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The Impact of the “War on Terror” Discourse on the Arab Region

November 2015

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INTRODUCTION

During the last four decades, and especially since the events of September 11, 2001, the "War on Terror" discourse has become an essential influence on the nature and level of participation of political parties and movements with a religious reference in North Africa and the Middle East, as well as on the process of building democracy. The use of this discourse has played a role in fueling tensions in some traditional political disputes as well as aggravating new conflicts. Thus, dealing with this discourse has become a defining element in how religiously motivated parties choose their discourse, reactions and strategies. As a result, the crisis of terrorism has raised profound questions regarding both the issue of terrorism itself, its root causes, characteristics, victims, scope and objectives, and the so-called "war on terror", its objectives, mechanisms, repercussions, and the consequent impact on the political and social discourse of the groups that are accused of committing terrorism or the forces being mobilized to confront terrorism and "wage war" against it.

The goal of this paper is to analyze the conditions and attitudes regarding the notion of "war on terror", through an in-depth reading of the phenomenon and a broad review of the available literature on the subject matter, as well as meetings and field interviews with a number of concerned people interested and involved in the topic. Thus, this paper covers the problem of defining terrorism, the timeline of the evolution of the discourse that opposes and confronts such "terrorism", with a special focus on the "Post-Arab Spring" era, and the strategies of the forces of "political Islam" in dealing with the "war on terror" discourse. The study will then raise questions about the extent of success of the "campaign" against terrorism and the accompanying "discourse" in achieving their desired goals. Finally, the study will present certain conclusions and pose some questions about the prospects for the future.

SECTION I: THE PROBLEM OF DEFINITION

For methodological reasons, this paper will not attempt a new definition of terrorism. However, it is noted that definitions are often given that do not resolve the theoretical debate on this topic or provide new added value to the theory on the matter in this regard.

- The issue of the definition is not essential for the purpose of this paper, since the purpose is to “analyze” the impact of the various aspects of the discourse on terrorism rather than the phenomenon in itself.
- However, it is important to state three particular observations that could be considered essential to understanding the fundamental aspects of the discourse on and the impact of the “war on terror” in the Middle East and North Africa region, as well as the related interactions and reactions of the people of this region.
- These observations relate to the political exploitation of the concept of terrorism, the background related to terrorist practice and the nature of the actors involved in committing so-called “terrorism”:
- First, “terrorism” is an ever shifting and ever evolving concept in relation to influences of ideology and political contexts. Examples of this reality are numerous and known on the international level. An outstanding example is that of the Iraqi Dawa Party which was considered a terrorist organization by the regime of the former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein; this same party later became a ruling party in Iraq, removing remnants of the former ruling Baath party and enacting laws to uproot them from political life as terrorist elements. A similar example can be seen in Libya, where the Muslim Brotherhood has

changed from being a prohibited group, labeled as terrorist over decades of Kaddafi’s regime to become a partner of a ruling power while elements of Kaddafi’s revolutionary committees are pursued on charges of terrorism after they had been the backbone of the former regime.

- Second, linking a religious dimension to “terrorism” in the field of terrorism studies and making a frequent connection between certain types of religious experience – the Islamic one specifically – and terrorism has led to serious repercussions on the perception of the phenomenon of terrorism and the nature of the way it is portrayed, especially in this part of the world. Therefore, the stigma of terrorism has become overly used here to describe the acts of violent groups which adopt Islamic slogans. At the same time, the behaviour of other groups - that could be not less radical or violent than the Islamist ones - is dealt with in a more tolerant way.

Third: There is a trend towards the exclusion of the actions of states and international organizations from being labelled as terrorism, even when such acts intersect with the actions of movements and groups that are stigmatized as “terrorist” in terms of their goals, style and effects¹. It is clear that a number of governments behave violently to achieve political goals through terrorizing the masses, but these state acts are rarely described as a terrorist behaviour by governments, except in some exceptional cases and in a way that is often motivated by political ideology.

¹ Researcher’s interview with Saad Eddine Othmani, former Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, former Secretary-General of the Justice and Development Party of Morocco, dated: 13 August 2014.

SECTION II: TIMELINE OF THE WAR ON TERROR

As much as it is difficult to agree on a definition of terrorism, it is almost impossible to identify a specific date that could be considered a starting point for the war on terror. The reason for this is that the concept (of terrorism) is volatile by nature, and thus the concept is used in different ways. In addition, there is a tendency to take certain positions based on circumstances. However, it can be said that the year 1963 witnessed the release of the first international counter-terrorism legislation. This coincided with the emergence of the Tokyo Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board of Aircraft, which formed the first episode in the international fight against terrorism through a series related documents, now amounting to 16 texts, some of which are in the form of a treaty or a protocol². It is no accident that one of the great theorists of al- Qaeda³ - Mustafa Sitt Maryam (Abu Musab al-Suri) talks in his book "The Overall Islamic Resistance" - of the same date as the beginning of the "War on Terror" and the confrontation by the West and local regimes with Islamist groups, whether political or violent. The same theorist also mentions the

² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2009. Legislative Guide to the Universal Legal Regime against Terrorism. p. 1.

³ The organization was founded on August 11, 1988, during a meeting of a number of leaders of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad with Osama bin Laden in Peshawar, Pakistan. In April 2002, the name of the organization became "al-Qaeda", and in 1996 al-Qaeda announced jihad to expel foreign troops and interests of Islamic land. Among the most prominent figures of this organization was its former leader Osama bin Laden, and the current leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.

date of 1960 as the actual beginning of the path of what he calls the Islamic Resistance⁴.

On the grounds that this date marks the beginning of modern terrorist attacks as well as of the "War on Terror", we could divide the timeline of the related discourse into four major phases, all involved in the idea of the "War on Terrorism," but distinct in terms of the driving motives, the methods and means used and the consequences. These phases are also distinct in terms of the discourse accompanying them, as the "War on Terror" discourse reflected, at every time, the distinguishing features of the specific phase.

1. THE IDEOLOGICAL POLARIZATION PHASE (1960-1990)

This phase is characterized globally by being accompanied by the ramifications of the Cold War, where contradictions split the world into two camps with conflicting ideological and strategic competitors. It is a phase that is characterized - at the level of the Arab region - with huge Cold War activity. The area witnessed the influence of two prominent phenomena:

1. The growing Arab nationalist tide and the arrival to power of a number of nationalist forces through military coups;
2. The rise of political Islam and the beginnings of a clash with the ruling power, under the influence of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the outbreak of the war in Afghanistan. The Afghan war was the incubator for the phenomenon of the "Afghan Arabs" as Jihadist groups.

⁴ Abdel-Hakim, Omar, aka Abu Musab al-Suri. 2004. The Call for the Global Islamic Resistance, (electronic edition). p. 764.

This phase was also characterized by a high usage of the idea of the ideological “fight against terrorism” as an excuse to suppress the opposition forces that were challenging totalitarian regimes in more than one Arab country.

Another motivation for this discourse was the ideological desire to tarnish the image of the Islamic currents, which were strong rivals to these regimes with links to the communist camp. The ruling regimes of that era considered the Islamists as dangerous and reactionary movements that posed a threat to the emerging revolutionary regimes. Despite the fact that the nationalist regimes’ grip fell under the influence of the setback in the war of June 1967, the situation worsened rapidly and became more complex with the emergence of the concerns against the “export of the Islamic revolution” from Iran to the Arab world after 1979. This was coupled with the emergence of armed actions by a number of Salafist groups in Egypt as well as signs of activity by some Arab elements belonging to the Afghan Mujahedeen.

It was apparent that this “war” took – at that time – a more intellectual dimension than a local political one, as the contradiction and the gap between the Islamists and the socialist regimes at that time was very deep. According to the theses adopted by the Islamists at that time, this war was perceived as an echo of the Soviet war against Islam as such (i.e. Islam, whether political or non-political) in the countries of the Islamic belt around the Soviet Union in central Asia.

However, this vision offers only one aspect of scene for this period, as the Arab states associated with the Western camp, in their turn, took a different path by taking care of and adopting the victims of repression in countries under the revolutionary

governments with a socialist tendency, especially in Nasirist Egypt, Baathist Syria and Gaddafi’s Libya. Through this approach, those countries - particularly Saudi Arabia – managed to propagate and deploy certain doctrinal ideas and perceptions that would have a profound effect in later developments and the evolution of both thought and practice.

Thus, countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Jordan represented basic incubators for the Islamists, and the position of the Western countries towards Arab regimes in the orbit of the Soviet Union constituted an opportunity for some of the leaders of political Islam to stay in the West and gain new experiences and expertise in an atmosphere characterized by greater freedom and more ability to act and interact. The focal point at this stage was the start of the “Afghan jihad”, when Arab countries competed to provide financial and military support and sent hundreds of young Arabs to support the Afghan fighters against the Soviet occupation, with recruitment and fundraising activities organized openly in the Gulf States and in Western capitals. As the major Arab countries opened their doors to young people leaving for Afghanistan, they also opened their doors to the leaders of the Afghan jihad to address local audiences and to fuel the spirit of resistance and raise donations. Thus, this phase would have a tremendous impact and a great role in shaping the subsequent stages. One outcome of this war was the establishment of a human resource base for violent groups described as Islamists in most Arab countries. Thousands of Arab youth who fought in Afghanistan during the eighties returned to their home countries carrying jihadist ideas and a great level of readiness and desire to continue the fight, and had difficulty within the political, social systems prevailing in the Arab world and the inability of these systems to contain these returnees.

During this phase, many elements had an influence on the “War on Terror”. The most important was the prevalence of military coups as an effective means to gain power⁵ and the spread of political violence sponsored by regional powers and often with the go-ahead of one of the two world powers. However, paradoxically, despite the temptation to get involved in political violence on a large scale, in a domestic and international climate vulnerable to such an approach, the main currents of political Islam managed to distance themselves in most cases from the path of violence as a way to achieve political objectives, locally at least. This period saw a process of clear intellectual / ideological differentiation or distinction between the schools of political Islam that resulted in a frank distinction of policy options and change methods. This evolution is perhaps partly due to the maturity of the political and organizational experiences and the clear intellectual approaches and political objectives of certain political Islamic groups, as well as the contact of some of their leaders with new experiences and their better assimilation of concepts of democracy and human rights as a result of their residence in the West and their dialogue and interaction with different trends and currents within the local and regional alliances.

⁵ Among the most important and famous coups that have occurred in the study countries, in Egypt: 1952 Free Officers coup against the monarchy in Egypt; 1954 RCC (Revolutionary Command Council) coup against Mohammed Najib; 2013 al-Sisi coup against Morsi. In Libya: 1969 Gaddafi’s coup on the monarchy in Libya. In Morocco: 1971 Skheirat coup attempt led by M’hamed Ababou on King Hassan II; 1972 Oufkir’s coup attempt on King Hassan II.

2. THE PHASE OF RELYING ON DOMESTIC REPRESSION (1991-2001)

The beginning of this phase coincided with major events in the world and in the region, notably the beginning of the disintegration of the Soviet empire and the fall of the bipolar system. These developments paved the way for the declaration of the New World Order. The occupation of Kuwait, and then, the outbreak of the second Iraq War contributed to the consolidation of new situations. Yet, there were two main factors that have had a prominent role in shaping the discourse of “War on Terror” and the formulation of its content:

- The first factor is the growth of a conviction among many western intellectuals that political Islam had become the greatest threat to Western civilization after the demise of the communist threat. In this context, there were academic writings that emerged talking of the Clash of Civilizations⁶ and the next Green Peril of Islam. Conferences were held and statements made by Western leaders talking about Islam colliding with and challenging democracy, as well as stating that Islamic forces, with all their various currents and different values, represent a threat to Western interests.
- The second factor was the return of large numbers of Arab Mujahedeen from Afghanistan to their countries of origin, carrying with them certain ideas that were shocking and radically contradicted the prevailing patterns of governance and

⁶ Huntington, Samuel. 1999. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Re-making of Global Order*, first edition, translated by Mahmoud Khalaf and Malik Abu Shahyoh. Tripoli: the al-Jamahiriya House.

ways of life in their countries. The result was the emergence of violent Islamist groups, not only bearing arms, but also advocating a political and intellectual vision based on violence as a tool to change regimes that these groups considered as corrupt, authoritarian and even infidel. Specifically, the traditional Salafist tendency to conservatism and obedience to the ruler on the one hand was countered by some new revolutionary ideas based on considering the ruling regimes as infidels and a call to action to dislodge them using "sacred violence" on the other hand; this trend or current is conventionally called *Jihadi Salafism* (*Salafiya Jihadiya*)⁷.

