



# LEARNING FROM MODERATE GOVERNMENTS' APPROACHES TO Islamist Extremism

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**A**CCORDING TO FIELD MANUAL (FM) 3.0, *Operations*, “Land-power is the ability—by threat, force, or occupation—to gain, sustain, and exploit control over land, resources, and people.”<sup>1</sup> When, in the aftermath of a conventional victory, the need arises for Army forces to control people during an occupation, it is useful to consider how and why the ousted enemy regime controlled the population in the first place. This question is especially important in Muslim countries, where Islamist militant organizations often are the predominant challenge to the government. Recent conflicts have increased the awareness that democracy is not “a kind of default condition to which societies revert” after a military victory over a repressive regime.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, the party that won the conventional fight seems to inherit the overthrown government’s problem of controlling Islamist militant organizations. Several Muslim governments have over 50 years of experience in dealing with this threat, and their methods are worth studying. Westerners can learn a lot from moderate Arab government approaches to this problem.

This article briefly addresses the following:

- The two predominant Islamic schools of thought concerning the attitude of an individual towards his ruler.
- How Islamist militant organizations apply teachings of the more extremist schools of thought to challenge Muslim governments or foreign occupiers.
- How Muslim governments cope with this challenge.
- What happens when a conventional military victory disables these coping mechanisms.
- What important implications matter for stabilization operations aimed at controlling extremists.

Islamist militant organizations, for the purpose of this article, are groups that combine Islamic proselytism, provision of social services, and political activism (both violent and nonviolent) in an effort to establish governance on the basis of Islamic, *shari’*a law. Examples are the Egyptian and Jordanian Muslim Brotherhoods (hereafter also referred to as *Ikhwan*), Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Iraqi Sadr II movement. These organizations are insurgencies because they see the use of violence and subversion as methods to achieve their political aims.<sup>3</sup>

## The Cause of the Islamist

Governments and regimes are able to control the population on their territory. In contrast, insurgents require a unifying cause, comprehensible by all, to influence people. Galula emphasizes the importance of the cause

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PHOTO: Islam’s basic creed (shahadah) written on a plaque in the Great Mosque of Xi’an, China.

by stating, “The first basic need for an insurgent who aims at more than simply making trouble is an attractive cause.”<sup>74</sup> For Maoists, it was “land to the tiller.”<sup>75</sup> For Islamists, the cause is “Islam is the solution.”<sup>76</sup> To understand its scope and implications, it is necessary to review Muslim scholars’ main opinions concerning two issues. The first is the relationship between a Muslim individual and a despotic ruler. The second is the defense of Islam against foreign and internal enemies.

In essence, the teachings of two medieval philosophers Al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyya, dominate the debate. Al-Ghazali lived in an era of violent clashes between Muslim leaders in the pursuit of worldly power.<sup>77</sup> His main concern was to end civil war between Muslims. Taymiyya’s outlook was completely different.<sup>78</sup> He saw Islam itself threatened by Mongol invasions in the East and crusades in the West. As a child, Ibn Taymiyya himself “was forced to flee Harran for Damascus in order to escape the Mongol invasions.”<sup>79</sup> Hence, he focused on the preservation of Islamic purity in the face of internal and external threats.

Al-Ghazali holds that the obligation to avoid chaos (*fitna*) in the Islamic community prevails over concerns about individual rights. “Political order is necessary because, by definition, no justice whatsoever is possible in periods of anarchy or chaos.”<sup>80</sup> Therefore, if their ruler is a Muslim, subjects should obey, however bad he may be. Ghazali argues “the tyranny of a sultan for a hundred years causes less damage than one year’s tyranny exerted by the subjects against each other.”<sup>81</sup> *Jihad*, the defense of Islam against an external enemy, is a collective duty organized by the ruler. The problem of defending Islam against internal enemies is non-existent for Ghazali because subjects ought not judge their own ruler’s piety.

In contrast, Taymiyya considers foreign threats a product of disunity in the Islamic world. Therefore,

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resisting invaders starts with strengthening the faith through a return to orthodoxy and ritual purity.<sup>12</sup> The Islamic scholar’s duty is to command what is good and to forbid what is evil.<sup>13</sup> In practice, this takes the form of education and preaching (*da’wa*). The ruler’s duty is to conduct policies inspired by Islamic law. According to Taymiyya, the ruling power’s “goal was Righteous Rule”<sup>14</sup> or *Siyassa shari’yya*.<sup>15</sup> To attain this goal, strong public opinion that is capable of exercising pressure on the ruler, is necessary to strengthen the Islamic character of the institutions. Taymiyya regretted that “on the one hand, rulers think they can achieve material ends by means of force, ambition and self-interest, while on the other hand, religious people think they can achieve spiritual ends by mere piety.”<sup>16</sup> Taymiyya’s solution was the “happy mean” or *Wasat*, meaning subjects should respect their ruler, and rulers should allow and accept justified public pressure.<sup>17</sup>

