

Islamism, also known as Political Islam (Arabic: **الإسلام السياسي** *islām siyāsī*), is an Islamic revival movement often characterized by moral conservatism, literalism, and the attempt "to implement Islamic values in all spheres of life." Islamism favors the reordering of government and society in accordance with the Shari'a. The different Islamist movements have been described as "oscillating between two poles": at one end is a strategy of Islamization of society through state power seized by revolution or invasion; at the other "reformist" pole Islamists work to Islamize society gradually "from the bottom up". The movements have "arguably altered the Middle East more than any trend since the modern states gained independence", redefining "politics and even borders" according to one journalist (Robin Wright).

Moderate and reformist Islamists who accept and work within the democratic process include parties like the Tunisian Ennahda Movement. Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan is basically a socio-political and democratic Vanguard party but has also gained political influence through military coup d'état in past. The Islamist groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine participate in democratic and political process as well as armed attacks, seeking to abolish the state of Israel. Radical Islamist organizations like al-Qaeda and the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, and groups such as the Taliban, entirely reject democracy, often declaring as kuffar those Muslims who support it (see takfirism), as well as calling for violent/offensive jihad or urging and conducting attacks on a religious basis.

Another major division within Islamism is between what Graham E. Fuller has described as the fundamentalist "guardians of the tradition" (Salafis, such as those in the Wahhabi movement) and the "vanguard of change and Islamic reform" centered around the Muslim Brotherhood. Olivier Roy argues that "Sunni pan-Islamism underwent a remarkable shift in the second half of the 20th century" when the Muslim Brotherhood movement and its focus on Islamisation of pan-Arabism was eclipsed by the Salafi movement with its emphasis on "sharia rather than the building of Islamic institutions," and rejection of Shia Islam. Following the Arab Spring, Roy has described Islamism as "increasingly interdependent" with democracy in much of the Arab Muslim world, such that "neither can now survive without the other." While Islamist political culture itself may not be democratic, Islamists need democratic elections to maintain their legitimacy. At the same time, their popularity is such that no government can call itself democratic that excludes mainstream Islamist groups.

Islamism is a controversial concept not just because it posits a political role for Islam but also because its supporters believe their views merely reflect Islam, while the contrary idea that Islam is, or can be, apolitical is an error. Scholars and observers who do not believe that Islam is merely a political ideology include Fred Halliday, John Esposito and Muslim intellectuals like Javed Ahmad Ghamidi. Hayri Abaza argues the failure to distinguish between Islam and Islamism leads many in the West to support illiberal Islamic regimes, to the detriment of progressive moderates who seek to separate religion from politics.

Islamists have asked the question, "If Islam is a way of life, how can we say that those who want to live by its principles in legal, social, political, economic, and political spheres of life are not Muslims, but Islamists and believe in Islamism, not [just] Islam?" Similarly, a writer for the International Crisis Group maintains that "the conception of 'political Islam'" is a creation of Americans to explain the Iranian Islamic Revolution and apolitical Islam was a historical fluke of the "short-lived era of the heyday of secular Arab nationalism between 1945 and 1970", and it is quietist/non-political Islam, not Islamism, that requires explanation.

During the 1970s and sometimes later, Western and pro-Western governments often supported sometimes fledgling Islamists and Islamist groups that later came to be seen as dangerous enemies. Islamists were considered by Western governments bulwarks against—what were thought to be at the time—more dangerous leftist/communist/nationalist insurgents/opposition, which Islamists were correctly seen as opposing. The US spent billions of dollars to aid the mujahideen Muslim Afghanistan enemies of the Soviet Union, and non-Afghan veterans of the war returned home with their prestige, "experience, ideology, and weapons", and had considerable impact.

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat – whose policies included opening Egypt to Western investment (infatih); transferring Egypt's allegiance from the Soviet Union to the United States; and making peace with Israel – released Islamists from prison and welcomed home exiles in tacit exchange for political support in his struggle against leftists. His "encouraging of the emergence of the Islamist movement" was said to have been "imitated by many other Muslim leaders in the years that followed." This "gentlemen's agreement" between Sadat and Islamists broke down in 1975 but not before Islamists came to completely dominate university student unions. Sadat was later assassinated and a formidable insurgency was formed in Egypt in the 1990s. The French government has also been reported to have promoted Islamist preachers "in the hope of channeling Muslim energies into zones of piety and charity."

