

Chapter 1

POLITICAL ISLAM AND ISLAMIZATION

ON MY VISITS to Muslim countries, which in the business are known as TDYs or temporary duty visits, I entered numerous mosques (my colleagues used to joke that my TDYs involved “mosque hopping” or “mosque crashing”) and spoke to dozens of imams and *‘ulama* (religious scholars). My Muslim interlocutors in these countries included ordinary people, mainstream thinkers, writers, journalists, and academics, political party activists, NGO officials, “establishment” (mostly adhering to the government line) and nonestablishment clerics, pro-democracy advocates, radical thinkers and jihadists, businessmen, restaurateurs, taxi drivers, farmers, and booksellers. During these visits, I also met government officials and interacted with allied intelligence services in dozens of countries. The analysis of what follows is informed primarily by these many discussions and interviews.

The goal of these visits was threefold: first, to track the growth of Islamization and Islamic activism across many countries, to study their manifestations, and to identify the factors that drive them; second, to compare and contrast the growth of Islamic activism in different Muslim countries and to develop a useful sense of the stages of Islamic activism; and third, to analyze how Islamic activists from different cultures, races, and sects understand the phenomenon of Islamization and use it as a basis for their political, economic, and social activism. My research focused on seeking answers to a range of questions: What theological arguments do Muslims advance to justify their activism as Muslims and as citizens of Muslim and non-Muslim countries? Why do some activists turn to Islam as an identity anchor, whereas others turn to nationalism? What factors determine the type of religious ideology—moderate and tolerant or radical and intolerant—they espouse as a foundation for their newfound ac-

tivism? At the conclusion of each visit, I made recommendations to senior policymakers on the long-term implications of Islamic activism and assessed whether such a phenomenon poses a short- or long-term threat to the United States and to friendly countries and regimes. As an intelligence officer, the author upheld the intelligence community's golden rule that intelligence officers do not make policy; they only inform it.

In talking to activists from various Islamic political parties—whether the Islamic Party of Malaysia, AKP in Turkey, Justice and Development in Morocco, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan, the Islamic Movement in Israel, or Hamas in Palestine—I was especially interested in learning whether their commitment to participatory government and democracy represented a tactical ploy to get them to power or a strategic shift toward accepting “man-made” democracy. Some argued they were genuinely committed to a pluralist form of government in which minorities—religious (Sunni or Shia), ethnic, and racial—would be afforded equal opportunities; others were not so categorical. The key question our policymakers asked about Islamic political parties was, Were they committed to a gradual, peaceful process of change and have they disavowed violence and terrorism as a means of pursuing their political goals?

In my interviews with a variety of Muslim activists, mainstreamers and radicals, I attempted to trace the process of radicalization and how young people in a particular country or community make the transition from moderation and tolerance to radicalism, the factors that drive this transformation, and how some of them ultimately translate their acquired radicalization and “jihadization” into acts of terror. That is to say, how does a young man move from being a nonpracticing Muslim to becoming a devout and observant Muslim and from there to a stage where he could justify the use of violence as part of his jihad in the service of his faith and global Islamic causes? When I asked a young Pakistani why he was going to Kashmir to do jihad against the Indians, he answered, “Why not? Kashmir is part of Islamic jihad.” Then I asked, if the opportunity presented itself for him to go to Chechnya to fight against the Russians, would he go? “Of course,” he replied. I turned to his father for an

explanation. He said that his son's "jihad" would help him serve Islam and would give him an opportunity to leave that small village and make something of himself. If he is "martyred" in the process, he would be rewarded in eternal life. This might be a typical case of how a young man goes through the process of transformation from being a "normal" or "unremarkable" kid to becoming a jihadist. He drops out or, if lucky, graduates from high school, cannot find a job, starts frequenting the neighborhood mosque, gets indoctrinated by an activist imam or a cleric about the "enemies" of Islam and the duty to do jihad, meets a like-minded group, and is given useful contacts, papers, and some cash to travel to Kashmir or other places to do jihad.

This young man and others like him become ready recruits for terrorism. The jihadist-terrorist tendency is strengthened as the young man arrives at his destination and begins to interact with other jihadists, from Pakistan and elsewhere. Training, linkages with individuals and networks, and ideological indoctrination continue as the young jihadist becomes more engrossed in what he is made to believe is a rightful struggle in the defense of the faith. Many Muslim interlocutors correctly pointed out to me that jihad was not synonymous with terrorism. They argued that despite the fact that many non-Muslims equate jihad with terrorism, most Muslims view jihad as a religious effort—for example, fasting, prayer, and almsgiving—which aims at bringing Muslims closer to God. A Muslim journalist told me, "Jihad has nothing to do with terrorism."

Most of the Muslims I met, especially those who are members of political parties, movements, or groups or who work for NGOs, expressed strong interest in participating in a democratic political process and would like to see the American government exert more pressure on their governments to allow Islamic parties and movements to participate in elections openly, freely, and without harassment. I heard these calls for a stronger American push for democratization loudest in Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, and Kenya. Islamic parties have already participated in elections in the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia, but in many countries—for example Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia—the gov-

ernments and their security services tightly control the electoral process and prescribe only a narrow space within which Islamic political parties can operate. These regimes often speak in the language of democracy but resist genuine calls for political reforms. They paint all opposition—secular and Islamic—with the same broad brush and either exclude them from the political process or co-opt them into acquiescence. The terrorist acts of September 11, 2001 gave many of these regimes an excuse to silence all forms of opposition in the name of fighting terrorism, and they have used their antiterrorism rhetoric to garner Western support of their repressive policies.

ISLAMIZATION AND ISLAMIC ACTIVISM

Beginning in the early 1990s, when I started my visits to Muslim countries, I began to sense a growing awareness among Muslims, individuals and groups, of their faith as a moral compass of their daily lives, a guide for their social interactions and political activism, and a basis of their worldview. Their Muslim identity became dominant over other identities and began to drive many of their political and other activities. The growth of this phenomenon, which has come to be known as Islamization, varies from one country to the next and from one Muslim community to the next. Islamization initially was more visible in Muslim majority countries but in a few years spread to Muslim minority countries. Islamic activists in different countries have offered diverse definitions of Islamization, depending on their religious ideologies, historical experiences, sectarian affiliations, and legal schools of thought to which they belong.

For many activists I spoke with, Islam is total way of life that encompasses faith, the world community, and the state, or what they call the three Ds in Arabic—*din* (faith), *dunya* (world), and *dawla* (state)—and some activists also maintain that Islam is the solution, or *Islam hua al-hal* in Arabic, to their social, political, and economic ills. “Islam is the solution” has been a major slogan in the election campaigns of several Islamic political parties, especially the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Islamic Action Front in Jordan, and in some cases the Islamic Party of

Malaysia. Some Islamic activists, especially the radicals, also believe that the political, military, and economic weaknesses of Muslims in the modern era are due to Muslims having strayed from Islam and followed non-Islamic ideologies and values and that the renewal and reform of Muslim societies can be achieved only through an Islamic system of government and law.

On a visit to Turkey in the mid-1990s, I had an interesting discussion with a leading thinker of the Islamic political party Refah about the nature of Islamization and its relevance to Turkish political life, especially as “laicist” or “secular” Turkey was striving to acquire membership in the European Union. He said he viewed Islam as the moral compass of Turkey regardless of the pervasive control of the military, under the direction of the Turkish General Staff, and that secular Kemalism, which was introduced by Mustapha Kemal Ataturk in the 1920s, is an aberration, not the norm. He argued that Kemalism never took root beyond the thin sliver of university-educated elites in the urban centers of Ankara and Istanbul and that Turkey has always been an Ottoman Muslim state. Maintaining that Turkey has very little in common with Europe, he claimed that over the centuries the relationship between the two sides has been one of conquest and conflict and that Turkey should look south toward the Arab Muslim world, not to the Christian north. “Islamization is a good thing for Muslims,” he said, because it helps them rediscover their Islamic traditions and heritage.