With regard to *jihad*, Taymiyya faced the problem of conceptualizing resistance against Mongol conquerors who converted to Islam, but kept their culture and habits. Inevitably, he came up with a distinction between good and bad Muslim rulers, thus opening a Pandora’s Box. “Ibn Taymiyya suggested that a ruler (or individual) who did not apply (or live by) the shari’a was in fact an infidel, apostate, or *kafir*.”<sup>18</sup> This was a new concept. “Prior to Ibn Taymiyya, the criterion for determining whether a ruler (or any individual) was a Muslim had always been whether or not he or she had professed the *shahada*.”<sup>19</sup> Taymiyya holds that “he who forsakes the Law of Islam should be fought though he may have once pronounced the two formulas of Faith.”<sup>20</sup> In this reasoning, *jihad* is above all the protection of Islamic identity against two types of enemies: the unbelievers or crusaders and the apostates or *kuffar*.<sup>21</sup>



An Islamic Flag, known as the ‘Flag of Islam’ (Alam al-Islam) or ‘Flag of Shahada’ (Alam al-Shahada) featuring the first Kalimah, the Shahada, widely used by Muslims.

## Taymiyya's Revival

Nineteenth-century European colonialism revived interest in Taymiyya's teachings. Colonial conditions seemed to match those prevailing during Taymiyya's time: Christian invaders, abolishing the Caliphate, dividing the Muslim world into arbitrary pieces of territory and installing puppet rulers who, promoted Western culture and life style, even though they were Muslim.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, Islamic leaders like the Egyptian Al-Banna started to apply Taymiyya's ideology as a way to resist colonial rule.<sup>23</sup> Confident that "when the people have been Islamized, a truly Muslim nation will naturally evolve," Al-Banna started preaching (*da'wa*).<sup>24</sup> Being a man of action himself, he looked for an ideology to provide his movement, the Muslim Brotherhood (*Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimoon*) with a solid theoretical foundation. The publication in 1948 of "Social Justice and Islam" attracted the *Ikhwan's* attention.<sup>25</sup> The author, Saïd Qutb, "quickly bec[ame] its chief ideologue and an integral part of its social activist strategy."<sup>26</sup> To understand this fact's significance, one must grasp

that "the issue of social justice is at the very root of militant Muslim movements."<sup>27</sup> At that time, Qutb was still relatively moderate. He had a "cooperative and long-term reform" in mind, based on two pillars, preaching (*da'wa*) and legislation (*tashrii'*), as "twin fundamental methods of Islam towards all aims."<sup>28, 29</sup> His theory provided a comprehensive alternative to two Western ideologies: communism and capitalism, consistent with the message that Islam was the solution for everything.

## Da'wa, Tashrii', and Jihad

Under President Nasser's harsh repression, Qutb radicalized dramatically. "The prison ordeal and the terrible years of torture suffered by Qutb in Nasser's camps are crucial in understanding Qutb's thought."<sup>30</sup> In his book *Milestones*, written in prison, he brought together Taymiyya's most extreme views and developed a strategy based on *da'wa* and *jihad*.<sup>31</sup> He even pushed Taymiyya's logic further by adding the practice of *taqfir*: qualifying regimes who do not introduce the *shari'a* as *kafir* and by calling active,



A vengeful mob gathers around the burning headquarters of the Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo, Egypt, after setting it on fire in retaliation for an attempted assassination of President Gamal Abdel Nasser, 27 October 1954. A member of the Islamic fundamentalist brotherhood fired eight shots at the Premier while he was speaking in Alexandria.



AFP Photo

Saïd Qutb, theoretician of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, drinks a cup of water behind bars in Cairo. He was executed 29 August 1966.

armed resistance (as *jihad*) against such a regime an individual duty, rather than a collective one.

