taken by surprise by internal mobilizations, such as the crystallization of resentment in one sector with detrimental spillover effects in others, or external criticism.

Morocco has chosen to 'bandwagon' with the new US emphasis on democracy promotion. Morocco hosted the first Forum for the Future of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) in Rabat in 2004. This was an astute move, displaying the Moroccan regime's goodwill in US eyes. Morocco is eligible for the MEPI programmes on education, healthcare, women's rights and job creation, largely regime-friendly programmes, and the Millennium Challenge Account, a foreign aid initiative of the Bush Administration. A free trade agreement was put into effect in 2006. Morocco remains a close ally of the USA, receiving USD 10,890 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF), USD 12.385 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and USD 1.856 million in International Military Education and Training (IMET) from the USA in fiscal year 2006. Morocco is not located in a core region, such as the 'central' Middle East, but is a more borderline case. Nonetheless, it is a useful ally. Hence its celebration by President Bush on numerous occasions, along with Jordan and Bahrain, as a successful case of democratic advances, especially at a time when other instances of the US diplomacy had gone awry.

This complex picture in which US democracy promoters in Morocco are navigating is a very narrow window of opportunity. The Moroccan equation allows for a prudent

or 'thin' US engagement with the Party of Justice and Development (PJD), which is a legalized party. There is no engagement with al-Adl wa al-Ihsan. The USA has sponsored several programmes in which the PJD is a participant. The PJD is one of several organizations that attended National Democratic Institute- or International Republican Institute-sponsored meetings aimed at strengthening political parties and their electoral skills.[20] The PJD maintains links with the US programmes on training and technical support for local NGOs. US officials have been very careful to treat other Moroccan political parties and the PJD equally, an echo of the old idea that the best way to act is to help foster a secular alternative to Islamist parties. In May 2006, the US State Department's International Visitor's Programme sponsored a visit of the PJD leader, Saad Eddine Othmani, to Washington. He held a conference at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Abdelsalam Yasin made several private visits to the USA in 2005–2006. Making contacts with individuals is a way to circumscribe relations with Islamism as a social movement, and US officials are careful not to overemphasize their contacts with the PJD, preferring a gradualist approach.

In Egypt, the equation is different and the window of opportunity is even narrower, even as the challenges are seen as more acute. The regime opened up under strong pressure in 2004–2005 but, compared to Morocco, it has remained ossified and is less able to benefit from reforms and less able to surf the wave of change in order to reinforce its control of a stabilized polity. In fact, the opposite is taking place. The regime has less capability to transform or reform itself than Morocco. The 'new generation' thematic (*al-jil al-jadid*) is just a veil to open the avenues of power to Gamal Mubarak, the son of the current president, rather than a whole restructuring of power relations aimed at strengthening the regime. The regime has been more eager to resort to repression in order to contain societal mobilization or political contestation, especially since the reversal of the tide in democracy promotion (Droz-Vincent, 2009). Egypt has remained a close ally of the USA and a beneficiary of a large amount of US military and economic aid – USD 490 million in ESF, USD 1,287 million in FMF and USD 1,200 million in IMET in fiscal year 2006. Even though President Mubarak opposed the Iraq war, Egypt provided logistical help and is a very useful partner to help defuse tension over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, especially in Gaza after the Israeli withdrawal and the rise of Hamas at the helm of the Palestinian Authority.

It is difficult for the USA to engage with groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, which is officially banned in Egypt although they do have 'independent' members of parliament – a situation quite different from that of the PJD in Morocco. The regime plays this card regularly, recalling the Algerian precedent and the risk of the one man, one vote, one time equation. At the same time, however, there is a

strong conviction in the US State Department that by linking US aid to Egypt to democratization benchmarks,[21] there will be a healthy opening up of the ossified Egyptian regime, which otherwise may become a threat to itself and to US interests in the Middle East. Hence, seminars have taken place in the State Department and in the intelligence community in order to understand the nature of the Muslim Brotherhood – as a political actor or a social movement, and one with veiled intentions or a convert to democracy.[22]

US policy is a very cautious policy of trying not to openly antagonize the Egyptian regime. The USA respects the Egyptian Government's desire not to allow illegal organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood to participate in US-sponsored reform. Even NGOs must ensure that no Muslim Brothers attend their seminars or training programmes.[23] Some contacts with the Muslim Brotherhood took place indirectly, [24] but these caused controversy when publicized. Care should be taken when assessing these initiatives. Rumours of informal contacts are very far from a clear policy formulation and do not fundamentally depart from the cautious US line.

5. High stakes in a changing Lebanon: Shia Islamists in a 're-democratized' confessional Lebanon

The Lebanese picture is replete with contradictions, offering some room for manoeuvre for US democracy promoters, but at the same time giving way to dangerous deadlock. Lebanon was not a priority in 2002–2005, except for a few neo-conservatives arguing, without much influence inside the Bush Administration, for a 'free Lebanon' – a proactive US policy to free Lebanon from the Syrian presence or occupation. Internal Lebanese resentment among the Maronite constituency mounted in the 1990s and exploded in a wide ranging civic mobilization after the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri in Beirut in February 2005. A new international consensus between France and the USA – a radical reversal in mutual relations after the debate on Iraq in the United Nations Security Council in 2003 – acted as an external umbrella to protect the Lebanese social mobilization. It crystallized around a compromise following the French proposal 'to do something for Lebanon', with the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 1559 on 2 September 2004.

Lebanon came to be integrated into the US democracy promotion project, new epigrams were used celebrating the Lebanese movement or 'Cedar revolution' – colours and symbols are essential to frame democratization movements and connect them with the media and international trends, as was the case in Ukraine and Georgia – and references were made to a Lebanese democratic transition. This came just at a time when the USA was in great need of momentum for its democracy promotion policy in the Middle East. The democracy promotion policy became the rationale

in US official rhetoric after other justifications for the Iraq invasion collapsed and proved gross manipulations. There was a redirection of the 'mission' to the cause of building an Iraqi democracy that would lead to democratization in the Middle East, and the forward strategy of freedom was locked into difficulties on the ground in 2005, such as the slow rhythm of Saudi opening up of municipal elections and the reluctance of the Egyptian regime to open up the electoral arena and the rise of the Muslim Brothers in Egyptian parliamentary elections. Democratization was advancing in Iraq – this was the widespread perception of decisionmakers around Condoleezza Rice and her deputy in Iraq, Robert Blackwill, but at a very slow pace, as exemplified by the difficult writing of the Constitution in the summer of 2005 and the sharp rise of the Sadrist movement inside the Shia United Iraqi Alliance in the December parliamentary elections. Hence, Lebanon came as a positive surprise – a kind of 'gift of destiny' heralding the beginning of democratic change in the Middle East. The USA invested great hopes in Lebanon, which became a pivotal case.

For US decisionmakers, the window of opportunity was seen as wider in Lebanon than in Egypt or even Morocco. They therefore began to bet heavily on the Lebanese 'case' and on the government of Saad Hariri-Fuad Siniora. As well as epitomizing democratization in the Middle East, Lebanese developments also weakened Syria and, for some US decisionmakers, might hasten change in the Syrian regime after the forced withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. They also addressed the Hezbollah problem, which, despite its transformation in the 1990s, was still considered to be a terrorist organization. The entry of Hezbollah into the formal political process in the 1990s did not extinguish US suspicions. Hezbollah leaders separated their political activities from what they described as 'legitimate resistance against Israeli occupation',[25] but Hezbollah positioned itself as a staunch opponent – more rhetorical than real – to the US policy and as a deadly foe to Israel. Hence, the stakes were high in Lebanon for US decisionmakers, reinforcing their strong will to move events forward even after they went from disillusion to delusion on the Lebanese 'front'.

The problem was a collision between two trends. On the one hand, there was the comfortable rationale in Washington that sees a quick rebuilding of a Lebanese democracy friendly to US interests and able to address Hezbollah's disarmament – an essential precondition added by the USA to cooperation with the French in forging Security Council resolution 1559. On the other hand was Lebanese internal political dynamics, especially the heightened confessionalism that broke up the Lebanese civic mobilization of February to April 2005 into its sectarian parts. Hezbollah placed itself in the position of a cornerstone in the Lebanese political game

with its entry into the Siniora government. The two trends collided and blocked all developments in Lebanon, and the US embassy in Beirut, the State Department and even Secretary of State Rice kept trying to put the process back on track in a way that fitted the official US rationale, trying to square the circle and pushing, or 'advising', the reluctant Siniora government to move forward. US foreign policy in Lebanon has made use of its large window of opportunity, as exemplified by the fact that Hassan Nasrallah dubbed Siniora 'the lackey of Jeffrey Feltman', the US ambassador in Lebanon, but the USA has encountered innumerable strains. Developments on the ground have kept US decisionmakers at bay, as illustrated for instance by the careful wording of statements by Rice when Hezbollah entered the government after the 2005 elections. She stopped branding Hezbollah a terrorist organization and shifted to another argument: a government must apply the rule of law by disarming militias on its territory.

The collision between internal and external trends blocked internal developments and built two warring camps in 2006–2007: the 14 March camp, a Sunni-Druze alliance along with some Christians, versus Hezbollah and its allies (other Christians). This was not a deliberate move. It was a 'negative side-effect', to borrow an expression from the sociological vocabulary. The two camps are identified by opposing views on the disarmament of Hezbollah, the tribunal to try those responsible for the assassination of Hariri, Hezbollah's regional alliances with Syria and Iran, the so-called moderate versus radicals regional debate, external support from France and the USA, the regional Shia 'crescent' versus Sunni powers and essential internal Lebanese elements such as the electoral law. As a result, the potential for internal deadlock increased, and US foreign policy was trying to find a way out.

The deadlock became so stark that the USA began to bet on another attitude: that Israel might 'finish the job' and eliminate Hezbollah, given an 'orange' or 'green' light from the USA in the war of the summer of 2006. The USA was ambivalent at first, demonstrated by its attitude before voting on Security Council resolution 1701, banking on a swift Israeli victory over Hezbollah. Since then, US democracy promotion in Lebanon, that is, US support to the Sionira government and the Hariri coalition, has lost much of its room for manoeuvre. The USA is trying to reinforce the Lebanese Government, but a Lebanese Government will only be able to function if it includes all actors, and will not be able to take the US side in a so-called struggle of moderates against extremists, especially when it comes to Hezbollah, which the US Government considers to be a threat to the USA, according to the July 2007 NIE. The whole US project in Lebanon is a shambles, and tensions on the Lebanese political scene regularly verge on civil war.

6. The core of the problem: The USA deep inside the Middle East

US policies towards Islamists have evolved since the 1990s. At the beginning of the 1990s, Islamism was an emergent force that was challenging the equilibrium between the incumbent regimes and the new US hegemony. During the 1990s, Islamism positioned itself, or was increasingly seen in the USA, as a central challenger. After 11 September 2001, Islamism was not just a stakeholder among other actors that US officials judged using objective criteria – claims of political moderation, and attitudes to violence, pluralism, women and minorities – and then engaged with or contained. Islamism may pose a radical challenge to US interests and some Islamist splinters may represent a direct terrorist threat to US territory and the US social fabric. Hence, US policies towards Islamism bear the influence of a global labelling, equating Islamism with terrorism or with an emerging threat. At the same time, however, a flurry of 'encounters' between US policies and Islamist dynamics were taking place on the ground. The process may be summarized as follows: after 11 September, US policies raised the stakes associated with political Islam to a level unknown before, but they have been forced to adjust by the ensuing difficulties on the ground. This process is indicative of a gradual and difficult adjustment of US policy towards Islamism – a vexed problem because it reflects the fluidity of a destabilized Middle East, as the USA is deeply involved in this area.