The interpretation of Islam promoted by this funding was the strict, conservative Saudi-based Wahhabism or Salafism. In its harshest form it preached that Muslims should not only "always oppose" infidels "in every way," but "hate them for their religion ... for Allah's sake," that democracy "is responsible for all the horrible wars of the 20th century," that Shia and other non-Wahhabi Muslims were infidels, etc. While this effort has by no means converted all, or even most Muslims to the Wahhabist interpretation of Islam, it has done much to overwhelm more moderate local interpretations, and has set the Saudi-interpretation of Islam as the "gold standard" of religion in minds of some or many Muslims.

Islamist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood, "are well known for providing shelters, educational assistance, free or low cost medical clinics, housing assistance to students from out of town, student advisory groups, facilitation of inexpensive mass marriage ceremonies to avoid prohibitively costly dowry demands, legal assistance, sports facilities, and women's groups." All this compares very favourably against incompetent, inefficient, or neglectful governments whose commitment to social justice is limited to rhetoric.

While studying law and philosophy in England and Germany, Iqbal became a member of the London branch of the All India Muslim League. He came back to Lahore in 1908. While dividing his time between law practice and philosophical poetry, Iqbal had remained active in the Muslim League. He did not support Indian involvement in World War I and remained in close touch with Muslim political leaders such as Muhammad Ali Johar and Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He was a critic of the mainstream Indian nationalist and secularist Indian National Congress. Iqbal's seven English lectures were published by Oxford University press in 1934 in a book titled *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. These lectures dwell on the role of Islam as a religion as well as a political and legal philosophy in the modern age.

Iqbal expressed fears that not only would secularism and secular nationalism weaken the spiritual foundations of Islam and Muslim society, but that India's Hindu-majority population would crowd out Muslim heritage, culture and political influence. In his travels to Egypt, Afghanistan, Palestine and Syria, he promoted ideas of greater Islamic political co-operation and unity, calling for the shedding of nationalist differences. Sir Muhammad Iqbal was elected president of the Muslim League in 1930 at its session in Allahabad as well as for the session in Lahore in 1932. In his Allahabad Address on 29 December 1930, Iqbal outlined a vision of an independent state for Muslim-majority provinces in northwestern India. This address later inspired the Pakistan movement.

Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi was an important early twentieth-century figure in the Islamic revival in India, and then after independence from Britain, in Pakistan. Trained as a lawyer he chose the profession of journalism, and wrote about contemporary issues and most importantly about Islam and Islamic law. Maududi founded the Jamaat-e-Islami party in 1941 and remained its leader until 1972. However, Maududi had much more impact through his writing than through his political organising. His extremely influential books (translated into many languages) placed Islam in a modern context, and influenced not

only conservative ulema but liberal modernizer Islamists such as al-Faruqi, whose "Islamization of Knowledge" carried forward some of Maududi's key principles.

Maududi also believed that Muslim society could not be Islamic without Sharia, and Islam required the establishment of an Islamic state. This state should be a "theo-democracy," based on the principles of: tawhid (unity of God), risala (prophethood) and khilafa (caliphate). Although Maududi talked about Islamic revolution, by "revolution" he meant not the violence or populist policies of the Iranian Revolution, but the gradual changing the hearts and minds of individuals from the top of society downward through an educational process or da'wah.

Roughly contemporaneous with Maududi was the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood in Ismailiyah, Egypt in 1928 by Hassan al Banna. His was arguably the first, largest and most influential modern Islamic political/religious organization. Under the motto "the Qur'an is our constitution," it sought Islamic revival through preaching and also by providing basic community services including schools, mosques, and workshops. Like Maududi, Al Banna believed in the necessity of government rule based on Shariah law implemented gradually and by persuasion, and of eliminating all imperialist influence in the Muslim world.

Some elements of the Brotherhood, though perhaps against orders, did engage in violence against the government, and its founder Al-Banna was assassinated in 1949 in retaliation for the assassination of Egypt's premier Mahmud Fami Naqrashi three months earlier. The Brotherhood has suffered periodic repression in Egypt and has been banned several times, in 1948 and several years later following confrontations with Egyptian president Gamal Abdul Nasser, who jailed thousands of members for several years.

Despite periodic repression, the Brotherhood has become one of the most influential movements in the Islamic world, particularly in the Arab world. For many years it was described as "semi-legal" and was the only opposition group in Egypt able to field candidates during elections. In the Egyptian parliamentary election, 2011–2012, the political parties identified as "Islamist" (the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, Salafi Al-Nour Party and liberal Islamist Al-Wasat Party) won 75% of the total seats. Mohamed Morsi, an Islamist democrat of Muslim Brotherhood, was the first democratically elected president of Egypt. He was deposed during the 2013 Egyptian coup d'état.