Qutb's evolution illustrates that within Taymiyya's school of thought, there are a variety of opinions on the kind of pressure one is allowed to exert on a ruler and on the measure of precaution one has to take to avoid chaos or *fitna*. This pressure ranges from criticism during Friday prayer sermons to suicide attacks. Recent history has shown that Islamist organizations can oscillate between radicalism and moderation, between *jihad* and *tashrii'*. However, what remains constant is *da'wa*. *Da'wa* allows an Islamist movement to generate popular support, vital to any insurgency. If a movement acquires a monopoly on *da'wa* in a Muslim country or region, success is only a matter of time and perseverance (*sabr*). In contrast, the kind of pressure the Islamist militant organization exerts on a ruler or foreign occupier is variable. It can range from *tashrii'* to *jihad* or anywhere in between. It can be interrupted by cease-fires (*tahdi'ah*) and truces (*hudna*). Islamists even combine participation in a government with an insurgency against it.<sup>32</sup> In short; these organizations are intransigent on principles, but extremely pragmatic and flexible in execution.

## Critical Capabilities

Applying Taymiyya's ideology, three crucial capabilities allow Islamist militant organizations to challenge Muslim governments or foreign occupiers. The first, and most important, is the ability to generate popular support and adherence to an Islamic ideal through *da'wa* activities. Its "success stems from its capacity to unite, around their program, various social groups, by waging a campaign of proselytism, accompanied by an intense charitable activity, centered around dispensaries, workshops, and schools, installed in the periphery of mosques, controlled by the organization."<sup>33</sup>

This is only possible because some governments or foreign occupiers fail to provide essential services to the population, leaving a vacuum for Islamists. "Islamic movements seem to be the only organizations that can provide opposition to the state establishment and that have the power to change the status quo in favor of the dispossessed. The social services they provide announce that they are already successful in providing what these people want and what the state is unable to deliver."<sup>34</sup>

Islamist militant organizations are often better at providing these essential services than the state because of a second crucial capability: worldwide fund raising, licit and illicit. In 1961, Baqer Al-Sadr's theory on Islamic economy, *Iqtisaduna*,<sup>35</sup> laid the foundations for Islamic banking.<sup>36</sup> The Islamic banking business expanded quickly after the 1973 Yom Kippur War and the subsequent oil crisis that tripled the price of oil. Wealthy citizens from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States poured their petrodollars into Islamic bank accounts and investment funds. Key Islamic concepts are the interdiction on usury and the obligation to share one's wealth with those in need (*zakat*).<sup>37</sup> Islamic banks respect this by allocating a percentage of the generated profit to social programs. Islamist militant organizations can tap into this wealth because their *da'wa* activities and social infrastructure qualify to receive *zakat*.

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With the expansion of the Islamic banking system and the growth of their fund-raising infrastructure, militant organizations gained a comparative advantage over secular resistance movements. "Over the decade of the 1980s, the Palestinian *Ikhwan* had become so popular a cause that a large proportion of the funds raised by Kuwaiti nongovernmental organizations for Palestine were channeled through the charities set up by them."<sup>38</sup> Global fund raising is a particular focus of Islamist militants because it allows them to collect money without diminishing their constituents' revenues. Most insurgencies revert to revolutionary taxes, racketeering, kidnapping, or drug trafficking to generate funds; thus alienating at least part of the population and the international community from their cause. In contrast, militant organizations' fund raising actually allows them to *increase* their constituents' wealth via the provision of essential services and social support.

The third crucial capability is the capacity to exert pressure on a ruler or occupier. This includes the ability to vary the intensity and nature of the pressure in accordance with political and military circumstances. It can be merely political (*tashrii*) or include the use of violence (*jihad*). When applying *jihad*, militant organizations intensify violence during crucial political junctures, or interrupt it by offering truces (*hudna*) or cease-fires (*tahdi'ah*) to gain political concessions. Hamas unilaterally declared cease-fires in 2002, 2005, and 2006, only to break them a couple of weeks or months later.<sup>39</sup> What matters here is that organizations can tune the level of pressure they exert without jeopardizing their financial and organizational infrastructure and without diminishing the credibility of their ideals. This ability means it is always possible to insert Islamic militancy into the regular political process. An unfortunate upshot is that these organizations can always revert to violence.

## The Ruler's Dilemma

These capabilities enable Islamist militant organizations to force governments and foreign occupiers into a dilemma. On the one hand, the government or occupier cannot eliminate the Islamist threat without attacking its *da'wa* infrastructure. On the other hand, they cannot attack the *da'wa* infrastructure without risking social distress and popular uprising. From hard-gained experience, Muslim governments

know the only thing that works in these circumstances is getting a firm hold on the Islamists' *da'wa* infrastructure without destroying it.