Islamic activists who have been involved in territorial conflicts, either against their governments or against a foreign occupation, have viewed the rise of Islamization among Muslims as a vehicle to mobilize their human and financial resources in the fight for their territory, either to gain autonomy from the central government or to liberate it from a foreign occupation. Islamic activists in Mindanao in the Philippines, in Xinjian Province in China, and in Aceh in Indonesia, for example, have struggled for territorial autonomy, whereas activists in Chechnya, Palestine, and Lebanon (before the Israeli withdrawal in 2000) have worked to liberate their territory from a perceived foreign occupation. These activists viewed Islamization as a source of their territorial-nationalist jihad, not as a path to

global jihad advocated by al-Qa'ida, Usama Bin Ladin, or his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Between the “territorial” activists and the global jihadists, there are some groups that focus on creating a *Sharia*-based society in specific regions of the world transcending individual states. These movements, which include Jema'a Islamiya in Southeast Asia, Hizb al-Tahrir in Central Asia and the Middle East, and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, view Islamization as a vehicle in their struggle to establish Islamic communities in those parts of the world. They tend to be closer ideologically and operationally to the global jihad paradigm than to the nationalist jihads of Hamas, the Chechens, and others. Hizb al-Tahrir, in particular, strives for the restoration of the Islamic Caliphate.

Islamic activists in Indonesia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Tunisia, Nigeria, and Jordan, for example, use Islamization to force their political leadership, which is ostensibly Muslim, to act more in accordance with Islamic law or *Sharia*. Muslim interlocutors in these countries have told me over the years that they strongly object to the “un-Islamic” behavior of their leaders; however, as these activists have come to realize that they could not dislodge their rulers from office, especially with the growing strength of the military and the security forces, they have turned their activism toward Islamizing their society from below. During a visit to Egypt, a Muslim Brotherhood member told me, “You Islamize society from below and the regimes will follow.” The statement reminded me of the American baseball field story: “You build it, and they will come!” The governor of the Zamfara state in northern Nigeria gave a similar rationalization for his decision to institute *Sharia* in his state in the late 1990s.

In addition to mainstream Islamic activists, radical segments of Muslim societies have also pushed Islamization among their followers. As indicated in numerous interviews, “radical” is used in this context to reflect an exclusivist, narrow-minded, and rigid view of Islam and support for aggressive jihad, including the use of force. Several of the interlocutors who considered themselves radical claimed they did not engage in violence or

illegal forms of jihad, but neither did they condemn the use of violence to further their cause. Other radical interlocutors justified the use of violence against perceived enemies of Islam. To these radicals, Islamization is a means to defend the faith in the face of the onslaught by the infidels. Radicals, whether in Indonesia or Uzbekistan, agreed on a few key points: many Muslim rulers and regimes engage in an un-Islamic behavior; Muslims are obliged to fight and overthrow such regimes and their Muslim supporters; jihad against unbelievers—Muslims and non-Muslims—is a religious duty that must be pursued by all means, including violence; opposition to perceived illegitimate Muslim governments often extends to the official clergy and state-supported mosques; and, while this jihad is country-specific, it is part and parcel of a global jihad against all enemies of Islam, near and far.

A critical difference between mainstream activists and radical jihadists is their approach to change. Mainstreamers often said that they believe in gradual change through peaceful means, including the ballot box, and that if they concentrate their efforts on social change, for example in the areas of education and judiciary, society will ultimately become more *Sharia* friendly. By contrast, radical activists—whether at Guantanamo or in a comfortable hotel lounge in Jakarta—make it clear they have given up on gradual change because entrenched regimes will not allow meaningful change to occur and that the electoral process in many Arab and Muslim countries is a farcical game designed to placate the populace while maintaining the regime's hold on power. To the radicals, the collusion between many Muslim regimes and the enemies of Islam—presumably the United States and Israel—have made them apostates who should be removed from power.

When I asked a radical jihadist at Guantanamo what he planned to do if and when he is released, he answered without hesitation that he would continue his jihad against the United States and pro-U.S. regimes, ticking off the names of Mubarak of Egypt, Saleh of Yemen, Musharraf of Pakistan, the two Abdallahs of Saudi Arabia and Jordan, and Ben Ali of Tunisia. Other detainees at Guantanamo who were caught in the drag-

net net after 9/11 did not share that jihadist's radical views against the United States or other countries. In a conversation I had with a Hizb al-Tahrir activist in Indonesia, he calmly told me over lunch that he justified the use of violence against the Americans and other enemies of Islam, even though such violence might lead to the killing of innocent bystanders. In his view, the United States and other Western countries have already employed this type of violence against Muslims throughout the Islamic world, including in Palestine, Afghanistan, Chechnya, and Iraq.

Those interviewed suggest that there is a growing rapprochement between secular and Islamic activists because of their similar opposition to regime-repressive policies and authoritarian rule and that Muslim Brotherhood ideology is pervasive among most Sunni political movements across the Muslim world, especially at the popular level where "establishment" *ʿulama* and clerics have very little influence. As a consequence of Saudi supported proselytization, however, a conservative Wahhabi form of Islamic ideology has also spread throughout the Muslim world in the past five decades, challenging mainstream Islamic ideology. Polling data indicate that majorities of Islamic activists are committed to gradual and peaceful change and do not necessarily view the Christian West as an implacable enemy. The radicals, on the other hand, who constitute only a small minority of Islamic activists, see no common ground either with non-Muslims or with tolerant and moderate Muslims. Islamic activist organizations are technologically savvy and have used the Internet, text messaging, and other high-tech devices to promote their agendas. The interviews further show that Muslim parliamentarians have become so comfortable with the whole process of legislative politics that they are adept at political compromise when needed to pass specific pieces of legislation.

STAGES OF ISLAMIZATION

By interviewing Islamic activists over the past decade and a half, I have detected a process of Islamization occurring in different

Muslim communities that can be divided into six stages. While seemingly linear, these stages do not assume that increased awareness of one's Islamic roots and piety will necessarily lead that individual to become a terrorist, but it does indicate that an Islamized environment might be conducive to further radicalization and terrorism.

First, an individual becomes more aware of his Islamic identity as a path to increased piety and a guide for action. Second, the individual begins to spread his Islamic commitment to the family and the immediate group to which he belongs. Third, Islamization expands to the larger society. In these three stages, where most Muslims find themselves, Islam is perceived as a moral compass in the daily lives of the individual, the family, and the community. An Islamized family usually becomes more observant of the tenets of Islam (the profession of faith, fasting, prayers, almsgiving, and *hajj*) and begins to dress more conservatively and traditionally and pay more attention to Islamic education for the children. These three stages for the most part focus on promoting an Islamically based value system but do not carry over into the political realm.

The fourth stage ushers in the political process of Islamic activism where activists embark on an effort to transform their political community into a more *Sharia*-friendly one. In tracking these efforts with my Muslim interlocutors, I concluded that Islamic activists begin to target the ministries of education and justice in order to ensure that educational curricula and textbooks are imbued with Islamic education, references to the Qur'an and the Hadith, Islamic history and traditions (especially the golden age of Islam), and Islam's contributions to knowledge. In the ministries of justice, Islamic activists strive to make *Sharia* the source of legislation and the basis for social interaction within the community and between Muslim states and the outside world. An examination of grade school and secondary school textbooks in several Muslim states reveals the tremendous influence of Islamic activist bureaucrats in shaping the curriculum. Saudi Arabia offers an extreme example of the pervasiveness of Islam throughout the curriculum—from religion to physics textbooks. In the Moroccan curriculum, on the

other hand, Islamic references are found only in religion and Islamic history textbooks.