Islamism as a transnational movement and the USA deep in the Middle East

Islamism has internal, social roots – an element often neglected in many foreign analyses but which must be brought back into the equation. Islamism has its roots in societal dynamics, hence the characterization of Islamism as a social movement. Islamism has positioned itself as the only instrument of change in the autocratic Middle Eastern countries. While being against modernity, Islamism enhances social change; while favouring regressive prescriptions for women, in terms of clothing and social seclusion, it might promote them as actors; while not being democrats, their programme contains many of the democratic tenets and much of the content espoused by the secular opposition. The issues the Islamist groups are arguing for – with slogans such as 'Islam is the solution' (Islam huwa al-hall) and 'the sharia should be the only source of law' – reflect the collapse and the enduring failures and compromises of the secular parties and the absence of credible alternatives. Islamist parties also appeal to Middle East societies because of Islamic law as a rule-of-law system. These factors are at the core of the mobilization capabilities of Islamist mass movements.

Islamism also has a transnational component – hence, a given Islamist movement is not a monolith but is composed of tendencies, generations and wings. Its 'essence' may change over time. The same holds true for the Iranian regime. Islamist movements have a transnational component, either ideological or organizational. The transnational dimension of Islamism basically entails a political project to reunite the Muslim *umma*. It is most effective in circulating books and ideas – Sayyid Qutb's books have been widely circulated beyond Egypt – and in finding safe havens against repression for activists – the Saudi role for the Muslim Brothers. Political Islam, however, has failed to reunite the Muslim *umma* and to fulfil its global agenda. National frameworks now shape Islamism, each polity with its own brand of Islamism with local or national aims. Islamist movements have nonetheless kept their transnational taint.

The Middle East is less permeable today than it was in the 1950s or 1960s, but more permeable to transnational influences. The systematic permeability channelled through Arab nationalism as embodied in the foreign policies of the major Arab states – Arab unity, Arab socialism, Nasserism and Baathism – has receded with the consolidation of authoritarian regimes. However, protracted conflicts with transnational reverberations along with a religious (Islamist) discourse are increasingly felt. They give new salience and substance to transnational currents and, in addition to Palestine, an old rallying theme. Iraq under occupation and US foreign policies have emerged as rallying cries for angry Arab publics. Context does matter. The war against the Taliban; the invasion of Iraq and the detrimental management of this country, from the looting after the fall of the regime to Abu Ghraib and the civil war in 2006–2007; the deterioration in the situation in the Palestinian territories; and the Bush Administration's close identification with the hard line Likud policy towards the Palestinian Authority have all led to a massive anti-US wave of feeling. Two positions the US Government adopted in 2006 were pivotal: the support it gave to Israel's attack on Lebanon and the harshly punitive moves against the elected Palestinian Legislative Council. The discussion of democracy in the Middle East is strongly tainted by condemnation of US policies: all US policies are interpreted as outright hypocrisy and are said to be moved by a hidden agenda. Any policy requires some degree of credibility and the lack of credibility leaves the USA at bay and elevates Islamism, with its populist discourse, as the most credible counterbalancing force.

Islamism has become more attractive in Middle Eastern societies. It plays on social mobilizations, either diffuse or organized, and on the broader sense of victimization or resentment among Middle East societies, which harbour an enormous sense of frustration, humiliation and injustice. US foreign policy does not create these feelings, but it helps to breed resentment, notwithstanding the amount of public

diplomacy. The perceptions of the USA in the Middle East are a function of policies, not of public diplomacy. US policies have been premised in Washington on the idea that they can strengthen moderates to combat extremists. Hamas is more popular than Fatah. In January 2006, Palestinians voted against Fatah for internal reasons (corruption and bad government), but also against it lining up with the USA on positions that did not bring any advance towards a genuine Palestinian state. Hezbollah is popular for similar reasons. The 'Arab street' is not convinced about the Iranian threat – due to Shia solidarity or to Iran's nuclear programme – proclaimed in the USA. Many people admire Hamas and Hezbollah, even though they use violence, because they are standing up to Israel and to the USA. The situation is viewed through this particular prism in the Middle East. Sharpened and one-sided visions of 'the other' have gained the upper hand.

The context is also weighing back on Islamist political movements. In a destabilized Middle East, transnational effects regain prominence and weight in Islamist groups. Islamist groups that had become much more pragmatic and cautious, that is, ensconced in national debates, have been pushed to take populist positions on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, on Hezbollah's stance in Lebanon and on US policy in the Middle East. (Many moderate Islamist groups have not seen the payback for their participation in internal political processes: the Muslim Brothers were repressed in Egypt after 2005 and the PJD was distanced in elections in 2007.) The same remark holds true for the Iranian regime, the foreign policy of which remains caught between a realist policy based on Iranian national interests; strong Iranian pride; a desire to be recognized, especially by the US hegemon, as a regional power; and Islamist transnational tendencies – the revolutionary project and the enduring clash with US power. In a destabilized Middle East, the transnational dimension of Islamist mass movements has gained precedence.

The limits of 'grand designs': The USA's restricted room for manoeuvre and Islamism

Islamism interacts with and often calls into question the whole US project in the Middle East, and the USA is deeply involved. The US conundrum is best exemplified by the fate of the US democracy promotion project. The backlash in expectations and the reversal of the tide in the US democracy promotion policy since 2006 are directly linked with Islamist dynamics. The US democracy promotion policy was tinged with optimism in 2004–2005. Mahmoud Abbas became president in a free and competitive election in the Palestinian territories. In Iraq, 8 million voters elected an interim assembly in January 2005. In Lebanon, thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of Beirut to demand the withdrawal of Syrian troops. In Saudi Arabia, the ruling family allowed partial elections to municipal councils, and in Egypt president

Mubarak agreed to amend the Constitution to allow more than one candidate to run in the presidential elections. Middle Eastern governments and Islamist movements alike were beginning to think that the USA was serious about trying to foster change in the Middle Eastern status quo and were afraid of the new US proactive role.

From US perspective, things went awry in 2005–2006. Islamists won numerous seats in the Saudi municipal elections – in a country viewed by numerous US decisionmakers as a 'special case', a traditional society not immediately prone to democratization. In Egypt, Mubarak's ruling NDP lost a significant number of seats to candidates from or allied to the Muslim Brotherhood. In Lebanon, US policy went from delusion to delusion as US officials witnessed an impressive electoral and political showing by Hezbollah, which was able to astutely navigate the Lebanese confessional quagmire. In Iraq, sectarian and confessional struggles took precedence over political processes as Shia movements, each bolstered by its own militia, dominated the parliament and, among the United Iraqi Alliance, the Sadrist movement took the largest number of seats in the December 2005 parliamentary elections.

In January 2006, the success of Hamas was a resounding shock in US decision-making circles. The Islamist advances in Egypt, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia acted as an accumulation of 'bad news' from the US point of view: the countries highlighted as successes of the forward strategy of freedom were now the subject of considerable concern or instability. The victory of Hamas had a trigger effect, fostering a backward re-reading of previous developments in the Middle East and the conclusion that things had gone awry. The policy of spreading democracy was sold as a strategic objective, but led to the victory of forces hostile to the USA. The tepid pressure on autocratic allies to democratize disappeared in part as a result of the chill the USA felt from the emerging Islamist movements.

The Arab regimes also played on this argument and well understood the US shift in democracy promotion. They harnessed the fears of Islamist-inspired terrorism and instability to justify their exclusive rule and their resilience to external pressures for reform. The Egyptian regime understood the US U-turn. The Mubarak regime locked down the succession process and cracked down on those seen as its main opponents – the Muslim Brotherhood. Saudi Arabia, which came to be understood after 11 September 2001 through the lense of state-sponsored Islamism or jihadism, has returned to its more 'normal' position as a 'special case' in official US eyes. The image of Saudi Arabia had been severely damaged in Congress, where hearings recalled the double or dangerous game played by some Saudi nationals and their financial links through familial networks and private donations with jihadist groups. In decision-making circles, however, the time for 'Saudi bashing' is over. Confidence may not have recovered to its highest point, when in the 1990s Prince Bandar, the

Saudi ambassador, was a true insider in the US system, but US officials have credited Saudi Arabian rulers with seriousness in combating terrorism.[26]

The vexed question for US policy – whether the USA should pressure Arab governments to open up their political systems when Islamists, the most popular opposition forces in Arab polities, stand to benefit from the process – has been answered in the negative. The Islamist subtext dominates. This is the 'backlash' argument, in which the rationale has shifted from hedging against the Islamist risk by betting on a democratic sweep in the Middle East (despite the bad image of Islamist movements in the USA and the poor confidence the USA had in them) to what has increasingly been called, since the Hamas victory, the containment of Islamism.[27] The question that was still valid in 2005 – how to build a sustainable US policy that requires a balance between conflicting interests and minimizes the risks of Islamists coming to power – is no longer on the agenda. The balance tilted in 2006. Containment of Islamism has gained prominence over any balancing strategy. The change in US minds has been felt in the Middle East. During the visit to the Middle East by President Bush in June 2008, democracy promotion was the third priority after Israeli-Palestinian peace (the Annapolis process) and regional security. Bush delivered a speech on democracy in Abu Dhabi in front of business and tribal elites but the rhetoric was toned down, like the means allotted to democracy promotion and the transformational impetus on the ground. US officials have branded little Gulf emirates as successes without taking a close look at these small, aristocratic sheikhdoms – their only remaining role models. In the USA, extreme aversion to the risks inherent in democracy promotion has become the rule. As a corollary, the scale factor is playing a considerable role in the choices made in democracy promotion. The USA has engaged Islamists in Morocco or Yemen, where the National Democratic Institute. helped to forge a formal alliance between Islah and the Yemeni Socialist Party. (Yacoubian, 2007), but the USA has prioritized security or strategic considerations over democracy in pivotal countries such as Egypt.

Paradoxically, the US encounter with political Islam has taken place in a specific new case, in an open context stabilized after a civil war – Iraq. The USA has been cooperating with Shia Islamists in Iraq since 2004, and increasingly with Sunni Islamists since the summer of 2005 in a relatively successful attempt to reintegrate Sunnis into Iraqi political processes. This is treated as a special case.[28] In Iraq, US decisionmakers were hoping in 2003 that 'moderate Muslims', which were not defined, but probably means secular and Western-oriented Muslims, were 'a silent majority' to develop as Saddam Hussein's regime lost its grip. Paul Wolfowitz made reference to them as 'the missing link'. Neo-conservative and Pentagon decisionmakers put faith in Ahmed Chalabi, considered to be a secular, liberal Shia but who became a faithful Shia. Rice and Robert Blackwill, embraced Ayad Allawi as Iraqi Primer

Minister, a former Baathist and a secular politician. After the January 2005 Iraqi elections, however, US decision-makers worked with 'pure' Shia Islamists and Sunni politicians close to the Iraqi Muslim Brothers.

Is a fragmented policy a problem or indicative of the stirrings of a new assessment?

