

VISION OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN ISLAMIST IDEOLOGY

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Islamism is one of the currents in the political thought of the Islamic world. It considers religion an ideology and uses it in political struggle. Its goal is to develop a model of socio-political development based on Islamic norms. Islamism is a socio-political thought deeply engraved in the minds of the inhabitants of the Near and Middle East and a very popular ideology due to the social order it envisages. For decades, in the Arab Middle East, Islamism as a political movement was pushed down into the political underground, but the events of 2011, referred to as the Arab Spring, have given to Islamist groups, new opportunities to take political action. It is commonly believed that if the Middle East keeps embracing democracy, Islamist organisations will gain access to the systems of the government and, in some cases, could even dominate them. A harbinger of that were the parliamentary elections in Tunisia in September 2011, where the Islamist party Ennahda received the largest number of votes. What model of international relations does Islamism present and what is its vision of the world order?

Ideological Principles

Modern Islamism is derived from the Egyptian Society of Muslim Brothers, also known simply as the Muslim Brotherhood, which was established in 1928 and has survived in deep secrecy as a persecuted underground movement, giving rise to many other similar organisations in other Arab countries of the Middle East. The ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood gave rise to the Muslim terrorist organisations. Forming its conceptions of development, Islamism refers to Islam, to its norms and perception of the functioning of the society. It is very difficult to polemicise against Islamism, since it is, in fact, a dispute over the understanding of the symbols of Muslim culture and religion, and debates on the tactics of political action between Islamists themselves and between Islamists and

non-Islamists often turn into a fight with verses from the Quran and with hadiths and even fatwas, that is legal opinions on the compliance of actual or intended conduct with Muslim law.¹

The vision of international order in Islamism results from the specific perception of the world. In Islamist ideology, the world is theocentric and the Quran, the Holy Book of Islam, is the main source of knowledge about it. The book deals with values and principles which concern all aspects of human life, including social issues and, consequently, the sphere of politics as well. The art of deciphering the meanings and interpreting allegories in the Quran has been long known in Islam as *ta'wil*.² On the one hand, due to the richness of metaphors in the Arabic languages and the mosaic of literary styles in the Quran, *ta'wil* is an art of explaining lexical meanings and, on the other hand, a search for contextual meanings which usually are not directly related to the lexical sense and sometimes can even be its opposite.³ In the Islamist ideology, the art of *ta'wil* mainly comes down to modernising the very context of the Quran's teachings by suggesting the existence of new meanings and references to new circumstances in the lexical content well known to the listeners.⁴

The unquestioned master of the interpretation of the Quran was Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian Islamist ideologist executed in 1966, during an intensive political conflict between the Muslim Brotherhood and the military led by Gamal Abdel Nasser. Qutb is one of the Islamist ideologists who had the most influence on the history of the Muslim world in the twentieth century. His commentary to the Quran published in the multivolume work *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an (In the Shade of the Qur'an)* is still extremely popular in the Muslim world.⁵

In the Islamist view, the world is mono-centric, but temporarily bipolar. The 'monocentrism' is expressed by the fact that Islam is the only religion leading to God and the perfect socio-political system given to mankind by God so that it is introduced on earth. The world is temporarily bipolar, because there persist other religions and social systems. However, as these are false, destructive and faulty, they will be gradually displaced by Islam until they vanish completely. Thus, the dynamics of international relations come down to moving the line between the Islamic world and the non-Islamic world or, in other words, to the 'Islamisation' of the non-Muslim world. This vision of the world refers to the classical views of Muslim jurists of the first centuries of Islam who divided the world into two parts: the so-called house of Islam (*Dar al-Islam*), an area of peace, and the house of war (*Dar al-Harb*), that is, the non-Muslim world.

In Islamist ideology, the history of the world is linear and has a beginning, which is the creation of the world by God, and an end, namely the Day of Judgement. This is a vision of Islam itself, as is the place of the most important event in mankind's

history – Muhammad’s prophetic vision and the birth of a new faith, which was the ultimate Revelation. Islamists also pass a radical judgement – characteristic of Muslim fundamentalism and traditionalism – on the history of the world. To what happened before Islam they refer as *jahiliyyah* – a state of ignorance, darkness and struggle lacking the proper understanding of God. Islam changed that and became the right path to God, a gift which was accepted by those who were aware of this fact with appreciation and gratitude towards God.

Islamism also presents another idea characteristic of Muslim fundamentalism, namely, the concept of the great deformation, the departure of the Muslim community from Muhammad’s teachings on the functioning of the state. This deformation is believed to have happened very early, namely, after the rule of the first four caliphs – Muhammad’s successors as religious and state leaders. The said caliphs ruled in the years 632–661 and are known in the history of Islam as the Righteous or Rightly Guided Caliphs. In that period, the Muslim state was strong and prosperous, with wise leaders and happy subjects. However, this ‘golden age’ did not last long.⁶ Subsequent rulers stopped obeying God’s law. They appropriated power and treated it as their own and their families’ property. They forgot that they were but exponents of God’s will on earth. They believed themselves to be the ultimate lawmakers and not only started modifying God’s law, but also replaced it with law which was alien, unrevealed, and consequently, by definition imperfect and favouring the interests of certain groups instead of the entire community. With time, the rulers became alienated from the societies and in the next centuries the world of Islam was even ruled by foreigners, who only later converted to Islam but never truly understood the essence of its message.⁷