During this stage, Islamic activists' efforts to change the political system are for the most part peaceful and lawful. As one interlocutor said, "We want to work within the system regardless of the nature of the regime." A Turkish activist told me in Ankara that in the 1980s and 1990s, for example, the Turkish Islamic Refah Party advised college and university students who were receiving financial and housing assistance from the party to major in public administration, law enforcement, and sociology. Upon graduation, these students would be employed in the ministries of police, education, and justice as well as in welfare associations and nongovernmental organizations. The Turkish interlocutor praised this approach as a thoughtful long-term strategy to Islamize society from below. This approach was similarly pursued in several Arab and Islamic countries. In some cases where this occurred, the government might appoint a "modernizing" minister of education—the appointment of the minister of higher education in Kuwait in the early 1990s is one example—only to discover that his efforts were thwarted by conservative bureaucrats throughout the ministry. These bureaucrats would join forces with powerful and equally conservative clerics and religious leaders, creating a formidable coalition that the minister was helpless to overcome. I asked an interlocutor in Jordan to explain why Islamic activists had been so successful in penetrating these critical ministries. His response, which I thought was very telling, was that for years most regimes focused on the "power" ministries—defense, foreign affairs, and treasury—and ignored the "soft" ministries of education, judiciary, and social welfare. In a conversation with a cabinet member in a Gulf Arab country, he lamented that fact and said, "By the time we discovered what was happening, it was too late!"

The fifth stage of Islamization takes the previous stage a step further, leading to a confrontation with regimes, ideologically and politically. Initially, the challenge to regimes from growing Islamization is through the electoral process, as Islamic political parties and groups begin to demand the right to vote in fair and

free elections and to organize into legally recognized entities. As many of these activists are harassed by regime security services and often jailed without charges, Islamic organizations begin to criticize the regime for repression and violation of human rights. When regimes in several Arab and Muslim states fail to respond to the peaceful demands of these groups, street demonstrations usually erupt, leading to confrontations with the police, more arrests, and more violations of human rights. Pakistan, Egypt, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan are illustrative examples of this type of confrontation. What usually begins as a lawful challenge to the regime invariably leads to violence. Regimes tend to view such challenges as undermining their legitimacy and a threat to their survival. Some regimes, as in Saudi Arabia, have attempted to undercut the Islamic challenge by brandishing their own Islamic credentials and their own commitment to the faith and by accusing the opposition of fomenting *fitna* or sedition. Some regimes went so far as to elicit a *fatwa* from a pro-regime cleric criticizing any and all opposition to the regime. An Islamic activist in Uzbekistan told me at a meeting several years ago, “we can’t fight the regime; we can’t fight regime clerics, but in the long run all of these actions by the regime reflect the regime’s diminishing legitimacy and the justness of our cause.” The brutal repression of Islamic activists in the Fergana Valley by the regime of Islam Karimov in 2006, which resulted in hundreds of people being killed, underscores the interlocutor’s point.

Despite these confrontations during this stage, most Islamic activists remain committed to the belief that they could change the system from within. Pragmatically, they might not have other options to deal with regimes that are so authoritarian, so powerful, and so entrenched. However, a tiny minority of these activists gives up on the gradual-change strategy, loses hope in its ability to force the regime to endorse meaningful political reform, and opts for confrontation and violence. As one interlocutor in Egypt said, “It has become especially difficult since 9/11 to force the regime to democratize because the Mubarak regime has used terrorism as an excuse to thwart all political reform. In fact, human rights conditions have become much worse in Egypt and in several other Arab countries in recent

years.” The constitutional change that the government of Hosni Mubarak rammed through the Egyptian parliament in the spring of 2006 on the surface looked like a step on the road to political reform but in fact resulted in expanding the power of the executive.

The sixth stage of Islamization applies to those activists who no longer believe in the efficacy of gradual change and who have come to view violence as a legitimate tool of political, ideological, and religious action. In this stage, acts of violence are committed against specific Muslim regimes for their perceived un-Islamic behavior, against foreign occupation, and against the so-called global enemies of Islam. Although many of these violent extremists start their activity on the home front, they quickly find a common ground with the global radical ideology and begin to affiliate, at least ideologically, with al-Qa’ida. We witness in this stage a transition in the thinking of violent radicals; they no longer view conflicts in Palestine, Kashmir, Chechnya, and Iraq as discrete cases but as part and parcel of a perceived U.S.-led global war against Islam, which in return requires a global jihadist response. This argument, in fact, is the core of al-Qa’ida’s ideology, globalized more readily through the Internet and other forms of electronic connectivity and linkages.

ISLAMIC ACTIVISM AND RADICALIZATION

The identification of extremists and terrorists with global Islamic causes began to form in the late 1990s and became much more energized after 9/11. To illustrate, during my travels to Muslim countries such as Nigeria, Indonesia, and Malaysia in the early to mid-1990s, I rarely heard any mention of the Palestinian conflict. However, by the late 1990s and the early part of the new century, Muslim interlocutors all over the Muslim world began to voice their support of the Palestinian, Afghan, Chechen, and Iraqi peoples and criticize U.S. policies toward those countries as un-Islamic. For radical Muslims, jihad became a sixth pillar of Islam, which has overshadowed other religious duties required by their faith. Although Usama Bin Ladin emerged in the 1990s as the most prominent articulator of the

radical paradigm, the radical message was voiced by other al-Qa'ida spokesmen, including Bin Ladin's deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri (Egyptian) and Sulayman Abu al-Ghayth (Kuwaiti). Saudi and other Arab radical clerics and thinkers in the past twenty years who supported some aspects of the radical message included the following: Abdallah Azzam (Palestinian, co-founder of al-Qa'ida), Nasir bin Sulayman al-Umar (Saudi), Hamid al-Ali (Kuwaiti), Nasir bin Hamid al-Fahd (Saudi), Salman al-Awda (Saudi), Ali al-Khudayr (Saudi), Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (Palestinian), Hammud bin Uqla al-Shu'aybi (Saudi), Sulayman bin Nasir al-Ulaywan (Saudi), Abd al-Rahman bin Nasir al-Barrak (Saudi), Safar al-Hawali (Saudi), Abd al-Aziz al-Jarbu' (Saudi), Umar Abd al-Rahman (Egyptian), and Harith Sulayman al-Dhari (Iraqi). Other thinkers, such as Yusif al-Qaradawi, endorsed parts of the radical jihadist message but not others. Many of these thinkers have relied on the writings of Ibn Taymiyya (a thirteenth- to fourteenth-century scholar who lived in Damascus), Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (an eighteenth-century Saudi scholar), Abu al-Ala' Mawdudi (a twentieth-century Muslim thinker and founder of Jama'at-i-Islam in South Asia), and Sayyid Qutb, a radical thinker of the Muslim Brotherhood who was executed by the Egyptian government in 1966.

Beginning with Bin Ladin's first *fatwa* declaring jihad against the United States in 1996, the radical message has focused on three key principles: first, Islam, as a faith and a territory, is under attack; second, the enemy consists of the Christian Crusaders headed by the United States, Zionism headed by Israel, and pro-U.S. Arab and Muslim regimes; and, third, jihad in all of its forms, means, and targets—including violence against innocent civilians—becomes a justified duty of all Muslims. In addition to the core message, some radicals view the war between Islam and the “infidels” as a millenarian battle between good and evil that will last until the “final days.” Although radical ideas have had a long history in Islam, al-Qa'ida and its supporters have expanded the permissibility of targeting innocent civilians and the use of weapons of mass destruction.

Al-Qa'ida argues that it is permissible to kill civilians, in reci-

procidity and proportionality, if the enemy has killed Muslim civilians (Bin Ladin has frequently cited the killing of Palestinian, Afghan, and Iraqi women and children by “invading” forces as a justification of al-Qa’ida’s position). According to radical thinkers, if any one of the following conditions prevails, then Muslims would be justified in killing civilians: the enemy kills Muslim civilians on purpose; civilians have assisted the enemy in carrying out the war against Islam (this extends to a democracy where the electorate would be held culpable by voting for leaders who engage in wars against Muslims); the enemy hides behind civilians while waging war; and heavy weapons are used in the conflict that inflict casualties beyond specific military or other justifiable targets. Despite such expansive definitions, radical apologists often cite their commitment to the principle of proportionality in targeting civilians. They also justify committing violence against fellow Muslims because they have either left the faith and therefore became apostates or rejected the doctrine of *tawhid* (oneness of God) and became polytheists. Abd al-Wahhab cited several other “voiders” that could result in an automatic expulsion of a Muslim from Islam, including praying to, and seeking intercession of, other entities than God (which applies to the Sufis and some Shia who pray to saints); considering non-Islamic and other human laws as more superior to Islam; making fun of Islam or the Prophet Muhammad (such as the Danish cartoon controversy); and assisting infidels in attacks against Muslims.