The end result is a fragmented US policy. Evolutions are still in progress amid the difficulties and have not crystallized into a clear-cut policy.[29] The policy concerning Islamism is therefore the result of policy struggles among contending factions in the US system, each with its own agenda. The complexity and multiple points of entry that define the US policy system make it possible, or even likely, that there will be competing strands of policy at work within the policy apparatus at any given time. A close reading may discern some new patterns in the US struggle towards a more discerning policy towards Islamism, bequeathed to the Obama Administration. Political Islam is not just a specific file for area specialists to deal with. Nor is it just a new global and straightforward enemy. It criss-crosses numerous US projects and interests in the Middle East.[30]

First, democracy promotion, the flagship of the Bush Administration, remains seriously shattered by the Islamist problem. For the time being, the conundrum for US democracy promotion policy, especially when democracy promotion is equated with free elections, is that people may well be voting against something and this may benefit Islamists. In the present context, to stop Islamists is to stop encouraging the ballot box. The Obama Administration is not tainted with the same ideological democracy promotion project as the Bush Administration. President Obama is forced to manage the resulting Middle East quagmire, and democracy promotion, perhaps in a longer term and less coercive manner, remains a political imperative. US policymaking circles are less divided between realists and idealists and are less prone to follow the realist argument that argues that the conduct of foreign policy and the pursuit of idealistic aims, such as democratization, are two separate domains that should not be mixed.[31] The so-called democratic deficit in the Middle East continues to be regarded as a security problem, even if its urgency may be foreshadowed by more realist considerations – finding a way out of Iraq and managing the Afghan quagmire. Even if the USA were tempted to return to the realist policy, that framework is no longer available in a changed Middle East.

Second, US policy in the Middle East has shifted from trying to transform the Middle East to trying to extricate itself from a regional quagmire – first Iraq and then Afghanistan being the essential problem for the Obama Administration. In 2005–2008, the USA was absorbed in a paramount policy objective – to find a way

to withdraw from Iraq without leaving a 'failed state' behind. All other objectives were subsumed under this one, which required the cooperation of close Arab allies such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt. In this context, the 'windows of opportunity' do not retain the same importance for the US foreign policy system, even if they remain acute and afloat. The latest occurrences include the invitation issued to 11 Muslim Brotherhood parliamentarians to attend the Cairo speech given by President Obama in June 2009, the subtle reorientation of the US vision of Hamas, and new Quartet preconditions indicating that discussions with Hamas are a worthwhile aim and that the idea of transforming Islamist movements by their inclusion, or the inclusion of their non-violent element, in political processes is not rejected.[32] As the 2008 US presidential campaign evolved, the occultation of the Iraqi thematic in the debate in a bipartisan way clearly showed a recognition that extrication – in the first sense troop withdrawals from Iraq – is not synonymous with isolationism. There is an understanding that the steps undertaken by the Bush Administration, on al-Qaeda and the Taliban, the global war on terror and lumping this together with Iraq, Iran and Syria, led to a campaign with too global a focus, which in turn has led to US entanglement in the Middle East. Extrication is understood in US decision-making circles to mean a US responsibility to maintain order, hence the continuing salience of Islamist political movements.

Third, the conjunction of the two above points does not mean that the advocates of 'thick' interpretations'[33] of political Islam – especially advocates of a differentiation between, on the one hand, political movements that have renounced violence and are playing democratic games and, on the other hand, jihadist actors – have got the upper hand in US decision-making circles. Ambivalence remains the rule, but not in the Bush sense. It does not come from an ability to gloss over reality, but from a difficulty in understanding that, unwillingly, the US stance of being 'deep in the Middle East' breeds negative reactions, and that Islamism is also representative of this context. All Islamist movements are opposed, at least rhetorically for the moderates, to key aspects of US foreign policy: US support for Israel, the US occupation of Iraq and the US military presence in the Gulf. Those who do not like the USA in the Middle East or oppose everything it is doing there, however, do not support direct attack. Even for those who like certain aspects of al-Qaeda, most of this is related to the 'cognitive shortcut': 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend', and only a small percentage agrees with al-Qaeda's methods. US decisionmakers have difficulties in understanding the contradictory or elusive reactions coming from the Middle East, related to the destabilized context, of which Islamist mass movements are a product. US ambivalence is mirrored by the same ambivalence from the main forces of change – Islamist mass movements.

Middle Eastern societies are the key to understanding Islamist mobilization capabilities. The Obama Administration has engaged in new diplomatic openings (the Ankara discourse, the Cairo discourse and an endeavour to make things move in Palestine using his envoy, George Mitchell) with great symbolic resonance that is quite different from the manipulative public diplomacy favoured by the Bush Administration. In one way or another, however, US policies remain premised on the idea of playing on civil societies that are, according to this view, yearning for freedom. The main problem for this popular idea is that the USA holds a Gramscian view of civil society: that control of civil society is a way to control the state.[34] The problem is that societal dynamics are not so conducive to external manipulation. Civil society is conceived as a panacea, something that will put right all troubles. It is one thing to say that, according to political philosophy, people are yearning for freedom, but how to build democracies is another problem – and the related question of their relation with US interests in the Middle East also enters the picture. The messianic view of democracy betting on long-term effects reaches clear limits because the deep US involvement in the Middle East undermines pro-democratic forces in the short term.

Fourth, the problem becomes not so much the US difficulty in discovering a policy towards Islamism, because political Islam is not a monolith and encompasses very different configurations. It is a difficulty best demonstrated by looking at shifts in policy over time in a single case, rather than policy towards the whole region. It is good news that the Obama Administration is a departure from the Washington politics of intolerance of nuance and ambiguities, but US policy finds it difficult to depart from rigidities. For instance, the problem of Hamas changed radically in 2006 when Hamas came to power in the Palestinian Authority and *ipso facto* became part of the Palestinian solution, whereas in the past Hamas had been a borderline opposition. At the same time, US inconsistency reached its peak, with US support for president Abbas over Prime Minister Haniyyeh – whereas a few years before it had favoured the Prime Minister against the president, Yasser Arafat, and directed sanctions at Hamas. After 2006, the USA undermined a Saudi-brokered national unity agreement between Fatah and Hamas and there were rumours of US intervention to support an anti-Hamas coup. The US system has encountered huge difficulties in trying to adapt itself in a straightforward way to the new Palestinian configuration, betting on an impossible return to an old situation that no longer exists. Change in US policies towards political Islam will therefore be incremental.

Endnotes

[1] These attempts are now called blowbacks, a CIA metaphor to describe the unintended consequences of the US government's international activities – in the present case the CIA's role in promoting the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan. See Johnson, Chalmers in *The Nation*, 15 October 2001. See also Brzezinski (1983).

[2] Leveau, interview on the French radio programme, France Culture, on 'The US and Islamism', 2 July 1993.

[3] Gerges, F., 'The Clinton Approach to Political Islam: Rhetoric vs. Realities', Council on Foreign Relations, 1998.

[4] See Gerges (1999) and do Céu-Pinto (1999).

[5] See Haddad's chapter in Lesch (2003).

[6] See the important meeting convened by M. Indyk for the Washington Institute on Near East Policy, Islam and the US: Challenges for the 1990s, 27 April 1992.

[7] On the period of Arab nationalism see the influential book Halpern (1963), a study commissioned by the Rand Corporation.

[8] Perceptions matter in international relations: see Jervis (1976).

[9] The rhetoric of these movements may be flamboyant, especially in their condemnation of US actions in Palestine or US interventions in Iraq or in the War on Terror, but they are following more 'national objectives'.

[10] The idea of finding moderates is becoming increasingly marginalized and being replaced by a heightened concern with Islamic terrorism.

[11] See the report of the Senate Intelligence Committee, 'Violent Islamist Extremism, the Internet and the Homegrown Terrorist Threat', July 2008, where the accent is on ideological terrorism being a direct reflection 'of the violent Islamist ideology' (p 11).

[12] The expression is borrowed from Galtung (1990). For another point of view see Hoffmann (1968).

[13] See the criticism of the Bush doctrine in Gordon (2006).

[14] See the debate inside the US Administration in 1990–91 on its stance towards Iraq.

[15] The essential feature for democracy promotion is the reorientation, restructuring and reinforcement of the democracy promotion apparatus (internal institutional impetus is essential to put in motion the system and reorient the diplomatic apparatus towards democracy promotion). The three main tools are Middle East free trade agreements (the US views free trade agreements as a way to foster economic growth

and to encourage the promotion of much-needed reforms which would help to curb extremism), the Middle East Partnership Initiative (the brainchild of former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, E Cheney, daughter of the then Vice-President) and the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (through the G-8).

[16] Among numerous reports, see those commissioned by the Council on Foreign Relations, and the changing focus between the 2002 report directed by Madeleine Albright and Bronislaw Geremek and the June 2005 report 'In Support of Democracy'. Islamist movements have re-entered the picture in the second report.

[17] The same vision is reflected in the address by US Secretary of State Colin Powell to the Heritage Foundation on 12 December 2002, announcing the launch of MEPI. In answer to the Islamist problem, 'a way has to be found. You can have a strong commitment to religion. We do. Most democratic nations have a faith-based aspect to them'.

[18] For instance, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission dealt with the human rights abuses during the 43 years of Muhammad VI's father and grandfather. It discovered what had happened to many of the people who disappeared and offered compensation, but did not name the people responsible and ended without an apology. Furthermore, the same practices are being used nowadays against the Islamists.

[19] NDI began working in 1993 and established its field office in Morocco in 2001. IRI began working in 1997 and opened its field office in 2004.

[20] Discussions in Congress to ensure that US foreign assistance for Egypt in fiscal year 2007 is used appropriately to promote reforms do not automatically reverberate on a moderate vision of the Muslim Brothers' role, since there is a profound distrust of Islamist actors. Events in Algeria have been an enduring prism for the USA in terms of how it looks at Islamist movements.

[21] See Leiken and Brooke (2007). The published article is the available part of a classified report commissioned by the National Intelligence Committee and of meetings that took place on the Muslim Brothers (with R Leiken of the Nixon Center and H Fradkin from the Hudson Institute) in June 2007 under the USA State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research.

[22] The Egyptian Government is highly sensitive about the role of external non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In 2005 the MEPI began distributing grants directly to local NGOs in Egypt, without the approval of the Egyptian Government, to support secular politicians and human rights groups. In June 2006 the Egyptian Government accused the head of the IRI's local office of meddling in Egyptian internal affairs and demanded that IRI temporarily halt its activities.

[23] In April 2007, some members of Congress attended a reception with representatives of the Muslim Brothers at the residence of the US ambassador in Cairo. A precedent not repeated. Muslim Brothers attended a seminar held in Cairo on 27 to 29 May 2008 convened with the help of USIP and Georgetown University.

[24] At the same time, Hezbollah's policy towards Israel seems to follow red lines, even deterrence rules, a logic of how far it will extend – the Summer 2006 conflagration came as a surprise to Hezbollah.

[25] Saudi financial links with Sunni jihadists seem to have remained active at a private level and there are rumours that official Saudi money has been funding jihadist groups, for instance jihadist Sunnis from the north of Lebanon since 2007, to build a 'Sunni Hezbollah' aimed at counterbalancing the influence of Hezbollah in Lebanon. US decisionmakers have turned a blind eye to these 'low-level' activities, which are sometimes seen as beneficial to US interests in the regional struggle between 'moderates' and 'extremists' such as Hezbollah, Hamas, Iran, Syria, and so on.

[26] The White House Press Secretary, Scott McClellan, stated in September 2005 that candidates running under the Hamas banner were 'business professionals' concerned with quality of life issues and not engaged in terrorism. The White House discourse changed after January 2006.

[27] This point is addressed by the neo-conservative pundit in Gerecht (2004). See also Fuller (2003) and Galbraith (2005).

[28] See the analytical paper by Heydemann (2007).