Because varying the level of violence is part of the Islamists' strategy, metrics based on the number of violent incidents are useless to gauge progress in the struggle against them. As long as Islamists retain the monopoly on *da'wa* and manage to raise the necessary funds to finance it, they can continue to shift pressure between *tashrii* and *jihad* at will. Over decades, the relatively moderate governments of Egypt and Jordan developed a delicate social, political, legal, military, and law enforcement apparatus to keep Islamist militant organizations in check. Conceptually, it takes the form of an arsenal of mutually reinforcing population control measures, and its focus is on the *da'wa* infrastructure, not on the *jihadi* operatives. The apparatus's most important capabilities are to co-opt (parts of) Islamist militant organizations, to subject their *da'wa* activities to registration and licensing, to control their fund raising, to provide permanent surveillance of their cadres, and to intervene decisively when this surveillance detects preparations for a *jihadi* campaign.

**Co-opting Islamists.** Muslim governments co-opt Islamist militant organizations by partially integrating *da'wa* activities in the state's social organization and by allowing moderate criticism on government policies. Jordan is particularly successful at this. "Jordan ha[s] contained the threat of violent Islamist militancy typically by relying on the largely co-opted Muslim Brotherhood . . . The Brotherhood . . . has become a party of peaceful political opposition that may protest government policies . . . but fully accepts, and embraces, Hashemite rule."<sup>40</sup> In exchange for its loyalty, Jordan granted the Brotherhood control on the education ministry and the school curricula.<sup>41</sup>

Egyptian policies in this regard have been more ambivalent. Successive Egyptian presidents used both accommodationist and repressive strate-

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gies. However, they were proven effective in the sense that after several waves of massive arrests, occasional executions, and subsequent gestures of reconciliation, “the Brotherhood acts within the existing system.”<sup>42</sup> The Egyptian government and the *Ikhwan* found an “understanding” because the former focused on short-term political stability, while the latter settled for a slow but steady evolution towards an Islamic state. In Egypt, “the Brotherhood demanded no rapid time frame for the implementation of shari’a as long as Mubarak remained dedicated to it in principle.”<sup>43</sup> This quotation illustrates that co-opting Islamists works when they believe that, over time, they can obtain more with *tashrii* than with *jihad*.

**The “awqaf.”** The basis of the charitable system in the Muslim world is the *waqf* (plural: *awqaf*). *Awqaf* organize the transfer of alms from those who give it to those who need it. The *waqf* is “the institutionalized form of giving in order to guarantee sustainable development.”<sup>44</sup> The first *waqf* was founded in Egypt in 641, so the concept is almost as old as Islam itself. “The purpose was to set up institutions independently and separately from the state to protect them from instrumentalization by rulers and to offer a better life to the population.”<sup>45</sup> With this in mind, it comes as no surprise that for centuries, Muslim governments have subjected charitable organizations to strict legislation and thorough administrative scrutiny. Egypt established the first ministry to control the *awqaf* in 736.<sup>46</sup> In modern Jordan, the Ministry of Awqaf appoints and pays imams.<sup>47</sup> It also registers charitable organizations and issues licenses for charitable activities.<sup>48</sup> By paying their salaries, the Jordanian government gains leverage on imams who, as a consequence, are less prone to criticize the government. Registration of charitable organizations facilitates their supervision and allows control on the money flows they generate. Additionally, those active in charitable organizations know all too well that the government “knows where they live.” Consequently, they think twice before risking involvement in organizing or financing *jihadi* campaigns.

In Egypt, similar laws and administrative regulations exist. They are supplemented with laws regulating elections for civil society institutions, like labor unions and student associations.<sup>49</sup> The Egyptian *Ikhwan*, outlawed by President Nasser in the 1950s, started “seeking influence in other, pre-

existing and more general institutions by playing the electoral game.”<sup>50</sup> By mobilizing their members for union and association elections, that traditionally had a very low turnout, they managed to gain majorities in the institutions’ executive bodies. Once in control, the *Ikhwan* instrumentalize these organizations for *da’wa* activities. Legislation aims to prevent this by requiring a quorum of voters.

Restrictions on fund raising and money transfers constitute the third way Muslim governments tighten their grip on Islamist militants. Egyptian law forces all non-governmental organizations to transfer their funds via a government controlled financial institution.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, Egyptian law only allows categories of non-financial foreign aid. These categories do not include food and medicines. In 1972, President Sadat created the Nasser bank that respects Islamic banking principles. By collecting *zakat* themselves via the Nasser bank, the Egyptian authorities aim to deny it to Islamist organizations.<sup>52</sup>

**Surveillance and repression.** Permanent surveillance is the fourth way to control Islamist militant organizations. One report states, “Jordanians are under such thorough surveillance by the security forces that they probably cannot at this point carry out elaborate preparations for a coordinated attack.”<sup>53</sup> The way Jordanian authorities handled Hamas’ attempts to acquire weapons in Jordan is illustrative in this regard. In 1991, “working clandestinely from the offices of the Jordanian *Ikhwan* in Amman and with the knowledge of no more than a handful of top local *Ikhwan* leaders, Hamas set up an arms procurement committee . . . to purchase weapons and store them until the circumstances allowed them to be smuggled into Palestine.”<sup>54</sup> These attempts were immediately detected and thwarted.