Thus, the features of the "War on Terror" discourse developed during this phase, under the impact of two phenomena: Islamophobia and the Jihadist Salafism, and since that time each has been deriving its power and influence from the other, in a dialectical relationship that continues to have serious effects on the evolution of political life in the whole Middle East and North Africa region.

⁷ The term "Jihadist Salafism" appeared in jihadist literature since the eighties. Among the most prominent icons to carry the banner of this line of thought, and represent it at the highest theorizing level are: Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Abdul Qadir Abdul Aziz, Abu Qatada Al-Filistini, Abu Musab al-Suri, and Ayman al-Zawahiri. The intellectual formulations of this movement began with Sayyid Qutb's famous intellectual inversion in the Nasserite era, in the sixties in Egypt. This was in the context of the struggle between the Muslim Brotherhood and Abdel Nasser, and under the influence of the writings of Abu Ala Mawdudi. These formulations developed in Saleh Seriyah's "Message of Faith" published in 1973; Mohamed Abdel-Salam Faraj's book entitled "The Missing Obligation", published late in 1980; and in writings of the leaders of the two key jihadist organizations in Egypt during that period: the Islamic Group (Al-Jamaa Al-Islamiya), specifically the Charter of Islamic Action published in 1984, which was co-written by Asim Abdul Majid and Essam El-Din Derbala and Najeh Ibrahim.

Perhaps the most serious impact was the regression of opportunities for countries of the region to take advantage of the new wave of democratic change throughout the world. It can be said that the reverse of the experience of democratic openness in Algeria in the early nineties had a serious impact on opportunities for the participation of political Islam, as well as on the way large segments of the masses viewed the democratic model. Far worse was that the tacit Western acceptance of the military coup in Algeria, in the context of the Western war on Iraq, had the effect of consecrating the idea of confrontation between the West and the Islamic world. So, this confrontation was no longer necessarily associated with occupation of territory in a Muslim country as it was in the case of Afghanistan. Thus, it was not a coincidence that some armed groups in Algeria hurried rather early to target Western interests and start operations in France.

Violence in Algeria has come out of the death of democracy, when the military perpetrated a putsch/a military coup against the results of the first round of the legislative elections that took place in late 1991, after it became clear that the Islamic Salvation Front was headed to overwhelmingly win the most seats in parliament. But this coup was disastrous for the whole of Algeria, and for the Islamists in particular, who found themselves in a confrontation with the army, the state and society, and subsequently with themselves. Thus, the dynamics of the war in Algeria led a section of violent Salafi groups to expand their operations; on the one hand, they no longer limited themselves to government targets, but rather widened their field of action to society, its civil institutions as well as the institutions and leaders of the Islamist spectra. These groups developed an extremely dangerous ideological system based on a narrow classification of protagonists and rejecting the other

regardless of its position; they also brought confrontation to a wider geographic area⁸.

If the Algerian experience was the most important violent manifestation of this period, and perhaps the most far-reaching in terms of political participation of Islamists, it was not the only example. Egypt saw bloody confrontation between the Mubarak regime and two organizations: Jihad and the Islamic Group. In its turn, Libya saw an intermittent confrontation between the Islamic Fighting Group and Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's regime that ended with controlling the activity of militant groups in the country. In all these examples, there was some kind of mutual confrontation; while the Tunisian experience could be considered a special case, within this context, since the violence which happened there was one-sided; nevertheless, the "War on Terror" discourse was no less present.

In Tunisia, the April 1989 elections were a decisive milestone the relationship between the Movement of Ennahda (the Renaissance)⁹ and the regime of President Zine El Abidine

Ben Ali. These elections came about a year and a half after regime change that toppled President Bourguiba and brought the release of political prisoners, mainly the leaders and militants of the Islamic Tendency Movement, amid a detente that fostered hope for a democratic transition inclusive of all political forces, including the Islamic Tendency Movement, which changed its name to become the Ennahda Movement, in a move that represented an indicator of readiness to deal with sufficient flexibility and positivity with the new situation¹⁰. In the general elections of April 1989 Ennahda participated on independent lists and achieved good results, amid talk of a widespread fraud and manipulation of the results to prevent its victory. This was apparently a warning bell that led Ben Ali to change his position on the participation of the Islamic movement in the political process. In this regard, many - including a number of leaders of the Ennahda Movement itself¹¹ - think that the Movement did not read the situation correctly by going, in its candidatures and in its quest to achieve electoral gains, beyond what was tolerated by the status quo, and not taking into account the concerns of the ruling class and the requirements of a gradual approach to achieve political gains.

⁸ On June 25, 1991 violence erupted, and unrest and clashes escalated between the supporters of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), and the Algerian army, leaving 55 killed, 326 wounded. About three thousand people were arrested. On June 28, Abassi Madani threatened to declare jihad if the army did not abolish the state of emergency. On the last day of June, the two leaders of the FIS were arrested: Dr. Abassi Madani and Sheikh Ali Belhadj, followed by successive arrests for the FIS leaders who took over from Abasi Madani and Belhadj.

⁹ The Movement was founded in 1972 and formally proclaimed in June 6, 1981. It was not recognized as a political party in Tunisia until March 1, 2011 by the government of Mohamed Ghannouchi; after the departure of President Ben Ali, and following the outbreak of the Tunisian revolution on December 17, 2010. One of its most prominent figures is the Movement head, Sheikh Rashid Ghannouchi.

¹⁰ The Islamic Tendency Movement was founded in Tunisia in 1969. It shares many of the intellectual concepts of the Muslim Brotherhood whose objectives, announced at its creation, were: the elimination of the secular tide, the revival of the Islamic personality, the renewal of Islamic thought, and the rebuilding of economic life on humanitarian grounds.

¹¹ Jebali, Hamadi. 07 June 2014. "Notes." The Middle East (Shark Awsat) newspaper. Accessed on: http://media.shemsfm.net/uploads/FCK_files/hamadi.pdf

From the point of view of many¹², the results achieved by Ennahda in the April 1989 elections raised Ben Ali's fears, as he did not want the emergence of a strong political rival to his newly installed regime. The successive political and security developments in Algeria, and the important upheavals and transformations at the regional level (the invasion of Kuwait and the second Gulf War had influential repercussions throughout the region) added more complexity to the already difficult relations between the Islamic Movement and the system of Ben Ali. He took advantage of the atmosphere of the "war on terror" to launch a massive campaign against the Ennahda Movement, to which the regime's security and media services attributed charges including terrorism and threatening state security. This included exploiting incidents, such as the attack on the ruling party's headquarters in the district of "Bab Soueikah," and what was known as the "Brakat sahel plot"¹³ when officers and security men described as close to Ennahda were accused of planning a coup to overthrow President Ben Ali and seize power. In this atmosphere, the Tunisian security forces launched widespread campaigns of arrest, crackdown and harassment against the leaders, members and sympathizers of Ennahda Movement. As

¹² Ghannouchi, Rachid: Head of Ennahda. 13 October 2012. Interview with the Algerian newspaper, El Khabar. Accessed at: <http://www.elkhabar.com/ar/autres/hiwarat/306073.html>

¹³ In the "Bab Soueikah" incident, in 2000, elements of the Ennahda Movement were accused of attacking the ruling party headquarters in this neighborhood of downtown Tunis, when the building's old guard was burned to death. In the "Brakat Sahel" incident, a group of army colonels were accused of cooperating with "Ennahda," in planning a coup to overthrow Ben Ali. 12 colonels were arrested in the case, which was classified as a state security issue.

a result, thousands were thrown in prison, tortured; prisoners and their families were subjected to difficult psychological and material conditions¹⁴, while many members of the movement were compelled to live in exile for years.

If the nineties had affected both Islamists and governments, they had also constituted an opportunity to market the Western model within Muslim communities under the banner of fighting extremism and disseminating open values; it was also period of renovation of the discourse of moderate Islamists who published, advanced series of their intellectual reference books. The head of the Islamic Ennahda Movement, Rached Ghannouchi's, published book: "Public Freedoms in the Islamic State" was an addition of quality to the theses of the Islamic movements. Many personalities linked to these movements also expressed more open views towards democracy and the relationship with the other; these were reflected through books or articles or within the dialogue meetings between Islamists and representatives of national trends from different backgrounds. This period also witnessed - despite the violence and government repression - higher electoral rating for political Islam in Egypt, Morocco, Jordan and Yemen, as part of the pursuit by Islamists to further come to terms with values of freedom, democracy and human rights and to appropriate national dimensions within their political and social thought as an alternative or complement to an idealistic universality. This stage saw in particular a wide tendency by political Islamic movements to participate in constitutional life by seeking to establish political parties, take part in the general

¹⁴ Amnesty International. 2007 Report. Accessed at: <http://www.amnesty.org/fr/node/6686>

elections and enter parliaments and take an interest in trade union work, where Islamic forces made significant progress during this period.

In addition to the high electoral stock of the Islamists, the pace of international pressure on Arab regimes also increased the need to introduce democratic reforms. The result was often the development of the forces of political Islam, both at the grassroots level and with the consolidation of Islamic concepts and ideas within that widening base. As for the Islamic forces usually described as extremist, this period was also a golden age for the currents of violence with Islamic reference. The atmosphere of the victory over the Russians in Afghanistan, and relative laxity throughout the nineties, allowed them greater opportunities to create a wide jihadist body and set more ambitious and global goals. Their peak was the announcement of the World Front for Fighting Jews and Crusaders, founded by Osama bin Laden¹⁵, and the increasing operations carried out by al-Qaeda through the years that followed.

3. THE PHASE OF OPEN AND DIRECT CONFRONTATION (2001 - 2011)

With the demolition of the twin towers of the World Trade Center at the hands of Al-Qaeda, the modern world witnessed the birth of a new era. The United States emerged from this disaster with a new prejudice and with total change to two of the most important pillars of its previous foreign policy toward the Arab world, namely:

1. The previous US policy of assigning the task of fighting terrorism to the local regimes, with full US support for the policies of these governments. Instead, the United States became a direct party in the fight against presumed "terrorist" groups, as well as launching a direct fight against the ones that the United States considers as partners or supporters of terrorism.
2. The previous US call for democratic openness was reversed. The United States moved away from supporting local democracy, and shifted towards more support for the dictatorships and totalitarian regimes, as long as the positions of these regimes were consistent with the US global war against terrorism. The US became ready to crush any regime that it believed that provided a base for what America describes as "Islamic terrorism".

Perhaps one of the most prominent features of this period is the return of the confusion in the definition of terrorism and the narrowing differentiation between the various Islamic groups in the eyes of national governments and regimes, as well as the United States-led international order. Thus, the international war on so-called terrorism during this period succeeded in paralyzing and destroying the centers of influence of Islamic armed forces in many countries. It also narrowed the sources of financing of Islamist groups; it enabled local regimes to succeed in marketing the theory that "all Islamist movements are alike" (i.e. no difference between moderate and radical). Thus, there was a return to the severe harassment and persecution of political Islam, seen by most Arab regimes see as a strategic adversary, exploiting the readiness of Western powers to turn a blind eye to policies pursued by these regimes in the framework of the so-called "war on terror." Thus, the international "War on Terror" had a negative impact on two levels:

¹⁵ On February 23, 1998, Osama bin Laden and (leader of Egyptian Islamic Jihad) Ayman al-Zawahiri signed, along with three other Islamic groups' leaders, the proclamation of the "World Islamic Front for Fighting Jews and Crusaders."

- Suppressing the spread of political Islam by placing obstacles in the face of the attempts to normalize the legal and institutional status of Islamic movements, while seeking to reduce their electoral gains, as well as hitting their presence in associations, syndicates and community institutions in more than one of the countries covered in this study.
- Decline in the democratic process in the Arab world, so that things shifted in favor of a culture of repression and harassment, which included suppressing all groups from all parts of the political and social spectrum. This harassment singled out Islamists more than others. In this context, Sheikh Abdul Fattah Moro said that "the authoritarian regimes have taken, from time to time, the opportunity of the so-called "war on terror" or the notion of "fearing for society" to impose restrictions on freedoms¹⁶ .

There was also an increase in punitive regulatory measures against so-called terrorism, whether in the forms of organizations, supporting activities or community wings. Such legislation was implemented in many cases not to confront the phenomenon, but as a tool to codify and give political credibility and moral legitimacy to measures of security and political repression long-practised by despotic and authoritarian regimes. Perhaps the ferocious attack by the United States, and regional governments, against political Islam and jihadist groups movements, and the tribulations experienced by them, played a role in getting some of these groups to accelerate their process of revision (in

Arabic: Murajaat) of aspects of their intellectual and political positions. This especially with regard to the attitude to participation, pluralism and the relationship with the other. Thus, terms such as moderation began to firmly take hold within Islamic thought - as a backing to the Islamists' adoption of democracy and national affiliation and an attempt to implant them within the political value system of Islam. At this stage, the slogan of moderation constituted a pivotal episode in the consecration of intellectual differentiation between the moderation current and the jihadi movement.