ISLAMIC RADICALS AND WMD

Muslim thinkers in recent decades have justified the right of a Muslim state to acquire weapons of mass destruction (WMD), especially nuclear weapons, on the grounds of self-defense, against an enemy who already possesses nuclear weapons. Iran, for example, has cited Israel’s possession of nuclear weapons, and Pakistan has cited India. In recent years, al-Qa’ida radical thinkers, however, have argued that nonstate groups, such as al-Qa’ida, are similarly entitled to acquire WMD in defense of Islam. In response to a question about al-Qa’ida’s potential use

of WMD against the United States, Saudi radical Shaykh Nasir Bin Hamid al-Fahd issued in May 2003 a twenty-six-page religious opinion in Arabic titled *A Treatise on the Legal Status of Using Weapons of Mass Destruction*. Al-Fahd said he based his findings on pronouncements from senior jurists representing several strands of Islamic religious law, including the four major recognized schools in Sunni Islam (Maliki, Hanafi, Shaff'i, and Hanbali). The author found the use of such weapons permissible and specifically empowered people of authority engaged in jihad to determine if and when WMD should be used. He offered four central points in defense of his position.

First, “defining WMD as only nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons is unacceptable and a self-serving Western ruse, because massive use of conventional weapons and bombs has killed millions of men, women, and children. Distinctions based on international law, the Geneva Conventions, and the Human Rights Charter have no standing in Islamic law, which recognizes the Qur’an alone as the source of legislation.” Second, “the West’s possession and past use of WMD established a precedent, as evidenced by the U.S. nuclear bombing of Japan, the British use of chemical weapons against the Iraqis in World War I, and the development of such weapons in Israel’s arsenal.” Third, “indiscriminate killing of civilians by jihadists’ weapons of mass destruction is permissible if civilians cannot be practically distinguished from others in warfare. If they are killed collaterally, there is nothing wrong with it. Jihad is not to be halted because of the presence of infidel women and children, and Muslims in target areas may be killed as well, if there is compelling necessity.” Fourth, “prohibitions against massive destruction of property, or “sowing corruption in the land,” according to the Qur’an, are not applicable when fighting the enemies of Islam. Whenever two causes of “corruption” conflict, it is agreed that one averts the greater by committing the lesser, meaning that the corruption caused by infidels’ remaining in their state of unbelief and not entering the rule of Islam is greater than the “corruption” caused by devastating and destroying their territory. Al-Fahd was arrested after he issued the treatise, and while in Saudi jail, Saudi authorities claimed that he recanted the trea-

tise; however, it is instructive to note that no Muslim state or nonstate group has denounced the treatise or spoken against its findings. Radical jihadists continue to quote it as a justification to acquire and use WMD in their fight on behalf of Islam.

Apart from the theorizing of radical clerics and religious scholars, Bin Ladin's radical message continues to resonate among some Muslim youth primarily because of its simplicity, clarity, and repetitiveness. It is communicated to Muslims who have limited education, is devoid of complicated nuance, and is global in nature. It is also tied to opposition to specific U.S. policies in parts of the Muslim world with which alienated, angry, and unemployed Muslim youth could easily identify. Whenever Bin Ladin has issued an audio or video statement, he usually peppers it with short, selective quotations from the Qur'an, something that a young man can easily memorize. Of course, Qur'anic citations, although highly selective, give the message an aura of religious legitimacy in the eyes of potential recruits. Secular, college-educated, professional mainstream Muslims are often hesitant to challenge the radical message because of their generally limited knowledge of the Qur'an, their disagreement with the same U.S. policies that Bin Ladin cites (Palestine, Iraq, Kashmir, Afghanistan, etc.), their opposition to the same pro-U.S. authoritarian Arab and Muslim regimes frequently cited in Bin Ladin's messages, and their fear of retaliation by radicals. These moderate activists who reject the radical message have themselves been subjected to harassment and imprisonment by so-called moderate regimes and therefore have become reticent to speak out publicly against the Bin Ladin message lest they be accused of being either pro-regime or pro-United States. The end result is that in several Muslim countries only two overt paradigms seem to exist in society: the authoritarian model reflecting a dominant regime and the radical model representing those who claim to speak on behalf of Islam.

Moderate Muslim thinkers who have been speaking out against the radical paradigm have argued that relations between Muslims and non-Muslims should not necessarily be conflictive, as Bin Ladin has postulated; that the Qur'an, revealed to

Muhammad in seventh-century Arabia, must be transformed to fit Muslim life in a twenty-first-century globalized world; and that the classical boundaries separating the *dar al-Islam* (abode of Islam) from the *dar al-harb* (abode of war) have all but disappeared. Today, millions of Muslims live in non-Muslim countries, especially in the Christian West, and should be able to reconcile their faith and their citizenship in these countries. These thinkers—including Abdol Karim Soroush (Iran), Mohsen Kadivar (Iran), Muhammad Shahrur (Syria), Tariq Ramadan (Switzerland), Khalid Abu el-Fadl (United States), Abdullahi Ahmad al-Na'im (United States and Sudan), Muhammad Arkun (France and Algeria), Hasan Hanafi (Egypt), and others—have been critical of the radical message and have engaged in a new kind of reasoning (*ijtihad*) calling on fellow Muslims to embrace an inclusive and tolerant vision of Islam. They have also argued that certain aspects of Western political culture, including parliamentary democracy, political and social pluralism, women's rights, civil society, and human rights, are compatible with Islamic scriptures and traditions, maintaining that these aspects of modern democracy are in line with the position of the three great Muslim reformist thinkers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Rashid Rida, and Muhammad Abdu. Despite their modernist message, however, these thinkers seem to exert only limited influence among their co-religionists in the Muslim heartland. Many of them reside in Europe and the United States, write in foreign languages (English, French, German, or Dutch), and lack an effective organization to spread their message in the Arab world.

MANIFESTATIONS OF ISLAMIZATION

In the past fifteen years Islamization has been manifested in increased piety (mosque attendance, fasting, etc.), a return to traditional and more conservative garb, a significant expansion in the number of Qur'anic *madradas* and Islamic schools, growing demands for the establishment of *Sharia* as the basis of governance, spread of Islamic publications, audio and video recordings of Friday sermons and other religious speeches, growth in

satellite religious broadcasting, widespread Islamic political activism, energized proselytization, expansion in the number of international Islamic NGOs, and growing international linkages among Muslim activist individuals and groups. A Muslim academic interlocutor in Turkey told me several years back that he had never seen his co-religionists pray so frequently and so openly. “They even started to fast!”

The daughter of a Kuwaiti friend, who at the time was a college student, chided her college mates for “shedding blue jeans and donning the *aba* [a black outer garment].” She said she and her “liberal” and “more secular” friends understood the reasons why more Muslims were returning to traditional garb, but she did not think that totally covered women (whom she described as BMOs or “black moving objects”) were necessarily better Muslims than those wearing Western clothes. Yet, traditional Islamic fashions have become a huge business, and major stores in Kuala Lumpur, Beirut, Ankara, Istanbul, Amman, Cairo, Rabat, and Jakarta have large displays of expensive floor-length dresses and *abas* for women. Silk and wool scarves and head covers (*hijabs*) of all colors and materials are also on display in high-end stores. To illustrate this transformation, only a few years ago a town in the Qasim region in the heart of Saudi Arabia was the only place in the Muslim world where one found totally covered women. In recent years, however, one could see such women in wealthy neighborhoods of Beirut, Cairo, Kuala Lumpur, and Rabat—and even in central London and by Lake Geneva.