When security services detect Islamist preparations for violence, the government usually orders massive arrests to destroy the organization’s military wing as well as to temporarily paralyze its *da’wa* infrastructure. The Egyptian military and police forces carried out at least five campaigns of massive arrests since 1950. As an example, “while Sadat’s negotiations with Israel . . . ‘changed the atmosphere’, and the Brother’s opposition to this policy led them to be targeted with other opposition movements in the repression of 1980-1981, Sadat’s successor, Hosni Mubarak, released members from jail in November 1981 and has allowed the Society

a (fluctuating) degree of space since then.”<sup>55</sup> This example illustrates that, usually, the government does not incarcerate *da’wa* key figures for long, because disrupting social services is not in its interest. It is merely a way to make clear who is in charge. As one report puts it, “thus the Society exists in a legal limbo, a sitting duck for repression, its wings regularly clipped, but never fully disabled.”<sup>56</sup> However, repression is but the government’s last resort, not its primary instrument. The apparatus’ main function is to make clear that armed resistance is futile and (the appearance of) complicity with *jihadi* factions endangers the vital *da’wa* infrastructure.

The government’s overall strategy is to turn Islamist militant organizations into *Zakat-Tashrii’* social movements: organizations, funded by religiously inspired charitable contributions, that combine Islamic proselytism, the provision of social services, and non-violent political pressure in an effort to further governance on the basis of Islamic *shari’a* law. By applying this strategy, Muslim governments seek to benefit from the Islamists’ positive characteristics while mitigating the negative ones. The policy relieves the government of most of the burden to organize education, health care, and social security at the price of occasionally yielding to political pressure. However, it’s like keeping a wolf as a pet: a short leash, constant supervision, and consistent beating and stroking are required to keep the situation under control.

## Conditions after Conventional Victory

The Six Day War illustrates what happens after a crushing military victory that eliminates an apparatus holding Islamist militant organizations in check. After the dust settled in June 1967, the consequences for state actors in the Middle East were clear. Arab governments suffered a humiliating loss of credibility and Israel’s conventional military capability henceforth commanded respect, admiration, and fear. In contrast, the consequences for non-state actors, like Islamist militant organizations only became clear two decades later.

Tamimi states that “the Palestinian Islamists may be viewed as pioneers in the way they transformed their intellectual and ideological discourse into practical programmes [sic] providing services to the public through voluntary institutions. Their brethren

elsewhere in the Arab world had, for decades, been denied such opportunities because the majority of the Arab countries had imposed restrictions on any form of non-governmental activity linking religion and education, or of a voluntary and charitable nature.”<sup>57</sup> Paradoxically, Israel’s victory provided Islamists with opportunities they could only dream of when they were under Egyptian and Jordanian rule. “The irony was that the situation changed in the aftermath of the 1967 war and the Israeli occupation. Israel opted to revive certain aspects of archaic Ottoman law in its administration of the affairs of the Arab populations in the West Bank and Gaza. This permitted the creation of voluntary or non-governmental organizations such as charitable, educational, and other forms of privately funded service institutions.”<sup>58</sup> By abolishing stringent Egyptian laws, Israel courted disaster. A memo written by the Hamas Political Bureau explains how Hamas thrived in these new circumstances. It outlines in great detail how “in view of these developments, the Palestinian *Ikhwan* inside the homeland and in the diaspora proceeded along two paths:

1. The first path: that of participation in direct military action against the Zionist occupation. . . .
2. The second path: the establishment of the organizational infrastructure for a jihadi (struggle) project against the Zionist occupation.”<sup>59</sup>

The Palestinian Islamists knew public support and social mobilization were crucial for the creation of this organizational infrastructure. Therefore, “the *Ikhwan* undertook to work in the following fields:

1. Arousing the enthusiasm of the members of *Ikhwan* to work in the field of *Da’wa* (calling people to Islam) and social reform.
2. Attracting the youth, especially university graduates....
3. Revitalizing the process of building mosques, considering that they constitute a principal source of influence in society.
4. Establishing numerous charitable and social institutions.”<sup>60</sup>