As for the jihadist current, this period also saw the beginning of great revisions. The rapid collapse of the Islamic Emirate of Taliban, Afghanistan's sinking in an endless spiral of violence, and then the breakdown of Iraq under the US strikes, came with the destruction of the most important military bases and centers for jihadists, and the arrest, killing or displacing of thousands grouped under the al-Qaeda and its ilk. All these events led to big questions on the effectiveness of those large-scale operations against the United States and the extent to which they had achieved their objectives. These questions spread rapidly and took the form of collective and extensive reviews of which the conclusions were published in books issued by the influential leaders of al-Qaeda, such as Suleiman Abu Ghaith, and Abu Hafs the Mauritanian who later criticized al-Qaeda's attacks against major political and security Western targets, and which had not taken into account the negative consequences involved. In the same context, some al-Qaeda theorists began, at that time, to get rid of what they considered the effects of ideological extremism within the jihadist discourse. Thus, some of al-Qaeda leaders started to disavow certain terrorist attacks against civilian targets or began to proclaim

¹⁶ Researcher's interview with Sheikh Abdel Fattah Moro, leadership of Ennahda and current Member of Parliament, dated: 10 August 2014.

their innocence of what they describe as abuses of some jihadist organizations, at the level of both thought and practice. This period witnessed also the beginning of what is known as “revisions” and dialogue between the ruling political regimes and Salafi currents described as extremist. Experiments in Libya, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Algeria represent important landmarks on this path. These revisions showed an awareness of the abuses taking place on all sides and opened the way to discussion of the need for a cultural, social and scientific approach to terrorism instead of relying only on the security side of which the weakness has been proven by a terrorism capable of renewing itself, its methods, its elements and its aims and objectives.

In fact, the process of revision, though it accelerated during this period, had been launched in the mid-nineties - especially from within the cells of Egyptian prisons, where the Islamic Group (“Al Jama Islamiya”) has released a collection of books that carried the name of the initiative, through which it offered to stop violence unilaterally. It later developed this position in the context of a collection of books known as “the revisions” (Murajaat) that represented a crucial intellectual turning point in the history of contemporary “jihadist” currents, and contributed to the fact that large numbers of young people renounced joining the fighting camps or taking up arms against the state and its institutions¹⁷. Despite this, the

security forces continued to exercise their role against anyone suspected of affiliation with or support, in any form whatsoever, of the so-called terrorist organizations. Thus, the consequences of that era, characterized by government oppression, ultimately produced what was known later as the revolutions of the Arab Spring, which suddenly emerged from the violence, the blockage of the political horizon and serious social crises. Since then, an Arab political and social experience has started of which it is not easy - yet - to recognize the full dimensions or clearly see the future.

4. THE “ARAB SPRING” PHASE

It is difficult to draw specific features for this phase, which was termed as the “Arab Spring”, for objective reasons, most notably:

- The fact that this was a period of sudden evolution at the beginning, and it may entail a surprise at the end of it. Still, it is a phase that is characterized with continuing and successive events. Therefore, it is appropriate to err towards caution in any attempt to read this “Arab Spring.”
- The gravity of the events of the “Arab Spring” and the highly contradictory developments all stand as a bedazzling situation. Therefore, it is difficult to access a main structural element that dominates this phase. The “Arab Spring,” which began in the Tunisian countryside, is

¹⁷ Of the most prominent Islamic groups “review” books: Zuhdi, Mohammed Karam, Abdullah, Najih Ibrahim, Ali Al-Sharif, Ali Mohammed Et Al. *River of Memories... Jurisprudential revisions of Islamic groups*; Hafez, Osama Ibrahim and Mohammed, Assem Abdel-Majid. *Initiative to Stop Violence... Realistic vision and a legal look*; Abdullah, Najih Ibrahim and Ali Al-Sharif, Ali Mohammed. *Forbidding of Religious Extremism and Considering Muslims as Infidels*. Azim, Hamdi Abdel-Rahman,

Abdullah, Najih Ibrahim and Ali Al-Sharif, Ali Mohammed. *Shedding Light on Mistakes that Happened in the Jihad*. Ali Al-Sharif, Ali Mohammed and Hafez, Osama Ibrahim. *Advice and Identification of Muslims’ Correct Concepts*.

basically a "reaction" or a "response by action" to injustice. It is the finest example of political protest against the regimes. This spring, for the mystery that is shocking about it, became bloody in Libya and Syria, and it also took the form of a "coup" in Egypt!

However, we can say that the "Arab Spring" is only an aspect of the results of the so-called war on terror, since the revolutionary forces that led the popular movement against the collapsing political systems in the "Arab Spring" countries are the same political forces most affected by that war; and the political Islam current is at the forefront of these forces. One of the results of this phase was that the current of political Islam was restored to the top position that it had relatively lost during the previous phase; it appeared that this trend occupies the first place within the circle of trust and interest of voters in the "Arab Spring" countries. This period has facilitated turning an important page of the war on terror: the page of exile and political asylum. If the "War on Terror" has pushed thousands of people, from the currents of political Islam, to migrate from their countries in search of security or fronts that can provide protection and training, the "Arab Spring" has provided another opportunity to end the era of the Diaspora and facilitate the return to the homeland. The returnees to home were not of a single political position; if the Islamic Ennahda Movement has returned to Tunisia with an Islamic thought, reconciled with the values of modernity, and merged quickly in the depth of the political scene before it reaches its peak, the Tunisians Salafists have taken contradictory paths. Some engaged in educational and social work across institutions and associations that they established for this purpose, while others went to the mountains and took up arms against the coalition government led by

Islamists. Thus, the Ennahda movement found itself for the first time leading a war against terrorism, after its members were the main victims of elimination and persecution in Tunisia under the pretext of the "War on Terror".

More than that, Ennahda began receiving the same accusations faced by Ben Ali's regime, such as imposing restrictions on religious freedom and fighting against the Islamists. In this context, one of Ennahda leaders, Sheikh Abdel Fattah Moro reminds his comrades, in the movement that led the coalition that ruled Tunisia for more than two years, of the need for accuracy in confronting the so-called terrorism so that such confrontation does not turn into an excuse for political tyranny, saying that "the fight against terrorism should not be taken as an alibi or pretext to justify despotism and dictatorship, iniquities or restrictions against our people". He added that "the regimes that consider this an appropriate opportunity for targeting freedoms, in particular freedom of religion, will get counterproductive results, as that would be an excuse to further spreading of terrorism among the youth"¹⁸.

As for the Egyptian case, the "Arab Spring" winds brought to power Islamists in the Muslim Brotherhood movement, and carried the Salafi Nour Party to the second rank in the Egyptian political scene. So it seemed that the winds of the "Arab Spring" were able to uproot Salafists' aversion of democratic mechanisms, and created an appropriate climate for the participation of Salafi currents – both jihadist and scientific alike – in political life¹⁹. In this context, one can be

¹⁸ Researcher's interview with Sheikh Abdel Fattah Moro, dated: 10 August 2014.

¹⁹ Among the leading political parties which emerged from the Salafist movement in Egypt:

certain that the electoral progress of the phenomenon of Salafism in Egypt was the result of three key factors:

- the effect of intellectual revisions of the Islamic Group (Jamaa Islamiya), which represented the basic ground for all intellectual revisions undertaken by Arab Salafis in general.
- the hope aroused by the “Arab Spring” of the feasibility of a climate of political participation, especially that this atmosphere coincided with a circumstantial decrease of the “War on Terror” discourse, or at least the existence of a level of selectivity and care in the clarifying those targeted by this discourse and distinguishing them from the rest of the Islamic currents.
- the status of proliferation and expansion, which is characterized by the pacifist Salafi trend in Egypt during the last years of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak’s rule, who was able, with the blessing and help of Salafi authorities in Egypt and Saudi Arabia to neutralize Salafi violence and contain thousands of Salafists in the new system based on obedience and submission to the ruler. Thus, the Salafi aversion of popular manifestations of democracy in demonstrations and protest was mated with the Egyptian government fears of those same expressions. Security liberalism and loyal Salafism met and agreed to reject the idea of mass change of the ruler, which provided a large team of

“Nour Party;” established June 13, 2011, after the outbreak of the January 25, revolution, it was the first Egyptian Salafi political party. In Libya: former rebels engaged in political life as Islamist formations. The Libyan Fighting Group, representing the jihadist Salafist movement in Libya, founded the Nation Party, led by Abdel-Hakim Belhaj. Another is the Authenticity Party, founded by the Salafist movement in Libya and led by Sheikh Abdul Basit Guellah.

Egyptian Salafists the freedom to formation and working. The Salafists’ scientific and cultural channels constituted an important gate for mobilizing thousands of supporters who later formed the electoral base of the Salafist movement.

If the Egyptian Salafists mostly took a very cautious position towards the popular movement’s demands for President Mubarak’s departure, they have, however, quickly tuned into the post-revolution phase, organizing themselves into wide political movements and investing the outcome of their activity during the last seven years of the rule of Hosni Mubarak²⁰. But the scene of the “War on Terror” in this period has exceeded its typical image; reaching extremely complex dimensions. Thus, the Muslim Brotherhood, who were described in the past as terrorists, arrived to power, before they were ousted in a bloody and terrible military coup that sent thousands of their supporters to graves and prisons, under the pretext of the “War on Terror” and of confronting militant dark forces. The Salafists have faced the new, troubled scene with unprecedented pragmatism, as part of a grand coalition that ousted the Islamists and included the most contradictory spectra in the Egyptian society: the military, the main

²⁰ After decades of political non-participation, and concentrating on advocacy and philanthropy, the Salafist movement found an outlet for political practice after the overthrow of Mubarak’s regime. Those dreams were soon dashed, however, after developments in the Egyptian scene and the dismissal of President Morsi. Some Salafists returned to refrain from political action; manifested in the cases of resignations that Salafist parties, including some pro-Sisi parties. On the other hand, killings and repression that worsened since Morsi’s overthrow may push some segments of the Salafist youth to extremism and perhaps violence. In the middle, a third group of Salafis joined the anti-coup alliances for supporting legitimacy.

secular parties, liberal and left-wing, the Coptic Church, the official religious establishment, the Sufism currents, the Nour Party Salafists (who had formerly formed part of the coalition led by the Muslim Brotherhood²¹, and which included some Salafi powers including the Islamic Group's leaders²², organized within the Development and Construction Party.)

In this period, Islamist discourse has lost one core card of mass build-up, which is the card of being "victimized" or "persecuted". Instead there has been an inter-Islamist conflict over electoral seats and political programs between multiple sections all characterized by the Islamic reference. The "War on Terror" and the position from the West remained one of the most important features of the

²¹ Founded in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna, may God have mercy on him, who attempted to bring together various Islamic intellectual currents in one group, to address serious challenges they faced, and to work for Islam. Among the most prominent figures: its founder and first leader: Hassan al-Banna, Hassan Hudhaibi: second leader, Omar Tlemceni, Mohammed Hamid Abuanasr, Mustafa Mashur, Mohammed Mamun Hudhaibi, Mohammed Mahdi Akef, Mohamed Badie.

²² The foundation of this organization was in 1989 at the hands of bin Laden. In 1977 some of the group's leaders broke away, joining the Muslim Brotherhood. The majority remained wedded to the Salafi trend. In 1979, Karam Zuhdi, the member of the Shura Council of the group, met the engineer Mohamed Abdel-Salam Faraj (a member of one faction of the Jihad organization and later a member of the Shura Council) and proposed the idea of their involvement with the organization in planning for the establishment of an Islamic state. This was agreed upon and it was approved to form the military wing, a body for preaching, scientific research, recruitment and application of Islamic laws, as well as the necessary support apparatus for the movement. Among its most prominent leaders and figures: Chairman of the Shura Council of the Group (Jamaa) in Upper Egypt, Dr. Ibrahim Najih, Karam Zuhdi, Mohamed Abdel Salam... Many of the group's leaders have recently given up their ideas.

difference between the Islamist movements at the outlining and the preparation of their political programs. If the Muslim Brotherhood has mostly shown political flexibility toward the West, in terms of ideas and institutions, the most important features of the political discourse of the Salafists during the "Arab Spring" was rather a focus on the Islamic reference and the application of the Sharia (Islamic law). Thus, it can be said that while the focus of the Salafists' discourse was on identity, the Brotherhood gave an increasing attention to the discourse concerned with reform and development issues.