In Islamist interpretation, the history of the world after the emergence of Islam is an endless series of attacks against Islam by its enemies, who have fought it because it is God’s revelation and who, consequently, are in fact not strictly the enemies of Islam, but of God himself. Thus, fighting with Islam is fighting with God, which only the forces of evil and darkness, the forces of Satan can do. These were the crusaders, who pretended to defend the true faith, even though it is common knowledge that Christianity is not a true faith, since the disciples of Jesus corrupted the Revelation, the moment they mistook their master to be the Son of God. After the crusaders came a new enemy, much more powerful than the previous one, namely colonialism. Faced with the Muslims’ steadfast defence of their faith, colonialism had to yield, but then it created a new tool to put pressure on the Islamic world – Zionism. It took root in the very heart of the Muslim homeland and its actions are directed not only against the material interests of the Islamic nation, but also against the very Muslim faith. In the Islamist ideology we find the characteristic thought that the attacks against Islam

are increasing alongside the increasing need to tell the world about the true Revelation provided to mankind by God through Muhammad. The struggle between the forces of God and the forces of Satan turns into a global conflict and becomes more and more intensive, which is a sign for all true Muslims that they must meet the challenge and prepare for the final battle.⁸

The West as the Enemy

Criticism of the West as the chief enemy is an important and permanent element of Islamist ideology. It concerns both the policy of the Western states towards the Islamic world and Western socio-political thought. Within several decades of the existence of Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist organisations, this criticism has undergone an evolution. Some Islamist ideologists softened the blade of criticism by establishing the moderate current and focusing on criticising not the West itself, but its policy towards the Muslim world. Others, in turn, sharpened it, criticising the West as the enemy of the forces of God and of the Revelation itself.

In this respect, radical Islamism refers to Sayyid Qutb, who formulated the conclusion of degeneration of the Western civilisation and its imminent collapse. Qutb, who knew the West from personal experience as he spent some time working and studying in the USA, ultimately rejected the Western secular liberalism, as well as the two governance systems present in Europe, namely, capitalism and communism. The Egyptian ideologist associated the West with the Biblical Pharaoh from the story about Moses.⁹ Several suras of the Quran speak of Moses: Sura 2: 'Baqara' (verses 47–73), Sura 7: 'A'rāf' (103–162), Sura 10: 'Yūnus' (74–92), Sura 20: 'Tā-Ha' (9–98), Sura 26: 'Shu'arāa' (10–69), Sura 27: 'Naml' (7–14), and Sura 28: 'Qasas' (1–42). The Quran also emphasises the figure of the Pharaoh, whom Moses convinces to accept his prophetic mission and to whom he speaks in the following words: 'O Pharaoh! I am an apostle from the Lord of the Worlds' (7: 104). The Israeli people are oppressed by the Pharaoh ['We have had (nothing but) trouble, before and after thou camest to us'–7: 129], but for this God punishes the Pharaoh and his people ['We punished the people of Pharaoh with years (of drought) and shortness of crops'–7: 130].¹⁰

Qutb believed that the confrontation between Moses and the Pharaoh resembled the current situation in the world. The difference was that the present-day tyrants were more ruthless. The Pharaoh had a conversation with Moses and wanted to make sure whether Moses really was such a great prophet, as he so claimed. The tyrants of the twentieth century do not have even the slightest doubts about the rightness of their beliefs and direct all their power against those who follow the path laid out by God. Torture, persecution, enslavement, and falsehood – this is what one can expect from

the rulers who do not recognise the power of God. The only thing that can prevent this is resolute opposition to the usurpers. However, mobilisation of the people of the true faith against the usurper power should be diametrically different than in the times to which the story of Moses refers. The opposition to tyrants must be universal and radical, says Qutb, as God is on our side and will punish the present day tyrants the same way He punished the Pharaoh and his people.¹¹

Categorical anti-Occidentalism is a very important premise of the Islamist vision of international relations. Hasan al-Banna, the creator of the Muslim Brotherhood, was deeply troubled by the influence of the West on the traditional lifestyle in the Muslim countries. The new ideas, nihilist from his point of view, which seeped to the Arab Middle East from Europe and which were taking root in the Egyptian society, were leading him to the conclusion that the Islamic world was in a state of collapse and was losing its cultural identity. For al-Banna, the transformations taking place in Turkey under Mustafa Kemal, and particularly the abolition of the institution of the caliphate, were proof that the Western world intended to destroy the Muslim Middle East by depriving it of its traditional state system and institutions.¹²

He believed the state of the Muslim society to be critical. The reason for this was the fact that it was developing in the wrong manner and was heading in the wrong direction. According to al-Banna, in the 1930s Egypt was at a crossroads and faced with two paths – the path of the West and the path of Islam. The Western civilisation was in a state of collapse and compromised itself.¹³ He saw some positive elements in the Western civilisation (understood as the capitalist countries and the Soviet Union), such as respecting the rights of the individual, the right of workers to defend their interests, the care for the poor, and the abolishing of class divisions in the socialist system, but generally he rejected it as not suiting the socio-political concept of Islam due to the Western civilisation's gradual secularisation and domination of material values over the spiritual ones. This was leading to a depravation of the society and its collapse. The founder of the Muslim Brotherhood pointed to the example of those Arab countries which had yielded to the Western influence and when he highlighted their poor social and economic condition he believed the reasons for this situation to be related to this Western influence. Al-Banna stressed many times that the sources for a revival of the Egyptian society would be found not in the West, but in the East.¹⁴

A very determined anti-Occidentalism is visible in the works of Sayyid Qutb. Qutb closely followed the events taking place in Palestine since the 1930s and preceding the division of the country and the establishment of Israel. He was convinced that the West, and particularly the United States, was not neutral towards Palestine and that it sided with Israel. This conviction had a strong influence on his views on the Western

model of development. He wrote that the West has created a society of inequalities and social pathologies. He did not perceive any significant differences between socialism and capitalism in the 'Western path'. He did not treat socialism and capitalism as different methods of production, but evaluated them from the point of view of ideology and the role of religion in the given system. From this point of view, the ideologies of the bourgeois state and socialist ideology were equally materialist and, consequently, heathen. According to Qutb, communist ideology with its materialist interpretation of history, atheism and class struggle was a natural phase in the development of the materialist Western civilisation; what made it different from the other European ideologies was not the manner but the scale of perceiving the problems and the type of organisational solutions.¹⁵