The document continues to explain how the terrorist movement Hamas naturally evolved out of the *Ikhwan*. Hamas issued a statement on 14 December 1987, shortly after the eruption of the first *Intifada*, announcing its existence. However, “the communiqué was not intended to declare the birth of the movement, because it had already



AP Photo

**The Mitla Pass, a strategic gateway to the Suez in the west central Sinai Peninsula, is littered with Egyptian equipment. Israeli troops killed between 7,000 and 10,000 Egyptians and destroyed or captured 700 tanks in the Sinai in June 1967.**

been in existence and had already been active in the field.”<sup>61</sup> The memo further describes how “the movement played a principal role in developing the Intifada from a popular format to qualitative forms of resistance ranging from the kidnapping of soldiers to the war of knives and finally martyrdom operations.”<sup>62</sup> Overall, the document describes the inextricable links between proselytism, the provision of essential services and the use of violence, including suicide bombing.

Israeli authorities did not impede Islamist movements’ fund raising either. “Ironically, the Israelis themselves had nurtured fundamentalist groups like Islamic Jihad and Hamas by turning a blind eye to funds being sent from the Persian Gulf region to the Islamists for the purpose of building mosques, sport clubs, and community centers.”<sup>63</sup>

## Zakat-Jihad

The price Israel had to pay for liberalizing *da’wa* activities was the *Ikhwan*’s transformation into a *Zakat-Jihad* activist insurgency: Hamas. A *Zakat-Jihad* activist insurgency is an organization, funded

by religiously inspired charitable contributions, that combines Islamic proselytism, the provision of social services, and terrorism in an effort to establish governance on the basis of Islamic, *shari’a* law. The organization generates popular support by providing essential services which primarily serve the purpose of creating a safe haven for *jihadi* fighters among the population. Such an insurgency, once established, is extremely resilient, “as Hamas’ and Hezbollah’s growth under Israeli occupation illustrates.”<sup>64</sup>

While the Egyptian and Jordanian apparatuses succeeded in sufficiently restricting militant organizations’ freedom of movement, thereby herding them into a social role, Israel was unable to prevent and stop Islamist terrorism. Against this reasoning, one might argue that the struggle to end Israeli occupation is much more mobilizing a cause than the fight to introduce *shari’a* rule in a Muslim country. Therefore, Egypt and Jordan are perhaps more successful only because their task is easier. However, admitting this is tantamount to claiming that in Taymiyya’s and Qutb’s ideologies, an unbeliever is more dangerous than an apostate. This



is not true. Abd-Al-Salam Farag, the leader of the Egyptian terrorist movement Al-Jihad illustrates this concisely in his rationale for the assassination of the Egyptian President Sadat. “For Farag, that Sadat had cultivated the image of *al-Ra’is al-mu’min* (the pious President), meant nothing against the fact that Egypt was not governed by Islamic law. Consequently, Sadat’s professions of faith were hypocritical and *jihad* was licit. Moreover, Farag argued, the obligation of *jihad* against ‘the nearer enemy’ (the Egyptian regime) took precedence over that against ‘the more distant enemy’ (Israel).”<sup>65</sup>

After Israel abolished many restrictions on *da’wa* activities in 1967, it took the Palestinian *Ikhwan* two decades to establish the organizational infrastructure for a *jihadi* campaign, led by their spin-off organization Hamas. The transition from charity to terrorism literally happened overnight, as the eruption of the Intifada illustrates.<sup>66</sup> Eighteen years later, this campaign culminated in Israel’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.<sup>67</sup> During this period, Israel succeeded several times in decimating Hamas’ *jihadi* infrastructure, only to see it rebuilt from scratch. Contrary to Egypt and Jordan, Israel never convinced militants that violent resistance is futile. On the contrary, the Israeli withdrawals from South Lebanon and the Gaza Strip seemed to be tangible proof that terrorism yields results. Furthermore, Hamas’ social services have become so elaborate largely because of unimpeded fund raising, that it is impossible to target Hamas without jeopardizing the survival of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. One report even argues that “any approach to the issue of Islamic charitable institutions... must start from the premise that they are critical in Palestinian life.”<sup>68</sup> In light of this situation, it is unfortunate the West only recently discovered one of its main strengths in dealing with Islamist militant organizations: the ability to control and constrict international money flow. The West is actually better at this than Muslim governments. The decision to withhold subsidies to the Palestinian Authority after Hamas’ electoral victory, the pressure American

legislation exerts on banks to detect and report suspicious transactions, and the physical seizures of cash by Israeli forces at the borders, destabilized Hamas.<sup>69</sup> However, the international community cannot use this weapon anymore without seriously diminishing the quality of life for most Palestinians. Early application of this measure, combined with regulations leveling the playing field for all kinds of nongovernmental organizations, can prevent the occurrence of a situations wherein Islamist militants dominate the provision of essential services.