The quick and decisive defeat of the Arab troops during the Six-Day War by Israeli troops constituted a pivotal event in the Arab Muslim world. The defeat along with economic stagnation in the defeated countries, was blamed on the secular Arab nationalism of the ruling regimes. A steep and steady decline in the popularity and credibility of secular, socialist and nationalist politics ensued. Ba'athism, Arab socialism, and Arab nationalism suffered, and different democratic and anti-democratic Islamist movements inspired by Maududi and Sayyid Qutb gained ground.

The views of Ali Shariati, ideologue of the Iranian Revolution, had resemblance with Mohammad Iqbal, ideological father of the State of Pakistan, but Khomeini's beliefs is perceived to be placed somewhere between beliefs of Sunni Islamic thinkers like Mawdudi and Qutb. He believed that complete imitation of the Prophet Mohammad and his successors such as Ali for restoration of Sharia law was essential to Islam, that many secular, Westernizing Muslims were actually agents of the West serving Western interests, and that the acts such as "plundering" of Muslim lands was part of a long-term conspiracy against Islam by the Western governments.

The Islamic Republic has also maintained its hold on power in Iran in spite of US economic sanctions, and has created or assisted like-minded Shia terrorist groups in Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Jordan (SCIRI) and Lebanon (Hezbollah) (two Muslim countries that also have large Shiite populations). During the 2006 Israel-Lebanon conflict, the Iranian government enjoyed something of a resurgence in popularity amongst the predominantly Sunni "Arab street," due to its support for Hezbollah and to President

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's vehement opposition to the United States and his call that Israel shall vanish.

In 1979, the Soviet Union deployed its 40th Army into Afghanistan, attempting to suppress an Islamic rebellion against an allied Marxist regime in the Afghan Civil War. The conflict, pitting indigenous impoverished Muslims (mujahideen) against an anti-religious superpower, galvanized thousands of Muslims around the world to send aid and sometimes to go themselves to fight for their faith. Leading this pan-Islamic effort was Palestinian sheikh Abdullah Yusuf Azzam. While the military effectiveness of these "Afghan Arabs" was marginal, an estimated 16,000 to 35,000 Muslim volunteers came from around the world to fight in Afghanistan.

Another factor in the early 1990s that worked to radicalize the Islamist movement was the Gulf War, which brought several hundred thousand US and allied non-Muslim military personnel to Saudi Arabian soil to put an end to Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait. Prior to 1990 Saudi Arabia played an important role in restraining the many Islamist groups that received its aid. But when Saddam, secularist and Ba'athist dictator of neighboring Iraq, attacked Saudi Arabia (his enemy in the war), western troops came to protect the Saudi monarchy. Islamists accused the Saudi regime of being a puppet of the west.

These attacks resonated with conservative Muslims and the problem did not go away with Saddam's defeat either, since American troops remained stationed in the kingdom, and a de facto cooperation with the Palestinian-Israeli peace process developed. Saudi Arabia attempted to compensate for its loss of prestige among these groups by repressing those domestic Islamists who attacked it (bin Laden being a prime example), and increasing aid to Islamic groups (Islamist madrassas around the world and even aiding some violent Islamist groups) that did not, but its pre-war influence on behalf of moderation was greatly reduced. One result of this was a campaign of attacks on government officials and tourists in Egypt, a bloody civil war in Algeria and Osama bin Laden's terror attacks climaxing in the 9/11 attack.

While Qutb's ideas became increasingly radical during his imprisonment prior to his execution in 1966, the leadership of the Brotherhood, led by Hasan al-Hudaybi, remained moderate and interested in political negotiation and activism. Fringe or splinter movements inspired by the final writings of Qutb in the mid-1960s (particularly the manifesto Milestones, a.k.a. Ma'alim fi-l-Tariq) did, however, develop and they pursued a more radical direction. By the 1970s, the Brotherhood had renounced violence as a means of achieving its goals.