For Qutb, the West was a Christian-Jewish environment. Therefore, when writing about the West, he often referred to these verses of the Quran which spoke of Christians and Jews. He focused especially on the verses 109 and 120 from Sura 2, which are supposed to confirm his conviction of the eternal intention of Christians and Jews to destroy Islam. These verses were interpreted in the same way by Muslims in the time of the crusades and were to warn Muslims against following the path proposed by Christianity and Judaism.¹⁶ Qutb strengthened his arguments supporting this interpretation by referring to the policy of colonialism towards the Islamic countries and to the activities of Zionism in Palestine. Orientalists, who promoted a distorted image of Islam and Muslims, were also enemies of Islam. Referring to this, he wrote that it was unthinkable that Muslims would learn about their own religion and cultural heritage from books written by Jewish orientalists.¹⁷

In Qutb's opinion, the independence of Islam's political thought from capitalist and socialist systems came down to the fact that, as a consequence of the different conditions in which Christianity and Islam were born, politics and religion in Islam are inseparable.¹⁸ Christianity emerged when Roman laws were in force and the rules of conduct in secular matters had been set for a long time. Thus, Christ's teachings focused on the relations between man and God, leaving the relations between people and the state to the existing law. As for Islam, the situation was diametrically different. It propagated the inseparability of religion and the state and regulated all relations, both the spiritual and the secular. Consequently, separating religion from politics in Islam is equal to depriving it of its very essence.¹⁹ Qutb believes that the materialist ideologies of the West were experiencing a deep crisis and were in a state of collapse. The struggle between them was nearing an end. At the same time, a new struggle was starting, a struggle of two main ideas of the modern world: the humanist idea, that is Islam, and the materialist idea, represented by communism as the highest stage of its

development.²⁰ Qutb was convinced that the Muslim system would take the place of the dying materialist systems. He wrote of it explicitly as a worldwide system, to which the entire humanity was heading, and not a regional system within what was referred to as the Arab world, for it was, he believed, a system which met the needs of mankind to a greater degree than any other system.²¹

The Moderate Current and the Concept of New Order

In the 1990s, there was a considerable shift in the views of Islamist ideologists on the relations with the West, that is, on the vision of the world order. The groups of 'centrist' or 'new' Islamists, which started forming in many Arab countries, rejected the position that the processes originating in the West should simply be ignored. Furthermore, they openly said that the world of Islam could not turn away from what was happening in the world and had to face the development-related challenges of modernity. They proposed devising a native 'national development programme', which would allow, on the one hand, to participate in the processes of globalisation and, on the other, to prevent surrendering to the dictate of world superpowers and international financial institutions. Fahmi Huwaidi, an Egyptian author and the leading expert of the so-called new Islamism, writes that the Muslim reflection on the nature of the West is essential for the future of Islam, as understanding the West will allow Muslims to comprehend the nature of Islam itself and to learn at which stage of development the Muslim world now is.²²

Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a well-known interpreter of the Quran and the leading ideologist of Islamism, believes that globalisation is a new era and a great challenge to the Islamic identity and the Muslim religious attitudes. He writes that in the past epochs, Muslims ignored the West; they talked with each other and were not even aware that someone might hear them. But now Muslims should not confine themselves to their own group. According to the author, such attitudes would be dangerous and detrimental, as in the present times we cannot fail to notice that we are not alone in the world, but there are others there as well. There are other religions and civilisations apart from Islam. Today, no society can afford to be in isolation or shut itself away.²³

Al-Qaradawi suggests a departure from traditional terminology in the perception of the followers of different religions. He also proposes not to call non-Muslims the 'unfaithful' (*kuffar*) anymore and to refer to them simply as 'non-Muslims' (*ghajru muslimin*); and consequently, to stop calling Christians and Jews living in Muslim countries 'the people under protection' (*ahl al-dhimma*) and simply refer to them as 'citizens' (*muwatinun*). This proposal meant that the century-old tradition, firmly rooted in the Muslim consciousness, would be discarded. Al-Qaradawi quotes arguments with

much weight to support his view. First, he names the verses 83–86 from Sura 6: ‘An’ m’, in which God speaks to the Muslims that the folk of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, John and Jesus were guided by God and followed God’s path. Then he refers to the same Sura to show the ambiguity of the term *kafir* (idolater). Its principal meaning is a man who does not believe in God and life eternal. While Christians and Jews, even though they do not believe in Muhammad’s mission, believe in God and in the Day of Judgement. Islam refers to them as *ahl al-kitab*, that is the ‘people of the book’, as they have experienced God’s Revelation. Now, can one really call them idolaters (*kuffar*), asks al-Qaradawi. Another name the Muslims give to Christians and Jews is *ahl al-dhimma*, or the ‘people of the dhimma’. This term originated in the early history of Islam and refers to those who were under the protection of Islam as non-Muslims. Al-Qaradawi stresses that this term is not offensive to Christians and Jews, but if the Egyptian Copts do not wish to be referred to in this way, their will should be honoured and they should be simply called ‘citizens’ (*muwatinun*).²⁴

Openness towards the West, neither uncritical nor unconditional, is a characteristic feature of the moderate Islamist thought. Muhammad al-Ghazali, the Egyptian religious thinkers (died in 1996), believed that the human civilisation made a huge progress in the development of knowledge, technical discoveries and production solutions, and that it would be a mistake to believe that mankind owes the current level of development solely to the Islamic civilisation; it is the work of the entire mankind, the achievement of the human mind in general. He further stated that the world civilisation was a common good of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, and atheists – that is those who do not believe in God – as all they sit down at the common negotiations table at the UN to debate on the matters of the world. This was praiseworthy, he believed.²⁵ At the same time, al-Ghazali referred to the example of al-Afghani and Abduh, great reformers of Islam who did not reject the Western civilisation and apart from its mistakes, they also saw the features which were positive for Islam.²⁶