The ability to overcome the division that exists now in Egypt and Libya, which Tunisians have been able to overcome - or more precisely reached a consensus for its management - represents the primary determinant of the possibility of avoiding a return to the previous status. There will be serious risks of a significant reverse of the democratic process and the feeling, of thousands of Egyptian and Arab youth, of deception and despair of the advantages of the peaceful option as a way to gain power and achieve political objectives.

SECTION III: THE DISCOURSE OF THE "WAR ON TERROR" AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE ERA OF THE "ARAB SPRING"

Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Morocco are appropriate models; helpful to monitoring the extent of the impact of the Arab revolutions and the "Arab Spring" climate on the discourse of the "war on terror", and studying the effect of this new setting on the political participation of Islamic parties. These countries provide different models for the transformation that these revolutions induced. The era of "Arab Spring" was

characterized, at least in the early stages, by a relative decline in the momentum of the discourse of the "war on terror" and its impact on the relationships among the local political parties towards one another, as well as the relationship between these parties and the regional and international powers. This situation may be due to two main reasons:

First: a fusion of various political forces and social elements into the arena of the struggle that group them together against the oppressive regimes. At that stage, everyone was lining up behind the agreed-upon collective slogans and objectives of the revolution, as well as having all forces melting together in the crucible of suffering and sacrifice during the days of the revolution. These elements have encouraged everyone to overcome the sensitivities and the small differences, and thus, the discovery of commonalities was apparent and most welcomed.

The second: the fall of certain regimes that were no longer viable, and change in governance patterns that no longer fulfilled any purpose, were the basic elements of a common desire for many groups; including the Islamic forces and some regional and international circles. The impact of that situation was in the form of a decline of both negative attitudes and self-centered orientations; and that was actually under the pressure of necessity of that stage. And thus, a shift towards greater understanding and willingness to cooperate became apparent.

However, it must be said that this setting was not at the same level in all countries, or through all stages or for all parties. Indeed, things have been different in degree and mode from one case (one country) to another.

1. TUNISIA: ENNAHDA IN THE FACE OF THE SALAFISTS

Although Tunisia represents still the least-painful model among the various "Arab Spring" experiences, it has not yet reached the stage of full recovery, especially with regard to the relationship between the Salafists and the state and prospects of the "War on Terror". The "War on Terror" has been a key portfolio of the Tunisian government; which resulted in direct confrontation after an operation carried out against the Jewish synagogue in Djerba in 2002, and the challenge this security breach posed to Ben Ali's regime, which boasted of eradicating what was described as terrorism. It claimed, at one point, to have succeeded to drain terror's resources through a comprehensive and effective strategy. Thus the regime renewed arrest campaigns, which were launched within the framework of strategic involvement in the US "War on Terror". Among the significant milestones in this context was the Tunisian authorities' dismantling of the Asad ibn Furat group, created by the Tunisian Salafists in 2006, which was followed by violent clashes. However, the Salafi current took on a deeper identity with the fall of Ben Ali's regime, and seemed more aggressive and fierce in the face of the new Tunisian authority, whose handling of the terrorism portfolio in the beginning was characterized by flexibility and openness, reflected particularly in the general amnesty of all Salafist prisoners, including those sentenced to death and life imprisonment.

So, the Tunisian Salafists found themselves in a new political situation with, as most prominent features:

- Peaceful change in power, that undermines violent means to gaining power - based mainly on the need to fight

to dislodge the ruling regime and establish the system adapted for the Salafi model.

- Freedom of association and movement, which enabled the Salafi trend to re-discover itself, to better connect and organize its various parts, facilitating communication and relationships between the Salafist movement base and its dispersed leaders; communicating with Salafist groups and authorities both at home and abroad.
- Open political debate, hardly taking into account limitations or recognizing any constants, compared to the previous situation; including the re-launch of discussion on religious issues and of the application of Islamic law (Sharia) among Tunisian elites: including those who completely reject it, those who categorically demand it and those who seek to achieve it gradually. This debate constituted a constant source of clashes between the Salafist movement and the rest of the Tunisian political forces.

In the post-“Arab Spring,” the Tunisian Salafist movement began to organize itself; first through relief and civil society work, before officially announcing its appearance in the Sakra conference near the Tunisian capital, under the heading “Hear from us directly,” which was followed later by the Kairouan conference in May 11, 2011 which was attended by more than 15,000 people - followers of the Salafist movement, its leaders and Sheikhs. The confrontational and show nature of both conferences was overwhelming; this was manifested first in the refusal of giving legal authorization for these major conferences. The Tunisian Salafist movement later entered into major confrontations with security services and leftwing groups because of some films considered by Salafists as contrary to Islamic values, or because of the Salafist movement claims for the application of Sharia, a demand

entirely rejected by the Tunisian left and the object of reservations by Ennahda movement - as interpreted by Salafists. Confidential and declared conversations between Ennahda leaders and some key personalities and leaders of the Salafist movement did not succeed in neutralizing the violence.

The crisis of the Salafist movement in Tunisia is in its inconsistent intellectual reference. This trend was not established as a unified political or ideological unit because of political restrictions in the era of Ben Ali; as a result the Tunisian Salafist movement remains, in the end, a group of undulating Salafist islands, living between a traditional culture of incitation based on excessive discourse and audacious acting spirit, and a changing and turbulent reality that has not yet taken its final features in the form of the political and intellectual reference of the government. The events of Jebel Ech-Chambi, the US embassy and Bir Ali, and other stages of confrontation between the Tunisian security and the Salafist armed groups, indicates that the Salafist movement in Tunisia is still in the formation process; drafting its ideological identity and political program, as it seems to lack a unified and consistent vision of the successive events in Tunisia.

2. EGYPT: THE POLITICAL SPRING OF SALAFISM

Egypt is described as the heart of the “Arab Spring”, as well as being a key center of Islamist phenomenon. The “Arab Spring” events represented a key lever of the Islamic movement in Egypt, for both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists; and they have shown enormous organizational and tactical capabilities. These capabilities gave the movement an important position in fields of struggle, enabling it to win a majority of seats

in parliament, and bringing it to the chair of the presidency in the first credible elections in Egypt's history. However, the winds of the "Arab Spring" in Egypt quickly turned into devastating storms that aborted the emerging political project, and put an end to dreams - of the majority of Egyptians - for the birth of a different political model to that which they knew over the preceding six decades. Thus, the military's return to power, in the context of unprecedented levels of community violence and tension, was an important turning point in the political history of Egypt, characterized by a sharp level of political polarization, not based on well-defined ideological foundations.

In this context, one can say that the two phases of the "Arab Spring" events in Egypt represented, a political spring for the Salafist movement, which expressed itself through a number of political platforms: most notably the Nour Party, the Reform and Renaissance Party, the Authenticity Party, the Construction and Development Party and the Virtue Party. All these parties have a Salafist reference in common, although they differ in their historical tracks and their interpretation of the current events; not to mention their different choices with regard to political positions and the relationship with the regional powers actors. Thus, while the Nour Party has the biggest turnout among political parties and wider links to other Arab Salafist forces (especially the Saudi Salafist movement linked to official circles in that country), the Authenticity, and Construction and Development parties are the closest Salafist parties to the political position of the Muslim Brotherhood and its political arm: the Justice and Freedom Party. The military coup in Egypt showed a divergence in the Islamist forces positions of the official "War on Terror" discourse. Thus, the Nour Party leaders have been active in incitement against their former challenger,

the Muslim Brotherhood; charging them with terrorism, other Salafist parties; with the Construction and Development Party at the fore, lined up within the camp opposed to the rule of Field Marshal Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

3. LIBYA: THE ARMED DIVISION

The political and intellectual unilateralism that Libya experienced throughout Gaddafi's rule - which lasted over forty years - created a parallel unilateralism in the country's Islamist phenomenon, whose field presence was mainly limited in the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group²³. It was not surprising that Salafist forces played a key role from the outset of Gaddafi's overthrow, as they were one of the few, organized political forces on the ground, and because of the depth and persistence of their dispute with the former regime. The Salafi role in the struggle crystallized in the form of a considerable actor in the formation of the post-revolutionary political scene, which was characterized by sharp divisions; tending towards more, and increasingly fierce, armed confrontation, between a steadily expanding political milieu. As a result, Libya has come to the brink of disintegration because of the wealth of internal contradictions, and the acute nature of attitudes and reactions, and perhaps also under the impact of opposed interests and policies of regional and international powers currently, openly grappling on the scene.

There are multiple factors that have contributed to push Libya to this difficult situation, of which the most important are:

²³ The Muslim Brotherhood Movement in Libya remained exiled due to the Libyan regime's suppression of all political formations under the revolutionary committees.

- The regional, ethnic and tribal divisions which became evident immediately after the collapse of the dictatorial regime that ruled with a firm grip for more than four decades.
- The lack of a well-established constitutional culture and strong national institutions with universal legitimacy.
- The chaos of armament in the country, especially in the absence of a central authority capable of regulating and collecting the huge weapons stockpile inherited from Gaddafi's regime.
- The related spread of gun culture within Libyan society.

It could be argued that the "Arab Spring" in Libya was not a rose but rather a flame, which freed violence, with Islamic ideological background, and that took on political, social, tribal, and even economic dimensions in this context.

4. THE MOROCCAN EXCEPTION

Moroccans have always cherished the specificity of their political experience, and believe that they are a singular model with its own political, social and cultural characteristics. This makes it appropriate to treat the Moroccan example independently; not applying ready-made models or interpretations applicable to the Arab Levant. In fact, the Moroccan monarchy was able to bow before the storm of the "Arab Spring" and, under the King's robe, accomplished a political transition that is still regarded as part of "Arab Spring," albeit less damaging, painful and with fewer losses for the Moroccan monarchy. This Moroccan spring had an impact on Islamists' discourse in general and Salafists' in particular, who praised the "Arab Spring" revolutions, which removed "tremendous injustice and prejudice that were oppressing the Islamic

and Arab peoples"²⁴. In this context, the discourse of some figures (previously accused, in terror files, of fighting against the state and rejecting political and community work within democratic frameworks) developed and changed; not only engaging in the political process by participating in the elections - as is the case of the "Renaissance and Virtue,"²⁵ but also beyond. Sheikh Alvezari, one of the prominent theorists of the Salafist movement in Morocco, has shifted from being one of the main instigators of violence, according to the Moroccan security, and a former prisoner sentenced to approximately 30 years, to becoming an open political orator whose speeches and sermons are attended by the Moroccan King Mohammed VI himself. In these sermons he prays for the success and triumph of well guidance of the King, whom he describes as the "commander prince of believers".

It can be said that the revisions and dialogue, in which some political and intellectual Moroccan parties participated, contributed to ideological reversal in the discourse of Jihadist Salafism, in addition to the atmosphere of national harmony and the Royal Moroccan amnesty that led to the release of hundreds of Moroccan Salafist prisoners, allowing them to engage in public life. As for the current of Moroccan political Islam, represented by the Justice and

²⁴ al-Ashraf, Hassan. 2014. "Salafists of Morocco: Directions and paths." Chapter in: *The Salafist Phenomenon*. Doha: Al Jazeera Centre for Studies. p. 244.

²⁵ The Moroccan Salafist leader: Abu Hafs Rafiki Mohammed Abdul Wahab is considered the most prominent leader of this Party, and the main Salafist revisionist figure in Salafist jihadist discourse. He seeks to harmonize current requirements: including political and ideological rapprochement, not only with political Islam, but also with the Moroccan throne, as well as with the liberal currents in the Kingdom.

Development Party and the Unification and Reform Movement²⁶, it has found in the established Moroccan monarchy an opportunity to manage a level of reconciliation; with understanding with the Moroccan throne as the most capable means to protect the acquired legitimacy, and the electoral gains that represent popular legitimacy. Thus, the Moroccan experience can be said to be, until now, the politically richest and most capable to create the exception among the Arab experiences as well the most qualified to survival and development.