[29] See a new wave of publications, as exemplified by Cofman Wittes (2008) and Moussalli (2008).

[30] See Hoffmann (1981) and Carothers (2004).

[31] Interview with President Obama in NPR, 6 January 2009.

[32] See Geertz's definition of the thick description (1973).

[33] This was analysed in the 1930s, in a quite different context, by Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks*.

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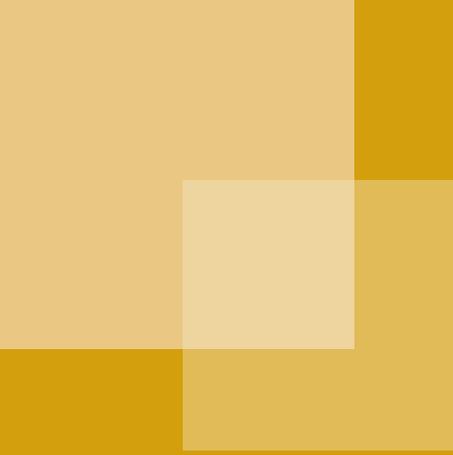
Chapter 7

EU policy and Islamist movements: Constructive ambiguities or alibis?
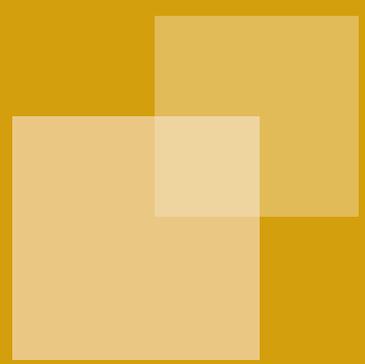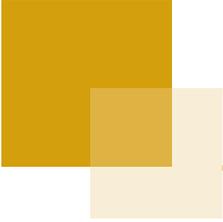
Chapter 7

Rosa Balfour and Battistina Cugusi *

EU policy and Islamist movements: Constructive ambiguities or alibis?

1. Introduction: The contours of EU policies on Islamist movements and parties

The European Union (EU) does not have a collective policy towards Islamist movements and parties. European positions towards such political actors need to be viewed through different lenses. First, they need to be understood in the light of EU policies in support of political reform, human rights promotion and democratization, supposedly key areas developed through the political chapter of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), which is also known as the Barcelona Process, and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Islamist movements and parties have also benefited from political reform processes in some countries in the Middle East and North Africa, most notably in Morocco.

The second area of activity relates more closely to the 'inter-cultural' and 'inter-faith' dialogue that the EU has developed through the third chapter of the EMP – as well as through other initiatives, although these have been limited in scope.

In the absence of a clearly defined policy towards Islamist parties or movements, a country-by-country analysis of these two policy fields sheds light on the different

positions that the EU and its member states have developed by default to deal with Islamist political actors such as the Party of Justice and Development (PJD) in Morocco, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. These positions depend heavily on the role the Islamist political actors play in their domestic arenas.

Contextual factors have heavily influenced EU positions. Alongside the inevitable weight of Arab-Israeli relations and the security situation in the region, broader considerations related to the nature of the parties or movements and their role in domestic political dynamics are conditioned by the EU's relations with the governments in the country and by the importance that individual countries have in the region or in Europe.

Other external constraints on the development of EU positions include pressure from the USA, which remains the principle 'policy shaper' in the Middle East, and which, in this field in particular, has dominated the agenda – especially through its positions on Hamas.

The single most important factor within the EU hindering the development of a common policy towards Islamist movements and parties is tied to a set of differences between the member states, notwithstanding the effort to develop collective policies through the EMP since its launch in 1995. On one level, the traditional relations of each member state with the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean are influenced by colonial histories and legacies, the roles of individual countries in the region, political and trade ties and migration patterns. On another level, there are different national sensitivities on issues that have a direct bearing on the debate over engaging with Islamist movements, such as the nature of religion-based parties and movements, the treatment of women and security policies – especially the fight against terrorism. These differences run deep within the EU member states and their political parties, as is illustrated by the diversity of views expressed in the European Parliament.

2. The search for an EU policy on engaging with Islamists

How to engage with Islamists remains a heavily debated issue in Brussels. In 2005 the EU seemed to be heading towards a policy shift, but this did not take place due to an unwillingness to address the constraints outlined above. The rhetoric on 'regime change' and the 'forward strategy of freedom' developed by the Administration of US President George W. Bush, particularly in the run-up to the military intervention in Iraq, posed a number of challenges to the EU's human rights and democracy promotion policies, and to the ways in which these declared aims were to address

the dynamics of political opposition in Morocco, Egypt and Lebanon. The EU member states were deeply divided over Iraq and concerned about its impact on EU relations with the Arab world, and the interventionist dimension of the Bush strategy contrasted sharply with the EU's approach based on partnership with third countries.

In parallel, in 2005, in the months preceding the 10th anniversary of the EMP, the EU began a rethink of the merits and failures of the Barcelona Process, involving national governments as well as the networks of think tanks and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that participated in the EMP. Needless to say, the absence of political reform in North Africa and the Middle East, set out in the influential Arab Human Development Reports, was highlighted as one of the factors hindering development in the region as a whole.

Elements of these debates trickled into the policy documents that the EU prepared in the run-up to the 10th Barcelona conference, and contributed, among other things, to a soul-searching exercise within the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on rethinking relations with Islamist movements and parties (European Commission, 2005; EuroMeSCO, 2005a, EuroMeSCO, 2005b).

One response was to be found in the field of the promotion of human rights and political reform. The Council's 2004 'Strategic partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East' contained two innovations: that political reform could not be imported from abroad and thus required local 'ownership', and that the EU should broaden its range of interlocutors and 'engage with non-violent political organizations committed to non-violent and democratic means' as well as civil society organizations (European Council, 2004). Successive EU positions also referred to the commitments to the principles of democratic and human rights made by the Arab countries in the Tunis Declaration of 2004.

In April 2005, EU foreign ministers, for the first and only time, held an informal debate on how to engage with Islamist actors on the margins of a European Council meeting in Luxembourg.[1] The issue was again debated by academics, experts and French and British diplomats at a conference held in Paris in June 2005, at which a growing academic consensus emerged on the need to involve a broader range of interlocutors from the South Mediterranean region, including Islamists (Bright, 2006). There is evidence that similar meetings took place in France. The results showed a certain cleavage between the positions of diplomats and those of researchers, with the former less inclined to establish contacts with illegal movements and parties and the latter strongly in favour of dialogue over isolation.[2]

This debate struggled to be translated into any official strategy. Whereas the post-11 September 2001 discussions on the limits of political reform efforts produced some attempts to sharpen the EU toolbox for human rights and democracy promotion, political Islam remained on the periphery of such debates – the actor that was never mentioned. The Action Plans developed within the framework of the ENP, jointly negotiated with Morocco, Egypt and Lebanon, illustrate the concrete aims of EU policy towards these countries but do not contain any explicit reference to political actors or movements in the three countries. Nor do they highlight any Islamist civil society organization there, except for vague mentions of aims to 'strengthen participation in political life' and 'strengthen people to people contacts'. The application of ENP aims fell short even of the stated intentions of the Strategic Partnership produced by the European Council (European Commission, 2004; European Commission, 2007a; European Commission, 2007b).

On the domestic EU front, the events of 11 September 2001 and the terrorist attacks in Madrid and London, as well as other episodes signalling growing difficulties in relations with Muslim communities, all played an important part in stimulating the increase in activities related to an 'intercultural dialogue' within the Euro-Mediterranean space, including within European countries. In EU relations with the South Mediterranean, the third basket of the EMP was seen as the most adequate umbrella under which to promote this agenda, intended to foster greater 'mutual tolerance and cooperation', according to the stated objectives of the Barcelona Declaration. The third basket was reinforced during this period. At the insistence especially of Sweden and Spain, the so-called 2002 Valencia Action Plan of the EMP advocated a stronger emphasis on projects that would counter the 'clash of civilizations' mantra.[3] In 2003 the members of the EMP established the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation in Alexandria, Egypt, with the aim of promoting dialogue between cultures and civilizations by establishing a 'network of national networks'.

At the same time, however, potentially contrasting security objectives were also strengthened in the Valencia Action Plan, such as cooperation on migration management and in the fight against terrorism (Gillespie, 2003), which was a common concern north and south of the Mediterranean, both of which have been the victims of terrorist bombings. The priority accorded by the EU to cooperation on counterterrorism with the governments of the Southern Mediterranean is widely considered to be the main obstacle to the political reform and democratization policies created by the EMP and the ENP (Joffé, 2008).

3. The persistence of the fear of Islamism

The debate sketched out above has not been translated into any recognizable or official strategy towards Islamist groups in the framework of the EU's promotion of political reform. Reactions to realities on the ground played an important role in blocking any possible policy change. Under the British Presidency of the EU, during the second half of 2005, the EU tried to make its voice heard on the conduct of presidential and parliamentary elections in Egypt. However, the success of the Muslim Brotherhood, members of which had stood as independent candidates in some of the parliamentary seats, and the ensuing victory of Hamas in the Palestinian elections held in January 2006 both contributed to a return to the EU's general policy of supporting the status quo in Egypt.

Even where the EU has developed positions on political reform in the region and on the treatment of the political opposition, it has limited its radar screen to secular groups rather than to those of religious inspiration, especially when these are subject to persecution by the government. In Egypt, the case of the secular and liberal opposition representative and former presidential candidate, Ayman Nour, who has been in jail since 2005, has been the object of foreign policy declarations, and has been raised bilaterally in meetings between ministers of EU member states and their Egyptian counterparts. The crackdown on the Islamist opposition, however, which, according to local and international human rights watchdogs, has increased since 2006, has not warranted any reaction on the part of the EU – either publicly or privately. In contrast to the authorities' repression of NGO activists, the reported 170 Muslim Brotherhood members held in administrative detention or in prison have not been the subject of any EU position. The 1990s witnessed similar, but fewer, episodes in which the EU would condemn the repression of individual secular political opponents and turn a blind eye to that of Islamists.[4] Even the European Parliament has failed to condemn the treatment of Islamists, even though it has been vocal in expressing its disapproval of the treatment of other issues such as female genital mutilation, the treatment of refugees and gay rights.[5]

Nonetheless, informal contacts have continued between some member states, often at a personal level through embassies, and representatives of Islamist groups. According to reports, British officials have established contacts with members of the Egyptian Parliament since September 2001, including with those close to the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as with Hezbollah in Lebanon (Bright, 2006). The same can be said about other member states, such as France and Germany (Schult and Holger, 2009).

The inconsistencies in EU policies when dealing with the persecution of members of the political opposition appear to have weakened the image and credibility of the EU in the region and its chances of defining itself as an actor pursuing 'different' strategies in the Middle East. According to surveys of the leaders of Islamist movements, the EU is seen as not living up to its rhetoric on political reform and human rights promotion, and the case of Hamas is seen as a powerful illustration of double standards.[6]

The ways in which external actors responded to Hamas's victory can be identified as the single largest cause of the halt to the debate that had been developing in the EU on engaging with Islamism, as well as the return to status quo policies coloured by informal contacts and the positions of individual member states towards individual countries. The international isolation of the party that had gained, through elections, a majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council had crucial repercussions for positions towards Egypt and Lebanon.