Perhaps the four most noticeable manifestations of Islamization have been the spread of Islamic NGOs, the growth of Islamic schools, the global linkages among Islamic activist individuals and groups, and the Arabization of the Islamization process. Qur’anic schools, whether in a village in northern Nigeria or in the Fergana Valley in Uzbekistan, teach the Qur’an in Arabic. I watched little children in poor Nigerian hamlets recite *suras* (chapters) from the Qur’an by heart in Arabic and observed high school and college students at the Deoband University (Dar al-Ulum) outside New Delhi in India discuss different interpretations of the Hadith in Arabic. As a personal example

of this phenomenon, I was able to converse with almost all of my Muslim interlocutors in Arabic regardless of where I was in non-Arabic-speaking Muslim countries, whether in Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Central Asia, Turkey, or the Balkans. On a recent visit to the Balkans, I recall only one of the twenty-eight Muslim interlocutors I interviewed who could not converse in Arabic. The Arabization of Islamic proselytization, or *da'wa*, has developed despite the negative attitudes many non-Arab Muslims harbor for Muslim Arabs or Arab Islam. For example, I have heard Muslims in Indonesia and in Central Asia say that their brand of Islam is gentler than Arab Islam, and they resented the perceived condescending attitude of Muslim Arabs toward non-Arabs. The role of Saudi-supported proselytization in the Arabization of Islamization, especially since the early 1970s, should not be underestimated. An Uzbek interlocutor was speaking in Arabic while he was criticizing Arab Islam, and when I asked him where he studied Arabic, he replied, "at the neighborhood mosque, using books from Saudi Arabia!"

Of course, the other and more ominous manifestation of Islamization has been global terrorism, a phenomenon that will endure for years to come. The radical ideology espoused by al-Qa'ida and its leaders developed initially as a response to specific policies by Muslim states and by Western powers, especially the United States. After the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan, Usama Bin Ladin directed his violent campaign against the presence of U.S. "infidel" troops in Saudi Arabia, the "Land of the Two Sacred Mosques," and against Al Saud for inviting the U.S. military to stay in the country after Saddam Husayn was evicted from Kuwait in 1991. The perceived collusion between Al Saud and the United States became the cornerstone of Bin Ladin's deadly rhetoric, which has since expanded to include Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kashmir, Chechnya, and Indonesia. A Muslim Indonesian interlocutor sympathetic to Bin Ladin told me that U.S. "anti-Islamic" policy in Palestine, Iraq, and elsewhere is what drives the radicals' anti-American sentiment.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ISLAMIZATION

The factors that drive Islamic activism vary among activists and among countries, but it is possible to identify a few critical ones. The search for identity and the sense of defeat and injustice top the list of factors that Muslim interlocutors usually enumerate. Whether in Jordan, Egypt, or Indonesia, Muslim interlocutors have highlighted the importance of Islam as their identity anchor, especially as many of them do not feel a close allegiance toward the state. They also point to the “unjust wars” waged against Muslims and the ensuing defeats suffered by the Muslim *umma*. Other factors include regime repression, corruption, nepotism, and poor governance; economic and social stresses (e.g., unemployment, underemployment, poverty, discrimination, and alienation); Islamic education, especially at the elementary and high school levels; familial, personal, tribal, and other informal connections; and disenchantment with, and exclusion from, the political process. Beyond the individual level, other factors of Islamic activism include recruiting; resonance of the radical message and the role of the Internet in the globalization of jihad; state-supported *da’wa*; and ongoing territorial conflicts such as in Palestine, Iraq, Chechnya, Afghanistan, and Kashmir, which many Muslims perceive as Islamic conflicts.

Saudi proselytization in the past forty years has played a crucial role in spreading Islamic awareness among Muslims worldwide. The Saudis have spread *da’wa* through their funding of educational institutions, developmental projects, and international Islamic NGOs. Underlying this effort has been a pact that Al Saud had forged with the Wahhabi al-Shaykh family early in the twentieth century, which allowed Al Saud to rule Saudi Arabia as they see fit but designated the Wahhabi clerical establishment the moral guardian of Saudi Islam. Under this arrangement, Wahhabi Islam would govern the moral fabric of Saudi society and would underpin Saudi Arabia’s international posture.

In the late 1960s the late King Faysal made Islamic *da’wa* a cardinal principle of Saudi foreign policy, with the aim of using Islam to fight communism and secular Arab nationalism, which

at the time was spearheaded by Gamal Abd al-Nasir of Egypt. Faysal helped establish the Organization of the Islamic Conference and later on several international Islamic NGOs, beginning with the Muslim World League (MWL), or al-Rabita as it is known throughout the Muslim world, the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), al-Haramayn, and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth. Saudi Arabia began to finance *da'wa* through these organizations and spread the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam. These NGOs, most of which are headquartered in Saudi Arabia and neighboring Gulf Arab countries, also offered scholarships to students in Muslim countries to study at Saudi Islamic universities, including the Imam Muhammad University in Riyadh, the Um al-Qura University in Mecca, and the Islamic University in Medina. Upon graduation, these students would go back to their countries to teach in Islamic schools and preach in mosques.

The Al Saud have taken another look at this type of proselytization and its inadvertent role in contributing to nurturing a violent jihadist mentality among the youth. Since the May 12, 2003, terrorist bombings in Saudi Arabia (which the Al Saud have described as their 9/11), the ruling family has reigned in extremist clerics, suggesting that the Al Saud understood that their homegrown radicals were threatening their internal stability as well as attracting unwelcome external attention. However, since the Iraq war and the ascendance of Shia power in that country at the expense of Sunnis, Saudi Arabia has tolerated, and in some cases financed, Sunni jihad in Iraq against the Shia.

I have visited numerous Qur'anic *madrasas* and other Islamic schools throughout the Muslim world financed by Saudi NGOs, especially MWL and IIRO. These NGOs also funded many mosques, libraries and printshops, and even agricultural programs. Most of the Qur'ans that are used in mosques in many Muslim countries are printed in Saudi Arabia and are distributed free of charge. An imam in Western Australia told me on a visit to his mosque he had to send quarterly reports about the mosque activities (programs, student enrollment, number of converts, etc.) to the Muslim World League office in Melbourne

and from there to the main office in Mecca. Several interlocutors in Malaysia, Albania, Uzbekistan, Tunisia, and Nigeria said they either studied in Saudi universities or know of others who have studied there. Traditionally, mainstream Muslim students have studied at al-Azhar University in Cairo, the oldest functioning Islamic university in the world.

Right after the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, Saudi Arabia energized its *da'wa* efforts to combat the proselytization activities of the Iranian supported Shia Ahl al-Bayt NGO, in other parts of the Muslim world, especially in Africa. Because most Muslims are Sunnis and because of the largesse of Saudi money, Iranian-supported Shia proselytization did not take root and diminished significantly by the end of the 1990s. Nigeria is a case in point. From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, Iranian influence spread rapidly in the northern part of the country through the Iranian-supported Zakzaki group. However, by the late 1990s, Zakzaki lost influence, and Saudi-supported conservative Sunni ideology became dominant, including among high school and college students. One could see the IIRO logo displayed in numerous villages and towns across the Nigerian landscape in the north. Saudi NGOs also provided free food during the month of Ramadan, drilled wells for agricultural projects, and distributed food and other assistance to needy families during 'Id al-Fitr and 'Id al-Adha, Sunni Islam's two most important religious feasts.