An interesting view on the state of the development of the world and the relations with the West has been formulated by Amru Khaled. This well-known Muslim preacher, whose webpages are followed and read by hundreds of millions of Muslims speaks about the contemporary world, its problems and what kind of a person one should be. The starting point of his vision is the conviction that the world of Islam is in a state of collapse and that this state should be changed. Amru Khaled is familiar with the development indicators calculated by the United Nations Development Programme, which show that the Arab world is lagging behind in terms of development, that it has high illiteracy and unemployment rates, that Arabs live shorter than Americans, that they have worse conditions for education and less free time. While speaking about this,

the preacher also points out that while this state is a legacy of colonialism, it is also a result of the low involvement of Muslims in reforming their countries. This is where his views differ from those of many ideologists in the world of Islam, who believe all contemporary evil to result from colonialism and the machinations of the global imperialism. For example, Khaled points out that in the USA, there are 4,000 engineers per 1 million of inhabitants, while in the Arab countries there are only 300. The situation is similar with the number of physicians, newspapers and computers. Khaled believes that any improvement in this field depends largely on the Muslims themselves and their governments. He speaks sharp and emphatic words about the Muslim world, claiming that Muslims only take but give nothing in return, that they are the parasites of the world. While doing this he also cites the hadith in which Muhammad said that those who make an effort to contribute to the common good are better than those who remain idle and only think about their own comfort.²⁷

International Order and the Governance System

In Islamist ideology, international relations are the sphere in which the Muslim state performs its tasks. Therefore, in order to understand the vision of these relations, it is important to know what the Islamist ideologists consider the desirable system of ruling and governing in an era of globalisation. This refers to both the political philosophy and the individual solutions of state organisation. Al-Ghazali and the other 'centrists' have been the proponents of the solution they call the 'Islamic solution' (*al-hal al-Islami*). It is supposed to combine the unique Muslim approach to development with the approaches representing the experience of other cultures. It is also very important that the Islamic solution creates only the general framework for social development on the basis of Islam. Individual solutions can and surely will be different, depending on specific historical and political factors in the individual countries of the Muslim world. What is suitable for Algeria, Syria or Jordan does not necessarily have to be suitable for Egypt, wrote Fahmi Huwaidi.²⁸

At the same time, there exist boundaries of freedom in creating the system and its institutions. They are set by the place of Muslim law in the state. Islam is a revealed religion and the content of the Revelation has been included in the legal norms which, as a result, are a religious and revealed law. The Muslim law, *Sharia*, is the proper guideline for all the faithful and its observance is the path to salvation. But should it be implemented by the state by the already established norms, or should it rather be a guideline for the lawmakers in their reflections on what is acceptable and what is forbidden? There is no consensus among Islamist ideologists in this respect. Some of them believe that implementing the existing norms of Muslim law is what the state is

unconditionally obliged to do. These are, for instance, Muhammad Salim al-Awa and Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the former stating that governance in Islam is practicing religious law²⁹ and the latter claiming that the state was created for the purpose of supervising the observance of Muslim law. Al-Qaradawi uses the term *dawla islamiyya* – ‘Islamic state’ interchangeably with the term *hukm al-islam* – ‘the rule of Islam’. He also writes that an Islamic state is only a state in which the entirety of the social life is governed by the *Sharia*. Muslims living outside the Islamic state live in sin,³⁰ he concludes. This Islamist ideologist known for his conservative views has formulated the view that everyone who does not believe that governance should be based on religious law commits the sin of unbelief (*kufr*), of which the Quran speaks in Sura 16.³¹

The essential question in relation to systemic solutions is the one about political pluralism, namely whether the political system in an Islamic state is to be a system with one religious party or a system with many parties and such organisations as labour unions.³² Al-Ghazali answered this question in an indirect manner, although without leaving any doubt about the essence of the matter. On one hand, in the chapter *ad-Din wa-d-daula* (*Religion and State*) of the book *Mustaqbal al-Islam kharij ardihi* (*The Future of Islam Outside its Land*) he writes that in Islam faith is inseparably connected to the state. There was such a connection in the state of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. However, this does not imply that it should be so nowadays as well. The Muslim civilisation is a dynamic culture, changing over time, through the centuries. Therefore, the issue of relations between religion and state should be approached from the historical perspective; we should study history and not copy it blindly. Thus, what is needed is *tafsir*, that is, interpretation of the factors shaping the social reality.³³

The notion of worldview pluralism is one of the main topics in speeches and publications of centrist Islamists. They consider pluralism as something indispensable in the Muslim state and the necessary condition for its successful development. The starting point for the reflections in this regard is the diversity of the views in Islam itself, which has been a part of the Islam since its very beginnings. This refers to the four *madhabs*, schools of Muslim law, and the actual religious diversity of the societies of Muslim states. Fahmi Huwaidi, who writes broadly about democracy in Muslim state, is a fervent supporter of tolerance for other religions and worldviews. At the same time, he does not agree with Abul A’la Maududi and Sayyid Qutb, ideologists of Muslim radicalism, who speak about non-Muslims with clear aversion.³⁴

In the opinion of moderate Islamists, it is unquestionable that non-Muslims need to have a permanent and safe place in the Muslim society. This indicates a considerable change in Islamist ideology. In the 1940s and 1950s, the social sentiments of religious chauvinism stirred up by the ideas of al-Banna led to increased hostility towards Egyptian

Christians and Jews. The new Islamists categorically reject the view represented by the extremists that there are two histories of Egypt: the Coptic (Christian) and the Muslim one. This approach leads to a division of the society into two mutually hostile factions, whereas the two religious groups each have their share in Egypt's history and share the same moral and ethical values. The protection of the rights of minorities is treated as an element of the broader issue of political and civil rights. Referring to the practice in the first Muslim state in the times of Muhammad, Yusuf al-Qaradawi writes that in this state, Muslims had also the guaranteed rights to ownership and work. The theologian argues that since the first Muslim state functioned under God's law, no one may question or change this state of affairs.³⁵