The path of violence and military struggle was then taken up by the Egyptian Islamic Jihad organization responsible for the assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981. Unlike earlier anti-colonial movements the extremist group directed its attacks against what it believed were "apostate" leaders of Muslim states, leaders who held secular leanings or who had introduced or promoted Western/foreign ideas and practices into Islamic societies. Its views were outlined in a pamphlet written by Muhammad Abd al-Salaam Farag, in which he states:

Another of the Egyptian groups which employed violence in their struggle for Islamic order was al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya (Islamic Group). Victims of their campaign against the Egyptian state in the 1990s included the head of the counter-terrorism police (Major General Raouf Khayrat), a parliamentary speaker (Rifaat al-Mahgoub), dozens of European tourists and Egyptian bystanders, and over 100 Egyptian police. Ultimately the campaign to overthrow the government was unsuccessful, and the major jihadi group, Jamaa Islamiya (or al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya), renounced violence in 2003. Other lesser known groups include the Islamic Liberation Party, Salvation from Hell and Takfir wal-Hijra, and these groups have variously been involved in activities such as attempted assassinations of political figures, arson of video shops and attempted takeovers of government buildings.

For some decades prior to the First Palestine Intifada in 1987, the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine took a "quiescent" stance towards Israel, focusing on preaching, education and social services, and

benefiting from Israel's "indulgence" to build up a network of mosques and charitable organizations. As the First Intifada gathered momentum and Palestinian shopkeepers closed their shops in support of the uprising, the Brotherhood announced the formation of HAMAS ("zeal"), devoted to Jihad against Israel. Rather than being more moderate than the PLO, the 1988 Hamas charter took a more uncompromising stand, calling for the destruction of Israel and the establishment of an Islamic state in Palestine. It was soon competing with and then overtaking the PLO for control of the intifada. The Brotherhood's base of devout middle class found common cause with the impoverished youth of the intifada in their cultural conservatism and antipathy for activities of the secular middle class such as drinking alcohol and going about without hijab.

Hamas has continued to be a major player in Palestine. From 2000 to 2007 it killed 542 people in 140 suicide bombing or "martyrdom operations". In the January 2006 legislative election—its first foray into the political process—it won the majority of the seats, and in 2007 it drove the PLO out of Gaza. Hamas has been praised by Muslims for driving Israel out of the Gaza Strip, but criticized for failure to achieve its demands in the 2008-9 and 2014 Gaza Wars despite heavy destruction and significant loss of life.

For many years, Sudan had an Islamist regime under the leadership of Hassan al-Turabi. His National Islamic Front first gained influence when strongman General Gaafar al-Nimeiry invited members to serve in his government in 1979. Turabi built a powerful economic base with money from foreign Islamist banking systems, especially those linked with Saudi Arabia. He also recruited and built a cadre of influential loyalists by placing sympathetic students in the university and military academy while serving as minister of education.

After al-Nimeiry was overthrown in 1985 the party did poorly in national elections, but in 1989 it was able to overthrow the elected post-al-Nimeiry government with the help of the military. Turabi was noted for proclaiming his support for the democratic process and a liberal government before coming to power, but strict application of sharia law, torture and mass imprisonment of the opposition, and an intensification of the long-running war in southern Sudan, once in power. The NIF regime also harbored Osama bin Laden for a time (before 9/11), and worked to unify Islamist opposition to the American attack on Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War.

An Islamist movement influenced by Salafism and the jihad in Afghanistan, as well as the Muslim Brotherhood, was the FIS or Front Islamique de Salut (the Islamic Salvation Front) in Algeria. Founded as a broad Islamist coalition in 1989 it was led by Abbassi Madani, and a charismatic Islamist young preacher, Ali Belhadj. Taking advantage of economic failure and unpopular social liberalization and secularization by the ruling leftist-nationalist FLN government, it used its preaching to advocate the establishment of a legal system following Sharia law, economic liberalization and development program, education in Arabic rather than French, and gender segregation, with women staying home to alleviate the high rate of unemployment among young Algerian men. The FIS won sweeping victories in local elections and it was going to win national elections in 1991 when voting was canceled by a military coup d'état.

In Afghanistan, the mujahideen's victory against the Soviet Union in the 1980s did not lead to justice and prosperity, due to a vicious and destructive civil war between political and tribal warlords, making Afghanistan one of the poorest countries on earth. In 1992, the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan ruled by communist forces collapsed, and democratic Islamist elements of mujahdeen founded the Islamic State of Afghanistan. In 1996, a more conservative and anti-democratic Islamist movement known as the Taliban rose to power, defeated most of the warlords and took over roughly 80% of Afghanistan.

The Taliban were spawned by the thousands of madrasahs the Deobandi movement established for impoverished Afghan refugees and supported by governmental and religious groups in neighboring Pakistan. The Taliban differed from other Islamist movements to the point where they might be more

properly described as Islamic fundamentalist or neofundamentalist, interested in spreading "an idealized and systematized version of conservative tribal village customs" under the label of Sharia to an entire country. Their ideology was also described as being influenced by Wahhabism, and the extremist jihadism of their guest Osama bin Laden.