In the past half decade, however, several government officials in Arab and non-Arab Muslim majority and Muslim minority countries—for example, Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia, Tunisia, Kenya, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Singapore, Thailand, India, and Indonesia—told me of their concern about the pervasive Wahhabi-Salafi influence among their Muslim communities. To combat this trend, these officials began to send students to study Islam at universities, including in Turkey, Malaysia, Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt, which they considered more “open-minded” than Saudi universities. Some of these officials admitted, however, that, once their students leave the country, they have no way of monitoring their foreign travel, unless they study abroad on government scholarship; students who finance their own

education are generally beyond government supervision. In addition to Saudi-financed education, officials in these countries also complained about the Salafi proselytization through Saudi-funded religious satellite television stations such as *ʿIqraʿ*. The curriculum at Saudi universities is saturated with courses in Arabic language and literature, Islamic history, jurisprudence, Hadith, and philosophy, and when students graduate with a concentration in these subjects, they find themselves unqualified to compete for jobs in the modern economy. Many of them become unemployed, continue to live at home, and are unable to get married and have their own home. They become frustrated, angry, and develop low self-esteem. The only jobs available to many of them are teaching in Islamic schools and preaching. A highly successful Saudi industrialist told me that when the Saudi government ordered businesses to “Saudize” the labor force, that is, to hire Saudis rather than expatriates, he personally reviewed resumes of applicants and to his dismay discovered that “only one in a hundred was qualified to work in his businesses.”

EDUCATION AND ISLAMIZATION

Education is a key factor in the growth of Islamization. Grade school and high school textbooks in the Arab world and other Muslim countries are replete with Islamic references and play a major role in socializing young children into a certain vision of Islam and of Islam’s relations with non-Muslims. Textbooks in selected Arab countries inculcate schoolchildren with an Islamic worldview strongly grounded in the Qur’an and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad and the first four “rightly guided” caliphs after him. Although the books vary from one country to the next—with Saudi Arabia the most conservative and Morocco the least—they exhibit common characteristics. First, Islamic teachings—whether the Wahhabi doctrine in Saudi Arabia or al-Azhar teachings in Egypt—are presented in the textbooks as infallible sources of individual behavior, human interaction, and relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. Second, the textbooks identify the enemies of Islam and

the Arabs as the Jews, for “deception against the Prophet” in Medina in the seventh century and their “occupation of Jerusalem” today; Christian “Crusaders”; Western colonialism; and Zionism. Third, the textbooks teach that Islam underpins all learning and the pursuit of knowledge, whether in history, philosophy, the sciences, or Arabic language and literature; that Islam is the source of political legitimacy; and that Islamic concepts of consultation (*shura*) and allegiance (*bay'a*) form the basis of good governance.

High school social studies textbooks in some of these countries, much like grade school books, teach students that Islam, Arab nationalism, patriotism, and the struggle of the Palestinian people are inexorably linked. Regardless of the peace treaties and economic and security arrangements some of these states, especially Egypt and Jordan, have signed with Israel, the textbooks do not recognize the existence of the Jewish state, do not show it on their geography maps, and view the establishment of Israel as an unjust usurpation of Arab lands. The textbooks present Arab high school students with a static picture of society based on the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad's experiences in seventh-century Arabia and do not encourage any debate of the revealed word or the traditions of the Prophet. It is as if the door of reasoning (*ijtihad*), once open to different interpretations of Islamic dogma, has been permanently closed, and neither regimes nor the religious establishment (*'ulama*) wishes to see it open.

Arab youths inculcated with ideas from these textbooks face an almost irreconcilable dichotomy between the traditional teachings of Islam as presented in the textbooks and the onslaught of new ideas emanating from globalization, satellite television, the Internet, political and economic reform movements, and worldwide impulses toward democratization. A survey of selected textbooks leads one to conclude that a curriculum grounded in a rigid interpretation of Islam in societies desperately striving for economic progress and in the midst of continued sectarian violence among Muslims and between Muslims and the West paves the way for violent confrontations between Muslim youth and the perceived enemies of Islam. In

nations rife with increasing unemployment and a deepening gap between rich and poor—in an environment of regime neglect, corruption, and repression—these textbooks will inevitably push some segments of the rising generation to become radicalized and susceptible to Bin Ladin’s message that the United States is the enemy of Islam.

In response to domestic and international demands for reform, Arab regimes began to talk about reform in areas like economics and education, but a wide gap remains between words and deeds. Educational reform in some countries has resulted in the introduction of more “modern” subjects in the curriculum and teacher training, but to address the narrow mind-set taught in some of these textbooks, the content of the textbooks must be revised toward promoting pluralism and inclusiveness and a more tolerant view of other religions and ethnic groups. Arab reformers continue to hammer on the theme of educational reform, and Arab regimes continue to talk the talk of reform. However, as the religious establishment—al-Azhar *‘ulama* in Egypt and Salafi-Wahhabi clerics in Saudi Arabia—control the curriculum and have the final say on the content of government textbooks, pro-reform bureaucrats in ministries of education face an uphill battle in curricular reform. When I asked a senior education ministry official in a Gulf Arab country about the status of textbook reform, he said, “We are proceeding on the path of reform, and *inshallah* [God willing] we will get there soon.” When I related this exchange to a secular, pro-reform liberal thinker in the same country, he quipped, “*inshallah* reminds him of the Spanish word *mañana* but doesn’t have the same sense of urgency!”

It should be pointed out however that several Arab states have embarked on major projects to revise their textbooks by replacing previous Qur’anic citations with others that are less exclusive and more tolerant. Recent textbook editions, especially in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, reflect some of the revisions. It is interesting to note, however, that the geography textbooks, even the new editions, in several of these countries still omit Israel from their maps of the Middle East and show “Palestine” covering the land between the Jordan

River and the Mediterranean Sea. Saudi textbooks, understandably, continue to espouse the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam, which tends to encourage Muslims to eschew relations with non-Muslims.

SHIA ACTIVISM

Much of our discussion of Islamization thus far applies to Sunni Islam; in recent years, however, Shia activism has become more pronounced in the Middle East. The defeat of Saddam Husayn and the Sunni regime in Iraq and the rise of Shia political power in that country have empowered the Shia not only in Iraq but across the greater Middle East. The “Arc of Shia resurgence,” as some Sunni Arab leaders have described it, stretches from Lebanon to Pakistan and cuts across Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Afghanistan. Although they constitute 10 to 15 percent of the 1.4 billion Muslims worldwide, the Shia in recent centuries have controlled only one country, Iran. Iraq became the second country to come under Shia control. The parliamentary elections in Bahrain in November 2006, where the Shia are also a majority of the population, resulted in the Shia bloc al-Wifaq winning seventeen seats in the forty-seat lower house of the national legislature. Al-Wifaq boycotted the 2002 election but was urged to participate in this election by Shia religious leaders, including Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husayni Sistani. The two Sunni groups (the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis), which were supported by the al-Khalifa Sunni ruling family, won a total of twelve seats. The Shia success at the polls occurred despite some election irregularities and the bussing in of recently naturalized Sunni citizens to polling places. Shia critics described this attempt by the government as “political citizenship” designed to alter the demographic composition of the country, according to media reports. The election results offer another example of the continuing Islamization of Arab politics and of the rising Shia political power. It is interesting to note that the pro-democracy secular, nationalist action group did not win even one seat. A Shia parliamentarian in Bahrain said after the election, “If free elections are held any-

where in the Middle East, Islamic groups would win.” Votes in Bahrain were cast principally along sectarian lines, a distressing phenomenon that is becoming more apparent in Arab politics since the invasion of Iraq. The election was another indication of the rising political power of the Shia as a voice for democracy in Sunni-controlled states.

Shia political leaders across the region have concluded that the democratic process could be an effective tool to lead them to power, either as a majority (Iraq and Bahrain) or as influential minorities (Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and elsewhere). These leaders have emerged as the most vocal advocates of democracy, a fact that has alarmed many Sunni authoritarian regimes. Shia political leaders in Iraq and Bahrain have also learned that their overt commitment to democracy finds resonance in the West. American policymakers have initially endorsed the newly articulated Shia democracy platform in the belief that it would be inclusive and pluralistic; however, this endorsement cooled off considerably once they realized that Shia democracy in Iraq began to systematically exclude Sunnis from the post-Saddam political order and deny them access to economic opportunity and political power.