SECTIONS IV: THE STRATEGIES OF ADAPTATION, UTILIZATION AND CHALLENGE

A wide range of Islamic movements have managed, to a large extent, to adapt to the constraints on discourse on the so-called "War on Terrorism". By capitalizing on the negative reactions to that discourse, some movements were also able, to achieve considerable political results, significantly contributing to increasing the spread of Islamic parties and movements. These parties succeeded in filling the void left by the decline in presence and popularity of rival political forces and ideological currents that have for long time occupied the forefront in

leading the masses under Arabist or progressive banners. In recent decades the Islamic movements have succeeded to better tune into, and respond to, the feelings of the Arab and Islamic masses. These already reject Western policies in the region; suspicious of the direction of the US' so-called "War against Terrorism", and angry at the vast and dangerous excesses that characterized that war. Thus, the Islamic movements have, generally, succeeded in dealing with the discourse of the "War" in different ways, depending on context. Not only have they reduced the negative effects of that discourse on their situation, but also exploited it in order to achieve some gains, most notably:

- **Capacity Development:** The challenges posed by discourse on the "War on Terror" has transformed the Islamic movements as a touchstone of bitter and painful experience but at the same time, inspiring and full of opportunities. In fact, these Islamist movements have found themselves obliged, under the pressure of events, to develop commensurate mobilization mechanisms and discourse skills for the size of targeting, to which they are exposed and the costs of leadership they aspire to; also, by virtue of the nature of the tasks imposed on them and the responsibilities they are looking to carry out, these movements realized the need to review many of their positions and methods of work, and in particular to reconsider their relations with many parties both at home and abroad. In general, we can say that as much as facing the "War on Terror" discourse has exhausted and often disturbed the Islamic movements and parties, in general, it has also provided them considerable opportunities to improve their situation and develop their potential and capabilities on more than one level.

²⁶ The foundation of this movement, in 1996, was the merger of the "Reform and Renewal" movement and "Association of the Islamic Future," that in turn emerged from the "Islamic Youth;" founded by Abdul Karim Matia' in the mid-seventies. Its members suffered repression and arrests following the murder of leftist leader Omar Benjelloun in 1975. Among its prominent members: Ahmad Chris, the former president of the movement and a prominent face in the International Union of Muslim Scholars, and Mohamed El Hamdaoui, Idrisi.

- **Popular expansion:** there are two key aspects, associated with the so-called “War on Terror,” that the Islamic movements and parties succeeded, to a great extent, in employing and exploiting in their favor. The first is the exaggeration of a number of regimes in the region in exploiting the “War on Terror” discourse as a cover for authoritarian practices, especially the repression of political opponents and specifically Islamists. The second is brutal excesses that accompanied the Western so-called “War on Terror”; its reckless and barbaric military actions in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere; the atrocious human rights violations around the world, culminating in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib prisons. In addition, what typified the “War on Terror” discourse was an absolute, arrogant and hostile nature towards Islam as a religion and culture, and the Islamic peoples as nations and civilized entities. Thus, the Islamic movements - relying on a historical experience replete with dealing in adversity, even in recent decades - have achieved an exceptional popular expansion by working to mobilize the mainstream conscience, which tends to be sympathetic to the oppressed victim and automatically appreciates any manifestations of sacrifice and heroism. Islamists have presenting themselves from the perspective of a double injustice or persecution: their own injustice or persecution, as they are the most prominent victims of the tyranny of the local regimes, and the injustice and sufferings of the Arab and Islamic peoples who complain of the arrogance and oppression of the West and see the Islamists as leading the forces of confrontation against that oppression.
- **A growing political gain:** the discourse on the “War on Terror” has automatically produced an inverse reaction becoming, in the hands of the targeted class, a gainful

electoral paper in the Arab world. Faced with the so-called “War on Terror” the Islamists had an opportunity to circumvent the political and social blockade, giving them a chance to broadcast widespread anti-Western attitudes in regional issues, for example on what large segments of the Arab peoples perceive as subordination to the policies exerted by some Arab regimes. In this way the Islamists succeeded in circumventing the institutional blockade – a blockade which was an essential part of the “War on Terror” plans, raging at the regional and international levels. In other words, the Islamists sought - and to a large extent succeeded - in converting popular expansion (referred to in the preceding paragraph) to effective political gains.

It is relevant to underline that most of Islamist forces have very often faced the discourse of “War on Terror” with great flexibility and pragmatism. Whether by coping on the level of discourse and practice, taking into account its constraints, exploiting it to clear away some suspicions; by presenting themselves as moderate for some, or in a victim stance for the others; or through an inverse use or utilization of such discourse by challenging and confronting it. In such a manner, the Islamic movements and parties reacted to the “War on Terror” discourse in three strategies: adaptation, utilization, and challenge.

- **Adaptation:** The strategy of adaptation in the terminology of this research refers to the commitment of the Islamist movements and parties to work in the framework of the legally and politically permitted margin, under the umbrella of the ruling institutional system. This means that the efforts of these parties and movements will center mainly in the authorized areas. Despite that, the Islamist movements, with extended experience of

working under restrictions, have never spared any efforts to exploit to the maximum the permitted margins. They have proved, several times over, their commitment to curb and control their ambitions; avoiding excesses (which leads to confrontation with the ruling powers in their countries), except through a calculated dosage and without prejudice to the critical balances established in accordance with the tacit understandings. Even movements that adopted armed struggle have behaved through adaptation, manifested, among other things, in regulating their confrontation strategies. Thus, they focus sometimes on "the remote enemy" or link their activities to arenas with a foreign presence, affording them the legitimacy of resistance action. Sometimes they concentrate their activities in the country territory as a reaction to the tyranny and suppression of local regimes. Presumably the most significant aspects of adaptation in the conduct of this class of Islamist groups are the intellectual and political revisions that have been undertaken by most of Salafist and jihadist groups. These revisions demonstrate great audacity in self-criticism, especially with the introduction of the "efficiency" factor, in addition to the factor of "religious legitimacy," as a basis to assess their practices, as we will see later. There are also the non-Jihadist Salafist groups, which represent a widespread and growing movement in these research countries, and which are beginning to play influential political roles in some countries of the "Arab Spring" (for example, the electoral outcome and political roles accomplished by Nour party in Egypt). These groups constitute a fitting example of Islamist groups' capacity to adapt with the effects of the discourse of so-called "War on Terror". Some of these groups - traditionally accused of spreading religious ideology considered as the

starting point for violence - have avoided the impact of the discourse of "War on the Terror" through adhering to the political positions of the ruling systems, and avoiding confrontation, thereby gaining some media platforms, and social and educational institutions that enable them to widen their area of influence within their countries.

- **Utilization:** Among Islamist parties and movements, the strategy of using or exploiting the "War on Terror" discourse lies primarily in two domains: electoral propaganda at the interior level and discourse aimed at building relations at the international arena. This strategy, adopted in part by some movements commonly understood as moderate, is based on two parallel lanes. Their paradoxical nature requires a great deal of dexterity to handle them both at the same time; first, focusing on mobilizing mass support as the first victims of the "foreign aggression" represented in the "War on Terror," and secondly dealing with the decision-makers and institutions in the West, in order to introduce their political project, and approach to change, as a contrary and an acceptable alternative to the practices and perceptions targeted by the "War on Terror" discourse. On the other hand, the different factions of the Salafist movements have worked to exploit the "War on Terror" discourse (accordingly to their position, choices and particular circumstances) to their interest. By either acting to gain the sympathy of the masses by rejecting this discourse; by espousing radical reactions against it to extend the recruitment circle to new elements, especially among some youth, thus increasing their ranks or providing assistance and protection to their members.
- **Challenge:** The strategy of challenge is based on frank and open confrontation with the "War on Terror" discourse – even

if this is not its constant feature in all circumstances. This strategy sometimes takes less hard forms – without giving any concessions, showing readiness to do so, nor expressing any will to truce, or even trying to correct the prevailing picture or present some justifications to the perceptions and the practices that can be addressed to convince the other side. Then, it is a strategy based on the extreme and absolute conflict with the other, with all those who cooperate with it, and even with those who stand on the sidelines. It is a vision based on the absolute expansion of the notion of the “other”. This strategy – as we talk about the so-called “War on Terror” – reminds us of the famous statement of President Bush Jr.: “who is not with us is with terror”. It is with a slight difference in wording, or rather what it practically implies, that it is issued this time from the other side of the showdown, or the other “camp” (in Arabic “Fustat”), if we want to use the famous expression of Osama Ben Laden and which appeared in almost the same context as that of Bush.

It is appropriate to emphasize, in this regard, on an important historical fact which is that the adoption of these strategies has varied from one country to another, and from one group to another. More than that, most Islamic parties and movements have paired, one way or another, many strategies or ranged between these strategies, from one era to another, depending on the exigencies of volatile situations in their countries, the shifts of their political positions and the evolution of their own intellectual vision. We can see that Islamic parties and groups dealt with the “War on Terror” discourse by adopting a combination of these strategies, to various degrees, according to local conditions and historical contexts and the specificity of each group. If it is true that the behaviour of parties that are traditionally described as

moderate was often characterized by the ability to adapt and the tendency to utilize; while movements long regarded as radical have adopted a challenging approach towards the “War on Terror.” This does not negate the fact that both the latter and the former exchanged sites in some moments and adopted the same strategies at certain stages.

1. EGYPT: ADAPTATION IN FACE OF REPRESSION

The Muslim Brotherhood experience is one of the most important political attempts in the context of Islamist phenomenon - if the most important. The parties and movements issued of the Muslim Brotherhood approach have, for many years, represented the spearhead of the opposition to local political regimes and remained in the forefront of anti-Western policies forces in the region. Despite the general commitment of the “Muslim Brotherhood” parties to peaceful options in their quest to regime change in the countries in which they operate, and their constant declaration of rejecting all forms of military actions except those destined to resist foreign occupation (particularly the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands), they have been accused, by a number of regional governments, of involvement in terrorism; whether practicing it, supporting it or hosting it. Thus, we can say that the so-called “War on Terror” left a clear mark on the speech and practice of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in various local experiences. It is clear that the Islamist parties with a Muslim Brotherhood background realized early on the extent of the desire of international forces to face so-called terrorism, and the desire of Arab regimes to exploit this trend to harass or liquidate their political opponents – chief among them the current of political Islam, which had begun to record remarkable

progress. To address this situation, the parties classified as part of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement often sought to adapt to these situations, as far as this was possible.

In this sense, we can examine the experience of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, since the Muslim Brotherhood has a long experience in terms of political conflict with the successive regimes in Egypt. This confrontation between the Muslim Brotherhood group and Egyptian governments has known various stages; it has witnessed stages of the extension of and intensity of the conflict. In reality it has barely been interrupted since the end of the forties, except in some transient cases of outward understanding, recorded in the fifties and in the middle of the seventies of the previous century, and for short period after the revolution of 25th January 2011 and the departure of President Hosni Mubarak from power.

Conflict between the two parties reached its peak – with different of appearances due to the different circumstances - during the reigns of former presidents Gamal Abdel Nasser and Hosni Mubarak, before returning with more violent dimensions at the overthrow of the first democratically elected Egyptian president and former president of the Freedom and Justice Party (the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood) Dr. Mohamed Morsi, who was ousted by his Secretary of Defense, and the current president al-Sisi on 3 July 2013. This was in the context of complex developments, resulting in a sharp polarization that led to violent political and judicial repression, and harsh action against the Muslim Brotherhood. The organization was declared a terrorist group by the new regime, amidst arrests of most of the group's leaders and thousands of its activists. The ban on the

Muslim Brotherhood's activities is not new for the ruling power in Egypt. In 1954, the Muslim Brotherhood was declared a banned organization, to the point that during the last years of the rule of President Hosni Mubarak, the official literature of the media associated to the Egyptian regime when talking about the Muslim Brotherhood, only used the phrase "the banned group." The group's institutions and members faced renewed charges, while they were exposed to prosecution and harassment at any time.

In most circumstances the Muslim Brotherhood was keen to show adaptability in line with the reformist approach, which is the main option based on the idea of the gradual action. The manifestations of this strategy are reflected, generally, in its carefulness to avoid open confrontation with the authorities, as well as in refraining from being dragged into violent or uncalculated reactions. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the political behaviour of the Muslim Brotherhood was dominated by a strategy of adaptation, especially through flexibility in dealing with pressures, and prowess in exploiting any opportunities to work in the public sphere, while avoiding unnecessary confrontations with the Egyptian regime. The Brotherhood is fully aware of the extent of this regime's eagerness to crush them, and put obstacles in their way, as its first political opponent. In this context, the Muslim Brotherhood tended to circumvent the restrictions on political activity, instead using multiple paths through which they managed to maintain an appropriate level of attendance in the public domain, despite the legal, political and media prohibition. The most outstanding paths or tracks followed by this group in its quest to adapt to the difficult positions were:

- **The path of associative/trade-union action:** During the eighties and nineties in

particular, the Muslim Brotherhood turned to working within the Egyptian professional trade unions. Thus, the group was able to consolidate its expansion inside the Egyptian middle class by means of the trade-unions for doctors, engineers, lawyers, journalists and teaching staff at Egyptian universities. In this way the Muslim Brotherhood ensured their presence on public platforms, allowing them greater opportunities to broadcast their discourse, to introduce their project, provide their public service model and communicate with the masses and with the rest of the political and social elite, and other forces in Egypt.