First, even if there were signs that the EU had been preparing for the election results (Dombey, 2006), it highlighted the ways in which EU policies were influenced by the USA and Israel, both of which put pressure on European capitals to ensure that Hamas stayed on the list of terrorist organizations (Agence France Presse, 2003), and, in the aftermath of the elections, that it would not be legitimized or benefit from EU support to the Palestinian population (Wallis, 2005; Schmid and Dombey, 2006). Germany, which was among the most sensitive to Tel Aviv's requests,[7] led the member states that were particularly insistent on tying recognition of Hamas with its respect of the three conditions.[8] These pressures overrode the softer positions initially expressed by other member states. The southern EU member states backed France's opposition to imposing sanctions on the government, calling for the decision of the majority of Palestinians to be respected (Agence France Presse, 2006).[9]

This policy choice regarding Hamas had consequences. Some EU member states were to regret the position taken,[10] as it weakened the EU's influence in the Quartet and vis-à-vis the Palestinians, helped strengthen the radical wing of Hamas and damaged the EU's reputation in the Arab world.[11] It also hampered the informal contacts that some EU member states had been building in the region. According to Alastair Crooke, a former British MI6 intermediary with militant groups who was withdrawn from Gaza allegedly amid Israeli protests that he was getting too close to Hamas, 'there is a widening gulf of understanding between the West and militant Islam'.[12]

In fact, despite the ban, contacts with Hamas, however informal and cautious, have been maintained over time, involving members of the European Parliament and

delegations from France, Italy and Norway. Hamas claims that there have been secret meetings with the EU and some of its member states (Klein, 2008; Retman, 2009). In May 2008, rumours about contacts between France and Hamas were confirmed – and then denied immediately afterwards – by the French Foreign Minister, Bernard Kouchner, who stated that the talks 'were about exploring the Hamas position on political issues' (Ganley, 2008). Italy has been one of the most active in this regard. Other EU member states maintain an informal 'focal point' with Hamas, with the aim of having a 'direct line' with the movement in case of emergency.[13]

The EU experience with Hamas has not been replicated with Hezbollah. Pressure from the USA to include the Lebanese political party on the list of terrorist organizations was resisted by the EU, in this case led by France which was keen to preserve its influence in the country. In contrast with Hamas, where it has been difficult to clarify the nature of the contacts, France, and others such as Italy and Spain, have established formal contacts with representatives of Hezbollah.[14]

The positions of Italy and Spain have been influenced by domestic political changes. The dialogue with Hezbollah, strictly linked with the responsibility assumed within UNIFIL, represented an invaluable opportunity for the Prodi and Zapatero governments to improve their reputation in the region after the US-oriented politics of the Berlusconi and Aznar governments. Both the Prodi and the Zapatero governments emphasized the importance of dialogue with Arab countries and the need to firmly distinguish between terrorism and Islam (Balfour et al., 2007; Hurtado de Ory, 2007; Aizpeolea, 2008). The military participation of some member states in the UNIFIL mission made them reluctant to voice any criticism of Hezbollah for fear of putting their troops stationed on the ground in danger.[15]

Hezbollah is not on the EU list of terrorist organizations. The matter is left in the hands of the member states. The European Commission has developed contacts with Hezbollah, although not of a high profile nature – at most at the level of the Head of Delegation. Only in cases in which representatives of Hezbollah have been in government positions has the EU entertained official contacts, such as in 2006 with the Minister of Energy and Water.

In contrast with the case of Hamas, the question of how to deal with Hezbollah did not even reach the discussion table at the EU, due to the expected divisions between member states on the treatment of the party.[16] The EU as a whole maintains a low profile, navigating through the ambiguities between formal constraints and justifications, and the realities on the ground. EU member states have thus 'agreed to disagree' over Hezbollah and have ensured that these differences are not discussed at the EU decision-making level. Such differences are further

highlighted by the debate in the European Parliament, where a cross-party and cross-country group has pushed – lobbied, according to many officials, by the USA and Israel – at least since 2005, for a resolution to include the whole Hezbollah organization, as opposed to some of its individual members, on the terrorist list (Goldirova, 2008).

On the other hand, in the present context of the potential opening up of relations with Syria, even the most cautious member states, such as the UK and the new central European countries, are unlikely to block informal contacts.[17] The lack of an EU position in this case gives the member states some flexibility in managing relations with Lebanon. The Lebanese elections of June 2009 confirm this picture. Officially, the EU will continue to develop relations with Lebanon as 'business as usual'. Unofficially, there is cautious optimism motivated by the way in which the elections were conducted, including Hezbollah's role in them, and Syria's apparent interest in improving relations with the EU and the USA as well as the change in US Administration.[18] Despite Lebanon's enduring fragility, these signs could tentatively help to create the conditions for a review of the position of the EU member states towards Hezbollah.

The case of Morocco has been far less controversial, even though it has not led to a particular shift in EU policy. This contrasts with the USA, which has developed a position that is far more open – at least to the main Islamist party – than its policy on Hamas would suggest. The integration of the PJD into, and its participation in Moroccan political life has enabled formal, although occasional and not structured, contacts between the PJD and representatives of EU member states, especially France and Spain (Boubekeur et al., 2006). Talks took place both locally and in Europe during the 2007 electoral campaign.[19]

It has been difficult to reach an agreement in the EU. Its caution has been motivated by a fear that behind the PJD's reformed discourse lies more extremist views, as well as of the party's relations with other Islamist organizations such as Justice and Charity and the Movement for Unity and Reform (MUR) – both of which lack legal recognition.[20] In addition, given the supposed EU policy of non-partisan engagement with third parties, the Commission would struggle to justify engaging with one party as opposed to another.[21]

What is significant, however, is that even in the case of Morocco, the country that is furthest away from the Middle East conflict, the debate on the role of and engagement with Islamist parties occurs only at the margins of political dialogue with the EU and at the levels of the Senior Officials' committee meetings or Association committee

meetings.[22] As in the case of Lebanon, some channels are also kept open by the presence of Islamists in local politics and in government.

In short, the EU as a whole has been shy of actively pursuing a strategy of Islamist engagement, and has made extremely poor efforts to identify and understand the political parties and organizations that exist in the three countries considered. Official explanations cite conditions such as respect for democratic principles, the rights of women, and so on, as a justification for this gap. On the other hand, the ambiguities that derive from the diverse situations in the three countries and the 'agreement to disagree' within the EU, and thus not develop a common position, has offered some freedom of manoeuvre to develop more informal contacts, mostly at the level of the member states.

4. Cooperation with Islamist movements through aid

The main sources of EU funding for the Mediterranean – the MEDA programme and, since 2007, the ENP Instrument – have devoted the largest share of funding to activities managed in partnership with the governments of third countries. Nonetheless, in recent years development aid and the many external assistance programmes of the EU have been considered a means to advance dialogue and mutual comprehension of Islamist movements and parties through operational and technical collaboration with the authorities or NGOs linked to them.[23] The EU has increasingly earmarked some of its funding for NGOs, although the selection process for projects still requires the approval of partner governments.

The MEDA Democracy Programme, and later the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), both provided tools to bypass government involvement and target local NGOs directly through 'micro-projects' managed by the European Commission Delegations in third countries. The current regulation governing the EIDHR also deleted the EU's requirement that NGOs possess a legal registration in their country. This would enable, at least in theory, the Commission to support NGOs that do not enjoy recognition from their governments.[24]

In practice, however, Islamist groups have been excluded from these initiatives. None of the NGOs that benefited from the funding of approximately EUR 1 million dedicated to strengthening NGO capacity with regard to human rights, freedom of expression, women's rights, children and prisoners in Morocco in 2005 was linked to pro-Islamic movements. A similar picture emerges from Egypt in 2005–2006, while in Lebanon the European Commission is required to allocate projects on a confessional and geographical basis, which also has political implications.[25]

Despite repeated signs that the EU wanted to broaden its range of interlocutors, political dialogue and cooperation have mainly concerned government representatives and a narrow range of NGOs. There is no evidence of the involvement of representatives of Islamist parties, even in those cases where they represent recognized opposition to government or where they are in local government. This partly reflects the fact that very few EU cooperation activities have involved political parties. Cooperation programmes in the political basket of the EMP and in the ENP have mainly targeted government officials and addressed areas of cooperation related to security matters, such as migration, justice and police cooperation.

With regard to the 'third basket' activities of the EMP, no significant engagement seems to have taken place with the actions undertaken by the Anna Lindh Foundation or other initiatives, such as the dialogue between cultures and civilizations, the Euro-Mediterranean non-governmental platform, or the Euro med youth platform, which aim to foster intercultural dialogue and promote understanding between the civil societies of the two shores of the Mediterranean. Moreover, when religion is at stake, activities have been mainly concentrated on interfaith dialogue as a way to promote common understanding and dialogue between the three main monotheistic religions of the area.

At the level of the EU member states, intercultural and interreligious dialogue has been one of the main frameworks for dealing with Islam. Spain has been among the most proactive in this sense. Intercultural dialogue has been placed at the centre of a national strategy to fight terrorism, promoted, among other things, by the launch of the 'Alliance of civilizations' and through analysis and research activities carried out by think tanks and foundations, including Casa Arabe, Fundación Tres Culturas and Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE).

Despite this, neither the EU nor Spain has paid enough attention to the interaction between religion and social and political structures. In this context, Germany represents a step forward, having implemented projects dealing with the organization of training programmes for Imams, fostering the role of mosques as intermediates in promoting local development and changes in social attitudes, such as a programme of integrated environmental management in Algeria implemented by the German International Cooperation Enterprise for Sustainable Development (GTZ).[26] France too has promoted projects of this kind in the framework of French bilateral cooperation with Morocco and Algeria.

EU member states justify their lack of involvement with Islamist civil society organizations by highlighting their poor understanding of internal dynamics, the risks linked to their involvement and their lack of experience in engaging with these

actors as some of the major constraints on developing dialogue and engagement. European foreign ministries consider the difficulty of choosing 'the right partners' to be one of the major constraints on engaging with Islamists. Few studies have been conducted to identify possible forms of engagement, but universal criteria are not likely to be found. In particular, donors lament the absence of criteria that would assure them that an organization is not affiliated with radical movements, and question how they can deal with those Islamic organizations most active in providing essential social services at the grass roots level, especially in the education and health sectors and in humanitarian projects, that at the same time maintain a paramilitary wing, as in the case of Hamas and Hezbollah.[27]

Because of their engagement at the social level, Islamist movements and parties can count on solid legitimacy and a large constituency of support in the population. Thus, donors are concerned that involving these actors in cooperation could have direct consequences for the internal affairs of beneficiary countries, strengthening the position of Islamist-affiliated organizations at the grass roots level and nurturing their legitimacy and capacity for influence. The latter aspect is perceived as being even more risky in the case of Hamas, which is believed to use its affiliated charities, committees and organizations as platforms for increasing its public support, recruiting new members and disseminating incitement against Israel.

At both the EU level and the EU member state level, when it comes to civil society organizations, religious affiliation is, in theory, not considered as a criterion for choosing the right partner or for financing projects. It is possible that projects directed at civil society organizations, especially those dealing with cross-cutting issues such as human rights, gender issues, the rule of law, and so on, have involved NGOs or charities linked to Islamist movements. At the same time, however, religious affiliation, in particular affiliation with an Islamist political party or movement, could be a criterion for exclusion. According to donors, and in the absence of comparable data across EU member states, it is highly likely that a project proposed by an NGO explicitly affiliated to an Islamist movement would not be financed.[28] Only in the case of Lebanon, due to its political organization as a communitarian state, has the European Commission been requested to seek a balance regarding the allocation of external assistance along confessional and geographical lines.