As we can see, the views of contemporary Islamism on the state's political system and governance clearly draw on the concept of European liberal constitutionalism. At the same time, we can also see the reference to traditional Muslim concepts, especially the political philosophy of Islam. This induces a reflection on what the elaborate disquisitions of Islamists ideologists on political pluralism really mean and whether moderate Islamism is indeed evolving in the direction of European liberal thought – as it is suggested by some European experts.³⁶

Egyptian moderate Islamists are surely fully aware of the growing role of external determinants in the development of the Arab world. The development of the contemporary world as a whole in consequence of the thickening network of technical, business and interpersonal relations is a topic frequently touched upon in discussions and publications, as are the poverty and underdevelopment of the Arab world in terms of material production.³⁷ New Islamism is more oriented towards the West than the generation of Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb and believes that a reflection on what the West is to Islam and on which level of development the Muslim countries are now, is very important. This reflection is by no means easy to Muslims, because – as al-Qaradawi writes – the West did a great deal of injustice to Muslims in the past, especially in the period of colonialism. Muslims are, therefore, cautious and distrustful of what the West offers. However, it is inevitable that the world of Islam will turn to the West, for we are living in a time of intensive contacts and revolutions in the field of communication.³⁸ Al-Qaradawi calls upon the West to abandon hostility towards Islam and the policy which is a continuation of the Mediaeval crusades. A change of attitude towards the Islam would help Muslim open their minds to the West and establish a dialogue on different planes. Are we speaking about a cultural and intellectual confrontation between the Islam and the West or about a political and military confrontation?, asks al-Qaradawi. If it is an intellectual confrontation, he continues, Muslims have nothing against that, as then each party can present its views and the confrontation is bound to

turn into a dialogue and an exchange of views and values. However, he also stresses that Muslims do not want foreign values to be imposed on them; the West must abandon its position of arrogance and superiority and the way in which it imposes its culture on the Islam using military power.³⁹

Amru Khaled talks about the attitude of the world of Islam towards the Western world in the age of globalisation to hundreds of millions of his readers. On his main webpage, Amru Khaled promotes the programme titled 'Sunaa' al-Hayah', that is 'Life Makers', which calls for people to make a new life together, hand in hand, as their fate depends on themselves and their actions depend on their will.⁴⁰

The so called new Arab Islamists also have a critical attitude towards terrorism as a means of political struggle, as well as towards the export of the Islamic revolution. In the 1980s and 1990s, the problem of terrorism in Egyptian politics became as serious as to provoke discussions in many political and intellectual circles. It was estimated that there were approximately fifty terrorist groups active in the country. In April 1988, Saad Edwin Ibrahim, a well-known activist for human rights and political freedoms, published an article in the magazine *Third World Quarterly* in which he wrote that the 'Islamic revival' was starting to dominate the Egyptian political discourse and that the idea of imposing an 'Islamic system' was successfully competing with democratic, socialist, liberal, and even nationalist thought.⁴¹ The opponents of the extremists undertook attempts to halt the tendency for public acceptance for the inevitability of the 'Islamic revolution', for instance through undermining the terrorists' religious argumentation on apostasy. The best-known attempts were the polemics with the radicals of Muhammad Said al-Ashmawi, a famous lawyer and justice of the Egyptian Supreme Court. Al-Ashmawi is the author of many books on Muslim law, the foundations of faith, the system of power in Islam, the religious norms concerning economic activity, and others. In 1987 he published the book *al-islam al-siyasi (Political Islam)*, in which he made a frontal assault on Islamism, and in particular militant Islamism. First of all, al-Ashmawi contested the common opinion that in Islam power and faith had always been strictly connected. Then he dealt with the concept of *hakimiyya* – 'the sovereignty of God', to which the extremists often refer. He believed that in Quran the term *hukm* meant 'judgement', 'solving disputes', and not 'exercising power' or 'governing' as the extremists would claim. Then al-Ashmawi analysed the verses 44–47 from Sura 5: 'Mā'ida', 65 and 105–107 from Sura 4: 'Nisāa', which, according to extremists, expressed the obligation to kill infidels and treat as apostates all those who do not live in accordance with the norms of Islam and, consequently, do not submit to 'the sovereignty of God'. The author argued that the verses had referred to particular situations in the times of Muhammad and that they could not be applied to the later period, when religious and secular power had been separated.⁴²

The moderate current of the Muslim Brotherhood generally dissociated itself from terror, but not all the activists did so unconditionally. For instance, Yusuf al-Qaradawi emphasised that death of a Muslim by the hand of a Muslim was at variance with the principles of faith and was an action characteristic of people in the times of *jahiliyyah*, that is in the pre-Muslim era. In this regard, al-Qaradawi quoted several verses from the Quran, including verse 151 from Sura 6: 'An' m': 'Take not life, which God Hath made sacred, except By way of justice and law'. Nevertheless, al-Qaradawi admits there are situations in which killing is admissible. In the relations between Muslims, such a situation is when a Muslim becomes an apostate. However, the judgement of who is to be considered an apostate cannot be made by a person who is not competent in this regard.⁴³ Al-Qaradawi also admits the possibility of using murder in the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in a situation when the former have to defend against the attacks of the latter. Al-Qaradawi, a preacher well-known in the entire Islamic world, has on several occasions dissociated himself from acts of terror. For example, he has condemned the bombing in London of 7 July 2005, calling it a disgrace. However, previous to that, he often spoke about the fighters in Iraq using terror against the US forces as martyrs,⁴⁴ and in his book *al-Islam wa al-almaniyya wajhan li-wajh* (*Islam and Secularism Face to Face*) he has presented terrorist actions as a form of defence forced by an aggression of the secularised Western civilisation on the Islamic world.⁴⁵