- **The path of charity and social work:** In this regard, the Muslim Brotherhood sought to compensate for their absence from formal political platforms by focusing on charitable activity and social service; spreading the establishment and development of a broad network of charitable and service organizations that ensured them to communicate seamlessly with the masses - particular the poorest and those in most need of services. This path achieved a dual purpose that would later have tremendous effects; on the one hand, it presented: a positive image of the group, and on the other hand, it showed the negligence and inability of the Egyptian regime - which is responsible for the tasks addressed by the Brotherhood's charitable and social institutions.
- **The path of political alliances:** In the eighties, nineties and the first decade of this century, the Muslim Brotherhood has attempted to enter parliament through an alliance with officially recognized parties, or through running on independent lists. They succeeded in doing so more than once, though with varying degrees of political cost, depending on situations. Perhaps the most notable example in this context is the alliance with the Egyptian Labor Party, led by Engineer Adel Hussein

who granted the Muslim Brotherhood a chance to circumvent the institutional blockade after they have long suffered from exclusion of their electoral nominations and the preventing of the group's members from take advantage of their constitutional right to political practice. Although this party (the Egyptian Labor Party), was later been "ikhwanized" due to the migration of Brotherhood members to it (especially in the electoral seasons), it did seem to be only a temporary, necessary interface more than a strategic alternative to the group's pursuit of an independent political line and framework. A group of the Brotherhood's staff split with the Labor Party in the mid-nineties and put forward the project of the "Center Party" (Hizb Al Wassat), which remained under construction until after the January 25 Revolution when it was recognized, along with "the Freedom and Justice Party", which the Muslim Brotherhood announced after fall of President Hosni Mubarak. The latter won a majority in the first post-revolution parliamentary elections, and as its candidate, Morsi later won the first free and multi-party elections in Egyptian history.

Of course, the adaptive strategy was not the only option for the Muslim Brotherhood, neither throughout their historic march, nor in the face of the "War on Terror"; but there were moments where the group's approach was defiant of the accusations directed against it, and in the face of policies often expressed in the "War on Terror" discourse. Perhaps the two most indicative stages of this situation are the conflict with Nasser's regime, during the fifties and the sixties, and then the current stage from 30 July 2013, when al-Sisi, seized power and removed Morsi. Between these two, there were many other examples showing the Muslim Brotherhood's adaptive tendency, but still

with an apparent determination to use the “War on Terror” discourse to their advantage - either by local presentation as a victim or by seeking, locally and internationally, to prove the moderation of its intellectual approach and its political positions, as already explained.

2. TUNISIA: EXPANDING THE COMMON'S CIRCLE

The Islamic Movement's experience in Tunisia - represented by what is known today as the Ennahda Movement - has passed through several stages and phases during which the movement's visions knew several changes and its situation fluctuated between weakness and strength. In most cases, despite the successive vagaries of the situation, and sometimes bitterness of the experience, the movement has followed a firm approach of moderation, a significant spirit of renovation and a superior ability to deal positively with others. This has enabled it, in an exceptional experience as compared to the experiences of most of the Islamic movements in other countries, to achieve a high level of interaction with the establishment, described as secularist in Tunisia. It coped with the difficult situation it faced during the era of former President Ben Ali. It stuck, along these stages and phases, to a civil and peaceful approach, adopting a method of dialogue and understanding with partners in politics, regardless of intellectual differences. Several factors may have helped the movement commit to this approach, most notably:

- The legacy of renovation in the Tunisian religious Reform Movement, which made qualitative, pioneering contributions to the renewal of modern Islamic thought. Prominent scholars have emerged in this field including Mohamed Tahar Ben Achour and politicians like al-Thaaliby,

and before these Kayreddine al-Tounousy, and others...

- The civil spirit prevailing in Tunisian society, where a broad middle class emerged a relatively long time ago, as compared to most Arab countries. This middle class enjoys a distinguished level of education, advanced cultural interests, developed civic consciousness and an acceptable standard of living. All these factors are considered objective reasons for pursuing moderation and equilibrium in opinions and positions.
- The intellectual and political pluralism which persisted in Tunisian society (in spite of unilateral and authoritarian regimes) spread awareness about the right to difference; imposed the logic of interaction and dialogue, and strengthened the opportunity for understanding and working within alliances that bring together more than one party. The implications of this awareness are still influential in the Tunisian political class' practices, despite the voices of extremism that rise here and there.
- Ennahda's experience, and the tribulations it has weathered in the eighties and nineties, pushed it to carry out drastic reviews of its political methods and practice, to take into account a great deal of pragmatism and attention to the concerns of other parties. It has become more willing to make concessions, and to modify its ambitions as long as necessary, to build confidence and avoid confrontation.
- A number of the movement's leaders and militants migrated to or were in exile in the West enabling their closer contact with different political, intellectual and human rights circuits; both in Western circles and the political, intellectual and media Arab elites, who live in the West or frequently visit it. This contributed to

raising the level of awareness of the movement's leaders and active members, increased their spirit of openness and made them deal with the other with a positive and constructive spirit.

These factors enabled the movement to continuously and boldly update the concepts and mechanisms of its political discourse, so that it became - in the eyes of Islamists and modernists alike - the most progressive within the broad Islamic spectrum. This quality allowed it to accomplish a general system of political views, which enabled it to achieve the 'agreed upon' with its partners in the Tunisian national parties through a political process with fewer losses and lighter wounds than the processes in countries such as Egypt and Libya. This does not negate the fact that even this high flexibility did not much serve the movement in practice, as it suffered a lot from the repression of the Tunisian regime and the staleness of some partners in the political arena in Tunisia.

Ennahda's experience was characterized by a great deal of complexity. It lived for many years under the brunt of an authoritarian regime which used, perhaps more than any other regime in the region, the discourse of the so-called "War on Terror," exploiting it to oppress its political opponents with the utmost cruelty. However, this movement has been able to avoid the slide into violent reactions, which might have resulted from the injustice of harsh conditions during stages of the reign of President Ben Ali. The movement's militants were not enticed into violence and so the movement remained safe, without deviating from the original path of peaceful change. Thus, it saved Tunisia from the tragedies of civil wars that hit other countries in the region during the nineties. It is true that the ferocity of the attack suffered by Ennahda in the interior left no choice for positive adaptation with these stressful

circumstances, and no opportunity for it to benefit from the popular rejection of the excesses of the so-called "War on Terror" and the negative reactions associated with it. The impossibility of working from the interior pushed the movement to migration and exile, where it found suitable spaces for the development of its visions, mechanisms, and work plans and for improving its image, and building bridges with local parties and Western circles with influence in the internal affairs of the region. After the revolution of 17 December 2010, which forced former President Ben Ali to flee on 14 January 2011, Ennahda's behaviour - especially since its victory in the Constituent Assembly elections in 2011 - represents the most prominent evidence of its commitment to the strategy of adaptation. Adhering to the participatory management of the transition; by the concessions it made in order to reach a consensual formulation of the Constitution; by overcoming the tension caused by the political assassinations; when it accepted to concede presidency of the government and supported the formation of a government of technocrats acceptable to everyone; by abstaining from running for presidential elections to avoid giving the impression that it wants to dominate the political scene; or by its commitment to neutrality during the two rounds of the presidential election and its abstention from supporting a particular candidate in order to avoid polarization that may worsen the already complicated political situation. All these positions reflect a deep understanding of the limits of the opportunities available and the size of the existing challenges, and show a strong desire to build confidence and avoid crises.

3. MOROCCO: LEADERSHIP OF ADAPTATION

Certain statements of the former president of the Unification and Reform Movement, Dr. Ahmad Raïssouni were understood to be critical of the status of King Mohammed VI, and of his role in the organization of religious affairs. These raised the ire of some circles close to the Moroccan throne, which saw it as an insult to the 'Prince of Believers' by one of the symbols of the moderate political Islam in Morocco. Perhaps the timing of these statements contributed to increasing this tension, since they coincided with a period marked by a convulsive political and media discourse on the 16 March 2003 bombings in Casablanca, which were followed by waves of unprecedented media incitement; sparking fears among the Movement's leaders of government targeting, amid the campaign of the so-called "War on Terror". This imposed on the movement a need to redouble efforts to adapt itself to the pressures of the situation.

Perhaps for that reason, Raïssouni returned to give clarification on the statements he had made, accusing some local media of distorting his original statements. Some voices from inside the Movement criticized the head, who was eventually forced to resign from the presidency, and left to concentrate on academic and cultural concerns that led him to live outside the Kingdom for a few years, in a kind of voluntary exile. This was probably to avoid embarrassing the Movement, for which he had always been keen to secure interests. In fact, this position of the Movement was no more than an additional illustration of the strategy of conscious adaptation to pressure. In fact, this strategy was not the result of the mentioned events. It formed part of a consistent approach since Mr. Abdelilah Benkirane and his colleagues decided to break with the

radical line of the Islamic Youth Movement and establish a new framework of legitimacy within boundaries drawn by the monarchy²⁷. It was not surprising that the movement went so far as to sacrifice a historical symbol and central personality of its, ideological and political, leadership to face the storm. The experience showed that, when it comes to resolving the choice between circumstantial calculations and strategic bets, the movements of political Islam often demonstrate exceptional ingenuity to adapt whenever they consider that the challenges might cause serious threats to their gains, or might undermine the entity of the country in which they work.

The political experience of the Unification and Reform Movement - and its intellectual and organizational tributaries - illustrates a unique model of adaptation to the constraints of reality; dealing with it in a positive spirit in addition to gradually neutralizing fears and accumulating gains; taking care to avoid carnival appearances, and provocative statements and positions. Consistent with this approach, the Movement's experience in political participation has quietly evolved without dramatic leaps. Thus, after the failure of the Moroccan authorities to license the National Renewal Party - a project which was submitted by a group of Islamic leaders in the early nineties - that group decided to contact Dr. Abdul Karim al-Khatib and offered him cooperation in reviving the Justice and Development Party²⁸ that he led, he agreed

²⁷ Kamboury, Idriss "Dramatic resignation of the President of the reform movement to overcome the repercussions of the bombings." 12 June 2003. Al-Asr Electronic newspaper on. Accessed at: <http://alasr.ws/articles/view/4169>

²⁸ The Justice and Development Party was founded after a split within the People's Movement Party in 1967, under the leadership of Dr. Abdul-Karim al-Khatib, who is one of the

on the condition that the newcomers accept some specific fundamentals; the Islamic reference, the Royal legitimacy and the renunciation of violence. An extraordinary party conference was held in 1996 for the integration of the coming Islamic leaders in the entities' bodies. Since then the party has participated in four general elections, but with a very limited number of candidates at the beginning. It made steady progress in the results²⁹ by being able to win the first place in the elections held after the introduction of important constitutional reforms under which the party leader, Abdelilah Benkirane, was assigned to form a government which he has since then led under very accurate political and institutional balances.

In contrast, we find that an Islamic political movement with a strong presence in the Moroccan arena: the Justice and Charity Group [JCO] (in Arabic: Jamaat Al-Adl wa Al-Ihsan), which is legally banned though its activities are often tolerated³⁰, has generally

historic leaders of the National Movement and a close ally of the 'Alawi throne. However some of his political positions were not in line with the Palace's orientation at that period, causing differences within the People's Movement and the emergence of the new party. This subsequent did not initially face many difficulties but finished by practically withdrawing from political life, until it was re-revived by newcomers after nearly thirty years.

²⁹ The party won a number of parliamentary seats in the legislative elections of 1997, 2002, 2007 and 2011, respectively: 12, 42, 46 and 107 seats in the House of Representatives.

³⁰ The Moroccan Justice and Charity Group assumed this name in 1987 and has, since its appearance in 1981, used multiple names from 'Family Group' to 'Community Association' and then 'Charitable Group'. Among its prominent leaders founder: Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine, its guide from its inception until his death in 2012; and his successor, Secretary-General Mohammad Ebadi. The group decided to retain the title of General Guide for the founder only.

maintained the same ideological line and political position towards the institutional monarchy and the political system. It does not apparently care much about adaption to the pressures of the discourse of the so-called "War on Terror" - neither at the level of discourse nor at the level of practice, which reached extraordinary levels in Morocco after the 16 May 2003 bombings. This is mainly due to two factors:

- The first is the known and entrenched ideological rivalry between the Movement and the Salafist School in general (to which violent groups in Morocco are often considered, to some extent, linked) which makes Abdessalam Yassine's³¹ group far from the suspicion of contributing to the creation of the phenomenon of violence.
- The second factor is the radical position of this group towards the Moroccan regime, as it has always considered itself unconcerned with political participation within a legal framework based on the principles of power that control Morocco - of which the most important are: the reverential place of the King in religious and the recognition of the historical and political legitimacy of the Alawi throne.