Shia political revival as a result of Iraq, Hizballah's ability to survive Israel's military assault on Lebanon in the summer of 2006, and a resurgence of Iran as a key regional power have alarmed many Sunni Muslims and leaders in the region, especially as some of these leaders have hitched their wagon to the United States. More and more statements and declarations by Sunni Muslims, moderate thinkers and radical clerics alike, have been published denouncing the “sectarian killings” of Sunnis in Iraq and growing Shia proselytization (*tashayyu'* or Shiafication) in Sunni communities, including in Egypt, Sudan, Yemen, and elsewhere. For the first time in centuries, Shia political activism is being conducted in the forefront of Middle East politics without being afraid of repression by the Sunni majority, resulting in new debates, a deepening divide between Islam's two primary sects, and potential conflicts within Islam. Several examples illustrate the growing rift between Sunnis and Shia and the increasing vitriol by Sunni groups and clerics against

the Shia. A Saudi religious scholar who teaches Islamic studies at the King Saud University sent a letter to the al-Azhar University in Cairo on April 19, 2007, urging the *‘ulama* in that institution to realize the dangers of growing “Shia penetration” in Egypt and the resulting threats of social and sectarian conflicts. A violent Sunni-Shia altercation occurred at the Cairo Book Exhibit on February 1, 2007, which reflected the growing anger among some Sunnis about the perceived “Shiafication” in Sunni communities. The Sudanese Supreme Council of Muslim Groups—which includes Ansar al-Sunna, the Muslim Brotherhood, and other Sunni organizations—warned the Sudanese government and people on December 6, 2006, against the active “Shiafication” efforts by Shia proselytizers in Sudan. The Supreme Council accused Iran of driving and financing this effort and claimed that whole villages have adopted Shia Islam and that Shia mosques and prayer places have spread all over Khartoum. The council’s statement described the Shia as not true Muslims and “rejectionists” or *rafida* and demanded the government ban Shia books from entering the country.

Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi in interviews with *al-Masri al-Yaym* newspaper in Egypt on November 27, 2006 and September 9, 2008, stated that he supported Hizballah in its struggle against Israel but opposed Hizballah’s and other Shia groups’ efforts to spread the Shia doctrine among Sunnis. On December 10, 2006, thirty-eight prominent Saudi clerics published a statement decrying the “massacres” and “sectarian cleansing” perpetrated by Iraqi Shia against the Sunnis in that country. The statement called on Sunni Muslims worldwide to support Iraqi Sunnis, renounce the “atrocities” committed against them, and “wake up” to the dangers of the Shia “plots and conspiracies” against the “Muslim *umma*” and said, “We should openly side with our Sunni brothers in Iraq and lend them all appropriate forms of support.” The statement, which presumably would not have been published without Saudi government implicit approval, claimed Shia militias were “killing Sunnis with Iranian and U.S. support.” The statement frequently referred to what it called a “Crusader, Safavi, *rafidi* (rejectionist)” conspiracy—that is, the United States, Iran, and the Shia—and implied that Iraq

currently is under a dual occupation by the United States and Iran. Among the signatories of the statement are Shaykh Abd al-Rahman bin Nasir al-Barrak, Shaykh Safar al-Hawali, Shaykh Nasir al-Umar, Shaykh Ali al-Ghamdi, Shaykh Muhammad al-Qahtani, and Shaykh Salman al-Awda. Two days after the publication of the Saudi statement, Shaykh al-Barrak, the first cleric to sign the Saudi statement, issued a separate and a more extreme and vicious *fatwa* against the Shia. He accused the Shia of duplicity, conniving, and deception and said that “because of their false religion, they are more dangerous to Muslims than Jews and Christians.” He concluded by saying that “the Sunni and Shia *mathhabs* (beliefs) are completely contradictory and cannot be reconciled; the talk of Sunni-Shia rapprochement is utterly false.”

The ongoing sectarian debate within Islam, especially among Muslim intellectuals from both sects, has revolved around the following key questions: Will Sunni-Shia sectarian violence spread to Iraq’s neighboring states and how will Sunni Arab and non-Arab states—for example, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and Pakistan—respond to potential sectarian violence and *fitna* in their societies as a result of growing Shia political assertiveness? What role will Sunni and Shia thinkers play in toning down sectarian vitriol and push for sectarian rapprochement over the next five years? Beyond domestic sectarian violence, will the region witness the formation of new regional alignments driven by Sunni-Shia sectarianism and Arab-Persian tensions reflecting a sense of “Sunni solidarity” and Shia assertiveness? Will such alignments enable conservative Saudi radical Salafi clerics to preach to their followers a new “jihad” against their Shia co-religionists? And will this type of violence lead to a Saudi-Iranian confrontation? Although the summer 2006 Lebanon war enhanced Hizballah’s prestige as an Arab “resistance” or *muqawama* movement against Israel, will increased Sunni-Shia conflicts push Sunni Arab nationalists to alter their view of Hizballah, perceiving it instead as a conduit for Shia Iran? Finally, what implications will these developments have for the United States and its standing and influence in the region as well as for Israel? Middle East analysts generally agree that Iran is not interested

in fomenting sectarian violence in the region because an unstable Middle East would not serve Iran's strategic interests. The military support that certain elements within the Iranian regime have been providing the insurgency in Iraq aims at forcing the United States to terminate its occupation because America's massive military presence in Iraq and throughout the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea is not comforting to the leaders in Tehran. Similarly, Iran's support of Hizballah in Lebanon is another extension of Iran's pursuit of its regional geopolitical interests. Most analysts equally agree that Iran's approach to foreign policy seems to reflect a sense of pragmatism rather than a strict adherence to Shia theology or religious ideology. This argument might also explain Iran's support of some Sunni "resistance" or jihadist groups despite its opposition to the global millenarian radical Sunni ideology of al-Qa'ida.

ISLAMIC POLITICAL PARTY POLITICS

The frequent participation of Islamic political parties across the Muslim world in national legislative elections and their behavior after being elected are indicators of their commitment to the democratic process and their pragmatic approach to politics and political change. None of those parties, either during the electoral campaign or after being elected, has demanded that their Islamic ideology dominate the political system or that *Sharia* be installed as the source of legislation in their respective countries. When I asked representatives of these parties over the years about their electoral strategies and how they reconciled their Islamic ideology with a Western brand of secular democracy, they frequently made three central points to buttress their position: first, Islam is not inimical to democracy ("Islamic dictators are," a Muslim contact told me); second, they do not intend to use the democratic process to install *Sharia* by force or through clever parliamentary maneuverings ("if the majority of the people decides to opt for *Sharia*, they would support it but will not spearhead a movement on behalf of *Sharia*," another interlocutor told me); and, third, these parties should be judged by their performance in national legislatures, not by their ideol-

ogy. A Western-educated Muslim activist asked, “Why is it okay for you to judge Christian and other ideological political parties by their performance as compared to their official ideology but it’s not okay to do the same with Islamic parties?”

Analysis of the behavior of some of these parties, whether they are a majority in the national legislature as in the case of AKP in Turkey or Hamas in Palestine or a minority in national legislatures as in the case of several Islamic political parties (Hizballah in Lebanon, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Islamic Party of Malaysia, Prosperous Justice Party in Indonesia, Justice and Development in Morocco, the Islamic Constitutional Movement in Kuwait, and al-Wifaq in Bahrain), indicates that these parties engage in legislative processes like other so-called secular political parties, compromise over the passage of bills, and for the most part focus on bread-and-butter issues that are of concern to their constituents. As a Hamas parliamentarian once said, “We are too busy focusing on providing jobs, electricity, home cooking fuel, travel permits, and garbage collection and have no time to promote *Sharia*.” However, party activists in several countries indicated they viewed *Sharia* as the moral underpinning of society and a guide for individual and group behavior. A Muslim Brotherhood member in Egypt told me that most of the issues his organization raises in and out of parliament are not “really Islamic.” He said they have articulated an agenda of issues that transcend the “Islamic street,” including the end to corruption, regime repression, and violations of human rights; freedoms of speech, assembly, and organization; solutions to unemployment and poverty; and social and public services. He added these and other issues of “poor governance” will occupy Islamic parties for years to come.