In July 1977, General Zia-ul-Haq overthrew Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's regime in Pakistan. Ali Bhutto, a leftist in democratic competition with Islamists, had announced banning alcohol and nightclubs within six months, shortly before he was overthrown. Zia-ul-Haq was much more committed to Islamism, and "Islamization" or implementation of Islamic law, became a cornerstone of his eleven-year military dictatorship and Islamism became his "official state ideology". Zia ul Haq was an admirer of Mawdudi and Mawdudi's party Jamaat-e-Islami became the "regime's ideological and political arm". In Pakistan this Islamization from above was "probably" more complete "than under any other regime except those in Iran and Sudan," but Zia-ul-Haq was also criticized by many Islamists for imposing "symbols" rather than substance, and using Islamization to legitimize his means of seizing power. Unlike neighboring Iran, Zia-ul-Haq's policies were intended to "avoid revolutionary excess", and not to strain relations with his American and Persian Gulf state allies. Zia-ul-Haq was killed in 1988 but Islamization remains an important element in Pakistani society.

"The Islamic State", formerly known as the "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" and before that as the "Islamic State of Iraq", (and called the acronym Daesh by its many detractors), is a Wahhabi/Salafi jihadist extremist militant group which is led by and mainly composed of Sunni Arabs from Iraq and Syria. In 2014, the group proclaimed itself a caliphate, with religious, political and military authority over all Muslims worldwide. As of March 2015[update], it had control over territory occupied by ten million people in Iraq and Syria, and has nominal control over small areas of Libya, Nigeria and Afghanistan. (While a self-described state, it lacks international recognition.) The group also operates or has affiliates in other parts of the world, including North Africa and South Asia.

Originating as the Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad in 1999, it pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda in 2004, participated in the Iraqi insurgency that followed the March 2003 invasion of Iraq by Western forces, joined the fight in the Syrian Civil War beginning in March 2011, and was expelled from al-Qaeda in early 2014, (which complained of its failure to consult and "notorious intransigence"). The group gained prominence after it drove Iraqi government forces out of key cities in western Iraq in a 2014 offensive. The group is adept at social media, posting Internet videos of beheadings of soldiers, civilians, journalists and aid workers, and is known for its destruction of cultural heritage sites. The United Nations has held ISIL responsible for human rights abuses and war crimes, and Amnesty International has reported ethnic cleansing by the group on a "historic scale". The group has been designated a terrorist organisation by the United Nations, the European Union and member states, the United States, India, Indonesia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Syria and other countries.

In its focus on the Caliphate, the party takes a different view of Muslim history than some other Islamists such as Muhammad Qutb. HT sees Islam's pivotal turning point as occurring not with the death of Ali, or one of the other four rightly guided Caliphs in the 7th century, but with the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924. This is believed to have ended the true Islamic system, something for which it blames "the disbelieving (Kafir) colonial powers" working through Turkish modernist Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

HT does not engage in armed jihad or work for a democratic system, but works to take power through "ideological struggle" to change Muslim public opinion, and in particular through elites who will "facilitate" a "change of the government," i.e., launch a "bloodless" coup. It allegedly attempted and failed such coups in 1968 and 1969 in Jordan, and in 1974 in Egypt, and is now banned in both countries. But many HT members have gone on to join terrorist groups and many jihadi terrorists have cited HT as their key influence.

Greater London has over 900,000 Muslims, (most of South Asian origins and concentrated in the East London boroughs of Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest), and among them are some with a strong Islamist outlook. Their presence, combined with a perceived British policy of allowing them free rein, heightened by exposés such as the 2007 Channel 4 documentary programme Undercover Mosque, has given rise to the term Londonistan. Following the 9/11 attacks, however, Abu Hamza al-Masri, the imam of the Finsbury Park Mosque, was arrested and charged with incitement to terrorism which has caused many Islamists to leave the UK to avoid internment.[citation needed]

The U.S. government has engaged in efforts to counter Islamism, or violent Islamism, since 2001. These efforts were centred in the U.S. around public diplomacy programmes conducted by the State Department. There have been calls to create an independent agency in the U.S. with a specific mission of undermining Islamism and jihadism. Christian Whiton, an official in the George W. Bush administration, called for a new agency focused on the nonviolent practice of "political warfare" aimed at undermining the ideology. U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates called for establishing something similar to the defunct U.S. Information Agency, which was charged with undermining the communist ideology during the Cold War.