Muhammad al-Ghazali was much more explicit in condemning terrorism. In his works he stated that the actions of extremists (*mutatarrifun*) who used violence and killed for political goals in the name of God were proof that they had sick minds. At the same time, this phenomenon indicates that it is not only individuals but the entire social system that is sick. Unemployment, extremely bad living conditions, no prospects for a better future, and the lack of confidence in the authorities are the prime sources of terrorism. Terrorism is product of the sick imagination of people shoved to the margin, left in a hopeless situation, uneducated, blindly following their leaders, who wrongly interpret the holy texts and are but pseudo-imams. Repressions brought down on terrorists and their sympathisers by the authorities cannot alone solve the problem and such actions should be condemned, as they only give rise to new injustice and create new divisions in the society. The only solution is a radical reform of education and upbringing. *Ta'alim* (teaching) and *tarbiyya* (raising and development) should be radically changed and based on religious values. A reform like that would additionally give people confidence in the purposefulness of what they are doing.⁴⁶

The Egyptian Islamists connected with the al-Wasat Party dissociated themselves from terrorism even more explicitly. In October 1994, in the seat of the Medical Association, Issam al-Iryan and Abu al-Ala Madi organised a two-day conference on

the fundamental civic rights and freedoms. Hundreds of well-known activists from non-governmental organisations and intellectuals took part in this conference. A delegation of the participants, including the main organisers, went to a hospital to visit Naguib Mahfouz, the Nobel Prize winner in literature who was earlier attacked and wounded with a knife by a militant Islamist. During the conference, the participants condemned the act of terror and the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood issued a statement in which it announced that attacks by militant Islamists on tourist and state officials were unacceptable. Furthermore, the leaders of the Association called on the radicals to arrange a cease fire with the government.⁴⁷

Islamism and Arab Spring

The eruption of social protest in the Arab countries in 2011 became a huge opportunity for Islamists to fill the political void after the dissolution of government parties and opened the prospect of free parliamentary elections. The prospect of the Islamists gaining access to power has upset many politicians and businessmen. They were convinced that the Arab states would neither be democratic nor tolerant and that 'Islamisation' would result in non-Muslims becoming second-class citizens. Businessmen started expressing concerns that freedom of economic activity would not be preserved under Islamist rule and that state institutions would interfere in entrepreneurship too deeply. Large business predicted that the expected expansion of social programmes would upset the budget and lead to increasing the taxes paid by the wealthiest citizens and that the raise in wages would result in increased costs of labour, which, in turn, would scare off foreign investors and slow down economic development. Some Egyptian politicians were concerned that under the Islamist rule, the Arab countries would follow the Iranian path of development.⁴⁸

However, there are still many sceptics who do not believe that the Brotherhood will achieve victory in the elections and will be able to act in the democratic political arena. Some Egyptian analysts believe that authoritarianism is the ideal environment for the Brotherhood, as it favours populism and puts ideology and religion in the foreground of political struggle. In the circumstances of political pluralism, when the political battles are fought with programmes – that is concrete proposals of specific social and economic solutions – the Brotherhood has trouble fitting in. According to these analysts, the Salafists, that is, Islamists with extremely conservative views, are likely to be a much more serious opponents to liberals, secularists and Copts.⁴⁹ The secularists call them 'Egyptian Taliban' because they strictly adhere to the letter of the Quran, observe moral conservatism and exhibit a relentless hostility towards the Christian West. Salafists were either activists in terrorist groups themselves or inspired terrorists with

their uncompromising attitude towards the authorities, which they considered 'godless'. When Mubarak stepped down, many of them were let out of prisons among the people repressed by the former regime and now rehabilitated. Others returned to Egypt from forced emigration. In April 2011, Salafists blocked a railway protesting against the nomination of a Christian by the new authorities to the post of governor of the Qena province in Upper Egypt. In Cairo, Salafists provoked clashes with Christians in the Imbaba district which resulted in twelve deaths. The military authorities did not dare attack the Salafists and made attempts to reach an understanding with them through one of their sheikhs, Muhammad Hassan. This, however, only consolidated the Islamist conservatives.

Summary

In the reflections of Islamist ideologists on international relations, there are some characteristic currents and tendencies. First of all, we can discern the conviction of having exclusive rights to interpret the history of Islam due to the only right understanding of the holy texts on rule and governance. This refers especially to the first generation of members of the Muslim Brotherhood, who believed the political doctrine of Islam to be constant, unwavering and explicit regarding the divine nature of rule in the Islam. The new generation is more diverse in their opinions on political power and the international order. Some Islamist ideologists believe that the doctrine does not specify any single standard of behaviour in the sphere of politics on the basis of which one could develop the model of a universal political system for all social situations. While some point to the caliphate as the model system to implement, others believe that it was not at all in accordance with the principles of the doctrine. This controversy makes it much easier to understand the words of the Egyptian author Muhammad Amara who said that the essence of political power had always been the most disputable and dangerous subject in Muslim political thought.⁵⁰

The controversy regarding the political system in Islamism is a significant fact, because foreign policy, as Islamist ideologists understand it, is an instrument used for pursuing the interests of the state. The character of the state – whether it is authoritarian or democratic – will, therefore, affect the directions of its foreign policy. Nevertheless, some currents in contemporary Islamist ideology are lasting and unchanging. The most important one is the criticism of the West – some criticise it as a civilisation, while others for its policy towards the Muslim world. Even moderate Islamists are extremely critical of the Western – especially the USA's – policy in the Middle East. In internal affairs, this constitutes their power, as they are credible in the eyes of other Muslims, but in the international arena this position severely limits their room for manoeuvre. Even though

it is not about xenophobia, but criticism of the USA policy in the Middle East, the West does not trust them. Overcoming the mistrust in the relations with the West is the key to the political future of moderate Islamism and the process of democratisation of the Middle East. The situation is very difficult and delicate, also for the West, for which an Islamist only or partially Islamist government would be a much more difficult partner than the past regimes dependent on Western aid. Islamists will surely be intransigent about Palestine, because an uncompromising position in this issue will be fundamental for the legitimisation of their rule in the eyes of the Arab masses. Thus, what Islamism is after regarding the existing international order, is its revision.