Legislative elections in recent years in Palestinian territories, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Malaysia, Indonesia, Morocco, and Bahrain and municipal elections in Saudi Arabia clearly indicate that Islamic political groups and parties are moving aggressively toward political participation regardless of the nature of the regime. Contrast this with the position that some of these groups took in the early 1990s against participating in politics because of what they saw then as the “un-Islamic” behavior of some re-

gimes. In the Arab world, Islamic political parties and groups are already serving in national legislatures in Kuwait, Yemen, Jordan, Bahrain, Lebanon, Iraq, and Morocco. In the wider Islamic world, Islamic parties are actively involved in the political process in Turkey, Sudan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Shia political groups, as was pointed out, have also expanded their political participation in Iraq, Lebanon, Kuwait, and Bahrain. Of course, the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 created the first Shia dominated government in the region in centuries.

Among the reasons that have contributed to the electoral success of Islamic groups are the failure of secular nationalist elites to organize politically around themes that appeal to the electorate and their ideological marginalization because of their association with discredited ruling regimes. These elites have in recent decades joined forces with authoritarian governments, whether military, civilian, or dynastic; benefited from access to the economic largesse of the state; and, in turn, acquiesced in many of the top-down policies designed to preserve authoritarian regime rule. Consequently, these elites, like many of the regimes they have supported, have lost their legitimacy, and when the political space provided an opening, though narrow and highly prescribed, Islamic parties became more appealing to the average voter. A Turkish Muslim activist admitted to me in a conversation in the mid-1990s that the Refah Islamic Party received many votes that were cast against the corruption, mismanagement, and poor economic policies of the ruling party. So was the case with voters in Palestine, where many of the ballots cast for Hamas reflected the voters' anger against the corruption, mismanagement, and nepotism of the Palestinian Authority that was installed as part of the Oslo Accords in 1993.

The weakening of the Middle Eastern state and its inability to provide for the well-being of its citizens in the past two decades have also contributed to the success of Islamic parties at the polls. As the Arab Islamic electorate becomes more critical of U.S. policy in the greater Middle East and of Arab and Muslim regimes' support of this policy—whether toward Iraq, Iran, or Palestine—popular anger has often translated into votes for Is-

lamic parties. Finally, the Hamas electoral victory in Palestine and the ensuing U.S. refusal to engage the Hamas-led government have inadvertently strengthened Islamic parties' claim that they are the new democrats in the region. It is important to note that much diversity characterizes the rise and electoral successes of these groups. Leadership, local conditions in each country, indigenous agendas, and the regional and international political, security, and economic contexts have influenced the electoral behavior and success of Islamic political parties and groups at the ballot box. These groups, whether in Baghdad, Gaza, or Kuala Lumpur, are heavily attuned to their local conditions and experiences and are charting a postelection course that reflects these experiences.

To summarize, the history of Islamic political parties in the Middle East region in the past half century is replete with sloganeering about the need to establish a *Sharia*-based society predicated on Islamic values, social mores, and theological guidelines. However, once these parties became part of the political process, they competed for votes, moderated their message, cooperated with other, mostly secular groups to pass legislation, and generally adopted a pragmatic attitude toward governance. In two recent parliamentary elections, Muslim Brotherhood candidates ran as “independent” under the “Islam is the solution” platform. The “parties of God” have at long last decided to set aside their commitment to “divine rule” (*hukm*) and play in the sandbox of the “democracy of man”—a strategic shift that mainstream Muslims have strongly endorsed and radical Muslims violently rejected. Arab and Muslim regimes have yet to comprehend this shift, embrace it, and exploit it in the furtherance of genuine political reform and democratization in the region.

ISLAMIC ACTIVISM, CIA BRIEFINGS, AND U.S. POLICY RESPONSES

The Central Intelligence Agency and other entities in the U.S. intelligence community became aware of the emerging trends of political activism and the Islamization of Middle Eastern

politics almost two decades ago and frequently briefed these trends to senior policymakers. In the past two decades, but especially since September 11, 2001, several senior analysts and I participated in a series of briefings designed to inform senior policymakers in the executive and legislative branches on the rise of Islamic activism, the meaning and implications of these trends, and the long-term trajectory of this phenomenon. As the book points out, reaching out to the Muslim world should include strategies for engaging mainstream Islamic political parties and groups and reestablishing formal contacts with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood that were halted in the late 1990s in response to objections from the Egyptian government. The Directorate of Intelligence provided its analysis of political Islam and the growing phenomenon of Islamic activism to policymakers through articles in the President's Daily Brief (PDB), strategic papers, trip reports, responses to inquiries or taskings from policymakers, and high-level briefings (which I provided on several occasions). The Directorate of Intelligence had also organized annual academic meetings for U.S. government analysts and managers from the intelligence and policy communities to explore different facets—legal, economic, cultural, educational, religious—of Islamic activism.

The analysis we provided focused on a few key topics, including the rise of political activism across the Muslim world; the differences among the various forms of activism; the thinkers of the different movements, both moderate and radical; the changing ideologies of the various parties and groups; the political landscape in different political, cultural, economic, and social environments in which Islamic political parties have operated; and the historical underpinnings of some of these developments. We also briefed on Islamic civil society institutions and their role in promoting Islamic activism, debates within Islam about the future direction of the faith, and the role of education in various Muslim countries and its role in nurturing a particular worldview among Muslim youth. Briefings and analytic products highlighted three key aspects for policymakers: first, there is no such a thing as one Islamic world, one Islamic “street,” or one Islamic society, but there are many; second, much of the

Islamic activism we observed was a benign form of political involvement and not a threat to the West or to the United States, but that the threat came from a small minority that was bent on radicalism and potential conflict with the non-Muslim world; and, third, much of the activism focused on domestic agendas, whether in Egypt or Malaysia, and was not connected to or driven by global Islamic activism, jihad, or terrorism. The intelligence community, having nurtured over the years a deep expertise in Muslim societies, cultures, historical experiences, and languages, offered senior policymakers a wealth of information in this area on a regular basis. After 9/11, our briefings and other analytic products divided Islamic activism into two broad categories: a small percentage of Islamic activists who preach a radical agenda and engaged in terrorism; and a vast majority of activists who advocate gradual change through existing political systems and who have adopted a pragmatic approach to politics. We roughly estimated the first group at 1–2 percent; the other at 98–99 percent. The greatest challenge the United States faces is how to reach out to the vast majority of Muslims while relentlessly pursuing those who commit acts of terror.

Unfortunately, before 9/11 senior policymakers did not show much interest in the topic beyond focusing on specific terrorist acts and unilateral relations with Muslim states. Although right after 9/11 the country understandably focused heavily on terrorism and the terrorists, in subsequent years the focus has changed very little. In senior-level briefings CIA analysts gave at the White House, to the National Security Council (NSC), and to Senate and House leaders, especially members of the intelligence committees, we tried to point out the complexity and diversity that characterize the Islamic world and the ongoing debate between the large moderate majority of Muslims and the small minority of radicals. We also briefed senior officials at the NSC and at the State Department on the results of trips we took to Muslim countries and numerous meetings we had with Muslim interlocutors and explained that, according to these interviews, many Muslim activists were committed to political reform and peaceful change through democratization and were seriously interested in engaging the United States on issues of

governance. We cited examples from Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Palestine, Turkey, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and the Balkans where Muslim activists were eager to meet with official and unofficial U.S. visitors and engage them in conversations about democracy. Some Islamic party activists have urged the United States to deal with them directly as potential democrats and not be “duped” by the antidemocratic rhetoric of authoritarian regimes who viewed all Islamic activists as potential terrorists and a threat to regime and, by extension, U.S. security. A Muslim activist in Uzbekistan told me that the Karimov regime views all Muslim oppositionists as “Salafi Wahhabis,” not to be trusted. When an Uzbek official was asked to define what he meant by “Salafi Wahhabis,” he could not. The United States had urged several Arab and Muslim countries to move toward democracy and political reform and make their political systems more inclusive, but they ignored these calls and did not alter their repressive and antidemocratic practices. Security has clearly trumped democracy, and U.S.-Muslim world engagement remains elusive.