Abdul Wahid al-Mutawakkil, head of the JCO's political department, believes that the Islamic movement, in general, has "remained balanced and went on in its constant position", in contrast to what he considered inappropriate reactions to the discourse on the so-called "War on Terror"; sometimes represented by overt submission, and

³¹ Abdessalam Yassine (19 September 1928 - 13 December 2012) was the General Guide and founder of the Justice and Charity Group. Yassin was famous for his fierce opposition to King Hassan II's rule. In 1974, at the height of the "Years of Lead", he sent him a message entitled 'Islam or the Deluge'. He is also the author of many works on religion and politics.

sometimes in more extremism and radical positions in the face of the excesses of the “War” and of the discourse associated with it. al-Mutawakkil did not deny that, what he called, the “Centrist Movement” (which he considers as representative of many Islamic movements across the Arab and Muslim world) had sought to develop tools to deal with these new challenges. According to him, these challenges are trying to root out this Movement, or damage it and the project it pursues³². Of course, this admission takes for granted the fact that all the Islamic groups and movements in Morocco sought, one way or another, to adapt themselves to the pressures and constraints arising from the discourse of the “War on Terror”.

From the previous three cases, we can see how the discourse of the so-called “War on Terror” has affected the political line of the movement of political Islam in the Arab region in general, and the in countries targeted by this study, in particular. From these positions we can draw the conclusion that the leaders of this movement may have the following considerations as the most important references:

- The global character of the “War on Terror” requires flexibility in dealing with the local data, taking into account the extent of pressure exerted on local regimes by the international centers of power; the readiness of local regimes to pounce on the Islamic movements, which they consider their principal political rival – requiring care from the latter until

better conditions for a balance of power are reached.

- The specific ideological identity and features of the transformational project of the broad mainstream of political parties with an Islamic reference is presented as based on a progressive and reformist vision with comprehensive dimensions, as well as believing in the democratic option as the most viable mechanism for regulation and alternation of power. This requires the parties to maintain, especially in ambiguous circumstances such as those created by the repercussions of the so-called “War on Terror”, an adequate level of distinction from groups that adopt the option of violence and reject the democratic approach.
- The international campaign against so-called terrorism destroyed - or at least disrupted - emerging bridges of communication between political Islam and some opinion- and decision-making circles in the West. Conferences on intercultural and religious dialogue, and discussions on common human development, were an essential part of what appeared as strategies of openness launched by the mainstreams of political Islam towards the West. This region, which often provides shelters for exiled leaders, and also sometimes represents the hand that controls the local whip used by regimes in the region against opposing Islamic forces.

4. LIBYA: THE VICIOUS CYCLE

The situation in Libya is different compared to those in the other three countries for many reasons, most notably:

- The nature of the political regime that existed there for more than forty years, and which printed its marks deeply on public life in the country. That regime was

³² Researcher’s interview with Abdul Wahid Mutawakkil, head of the political department in the Justice and Charity Group, dated: 15 August 2014.

- The exceptional nature of political life in Gaddafi's Libya overshadowed the social mood and contributed to tribal, ethnic and factional prejudices and sensitivities, in a way that would later lead to the 'mining' of the political field and elimination of any possibility of rational and calm political exercise.
- The Islamic movement, which has always recorded a strong presence in the interior and which had a prominent role in the events-making in Libya, is the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group³³, one of the most active Salafist jihadist organizations. This group, in which a number of the leadership had close ties with al-Qaeda's leader, Osama Bin Laden, was strongly present in news related to the so-called "War on Terror".

conflict with Gaddafi's regime. Perhaps this marked attribute in the behaviour of the Islamic Fighting Group in Libya, in most stages of its development, was due to various factors, of which the most important are:

- The national political dimension of its project, where it primarily focused on changing the regime in Libya or fighting the nearest enemy, according to the common term; that is why its leaders have always expressed serious reservations about the 'global jihad' plans, which are the first concern for al-Qaeda's leaders.
- The group has early paid great attention to the "knowledge" (scholarly Islamic law study) aspects, in particular, the training of "scholarly" references or authorities that can help it adjust its ideological compass to fit what it considers as the correct understanding of the provisions of Islamic Sharia³⁴.
- Despite the affiliation of the group to what is known as the 'Salafist Jihadist Mainstream' standpoints and presuppositions, at its creation and beginning of its work the Islamic Fighting Group in Libya had some links with leaders of the Afghan jihad, who are classified as having a 'Muslim Brotherhood' background, such as Sheikh Abdullah Azzam and Abdul Rasul Sayaf. Later, some of its leaders built relationships with Libyan scientific and intellectual personalities who have the same approach, such as Dr. Ali Sallabi. These standpoints and effects might have contributed to the formulation of the political approaches of this group.

³⁴ Researcher's telephone interview with Sami al-Saadi, dated: 27 October 2014.

Whatever may be the influencing factors or driving reasons, it remains clear that the behaviour of the Islamic Fighting Group in Libya was characterized by a high level of flexibility, alternating between adaptation, utilization and challenge strategies in response to the “War on Terror” discourse. In its early work during the eighties and early nineties, the group succeeded in exploiting the international climate that was hostile to Gaddafi regime and at the same time supporting the Afghan jihad against the Soviets. During this period it managed to found its organizational structure and train its staff and fighters. When the tacit alliance between the West, the regional governments allied with it, and the Islamic groups in support of the Afghan jihad disintegrated, the Group distanced itself from the negative effects of discourse of the so-called “War on Terror” by adapting. It focused on facing what it called the “near enemy”, giving a political and national character to its armed activity, especially directed against a regime outcast by the West. Even at the domestic level, the group sought, as far as it could, to postpone confrontation with the Gaddafi regime, waiting for better preparation, in order to reduce the expected costs and increase opportunities for success.

However, some unpredicted developments led the group to engage in an open confrontation with the Libyan regime and threw it, under the pressure of necessity perhaps, into the arms of al-Qaeda. It no longer had a choice but to adopt the challenge strategy in the face of “War on Terror” discourse; both at internal and external levels. One of the results was that the group’s activity on Libyan territory was almost fully uprooted by the end of the nineties, though with an increasing presence on the international level through some of its leaders and members occupying advanced positions in al-Qaeda, and others who settled

in the West, later forming dialogue with the Libyan regime. In the new millennium, the group returned to the adaptation approach helped by the regime’s need to liberalize aspects within the country, and improve the relationship with the West through openness and reform orientations. So the Group entered into an extended dialogue with the regime, in parallel with the initiation of a radical review of its ideological line and political positions. These two tracks together led to a breakthrough in the situation, which continued until the outbreak of the revolution of February 17, 2011 that overthrew the regime of Gaddafi. It is believed that the former members and fighters were instrumental in the fighting that took place after the outbreak of the revolution. After that there were different trends among Islamic forces in Libya. Some sought to engage in political life by accepting the rules of democracy and participating through the establishment of political parties; others attempted to form private entities and impose their vision of violence. Then, sharp polarization in the complexities on the Libyan scene; still tormented under the legacy of Gaddafi’s structure of power; the situation in Libya overlapping with what is happening in the Sahel region; the impact of regional and international interventions. All this soon pushed things towards an all-out confrontation that could bring back the Islamist movement in Libya, and at the forefront, the Salafist forces, to challenge logic in dealing with the “War on Terror” discourse.

5. REVISIONS: MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

If the “War on Terror” discourse has had strong impact on the political participation of Islamist forces in the study countries, the Salafist forces that constitute a central topic of the discourse, in its general formulations

and international uses, deserve special attention. We find that - contrary to what may come to mind - Salafist currents have always given attention to the discourse of the "War on Terror" and interacted with it at different levels. The process of continuous interaction affected the perception, of Salafist forces, of their relationship with the other and of their varying approaches and levels of participation in public life. It is useful to recall that the Salafi forces, even if they agree on their original position of rejecting democracy, never constituted one school of thought on the "War on Terror" discourse, nor in their view of political practice. Salafists called Jihadists believe in violence as a way to reach their political goals, but traditional or scientific Salafism³⁵ is contained to rejecting the democratic model as a set of values, practices and institutions.

Mahfouz Ould El Waled, known as Abu Hafs the Mauritanian³⁶ is a former leading figure of al-Qaeda and the former head of its "legislative committee", and for years was one of prominent figures close to Osama bin Laden. El Waled thinks that in the early nineties, during the establishment of bin Laden in Sudan, the al-Qaeda leadership reached a decision to change the strategic line from a jihadist movement - in the context of that time - to a backing force for resistance movements in Islamic countries under

foreign occupation. The former leader of al-Qaeda revealed that at the time Osama bin Laden sent a letter to the then-Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz denying any interest in organization to overthrow the ruling regimes in the Arab countries, and calling for cooperation for the liberation of countries and peoples of the Islamic territories. The organization went as far as offering to help the Saudi authorities in the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion in order to avoid the use of foreign forces. In the same period al-Qaeda participated in the war, fought by Ali Abdullah Saleh's regime, for Yemen's reunification. Despite this change of position, and despite the fact bin Laden's interests were then oriented to the political and media activities in the first place, the only response was exerting pressure on Sudan to compel bin Laden and his associates to leave to Afghanistan - as if there was a deliberate intention, by certain actors, to prevent such a shift in the position of the jihadi movement³⁷.

This data show the extent to which strategies producing the "War on Terror" discourse contribute, by their arrogant perspective and perhaps their undeclared dimensions, to encouraging the phenomenon of what is called terrorism and providing it with innovative elements instead of seizing opportunities to eliminate it and reduce its causes. We become aware of the extent of wasted time and energy, and of how heavy the human cost of the wars, that resulted this missed opportunity, when the United States would be, ten years down the line, seeking by all means to draw the Taliban to the dialogue (not to mention the entry by a number of

³⁵ Scientific Salafism is one of the Salafist movement factions: a peaceful faction that holds primarily to advocacy, with a scientific and hortatory purpose, by teaching people matters of religion with a focus on some doctrinal and legal aspects, as well as encouraging the study of religion-related science.

³⁶ Mahfouz Ould El Waled, the former head of "the legislative committee" of al-Qaeda, alias Abu Hafs the Mauritanian. He returned to the Mauritanian capital Nouakchott on November 21, 2011 after 10 years of house arrest in Iran.

³⁷ Researcher's interview with Mahfouz Ould El Waled, former official of the "Legislative Committee" of al-Qaeda, dated: 25 October 2014. The same information is also in the published diaries: "The Road to al-Qaeda".

governments in the region into a series of dialogues with Salafist groups active in their countries). The "revisions" (or Murajaats) that took place early among some jihadist groups, compared to those obtained later, were launched from intrinsic and spontaneous considerations, giving them more credibility and stronger authority among followers, than is the case the "revisions" that took place later with the auspices of the official authorities and under certain pressure. It is true that the reviews that have taken place in recent years included more countries and groups and have become more comprehensive in terms of content, depth of the approach and boldness in self-criticism. Most important, as noted by researcher Mamdouh Sheikh³⁸, they have consecrated a new element of the "efficiency factor", whereas in the past those groups evaluated their actions through the single standard or factor of "religious legitimacy". However, the formal dimension and the fact that these later revisions came under stressful conditions (most of them from within prisons), and only after enmity has been established, makes these revisions seem out of context. Therefore, they often did not achieve the desired results.

As the Saudi authorities ignored bin Laden's offer, the Egyptian authorities' response was almost the same in dealing with early attempts to reach an understanding to put an end to the violence that struck Egypt throughout the eighties and nineties. In fact, there was a mediation attempt in 1993, led by Sheikh Mohammed Shaarawi who formed a "Committee of Wise Men" including prominent authors and writers like Sheikh Mohammed al-Ghazali and Dr Ahmed Kamal

Abul-Magd. This mediation lasted nearly three years and received a remarkable response from jihadi leaders and the Ministry of the Interior, and was set to reach concrete results but, on the day of a scheduled meeting between the Committee and an important member of government, the Interior Minister was abruptly sacked³⁹. Despite the Egyptian authorities missed opportunity, the "the Committee of Wise Men" efforts were apparently not in vain. In March 1990, the Islamic Group (Jemaa Islamiya) announced an initiative to stop the violence in the statement delivered by Khalid Ibrahim Amir of the Aswan group, during his appearance before the military court. This statement was the beginning of a process that, by early 2002, saw the issuance of review books which included an explicit apology, from the group, for violence committed and an expression of the desire to compensate the victims. The contents of these books constituted a clear shift in attitude away from accusing their opponents of infidelity and use of violence.