Nonetheless, the generally accepted – but not explicit – strategy is to target secular civil society organizations, notwithstanding their role in society and the ways in which they are representative of local civil society. This does not reflect 'naive blindness' (Berger, 2006: 14), but a pragmatic choice: secular organizations usually use the same vocabulary and take similar positions as the EU on delicate issues such as democracy, human rights, the empowerment of women, and so on.

In contrast with the EU, some of its member states have been active in developing contacts with Islamist organizations through round tables and seminars involving representatives of political Islam,[29] and in showing an interest in the search for less controversial forms of cooperation. In this regard, Germany has been among the most active, experimenting with cooperation with Islamist organizations in Mauritania, Yemen and Tajikistan, among others, which are considered less sensitive than those in the Middle East, relying on the political party foundations that are part of the German system of development cooperation but are non-governmental. Such foundations are freer to establish links with representatives of Islamist mass movements and parties through the organization of seminars, conferences or training programmes involving those actors, and also at a political level. Nonetheless, the ties between these foundations and German political parties make these efforts controversial in the domestic political sphere. The influence of Israel and the fear of accusations of anti-Semitism have 'burned', in the words of one interviewee, rapprochement initiatives with Islamist movements. In Germany, perhaps more than in other EU member states, the divisions in the political establishment are not just between parties but within them.[30]

5. Conclusions: Changes and continuities in EU policies towards Islamist movements

EU policy towards the South Mediterranean has been and remains a status quo policy, especially at the political level. The post-11 September 2001 debate, framed by regime change rhetoric, led to a series of discussions within the EU. This debate has influenced, thanks to the networks set in place by the EMP, a growing consensus within the academic community that the sources of Islamic-inspired terrorism can also be found in the authoritarian nature of most of the regimes in North Africa and the Middle East, and that EU policies towards the region have failed to address the core political problems that hamper cooperation between the two shores.

These contextual changes, coupled with internal EU pressures to improve relations with the southern shore, contributed to a rethink of the type of polices that the EU was developing and, most importantly, of the range of interlocutors with which it has engaged. However, this soul-searching exercise on how to engage with Islamism was short-lived. After the experience with Hamas, for different reasons, the EU member states tacitly agreed that it was more appropriate to deal with such matters at the level of the member states rather than through the EU.

Brussels abandoned the development of collective policies towards Islamist parties and movements in favour of a return to status quo policies based on cooperation with

South Mediterranean governments. These were mostly influenced by evaluations of the role of Islam in specific countries, leading to inconsistencies in the treatment of third countries that leave the EU subject to criticism, especially from observers from the southern shore.

Whereas the EU member states have developed collective policies towards these countries, even though bilateral priorities often remain of paramount importance, there has been a deliberate avoidance of following a concerted path with regard to relations with political Islam, even in the external cooperation projects from which Islamist organizations are by and large excluded. Alongside external pressures, differences between EU member states motivated by a range of different factors, have presented key obstacles.

The different positions of the member states are themselves due to a broad range of pragmatic, ideological and historical reasons, which vary from country to country. If the left-of-centre governments in Spain and Italy favoured dialogue with Islamist actors in the region, the same left-right distinction cannot be found in other member states. Nor are these positions framed in the 'political reform' agenda advocated most by the Scandinavian states, but picked up also by countries such as the UK and Germany. Rather, Italy and Spain follow a tradition of dialogue with Arab political actors, most notably with those in power. France's position can be understood in similar terms, but without the left-right distinction. Germany has emerged as a multifaceted actor. On the one hand, it has pioneered dialogue with individual Islamist representatives through political foundations and its development agency. On the other hand, it has been one of the member states most sensitive to pressure from Israel. Most of Germany's activities in this field have taken place in those countries least influenced by developments in the Middle East.

Fear of antagonizing Israel and of stepping out of line with US policy can be identified as constant factors inhibiting the development of an alternative position towards Islamist movements. The outcome has been an inability to develop a policy towards Islamist movements and parties as a whole, falling back on ad hoc positions related to strategies, aims and influence in specific countries – not unlike US policy. Some EU member states, and at times the European Commission, have managed to navigate through the ambiguities that result from the absence of a collective position, for instance by developing informal diplomatic contacts and, even in some cases, forms of dialogue.

Even if these ambiguities have allowed for a degree of flexibility, the most important outcomes have, by and large, weakened the EU's ability to influence political developments in North Africa and the Middle East, increasing the gap between

the EU's economic influence in the region and its political leverage. By avoiding the development of any consistent position on its stated aims of political reform, it has undermined its own credibility as an actor that could be an alternative to the USA. As a consequence, it has also undermined its ability to contribute to any peacebuilding efforts.

Endnotes

[1] This exercise has not been repeated. Author interview with official at the Council of the European Union, Brussels, September 2008.

[2] Unofficial document of the French Foreign Ministry. The EuroMeSCo network of research institutes and think tanks, supported by the European Commission in the framework of the EMP, produced a number of policy papers and recommendations advocating greater EU engagement with Islamist political actors.

[3] For an overview see Gillespie (2003).

[4] These conclusions are drawn from an analysis of public and confidential diplomatic statements by the EU. The public statements are available at <http:// www. consilium.europa.eu/cms3_applications/applications/newsRoom/loadBook. asp?BID=73&LANG=1&cmsid=257>. The confidential EU messages are reported in the Council of the European Union's annual reports on human rights.

[5] Based on an analysis of resolutions from the European Parliament. See also Lübben (2008).

[6] See the various case studies in Emerson and Youngs (2007).

[7] Author interview, German political foundation, Brussels, September 2008.

[8] See chapter 5 in this research report.

[9] As early as 2000, Cheik Yassine praised the French position as the most advanced compared to the rest of Europe (Rioufol, 2000).

[10] Author interview, Council of the European Union, Brussels, September 2008; author interview, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris, September 2008; Schmid and Dombey (2006).

[11] Author interview, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris, September 2008; Author interview, Council of the European Union, Brussels, September 2008. See also Alvarez-Ossorio Alvarino (2007); Tocci (2007) and Lübben (2008).

[12] Quoted in Grey (2005).

[13] Author interview, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris, September 2008.

[14] Ambrosini (2008); and Author interview, Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Madrid, November 2008. See also 'Statements made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson", Paris, 29 May 2007, available at <http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/briefing-on-general-aoun-meeting.html?var_recherche=hamas>.

[15] Author interview, European Commission, Brussels, November 2008.

[16] Author interview, Council of the European Union, Brussels, September 2008. Hezbollah is on the terrorist list of the Netherlands, while the UK has placed only its military wing on its terrorist list.

[17] Author interviews, Council of the European Union, Brussels, September 2008.

[18] Author interviews, Council of the European Union and European Commisssion, June 2009.

[19] Author interviews, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris, September 2008; and European Commission, Brussels, November 2008.

[20] See chapter 1 in this book.

[21] Author interview, European Commission, November 2008.

[22] Author interview, European Commission, November 2008.

[23] See in particular Berger (2006); Van Bruinessen (2007); Archer and Huuhtanen (2006); and Assemburg and Brumber (2007).

[24] Restrictions on NGO registration are common practice in North Africa and the Middle East, as are cases of legal action against organizations using foreign funds. In the most famous case, members of the Egyptian Ibn Kaldun Centre, ran by Said Eddin Ibrahim, were jailed for participating in a European Commission funded project on voter education.

[25] Bicchi (2006); and author interviews with European Commission officials, Cairo, June 2007, and Brussels, September and November 2008.

[26] GTZ has created a special division dealing with intercultural dialogue and cooperation in the Arab world.

[27] Author interview with GTZ, Echborn, July 2008; Author interview with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris, September 2008.

[28] Author interviews, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris, September 2008; GTZ, Echborn, July 2008; European Commission, Brussels, November 2008.

[29] In the case of Morocco, for example, GTZ organized round tables in the field of sustainable development and in the framework of the gender programme to discuss

the modification of the Mudawana, the family code of Morrocco. In the latter case, among the participants were representatives from the PJD and the illegal movement Al Adl Wal Ihssane.

[30] Author interview with the German Development Institute, Bonn, July 2008.

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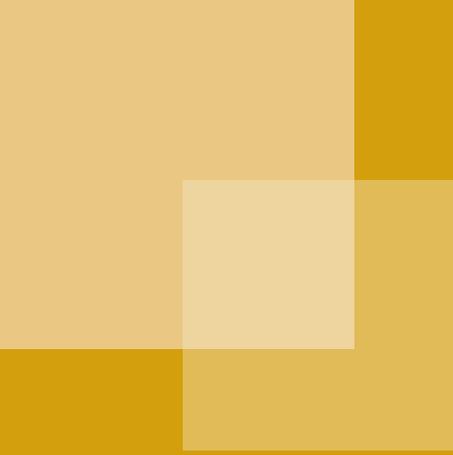
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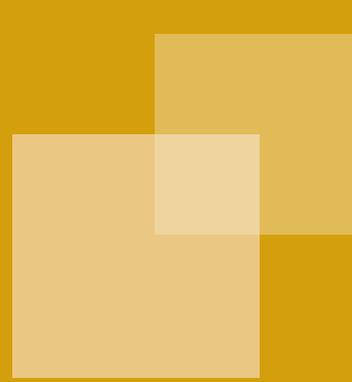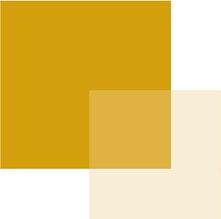
Conclusions

Rosa Balfour and Daniela Pioppi

1. Introduction

This book analyses the political role of the mass Islamist parties and movements in Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and their relation with the external policies of the United States and the European Union (EU). A number of premises on which the book was built need to be recalled. First, it avoids the teleological trap that can be implicitly found in most studies inspired by the academic literature on transition and democratization. The aim was not to ascertain whether Islamist movements or parties genuinely or just tactically embrace democratic values in abstract terms, but rather to analyse in concrete terms the role of such movements or parties in domestic politics, starting from the assumption – increasingly shared by the most recent literature on the region – that the direction of change in the countries considered is towards a modernization of authoritarianism and not democratization.

This approach allowed a deeper understanding of the recent evolution of the movements and parties concerned as well as the unpacking of the international positions and policies developed towards them, and enabled some hypotheses to be advanced on the interaction between domestic and international politics.

Similarly, we have avoided using the frequently recalled prisms of moderate versus extremist movements, or peaceful versus violent Islamism because the authoritarian and/or conflictual contexts in which these movements operate make such definitions subjective and difficult to use in any meaningful way, especially comparatively. It is worth pointing out, however, that even if these categories are hard to substantiate methodologically, they do represent key parameters for international actors when addressing Islamist parties and movements in the Arab world.

Third, it is an important assumption that Islamist movements and parties are not just actors in their respective political contexts, but are themselves a product of such contexts – an assumption that is particularly important in the cases of conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and in Lebanon.[1]

Finally, although it was not a core aim of this book to discuss democratization policies, these did require analysis as far as the role of international actors is concerned, because it is through them that the question of how to relate to Islamism emerged, and it is through them that expectations for the development of a policy towards Islamism came about in Europe and in the Arab world.

The core questions, therefore, revolve around a number of main clusters. What interests and socio-economic bases do Islamist parties and movements represent? What are their strategies regarding mobilization and political participation? How do they relate to the political contexts in which they operate? How do they relate to external actors and policies? How do external actors relate to Islamists? How have these policies and positions changed over time? What is their impact?

