
Many Muslims see the Islamic revival, emanating from the urban centres of Turkey to the rural hinterlands of Xinjiang (China), as a reassertion of their identity and a return to their roots, an alternative to secular materialism. Some in the West perceive it as a threat—the so-called "Islamic threat". This fear is compounded by the fact that since the demise of Communism, Islam appears to be the only ideological alternative capable of transcending ethnic and national barriers. The fire is fanned further by the alarmist writings and speeches of some scholars, journalists and leaders in the West and the Muslim world. Sadly, the situation is not helped by the reprehensible acts and anti-West hyperbole and mindless rhetoric spouted by some Islamists.

Can Islamists be trusted? What is the alternative? Are Islamists out to destroy democracy, freedom, justice and liberty? What are the consequences of the lack of communication between the proponents of Islamic revival and the West? These and other pertinent questions are raised and framed in a constructive manner in *The Politics of Islamic Resurgence through Western Eyes: A Bibliographic Survey*. But more importantly, the work provides an extensive and impressive bibliography of articles, books, papers and conferences dealing with this issue over the past few decades.

The Western obsession with a perceived threat of "Islamic fundamentalism" and the undertaking to combat it at any cost has led many to forget that secular liberalism is only a worldview and not the only one. The assumption of liberals that "all human beings by nature possess the capacity and desire to become liberals when free to do so",¹ and the imposition of this view on others only results in secularists committing a variation of the very crime they accuse Islamists of; what can be termed "secular fundamentalism". The fifty-page analytical summary in this book challenges the reader to reconsider

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¹ Dr Muhammad Hamidullah Library, IIU, Islamabad. http://iri.iiu.edu.pk/
the erroneous assumptions of "secular fundamentalism".

The book begins with an article entitled "The Western Pen: A Sword in Disguise?" by Ahmad AbulJobain. AbulJobain does a wonderful job in this critique of the mainstream Western media, that in his words, are "the most outspoken critics of political Islam" (p. 8). The essay addresses the demonization of Islam and Muslims, sensationalism and the voluntary ignorance sadly characteristic of the media. AbulJobain also raises a question to which I would love to hear a coherent answer: "Where are all the liberal intellectual elites [who stand by Rushdie at all costs] when Islamic thinkers were, and continue to be, executed for mere opposition, let alone denigration?" (p. 13). He accurately warns, "If this trend of misrepresentation is perpetuated, both civilizations will experience a violent schism. This will prove catastrophic since, like it or not, the fates of Islam and the West are intertwined" (p. 18).

The Western aversion to Islamists and their wholesale designation as fundamentalists, terrorists and as being inherently anti-Western is inaccurate and, more importantly, counterproductive. This is the message explicitly articulated by Ahmed bin Yousef in his analytical piece, "Islamists and the West: From confrontation to Cooperation".

As Bin Yousef confirms, far from being a monolithic entity, the movement is composed of divergent groups ranging from the rejectionist and extremist minority to the mainstream which is committed to work peacefully within the system. There are significant differences between them, including their visions of an Islamic state and the routes to achieve it. The mainstream seeks Islamization through the process of education, and social and political activism. Only a small minority believe in violent overthrow of the existing leadership at any cost. The only common denominators between them are their identification with Islam, and opposition to the secular elites who have very little, if any, legitimacy in the eyes of a growing number in the Muslim world. But even among extremist groups there is discord. This is evident, for instance, from the case of Egypt where the two groups on the fringe, al-Jamā'ah al-Islāmiyyah (Islamic Group) and Islamic Jihad, differ over tactics, compete for funding and even have an ongoing rivalry. It is worth noting at this stage that Rachid Gannouchi accurately suggests that "[t]he most lethal weapon available to sap radicalism of its strength incorporates the promotion of dialogue, freedom, and respect for human rights" (p. 53). Bin Yousef also deals with the overused and abused term "Islamic fundamentalism". Islamists reject the label insofar as it reflects the negative connotations implied by its modern usage. In Bin Yousef's view, if at all applicable in the Islamic context, its application would be restricted to the ultra-conservatives who believe "in an absolutist return to the pure practices of Medina residents during the Prophet Muhammad's era" (p. 28). It is ironic that
the term with its negative colouring is used to refer to Islamic revival movements—many led by reformers striving in the long established Islamic traditions of *tajdid* (renewal) and *islah* (reform).

Bin Yousef also addresses the ideological and conceptual differences and similarities between the Western and Islamic systems and concludes, "Islam is clearly a challenge to the West; yet its challenge is one of friendship not enmity" (p. 40). Bin Yousef stresses the importance of dialogue between the proponents of Islamic revival and the West. He drives home this point by quoting Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi: "Were we to convince Western leaders and decision-makers of our right to live according to our faith—ideologically, legislatively, and ethically—without imposing our views or inflicting harm upon them, we would have traversed an immense barrier in our quest for an Islamic state" (p. 40).

The book also contains the full text of a speech delivered by Shaikh Rachid Gannouchi in the United Kingdom, where he currently lives in exile. The piece entitled, "Islam and the West: Realities and Potentialities" provides an insider’s view from one of the most respected Islamist activist/thinker. He deals with the issue why people are turning to the Islamic movement as well as why the West should rethink its attitude.