References

- [1] Eickelman, D.F. and J. Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996, p. 5.
- [2] *Ta'wil* is a notion related to the *tafsir*, but not equivalent to it. While *tafsir* explains the meaning of a word, *ta'wil* points to possible references of the meaning of the given word to different contexts, e.g. historical, social.
- [3] Jensen, J.J.G., *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994, pp. VIII–IX.
- [4] For example, in his famous commentary to the Quran, Sayyid Qutb wrote that Islam was explicit in the understanding of the principles of faith and conduct in everyday life; all disasters of the Muslim world started when everyone started interpreting the Quran in their own way. See: Sayyid Qutb, *Fi zilal al-Qur'an (In the Shade of the Qur'an)*, vol. 1–30, Beirut 1963–1973, Vol. 10 (commentary to the Sura 8: 'Anf l'), p. 13.
- [5] Shehadeh, Lamia Rustum, 'Women in the Discourse of Sayyid Qutb', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 2000, p. 47.
- [6] The idea of a 'golden age' is also present in Shia Islam, where it is believed to be an even shorter period than in Sunni Islam, namely the four years of the rule of Ali, the last of the Righteous Caliphs and the first Shia Imam. This idea played an important role in mobilising the Khomeini supporters to oppose the Shah of Iran. See: Said Amir Arjomand, 'Shi'ite Islam and the Revolution in Iran', in B.S. Turner (ed.), *Islam: Critical Concepts in Sociology*, Vol. II: *Islam, State and Politics*, London–New York: Routledge, 2003, pp. 357–59.
- [7] This refers to the Ottoman Turks. This vision of history is presented, among others, by Muhammad al-Ghazzali. See: Muhammad al-Ghazzali, 'Misr bayna al-dawla al-diniyya wa al-madaniyya' ('Egypt between a religious and secular state'), in Samir Sarhan (ed.), *al-Dar al-Misriyya li-l-Nashr wa al-Tawzi'*, Cairo, 1992, p. 44.

- [8] Sayyid Qutb wrote that today more than ever humanity was in need of the Muslim message (*ad-da'wa al-Islamiyya*), and that this message speaking about the Revelation was nowadays needed more by the non-Muslims than by the Muslim community. See: Sayyid Qutb, *Nahwa mujtama' islami* (*Towards an Islamic Society*), Amman, 1969, p. 8.
- [9] For more about the role of the story of Moses in Qutb's writing see: A. Johns, 'Let My People Go!', Sayyid Qutb and the Vocation of Moses, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1990, pp. 143–70.
- [10] *The Holy Qur'ān*, Text, Translation and Commentary, A. Yusuf Ali, Brentwood, Maryland: Amana Corp., 1983.
- [11] Qutb, Sayyid, *In the Shade of the Qur'an (Fi zilal al-Qur'an)*, Vol. I–XIV, Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 2003–2006, pp. 181, 186, 202.
- [12] Al-Banna, Hasan, *Muzakkarat al-da'wah wa al-da'iya* (*The Memoirs of the Call and the Preacher*), Beirut–Damascus, 1983, p. 72.
- [13] Al-Banna, Hasan 'Nahwa al-noor' ('Towards the light'), in *Majmuat rasa'il al-imam al-shahid Hasan al-Banna* (*The Collection of Letters of Martyr Imam Hassan al-Banna*), Cairo 1992; some of al-Banna's writings have been translated into English and published under the title *Selected Writings of Hasan al-Banna Shaheed*, New Delhi: Mellat Book Centre, 1999, pp. 275–76.
- [14] *Ibid.*, pp. 287–88.
- [15] Qutb, Sayyid 'al-Mustakbal li-l-Islam' ('The Future Belongs to Islam'), in *Nahwa mujtama' islami* (*Towards an Islamic Society*), Amman, 1969, p. 23.
- [16] Verse 109 from Sura 2: 'Baqara' states: 'Quite a number of the People of the Book wish they could Turn you (people) back to infidelity after ye have believed, From selfish envy, After the Truth hath become Manifest unto them: But forgive and overlook, Till God accomplish His purpose; for God Hath power over all things.'
- [17] Qutb, Sayyid 'al-Mustakbal li-l-islam', ('The Future Belongs to Islam'), in *Nahwa mujtama' islami* (*Towards an Islamic Society*), Amman, 1969, pp. 20–21.
- [18] *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- [19] *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4, 10–19.
- [20] *Ibid.*, p. 39–40.
- [21] *Ibid.*, *Ma'alim fi al-tariq* (*Milestones*), Beirut–Cairo: ad-Dar al-àrabiyyah li-l-mawsuàt, 1983, p. 62.
- [22] Huwaidi, Fahmi, *al-Islam wa al-dimuqratiyyah* (*Islam and Democracy*), Cairo: Markaz al-ahram li al-tarjuma wa al-nashr, 2002, p. 16.
- [23] Al-Qaradawi, Yusuf, *Khitabuna al-islami fi asr al-aulama* (*Our Islamic Identity in the Time of Globalization*), Cairo 2004, p. 19.