2. The political impasse of mass Islamist movements

As the chapters in this book confirm, Islamist movements or parties are everywhere in the Arab world the main form of organized and mass-based political opposition to incumbent regimes.

However, they display a number of differences in terms of social constituencies. For instance, the Moroccan Party of Justice and Development (PJD) finds its supporters in the urban middle class. In the years between the elections of 2002 and 2007, the party lost support in the poorer, lower middle class part of Casablanca and instead made gains in the better off parts of the city, reflecting the 'governmental' choice of the party's establishment.[2] In general, the main Moroccan Islamist party does not represent the social grievances of the poor, but the aspirations of the more educated and dynamic upward-looking urban bourgeoisie. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood is also traditionally a middle class movement, although since the 1970s it has mainly represented a re-emerged conservative upper middle class, which managed to re-enrich itself after the Nasser parenthesis thanks to the economic liberalization policies of the Sadat and Mubarak regimes.

An inverse socio-economic trajectory is that of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine (MBP). Until the 1970s, the MBP had a social constituency made up from the upper middle classes and local 'notables'. However, in the 1980s–1990s, its offshoot, Hamas, almost reversed the composition of the Palestinian Islamist

movement, drawing its leadership and membership mainly from the lower middle class, from the rural under-proletariat and from refugee camps or the margins of the Palestinian cities. This change in the social composition of the movement coincided with a move towards a more 'revolutionary' stand with respect to both the Arab-Israeli conflict and the position of disadvantaged social groups, although compared with nationalist and leftist groups the MBP and Hamas managed to maintain their appeal to the better off parts of Palestinian society.[3] Finally, and similarly to Hamas, the social composition of Lebanon's Hezbollah is both lower and middle class, having inherited traditional Shi'a anti-elite and social revolutionary mobilization patterns. Hezbollah's rank and file are recruited from poor peasants or the urban under-proletariat, but the party also benefits from the support of important Shi'a businessmen and the Shi'a middle class in general.[4]

In sum, while the PJD and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood are socially at the 'conservative' pole in terms of representation, Hamas and Hezbollah – the two 'resistance movements' – tend to be more at the 'progressive' pole. This is in line with their respective political programmes. In fact, although all Islamist movements share a cross-class political agenda and a populist stance on social justice, the PJD is the most favourable to neoliberal policies, followed closely by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood although the latter maintains a more ambiguous and sometimes contradictory economic programme. In contrast, the Hezbollah programme favours a strong welfare state.

These considerations are important because these movements operate in highly unequal and elitist societies. The analysis of the Islamist movements' social constituencies is thus an important indicator of their potential as tools for an enlargement of popular political participation. The reasons behind the large social basis of Islamism, especially compared with other forms of opposition in the Arab world, vary from one political organization to another, although all Islamist movements and parties share a reputation as good and honest administrators gained through their efficient and far-reaching networks of charitable institutions – a reputation they also enjoy, unofficially, in Brussels. The Moroccan Islamist movement is less developed compared to the rest of the Arab world and its network of social institutions is less extensive. The PJD, however, owed its electoral success in 2002 to its strong investment in mobilization structures and its image as a 'different' Moroccan party. The internal democratic practices for choosing candidates in the elections played a big role in this. The party decided not to mobilize against the regime, but on topics of authenticity and identity (e.g. against the personal status code, secularism, the use of alcohol, etc.) but much of its initial success was due to its successful cultivation of an image as working for the citizens and a closeness to the

people, as well as the door-to-door mobilization strategies of its electoral partner, the Islamist Movement for Unity and Reform.[5]

The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt probably has the oldest and most developed network of social charitable institutions in the Arab world, and owes to them the social basis it continues to enjoy and its reputation for being, since the Nasser years, the only potential alternative to the regime.

Hamas and Hezbollah certainly share with the other organizations a reputation as good and honest administrators as, for instance, was highlighted in the electoral platform of Hamas, 'Change and Reform', or in the municipal election campaigns run by Hezbollah since 1998, but the two parties owe their success mainly to their 'resistance legitimacy'.[6]

Notwithstanding the differences between the movements, the findings of this book confirm the exceptional capacity of Islamist organizations to mobilize large social sectors and, therefore, to potentially act as agents of an enlargement of political participation. The picture, however, would not be complete without considering the impact that the political environment has on the strategies and choices of these movements.

All the Islamist movements studied for this book are heavily influenced by the authoritarian – and often violent – context in which they operate. This is particularly evident for the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood which, after its re-emergence on the public scene in the 1970s and its acceptance of the 'rules of the game', had to operate in a context of strong limitations and cyclical repression. This has not only limited the society's capacity for political action, but also paradoxically granted the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood the opportunity to maintain a great deal of ambiguity in its political programme – both externally and internally in its own ranks. Democrats, salafists, radicals, and so on – whatever one may wish to call them – can coexist in the same organization only because the authoritarian context allows the postponement of important choices, such as the formation of a political party with a clear programme, or of clear-cut relations with external actors.

As the trajectory of other Islamist parties shows (e.g. the Justice and Development Party, AKP, in Turkey), however, a more open environment would radically transform the Brotherhood, resulting in the loss of constituencies on one side or the other. It is often argued that the Brotherhood's evolution would then be similar to that of the AKP, but Aclimandos paints a different picture, attributing a more enduring role to the hard core ideological side of the Brotherhood.[7]

In the case of the PJD, Wegner and Pellicer clearly explain the electoral 'failure' of 2007 by the climate of repression and the restrictions imposed by the King on the activities of Islamists after the terrorist attack of May 2003. Wishing to maintain its legal status at all costs, the PJD was forced to compromise with the regime by changing its mobilization strategy and political programme, which led to a loss of support.[8]

In the cases of Hamas and Hezbollah, the environment of war and military occupation was not only the proximate cause of the foundation of the two armed movements, but has also clearly shaped their evolution.[9]

Having said that, and going to the heart of our research, the most difficult question is then the reverse: to what extent can these movements or parties have an impact on their political context? Or, in other words, are they really actors of change, for good or bad, or are they instead systemic, functional actors with respect to their own political environment? To what degree do they present a real and concrete alternative to the political regimes they oppose?

The answer is not easy and cannot be unequivocal. As the case of Morocco illustrates, for instance, by agreeing to play the game imposed by the monarchy to the point of adapting its own programme (e.g. by accepting the personal status law and relinquishing the pursuit of political issues), the PJD transformed itself into another typical Moroccan opposition party ending up, not unlike the nationalist left in the alternance government, as successfully co-opted by the King. If the PJD continues on the path of abstaining from criticizing the heart of the authoritarian system, the most likely scenario is that it will continue to lose popular support.

Similarly, although it has a much longer and glorious history, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood appears to have been ossified by the authoritarian environment in which it has existed since the 1970s. Of course, the Egyptian regime is much more rigid than the Moroccan and recently demonstrated its ability to harshly repress its opponents.[10] Here as elsewhere, however, the question remains: how long can a political organization exist under authoritarian conditions, accepting faithfully the rules of the game, without acquiring certain characteristics of the system in which it lives?

As far as Hamas is concerned, the question would therefore become whether this Islamist guerrilla party can represent a new beginning for the Palestinian national movement. Here, part of the answer lies outside Hamas itself, as the Palestinians in general are on the losing side of the conflict and their society is exhausted by years of military incursions and occupation. As is explained by Hroub above,

Hamas has accumulated 'resistance legitimacy' while Fatah and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) were stuck in a failed negotiating process. However, notwithstanding its landslide victory at the election in 2006 and the opportunity to form a government, Hamas could not change the conflict balance, and nor could its moderation break the international isolation. With the advent of the Administration of US President Barack Obama, the Arab-Israeli conflict again occupies a more prominent position on the international agenda, and there are renewed international efforts to kick-start negotiations. However, given the persistence of Israel's settlement activities, that the Occupied Territories are divided and that Gaza was destroyed by the December 2008 Israeli attack and remains under siege, the spread of chaos and violence remains a concrete scenario. Hamas has certainly shown itself to be a fundamental actor in Palestinian politics, but it is probably too late to change the course of events.

Among our case studies, Hezbollah is probably the actor with the most potential to have an impact on its political context. However, as is illustrated by Pioppi above, the party has competing elements in its institutional structure, mobilization strategies and political programme. It is a Shi'a party, but also a programmatic party; an Islamist party, but also a nationalist force, and so on. The way the party evolves and the role it plays in its political context will also greatly depend on the evolution of the Lebanese confessional system and on the policies of external powers, such as the US, Israel and Iran. As the 2009 elections demonstrate, secular or cross-confessional forms of social organization and mobilization have little if any opportunity to compete effectively. The political salience of religious identity is increasing, undercutting the influence of non-religious groups in the system. In effect, all of the major political actors, including Hezbollah, have recently augmented their resort to, either overt or more discreet, sectarian appeals.

In conclusion, it could be said that Islamist mass movements are today in a political impasse that derives from a backlash linked to political participation in neo-authoritarian regimes. Islamist movements participating in elections in Arab countries have reached an important crossroads. Despite electoral successes (e.g. the PJD in Morocco in 2002, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 2005 and Hamas in 2006), they have generally failed to make relevant political gains from their participation but, on the contrary, have had to reach important compromises with their respective regimes. The result is that they are losing their credibility as genuinely alternative political actors and are increasingly criticized by their rank and file for abandoning their religious and political commitments.

Together with the ruling establishment, however, mass Islamist movements remain the most important political actors in Arab countries. The way in which they

internally resolve the current political impasse, and the strategy they choose with respect to their participation, will certainly have important consequences for the evolution of Arab regimes.

3. International policies on mass Islamism

In the case of neither the USA nor the EU and its member states can it be said that their positions amount to a policy, let alone a policy towards Islamist parties or movements. International actors have not developed a 'one size fits all' policy,[11] preferring to base their strategies on country-by-country approaches. This is due to their assessment of the diversity of the situations in the four case studies treated here, but also to the broad and mixed range of ideological, strategic and historical reasons that have constrained external actors in their relations with these countries.[12] Fear of a rise of Islamism, anti-terrorist policies, the influential role of Israel and the endurance of the Middle East conflict have all stifled the development of a broad policy based on a strategic assessment of the nature of Islamism and its political manifestations.

The decision to maintain ad hoc positions towards the Islamist parties and movements, however, has not empowered international actors to develop flexible policies that respond constructively to the political environment in Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon and the Palestinian Occupied Territories. In the USA and the EU, the persistent need to maintain the status quo in North Africa and the Middle East – despite the 'regime change' and 'political reform' rhetoric – and the struggle for influence in the region have been obstacles to external actors achieving any positive impact in the domestic political arena.

Nonetheless, it is apparent from all the case studies that the international environment and the positions of external actors are taken into account in the strategic calculations of Islamist leaders. This has been particularly evident in recent years, and has been influenced by the regime change rhetoric developed by the Bush Administration, and the political reform approach contained in the EU's declared policies. Islamist parties have all benefited from this reform mantra, which has forced some regimes to make concessions to the Islamist opposition by relaxing restrictions on electoral participation. In all the cases considered here, Islamist parties have fared well in the elections held since the mid-2000s.

The reform mantra was short-lived. The USA, the EU and its member states found themselves in the same 'Islamist dilemma' as that of the 1990s after events in Algeria – that democratization in the Middle East and North Africa entails the rise of Islamism or, in other words, the rise of political actors that are not trusted as potential allies

of Europe and the USA.[13] Since the victory of Hamas in January 2006, Islamist parties have either downsized the challenge they could pose to current regimes by limiting the number of seats in which they compete, as in Morocco and Lebanon, or suffered a further crackdown on the part of the government, as in Egypt. As a consequence, participating in elections may not provide as many benefits for Islamists as initially appeared.