## Conclusion

In the Muslim world, occupying a territory in the aftermath of a conventional military victory and controlling the population inhabiting it, often means managing Islamist militant organizations. Though this problem is relatively new for most Western countries, some Muslim governments have dealt with it successfully for over half a century. The methods they developed, while not completely applicable by Western democracies, have proven successful and are worth studying.

History shows unchecked Islamist militants develop into *Zakat-Jihad* activist insurgencies. These insurgencies only start to use violence at the end of a long preparatory phase of seemingly harmless religious and social action. The transition to violence can happen overnight, after which the movement is almost impossible to eradicate.

Conversely, checked Islamist militant organizations can evolve into *Zakat-Tashrii’* social movements. Muslim governments have developed an arsenal of mutually reinforcing population control methods aimed at pushing militant organizations into social roles and keeping them there. Muscular military and police action against *jihadi* operatives is an essential part of this arsenal, but by no means the most important one. Getting a firm grip on the Islamist *da’wa* infrastructure is much more important. Co-opting (parts of) the Islamist militant organizations subjecting their charitable activities to registration and licensing, controlling their fund raising, and providing permanent surveillance of their cadres are four ways moderate Muslim governments combine to achieve this objective. Not every method used by Muslim governments would be feasible for Western democracies. Co-opting Islamists may prove extremely difficult for Westerners or

***The transition from charity to terrorism literally happened overnight...***

Western-backed interim governments. On the other hand, Western democracies are better at some other methods, like controlling international fund raising and constricting the resultant money flows. Although the combination of methods applied by Westerners may differ from those applied by moderate Muslim governments, they can be equally effective.

In summary, after a conventional victory that eliminates a regime hosting an Islamist militancy in check, the victor has to implement as soon as possible a system that prevents potential insurgents from being simultaneously the biggest menace to

peace and the best guarantee for survival and development of the population. To attain this objective, the victor should not remain passive until violence erupts, nor should his strategy focus solely on eliminating *jihadi* operatives. Rather, by controlling money flow and by leveling the playing field for all kinds of charitable organizations through a process of registration and licensing, the strategy should focus on preventing the emergence of a monopoly on the provision of essential services to the population, a monopoly from which militant organizations derive their popular support. **MR**

## NOTES

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8. Taqi ad-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328).
9. Elizabeth A. Barre, "The Shayk Al-Islam: The Legacy of Ibn Taymiyya in 20th Century Political Islam." Paper presented at the Florida State University Department of Religion Graduate Symposium, April 2005, 4.
10. Sami Zemni, *Politieke Islam, 9/11 en Jihad* (Leuven, Belgium: ACCO, 2006), 46 (translated from Dutch by Erik Claessen).
11. Quoted in Ann K.S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam: An introduction to the Study* (New York: Routledge, 1981), 124.
12. Barre, 9.
13. In Arabic: Al-Amr bi'l-Maruf wa'l-Nahy'l-Munkar, this is also the title of a short work by Taymiyya and a phrase often used by Islamists. Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 151.
14. Anthony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 155.
15. Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Kitab al Siyasa Al-shar'iyya, The Book on the Government of the Religious Law*, written between 1311 and 1315.
16. Anthony Black, 155.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Barre, 5.
19. *Ibid.*; The shahada is the Islamic creed.
20. Ibn Taymiyya, *Public Policy in Islamic Jurisprudence*, trans. from Arabic by Dr. Omar A. Farukh (Beirut, Lebanon: Khayats, 1966), 100.
21. A kafir (plural kuffar) is someone who rejects, hides, or denies the truth. In the Islamic sense, the word is synonymous to apostate.
22. Mustapha Kemal Atatürk abolished the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924.
23. Hassan Al-Banna (1906-1949).
24. Quoted in Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1969), 308.
25. Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam (al-Adalah al-ijtima'iyah fi al-Islam)*, trans. from Arabic by John B Hardie, and Hamid Algar (North Haledon, NJ: Islamic Publications International, 1999).
26. Scott Thomas Makstenieks, "Why They Hate Us: Sayyid Qutb, Islamic Fundamentalism and Public Emotionality", 2007, <<http://www.uh.edu/chcc/nca/data/documents/p190219.pdf>>, 15.
27. Özlem Tür Kavli, "Islamic Movements in the Middle East: Egypt as a Case Study," *Perceptions*, Journal of International Affairs December 2001-February 2002, vol. VI, no. 4, 5.
28. Ahmed Bouzid, "Man, Society, and Knowledge in the Islamist Discourse of Sayyid Qutb," 1998, <<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-3398-184043/unrestricted/Final.pdf>>, 51.
29. *Ibid.*, 52.
30. *Ibid.*, 23.
31. Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones (Ma'ālim fi al-tarīq)* (Indianapolis, IN: American Trust Publications, 1990).
32. Three examples are illustrative in this regard. Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Sadr II Movement control ministries in the Palestinian Authority, the Lebanese government, and the Iraqi government respectively. However, this does not prevent them from using violence against these institutions.
33. De Gilles Kepel, *Jihad, expansion et déclin de l'islamisme* (Paris, France:

- Editions Gallimard, 2000), 29 (translated from French by Erik Claessen).
34. Özlem Tür Kavli, 8.
35. Mohammed Baqer Al-Sadr, *Our Economics (Iqtisaduna)*, trans. from Arabic by Dr. Kadam Jawad Shubber (London, UK: Bookextra Ltd, 2000); Mohammed Baqer Al-Sadr (1935-1980) is Moqtada Al-Sadr's grand-uncle and father-in-law.
36. Kepel, 387.
37. Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam and requires Muslims to pay roughly 2.5 percent of their wealth a year to those in need.
38. Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters* (London, UK: Hurst, 2007), 72.
39. *Ibid.*, 166.
40. International Crisis Group (ICG), "Jordan's 9/11: Dealing with Jihadi Islamism"; Middle East Report no. 47, 23 November 2005, <<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3801>>, 6.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Özlem Tür Kavli, 6.
43. Jon Walsh, "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood: Understanding Centrist Islam," *Harvard International Review*, January 2003.
44. Layla Bahmad, "Palestinian Non-Governmental Organisations caught between Reality and Challenges", Dissertation zur Erlangung des Akademischen Grades eines Doktors der Politikwissenschaften; Universität Kassel, Germany, 16 May 2007, <<https://kobra.bibliothek.uni-kassel.de/bitstream/urn:nbn:de:hebis:34-2007091019190/3/DissertationBahmad.pdf>>, 99.
45. *Ibid.*, 102.
46. *Ibid.* 104.
47. ICG, Middle East Report no. 47, 15.
48. The most relevant Jordanian law in this regard is Law 33/1966 on Associations and Social Bodies.
49. The most relevant Egyptian laws in this respect are law 40/1977 on political parties, law 84/2002 on non-governmental organizations and law 100/93 on labor unions.
50. ICG, "Islamism in North Africa II, Egypt's opportunity," ICG Middle East and North Africa Briefing, 20 April 2004, <<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=2619>>, 12.
51. Law 32/1964 Concerning Private Societies and Organizations.
52. Kepel, 153.
53. ICG, Middle East Report no 47, 1.
54. Azzam Tamimi, 73.
55. ICG Middle East and North Africa Briefing, 11.
56. *Ibid.*, 10.
57. Azzam Tamimi, 37.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Ibid.*, 254.
60. *Ibid.*
61. *Ibid.*, 257.
62. *Ibid.*, Hamas uses the expression "martyrdom operations" to designate suicide terrorist attacks.
63. Judith Palmer-Harick, *Hezbollah, The Changing Face of Terrorism* (New-York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 25.
64. Erik A. Claessen, "S.W.E.T. and Bood: Essential Services in the Battle between Insurgents and Counterinsurgents," *Military Review*, 87, (November-December 2007): 91. The article defines Zakat-Jihad Activist Insurgencies, describes their tactics, and derives implications for counterinsurgency operations against them.
65. ICG Middle East and North Africa Briefing, 5.
66. The first intifada, or uprising, was sparked on 9 December 1987 in Gaza when an Israeli lorry ran into and killed four Palestinians; "Intifada, then and now," BBC News, 8 December 2000, <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/1061537.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1061537.stm)>.
67. On 12 September 2005, Israel evacuated the Gaza Strip, including a number of Jewish settlements.
68. ICG, "Islamic Social Welfare Activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: A Legitimate Target?" ICG Middle East Report no. 13, 2 April 2003, ii, <<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1662>>.
69. A spectacular seizure of this kind took place on the Egypt-Gaza Strip border in 2006. Israel refused access to Gaza to Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniya (a member of Hamas) until he left behind the \$35 million in cash he was carrying. "Gaza border shots 'targeted PM'," 15 December 2006, <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/6181681.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6181681.stm)>.