- [24] Al-Qaradawi strengthens his argumentation by saying that already in the early Islam the 'people of religion' and religious law experts used the term *ahl al-dar* ('people of the house'), which corresponds to the present term 'citizens' (*muwatinun*); cf. *ibid.*, p. 44–45.
- [25] Al-Ghazali, Muhammad, *Ma'araka al-mushaf fi al-alam al-Islami* (*The Fight of Quran in the World of Islam*), Nahda Misr, Cairo, 2003, pp. 142–43.
- [26] *Ibid.*, p. 190.
- [27] <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/oneonone/2011/04/2011419115959257764.html>
- [28] Huwaidi, Fahmi, *al-Islam wa al-dimuqratiyyah*, (*Islam and Democracy*), Cairo: Markaz al-ahram li al-tarjuma wa al-nashr, 2002, p. 245.
- [29] Salim al-Awa, Muhammad, *Religion and Political Structure: An Islamic Viewpoint*, "Occasional Papers", Birmigham, 1999, No. 3, p. 6.
- [30] Al-Qaradawi, Yusuf, *Min fiqh al-dawla fi al-Islam: makanatiha, tabi'atiha, mawifuha min al-dimuqratiyya wa-l-ta'addudiyya wa-l-mar awa ghayr al-muslimin* (*On the Theory of the State in Islam: Its Role, Characteristics, Nature and Positions on Democracy, Pluralism, Women, and Non-Muslims*), Cairo, 1997, p. 15.
- [31] Al-Qaradawi added that if such an attitude is the consequence of ignorance and does not result from ill intentions towards Islam, it is not the case of apostasy, but only a misdeed. The theologian issued several fatwas (legal opinions) condemning terrorism, see: <http://www.answers.com/topic/yusuf-al-qaradawi#Terrorism>. See also his *fatwa* on *jihad*: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/index.php?page=showfatwa&Option=FatwaId&Id=83989>
- [32] Al-Ghazzali, Muhammad, *Sirr ta'akhhur al-arab wa-l-muslimin* (*Hidden Reasons of the Backwardness of Arabs and Muslims*), Cairo: Nahda Misr, 2002, p. 28. The same question is also asked by Fahmi Huwaidi in the book *al-Islam wa al-dimuqratiyyah*, p. 152.
- [33] Muhammad al-Ghazzali, *Mustaqbal al-islam kharij ardihi* (*The Future of Islam Outside its Land*), Cairo 2003, pp. 70–71.
- [34] Huwaidi, Fahmi, *al-Islam wa al-dimuqratiyyah*, pp. 19, 22, 33. Huwaidi cites Sura 30: 'Rūm', verse 22, which reads: 'And among His Signs Is this, that He created For you mates from among Yourselves, that ye may Dwell in tranquillity with them, And He has put love And mercy between your (hearts): Verily in that are Signs For those who reflect.' According to the author, these words are proof that God considered diversity a positive aspect of social life.
- [35] The theologian cites the most solid of arguments in the form of a verse from the Quran, which says that no man may undermine God's will ('If any one disobeys God And His Apostle, he is indeed On a clearly wrong Path', Sura 33: 'A s b', verse 36) – see: Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Non-Muslims in the Islamic Society*, Indianapolis: American Trust Publication, 1985, pp. 7–12, 27–33.
- [36] This view is expressed, for instance, by R.W. Baker, *Islam without fear. Egypt and the New Islamists*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Ma.)–London 2003; B.O. Utvik, 'Hizb al-

- Wasat and the Potential for Change in Egyptian Islamism', *Critique: Critical Middle East Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2005, pp. 293–306.
- [37] Poverty is considered the principal social problem of Arab countries by, for instance, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Daur al-zaka fi ilaj al-mushkilat al-iktisadiyya* (*The Role of Zaka in Solving of Economic Problems*), Cairo, 2001, and Muhammad al-Ghazali (already in 1985), *Sirr ta'akhhur....*
- [38] al-Qaradawi, Yusuf 'al-Infitah ala al-gharb: muktadjahu wa shurutuhu' ('The Openness to the West: Its Results and Consequences'), in *Risalat al-muslimin fi bilad al-gharb* (*The Message of Muslims to the West*), Cairo, 2000, pp. 8, 19.
- [39] Ibid, pp. 23–24, 26.
- [40] <http://www.naseeb.com/journals/amr-khaled-interview-85761>
- [41] Eddin Ibrahim, Saad, 'Egypt's Islamic Activism in the 1985', *Third World Quarterly*, April 1988.
- [42] Said al-Ashmawi, Muhammad, *al-Islam al-siyasi* (*Political Islam*), Cairo, 1987, pp. 36–42. Verse 47 of Sura 5 says: 'It was We who revealed The Law (to Moses): therein Was guidance and light /.../ For to them was entrusted The protection of God' Book And they were witness thereto: /.../ If any do fail to judge By (the light) what God Hath revealed, they are (No better than) Unbelievers. The people of the Gospel shall rule in accordance with God's revelations therein. Those who do not rule in accordance with God's revelations are the wicked', while verse 107 of Sura 4 says: 'Contend not on behalf Of such as betray Their own souls; For God loveth not One given to perfidy And crime;'
- [43] Al-Qaradawi, Yusuf, *al-Halal wa al-haram fi al-islam* (*The Lawful and Prohibited in Islam*), Cairo 2002, pp. 282–83.
- [44] *The Times*, 16 July 2005, p. 6.
- [45] Al-Qaradawi, Yusuf, *al-Islam wa al-almaniyya wajhan li-wajh* (*Islam and Secularism Face to Face*), source: http://www.qaradawi.net/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&version=1&template_id=90&parents_id=12
- [46] Muhammad al-Ghazzali writes broadly on raising in a religious spirit (*tarbiyya*) in *Aqidah al-muslim* (*Muslim's Faith*), Cairo, 1984, pp. 141–45.
- [47] El-Ghobashy, Mona, 'The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 37, 2005, p. 382.
- [48] Vittert, L., 'Leading Egyptian Businessman Fears Muslim Brotherhood Takeover', *Fox News*, 8 February 2011, source: <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2011/02/08/leading-egyptian-businessman-fears-muslim-brotherhood/>
- [49] *Salafiyyah* is a nineteenth-century social movement related to cultivating the tradition of venerating ancestors (literally 'pious ancestors'). In the Muslim tradition 'pious ancestors' are the first three generations of Muslims – see: *Salaf and Salafiyya* [in:] *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. VIII, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995, pp. 900–01.
- [50] Lahoud, N., *Political Thought in Islam. A Study in Intellectual Boundaries*, London–New York: Routledge, 2005, p. 68.