Even if the USA and the EU have not developed an overall vision for how to address Islamist parties or movements, a common thread can be identified in their preference for policies of isolation rather than engagement – despite the absence of any positive benefits of such a policy. All the contributions in this book conclude that the US and EU policies of 'isolation', which remain especially strong in the case of Hamas, have not had the intended consequence of weakening or 'moderating' Islamist movements and parties. The international isolation of Hamas has not encouraged those within Hamas who seem more favourable to a tactical – if not strategic – reorientation of the movement's core principles of the non-recognition of Israel and resistance.[14]

On the basis of this picture, how can the role of the EU and the USA in the region be understood? With regard to the EU the ambiguities of its role have been translated into a general weakness and an inability to influence developments in the region.[15] This also underlines the asymmetry of power that remains typical in the EU, despite its bid for a stronger global role. While the EU is economically crucial to the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, as the main market for their products, its economic clout is unmatched by political influence. This gap is widened by its continued inability to play a part in the Middle East conflict, compounded by the policies it adopted towards Hamas, which it can be said to have later regretted.[16]

This leads to further considerations, although these are less measurable empirically. The weakness of the EU and its position of following the leadership of the USA – albeit with a few caveats and nuances, visible mainly in the case of Lebanon – have led to a loss of credibility in the region as a potential alternative actor. Regardless of whether the EU as a whole ever considered making a bid to develop elements of an alternative strategy towards the Middle East and North Africa, there is some evidence of a 'sub-text' in official EU discourse to that end, and a perception, in the Arab world, of divergence from the US position.

In contrast with the EU, the USA remains the most important external political actor in the region. Its 'deep' involvement in the Middle East makes it a part of the political game there,[17] but its unwillingness to develop a strategy of engagement with Islamism and its preference for ad hoc positions and policies based on country-by-country evaluations, which in turn have been deeply influenced by internal

politics, the role of Israel and anti-terrorist priorities, have produced deadlock in terms of addressing the most pressing issues regarding the nature of the conflict in the Middle East and of Arab regimes; and led to a 'backlash' against democracy,[18] which has shelved the debates that were emerging on devising new approaches to Islamist parties and movements.

The extent to which these debates may change under the Obama Administration remains to be seen. The invitation to representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood to attend Barack Obama's speech in Cairo in June 2009 could represent a change in both style and substance. Change is yet to be seen, however, with regard to one of the core issues of this book: international engagement with Islamist political groups. Even if there has been talk of changing US policy towards Hamas, for instance, there has been little debate in the USA and in the EU about the concrete steps that would need to be taken for Obama's vision to be translated into policy.

Endnotes

[1] See chapter 3 and chapter 5 in this book.

[2] See chapter 1 in this book.

[3] See chapter 4 in this book.

[4] See chapter 3 in this book.

[5] See chapter 1 in this book.

[6] See chapter 4 and chapter 3 in this book.

[7] See chapter 2 in this book.

[8] See chapter 1 in this book.

[9] See chapter 4 and chapter 3 in this book.

[10] See chapter 2 in this book.

[11] See chapter 6 in this book.

[12] See chapter 7 in this book.

[13] See chapter 6 in this book.

[14] See chapter 5 in this book.

[15] The reasons behind which are analysed in chapter 7 of this book.

[16] See chapter 5 in this book.

[17] See chapter 6 in this book.

[18] See chapter 6 in this book.

About the project and its methodology

Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI), International IDEA and Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) joined forces in order to undertake research on Islamist mass movements, external actors and political change in the Arab world. Arab Islamist mass movements today play a crucial role in the political life of their respective countries. A better understanding of their ideology, structures and strategies of mobilization – as well as of the policies of external actors towards them – is therefore vital for all those who seek to support efforts for democratic reform in the Arab world.

The aim of the research, which was carried out between October 2007 and December 2008, was to analyse the evolution of Islamist movements and their role in the political transitions of Arab countries using four countries as case studies: Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon and the Occupied Territories of Palestine. In addition, the research analysed the policies of the European Union (EU) and the United States towards these national contexts, and the importance both increasingly attribute to Islamist movements, highlighting the strengths and limitations of their policies and analysing the impact of such policies on domestic political dynamics.

The research was structured in a number of research papers, which now form the chapters of this book. Four papers focused on Islamist movements and three were dedicated to the policies of external actors. The research was implemented by researchers and analysts from CeSPI and IAI and by a team of external experts, all of whom are well-known scholars with long experience in policy analysis. The internal team was made up of the area experts and international affairs analysts Rosa Balfour and Battistina Cugusi of CeSPI and Daniela Pioppi of IAI. Rosa Balfour and Daniela Pioppi prepared the initial concept paper, setting guidelines for the authors.

A Steering Committee, made up of officers from each of the three implementing bodies, met regularly to select the researchers, coordinate, supervise and monitor the research work and provide guidance to the authors and analysts. International IDEA was represented on the Steering Committee by Abdalla Hamdok and Marina Romualdi Vaccari, CeSPI by Rosa Balfour, Ferruccio Pastore and Battistina Cugusi, and IAI by Roberto Aliboni and Daniela Pioppi.

An internal seminar to present and discuss the draft research papers was held in Rome on 6 October 2008, thanks to a financial contribution from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. The authors of the case study papers and the members of the Steering Committee participated as well as external experts. The seminar allowed for lively discussion and provided useful inputs into finalizing the case studies as well as suggestions for the conclusions.

The views and opinions expressed in this book are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions of International IDEA, CeSPI and IAI.

About the authors

Tawfiq Aclimandos is a Political Scientist and researcher at Collège de France on the History of the Arab Contemporary World. He also collaborated with the Centre de documentation économique, juridique et sociale (CEDEJ), based in Cairo. He has published widely on the contemporary history and politics of Egypt and in particular on the Egyptian army, Nasserism and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Rosa Balfour is Senior Policy Analyst at the European Policy Centre in Brussels. Before joining EPC in 2007, she was a Senior Research Fellow at the Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI) in Rome, with which she continues to cooperate. A selection of her recent publications includes: 'The Transformation of the Union for the Mediterranean', in *Mediterranean Politics*, 14 (March 2009); 'Human Rights Promotion', in Furio Cerutti and Sonia Lucarelli (eds), *The Search for a European Identity: Values, Policies and Legitimacy of the European Union* (London: Routledge, 2008); and 'Potenza civile o potenza retorica? L'Unione europea e la promozione dei diritti umani', in Roberto Gualtieri and Ferruccio Pastore (eds), *L'Unione europea e il governo della globalizzazione* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008).

Nathan Brown is professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University and non-resident senior associate in the Middle East Program of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He was previously a scholar in residence at the Middle East Institute. Among his publications are: *Resuming Arab Palestine* (University of California Press, 2003), *Constitutions in a Non-Constitutional World: Arab Basic Laws and Prospects for Accountable Government* (SUNY Press, 2001) and *The Rule of Law in the Arab World: Courts in Egypt and the Arab States of the Gulf* (Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Battistina Cugusi is Senior Research Fellow on European Affairs at the Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI) in Rome, where she has worked on several research projects dealing with EU external relations policies and cooperation programmes with the Southern Mediterranean Partners. Among her publications are: 'La politica di vicinato e l'Unione per il Mediterraneo', in Andrea Stocchiero (ed.), *Mare Nostrum. Cooperazione e nuove politiche europee nel Mediterraneo* (Rome: Carocci, forthcoming); and 'L'Unione per il Mediterraneo: perfezionamento o svuotamento di un disegno politico?', CeSPI *working paper* 52 (2009).

Philippe Droz-Vincent is a Senior Lecturer at the Institut d'Etudes politiques, Toulouse. Among his main publications are: *Moyen-Orient: pouvoirs autoritaires,*

sociétés bloquées (Paris: PUF, 2004) and *Vertiges de la puissanc: le moment Américain au Moyen-Orient* (Paris: La Découverte, 2007).

Khaled Hroub is director of the Cambridge Arab Media Project in association with the Centre of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge. His main publications include *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Institute for Palestine Studies, 2000). He has also written for the *International Herald Tribune* and his academic writings have appeared in *Middle East Journal, Middle East International, Journal for Palestine Studies, Shu'un Arabyya, Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies, Outre Terre*, and *Internationale Politik*. He is a weekly contributor to the Arab daily newspapers *Al-Hayat, Al-Sharq, Al-Ittihad, Al-Kahera* and *Al-Ghad*.

Miquel Pellicer is a researcher at the Università Autonoma de Barcelona. He has a PhD in Economics from the European University Institute, Florence. He was Visiting Fellow at the Mohammed V University, Rabat, in September to December 2008. Among his publications are 'Islamist Moderation Without Democratization: The Coming of Age of the Moroccan Party of Justice and Development' (with Eva Wegner) in *Democratization* 16/1 (2009); and 'Morocco's Local Elections: With A Little Help from my friend' (with Eva Wegner) *Cidob Notes Internacionals* 3 (2009).

Daniela Pioppi PhD is a researcher on the contemporary history of the Arab world at the University of Rome 'La Sapienza' and an associate fellow in the Mediterranean and Middle East Programme of the International Affairs Institute (IAI). Her recent publications include (edited with Laura Guazzone) *The Arab State and Neo-Liberal Globalization: The Restructuring of State Power in the Middle East* (Ithaca Press & Garnet Publishing, 2009).

Eva Wegner is a postdoctoral fellow at the CSIC. She has a PhD in Islamism in Morocco from the European University Institute, Florence. She worked as a researcher at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP). Among her publications are 'Authoritarian King and Democratic Islamists in Morocco', in *The Challenge of Islamists for EU and US Policies: Conflict, Stability and Reform* (SWC and USIP, 2007); and 'Autocrats and Islamists: Contenders and Containment in Egypt and Morocco' (with Holger Albrecht), in *Journal of North African Studies,* 11/2 (June 2006).

About the partners

Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale

The Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI) was established in Rome in 1985 as a private, independent, non-profit research centre. Its research areas focus on: international development and cooperation; finance for development; the European Union's external action; and international migration and migration policies. Specific attention is paid to emerging actors in international relations, such as sub-state governments and non-governmental organizations, and to the geographic areas particularly relevant to Italy – south eastern Europe and the Balkans, the Mediterranean Basin and Latin America.

In addition to its research, CeSPI carries out consultancy and training activities. The Centre cooperates closely with organizations and institutions at the international (the European Commission and the European Parliament, the World Bank, etc.) and national (the Italian Parliament, the Foreign Affairs and other ministries, Italian business, etc.) levels. The Centre is part of a number of international networks in various fields of international affairs.

International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy worldwide. International IDEA's mission is to support sustainable democratic change through providing comparative knowledge, assisting in democratic reform, and influencing policies and politics.

The Institute works in the fields of elections, constitution building, political parties, gender in democracy and women's political empowerment, democracy self-assessments, and democracy and development.

International IDEA works worldwide. It is based in Stockholm, and has offices in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Istituto Affari Internazionali

The Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) was founded on 11 October 1965 at the initiative of Altiero Spinelli, its first director.

IAI is a non-profit organization funded by individual and corporate members, public and private organizations, major international foundations and a standing grant from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Institute's main objective is to promote an understanding of the problems of international politics through studies, research, meetings and publications, with the aim of increasing the opportunities for all countries to move in the direction of supranational organization, democratic freedom and social justice (IAI Bylaws, article 1).