Many observers boil down the resurgence of Islam to be a reaction against the deplorable economic and social situations prevalent in the respective societies. They think (and hope) that changes in these antecedents will check the appeal of the movement and diminish its pool of recruits. But Islamists and the evidence suggest otherwise. Islamic resurgence is not restricted to economically depressed states. It is picking up momentum in Malaysia, for instance, even as the economy is booming. Second, the movement finds its greatest support among university graduates and young professionals of both genders. John Esposito also notes that most recruits come from the faculties of humanities, law, medicine, science, engineering, and education rather than traditional religious faculties.

The conclusion that it is not a movement exclusively limited to the economically and socially deprived is reinforced by the fact that professional associations of lawyers, engineers and physicians are the first to accept the Islamist message. In Egypt, for instance, all three are dominated by Islamists. In fact, when members of the *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn* (The Muslim Brotherhood), the sixty-year-old officially banned Islamist party, won the elections in the lawyers syndicate in 1992, the government stepped in by "tightening" election procedures in all professional associations.

The leader of the Tunisian Islamist party *Hizb al-Nahḍah* (The Renaissance Party), who has spent more than a decade in jail, contends that
people support the movement because Islamists seek a reformation of their societies, and are committed to social justice, civil liberties, pluralism and an end to dictatorships (p. 48). He and many other Islamists point out that their movement, rather than a fundamentalist one, is more akin to the European Renaissance in a Muslim context; what Gannouchi refers to as a "merger between modernism and Islamism" (p. 48). Equality, respect for the rule of law, respect for private property, social justice, and a tradition of tolerance of debate and argument are established in Islam, though some extremists today may repudiate these.

Gannouchi, who was recently tried by a Tunisian court in absentia and sentenced to life for his democratic opposition, argues it will not be possible to create the society they wish without going through some birth pangs. Indeed, it should be pointed out that the transformations of the Western world into civil societies were brought about not only through intellectual but also bloody political revolutions.

The book is worth having just for these short pieces but its value is increased immeasurably by the extensive bibliography covering articles, books, papers, and conferences on the resurgence. The compilation is conveniently divided into three sections covering articles, books, and conferences/papers/dissertations, respectively. They are further subdivided along the lines of general, and geographical categories. The book also contains an informative critique of a conference organized by the United States Institute for Peace. A biography of scholars who write regularly on political Islam is a bonus.

AbulJobain and Bin Yousef, both from the United Association for Studies and Research, the publishers of the Middle East Affairs Journal, have done yeoman service to those interested in the Islamic revival. One can only hope that they are busy working on a revised edition to include more recent writings on this topic. It may also be worthwhile to add the writings of Islamist thinkers to the bibliography.

Islamists claim they have an agenda and seek to introduce changes in inter alia the economic, political, and social spheres in their societies. Though they still have to prove that their programme goes beyond mere rhetoric. The only way to know whether the "Islamic solution" is workable is to provide them the opportunity to implement their vision. A great opportunity was lost when the Algerian military cancelled the second round of elections when it realized that the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS—Islamic Salvation Front) was set to take power. This would have been the first democratically elected Islamist government. Unfortunately, the fear ingrained in the hearts of Western policy-makers—as evident from their hypocritical acquiescence to the "highjacking" of democracy in Algeria—denied the world an opportunity to witness the "Islamic solution" in action.
This book which is a must have for anyone—lay person, scholar or policy-maker—with an interest in the Muslim world, the Islamic revival or its international implications will hopefully contribute towards changing the Western perception of Islamic revival by setting the stage for further research. The editors have precisely laid the groundwork for studies directed at the removal of misconceptions and formulation of policies consistent with the long term interest of international security and the fundamental right to self-determination. [Reviewer's note: The book is available from the American Educational Trust, publishers of the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs. $11.95 for one, $14.95 for two. Tel. 1-800-368-5788].

1Peter O'Brien, "Islam vs. Liberalism in Europe", 10:3 American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences 367 at 379.
2Caryle Murphy, "Egypt: An Uneasy Portent of Change", Current History (February 1994) 78 at 79.
4Murphy, "Egypt", 2 at 80.

Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith (eds.), Muslim Communities in North America (Albany: SUNY, 1994), 545 pages.

In 1994, the Olduvai Humanities Library started producing Islam in America. That same year, Dar al-Islam organized the second annual North American Muslim Powwow in the mountains of Northern New Mexico. A summer NEH session met there for high school teachers teaching Islam in the curriculum of schools across the U.S. And I understand that the Library of Congress was holding meetings to decide how literature produced by American Muslims would be catalogued. "Islam in America" has become an academic subject. Islamic Law, some may be astonished to learn, is already being practised by U.S. courts—when Muslim inmates demand certain religious rights, the courts have to make pronouncements about Islam, what it is, and what is "obligatory" and "not-obligatory". This is a time of great excitement and not a little trepidation. I found this feeling accurately explored throughout the pages of this collected work.

All the articles are focused nicely on particular groups. Sachedina's contribution (one of only three not produced specifically for this book) is of course very scholarly, but it also captures the small-scale of Muslim