If the Egyptian Islamic Jihad group⁴⁰ was late to follow similar revisions to the Islamic Group (Jemaah Islamiyah); after it had officially disowned the "stop violence initiative", launched in February 2000 by the group's leader, Osama Ayoub, resident in Germany, it presented the document of: "The Rationalization of Jihad in Egypt and the World" written by Amir of the group: Dr. Sayyid Imam al-Sharif known as Dr. Fadl. The document was published in 111 pages of

³⁸ El-Sheikh, Mamdouh. "Islamic groups in Egypt: Review of thought, methods and attitudes." Accessed at: www.murajaat.com/trajuaat_akra_data/

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Founded in 1964 in Cairo; among its main founders there were Alwi Mustapha, Ismail Tentawi and Nabil Al Bur'I. They were all high school students. One of the members of this organization in the late sixties was Ayman Al-Zawahiri.

medium size and included fifteen clauses and four notes. Among the most important elements contained in this document was the renunciation of some important ideas like: the legitimacy of exercising violence in Muslim societies. The group also included an apology for some acts committed in the context of its conflict with the Egyptian regime, and recognized the inefficiency of some of its previous methods. While this document resembles Jemaah Islamiyah's reviews in that it was written under prison conditions, it was marked by a severity of tone which may have been a pretext to enfeebling the document.

So the atmosphere of the so-called "War on Terror," and the arrogant nature of its rhetoric, contributed once again to missing opportunities that provided for assimilating violent phenomena in a country that is one of the most important historical sources of Islamic trends.

In Libya, it seems that the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group focused early on the diagnosis of the causes of what is described as extremism and sought to revise ideas and positions in order to give its elements the necessary immunity. One of the Group's leaders and its former official of its "legislative committee" Sami al-Saadi⁴¹ gives a diagnosis of the main reasons for deviation and extremism: ignorance, enthusiasm, love of precedence and counter extremism. He therefore believes that since the eighties, when its members went to Afghanistan, the Group was keen to organize panel discussions, arrange scientific sessions and send students to study religion and Islamic law. Beneficiaries of such training have later played important roles in correcting

perceptions of other members within the prisons, and developing the intellectual and political transformations that the group subsequently knew. What al-Saadi called "counter-extremism": the repressive actions and excessive physical and moral harm committed by the state on prisoners under the "War on Terror", has always been an impediment to any positive shift in such groups and individuals, but has even led to greater extremism. The revisions conducted by the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group in Libya, and which appeared under the title "Corrective Studies in Understanding Jihad, Accountability and Judging people," as an epitome of extensive discussions between leaders and members of the community, scholars and intellectuals from various Islamic walks, would have had larger echo and yielded better results had they not been made under a dictatorial regime such as the late Libyan leader's regime. In that setting, the only concern was to exploit them in formal aspects without any care for using the opportunities offered by a transformation of such magnitude.

The confusion in dealing with attempts to rationalize the ideas and practices of jihadist groups, as reflected in the reviews mentioned earlier, and the absence of insight from regional governments and international circuits on the production of the "War on Terror" discourse, led to the wasted opportunities for the development of political participation. Such opportunities contributed to weakened revisions and efforts to progress within groups that espouse violence as a means for change. In this aspect the "War on Terror" discourse did not contribute to the elimination of the phenomenon of terrorism, but rather contributed - albeit indirectly - to perpetuating violence across more extreme and violent groups that are more difficult to

⁴¹ Researcher's telephone interview with Sami al-Saadi, dated: 27 October 2014.

understand and control; like ISIL /ISIS (Daash)⁴² in Iraq and Syria, and Ansar Beyt Al Maqdis (Jerusalem supporters) in Egypt⁴³ and Ansar al-Sharia in Libya⁴⁴ and Tunisia⁴⁵.

SECTIONS V: HAVE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE "WAR ON TERROR" BEEN ACHIEVED?

It might be useful before answering this question to remind ourselves of the stated objectives of the "War on Terror." These objectives are, of course, ambiguous, non-specific and not fixed, like the concept of terrorism itself, but they generally include restrictions on the groups described as terrorist, the reduction of the level of public sympathy with them, cutting of material and moral support, and in general drying up the sources of so-called terrorism, paralyzing the effectiveness of groups engaged in such activity and isolating them from their popular background. Some senior researchers and politicians in the Arab Maghreb region frankly remark that the declared objectives or goals of the anti-terror war quickly turned into political and economic goals for the Western powers, in particular. Thus, "it is clear that many states and interested lobbies have found in this "War on Terror" discourse an opportunity to achieve their goals to expand their control over areas of natural, like oil-rich areas in the Middle East and mineral-rich areas in Africa. Therefore, the bulk of the "War on Terror" has soon become itself a generator for more factors of tension and instability, thus feeding and fueling terrorism," as says the former Moroccan Foreign Minister Saad Eddine Othmani.

The strong overlap between security objectives and local political deals, which were ideologically influenced by the effects of Islamophobia, had a negative impact on the fight against so-called terrorism. At the local level, priority was given to the objectives of the region's regimes in the survival and expansion of influence, and the goals of major international powers to subdue some regimes, to obtain concessions or access to

⁴² The name "Daash" (Arabic acronym for: ISIL/ISIS) is the media's given name of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), while this entity itself does not use it. They call themselves "The Islamic State or Emirate". The first nucleus of this organization was the Islamic State of Iraq, announced on October 15, 2006, before it fell in 2007, only coming back successfully in the last two years: 2013 and 2014. The foundation of the province (wilaya) of the Syrian ISIL was announced on April 10, 2012, one day after the Emir Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of the al-Qaeda branch in Iraq demanded that the Support Front (Jabhat Nussra), led by Abu Mohammad al-Golani, give their allegiance, which was rejected by the latter. This led to a split within the Jabhat Nussra. The majority of Syrian fighters lined up with their leadership, while 70% of the elements split to create ISIL (Daash) under direct command from the Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who took over leadership of the organization in April 2010.

⁴³ Ansar Beyt Al Maqdis (Jerusalem Supporters) became widely known in Egypt in the wake of the June 30, 2013, through bombing operations targeting military and police installations. It is one of the armed groups that became based in the Sinai some years ago and announced that it is fighting Israel, but it soon entered into direct confrontation with the army and security forces in Egypt, a confrontation that increased gradually since the events that followed the overthrow of President Morsi.

⁴⁴ Ansar al-Sharia in Libya is a militia founded in April 2012, a few months after the end of the Libyan Revolution. It calls for the "application of Islamic law in Libya."

⁴⁵ Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia is an organization founded by Abu Ayaz the Tunisian in late April 2011, who previously co-founded the Tunisian Fighting Group with Tarek Maaroufi in June 2000: this organization has established several media organs such as the Kairouan Media Incorporation.

centers of political influence or sources of economic wealth, over purely security goals. Thus, the targeting is no longer on the basis of suspicion or confirmed involvement in or planning "terrorist operations", rather it became a matter of pre-emptive action or deterrent operations as the most common means used by international forces to confront acts described as terrorist. This quickly succeeded in dragging an international force into a quagmire of direct confrontation, with subsequent heavy losses, which lead to an intensified negative image of the West in the minds of Muslim in general and the Arab peoples in particular.

Thus, with an objective view, one can say that the "War on Terror" has probably achieved some of its objectives in part, especially with regard to cutting the traditional funding resources for groups described as extremist, as well as at the level of the destruction of mobilization and training centers of the armed Islamic organizations. But as an overall answer to the question: have the objectives of the "war on terror" been satisfactorily achieved? The answer would be 'no'. In fact, violence has widened its constituency, and it has grown fiercer. The means and methods of violence have become more sophisticated. The number of victims of violence has risen. And the more serious element is that the "debate on the legality of the methods to counteract violence" has become more acute than ever before. Hence, there is a need for a comprehensive assessment of the strategies against what is called "terrorism," in order to address the imbalances, and serve the aim of ensuring greater respect for legality, equity and human rights, rather than putting more obstacles in the face of the people of the region in their move towards the path of democracy and the rule of law.

This cannot be achieved without a comprehensive and inclusive dialogue that addresses the objectives of the "War on Terror", and the scope and means of this war. In the first instance, there should be a 'rationalization' of the discourse of "War on Terror" so as to put an end to its negative effects on the political participation of the various actors in the countries of the region.

SECTIONS VI: CONCLUSIONS AND COMMENTS

Having traced the development of the contentious discourse on the "War on Terror", and noting the most prominent effects on the development of the attitudes of political Islamic movements - especially with regard to Islamists' participation in political life - it is possible to record the following observations:

The war on what is called "terrorism" has led, inadvertently, to the dissolution of large organizations deemed to be "terrorist" ones. Thus, the violence diffused; it became an idea that is adopted by small groups, and even individuals in some cases. This resulted in an unprecedented spread of violence over large areas (Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, the Sahara and Sahel region, some countries of sub-Saharan Africa, Sinai Peninsula, Yemen, Somalia, as well as various global capitals).

At an exponential rate, what is called "terrorism" is taking on new and atypical manifestations, as this "terrorism" is not always associated with religious visions or ideological positions that vacillate towards extremism. In fact, terrorist groups have become increasingly apparent, as they practice such violence according to different motivation; sometimes for purely partisan reasons and out of self-interest as well. Therefore, it is probably not possible to

distinguish between these 'terrorist' groups and the traditional organized crime.

The many abuses that accompanied the international war on what is called "terrorism", as well as the exaggerations in the discourse associated with this war, undermined the moral credibility of this war. The excesses that accompanied this "War on Terror" and its huge abuses and violations of human rights produced the opposite effect among broad sectors of the region's communities. This reached the extent that many of the people in the region view that "War on Terror" as something that is not less damaging and harming than the terrorist act itself. Some of these communities see this "War" as one that goes beyond its claimed objectives to target the core values of the people of the region and their inherent beliefs.

Finally, the global war on what is called "terrorism", and its accompanying discourse has been extensively used and abused by a particular number of governments in the region, for political purposes that are not necessarily related to the fight against terrorist acts. This effect might not have been desirable by the Western powers. This inevitably contributed to the historic rivalry between these governments and movements of political Islam. These Islamic movements, which take the largest share of suffering and sacrifice in this war, have managed - in most cases - to adapt to its constraints. Rather, these movements were sometimes able to employ and utilize this "War on Terror" to their advantage.

Despite the war waged against them, these Islamic movements expanded their institutional bodies and organizations, and entrenched them more deeply in the society. They ensured their social presence to become more popular than ever before. These

movements have presented themselves as an alternative to the existing regimes; as an option that represents a compromise between the groups of extremism on one hand, and the regimes of tyranny on the other.

SECTION VII: IS THERE A ROOM FOR DIALOGUE?

It may not seem possible to talk about dialogue in a climate of division, or in the context of the existing relations among the troubled and divided elite sectors in the Middle East and North Africa. However in this context it is important to expand the circle of interlocutors in public affairs and the list of contents of such dialogue. In fact, experience has shown that dialogue among the civilian elites lead -in most of cases - to positive results, at least at the theoretical level, where the parties of the dialogue arrive at certain initial and elementary understandings. The problem is that there remains, in most cases, a party outside the sphere of trading, debating and dialogue; although it does not hesitate to intervene, without notice, in the positions of political actors, at policy level or to exercise power and organize the relationship between the various elements of the political scene. This party is the "military establishment", which holds the reins of most state institutions, be it directly or indirectly, in most countries of the region. This "military establishment" usually grants itself a monopoly of the final word regarding the determination of the political rules of the game. This institution can always 'coup' on the political process and re-draft and re-design it at any time.

From this point of departure, there is a need to overcome coyness and to enter into a serious debate in political and academic circles; to learn and to investigate more the

viewpoints and opinions of the "military and security establishment" on current conditions, and how to generate a vision on the role of this institution that is acceptable to all parties, in determining the future of democratic practice. The overall aim would be ensuring that the "military and security establishment" exercised a role in political life, in accordance with clear and specific frameworks. This situation would of course be preferable to this institution exercising its role by a show of force, outside the framework of legality.

It is essential to guide researchers towards the preparation of studies that delve into the essence of the orientations and intentions of this institution, which is more complex and controversial in the Arab world, so as to understand the nature of the military and its political concerns and then to evaluate its experience in governance over the past decades.



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