

# Islamism and Globalization

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*Islamism appears one of the most important phenomena of our times and it greatly affects many global processes. In the Muslim world one can hardly find a country where Islamism would not be an influential and stable political factor. It seems impossible to comprehend modern Muslim (especially Arab) societies without taking into account the role of Islamism as simultaneously an ideology, a cultural environment, and a mode of life and guideline to follow. And if one keeps in mind the increasingly large share of the Muslim population in the world, it appears hardly possible to ignore their impact on the current and future globalization trends. All these make the correlation between globalization and Islamism an urgent issue which is, nevertheless, understudied. In the present article we would like to outline some patterns and landmarks of this mutual interaction. Currently, Islamism is one of the most complicated social phenomena; it is a multifaceted, changing and heterogeneous movement within whose framework there unfolds an intensive ideological and political struggle. We hope the present article will help the reader to obtain some idea about this important phenomenon of the modern world whose development involves interests of billions of people of all countries, religions and views. At that, we emphasize that it is vital to distinguish between radical and moderate types of Islamism; the latter is promising with respect to becoming a positive and promising wing of political system in Muslim countries. We suppose that it is impossible to eliminate the threats posed by radical and terrorist Islamism only by force. One may hope to achieve this goal if they succeed to separate it from moderate Islamism while the latter should become more respectable, open and involved in common political environment.*

**Keywords:** *globalization, Islamism, radical Islamism, moderate Islamism, fundamentalism, the Muslim renaissance, the Orient, Muslim societies, politicized Islam, World System, oil dollars.*

## Introduction

The number of the world Muslim population is estimated around 1.7 billion which makes more than one-fifth of the total world population. It is predicted that by 2050 the worldwide number of Muslims will grow to 2.76 billion people. By this time, they will make up almost 30 per cent of the world population (Desilver and Masci 2017). It is natural to expect that the role of both Islamic countries and Islamic communities in countries with different religions and cultures will continue to grow. It is evident that one can hardly under-

stand contemporary Islamic (especially Arab) societies without considering the influence of Islamism along with ideology, culture, and a way of life. Islamism is one of the contemporary most complicated social phenomena (Kepel 2004) which is many-sided, changing and heterogeneous in its nature and in this article we try to outline its main features. It is extremely important to understand that Islamism is not a superficial phenomenon since it affects the fundamental aspects of Muslims' lives, and it is also a mass movement that has a wide and ramified social base. It is not surprising that there is no country *in the Islamic world where Islamism would not become an influential and persistent factor of domestic and foreign policy. What appeared at the end of the last century as particular episodes turned out to be one of the major trends in the world politics.* The correlation between globalization and Islamism becomes and will remain relevant for a long time. Meanwhile, this issue remains understudied.

The present article consists of an introduction, three sections and a conclusion. In the first section we give a definition of Islamism with the account of its different flows and show that radical Islamism is only a relatively small part of the general Islamist movement, while its major part is presented by moderate Islamism. We also show that Islamism is not just something superficial but a fundamental and comprehensive basis of Islamic societies. In the second section we analyse the relations between Islamism and the West, and discuss the link between the development of Islamism and globalization during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In the third section we examine the roots of the rise of Islamism (*the Islamic Resurgence*) starting from the late 1970s. Finally, in conclusion, we discuss the path to the positive development of Islamic countries which largely lies in the direction of moderate Islamism. It is extremely important not only to distinguish between radical and moderate types of Islamism, but also to rely on the latter to weaken the former, because moderate Islamism can become a positive and promising wing of the political system of Islamic countries.<sup>1</sup>

## **1. What is Islamism? Radical and Moderate Islamism. Islamism and Power**

### **1.1. Islam and Islamism. Multifaceted Islamism**

It is impossible to put an equal sign between *Islam and Islamism* since these are not synonymous terms. Islam is an ancient religion, which has religious rituals and spiritual leaders – adherents of the Quran, the Sunnah, and other sacred texts. At the same time, many Muslim men of religion are often far from politics and try to remain within the framework of purely religious activity. Islamism is a relatively young *political* and social ideology based on the leading religious ideas and practices, which calls for Islamic laws and traditions to be extended to the behaviour of the whole society (all Islamic societies or even the whole world). Islamism is spread by the politicians who usually do not have any theological education, and political groups and parties endeavouring for power and influencing the authority. Men of religion often do not welcome Islamism, which is actually the Islamic reformation. So today, the laymen and not men of religion start to interpret the sacred texts and apply them. And this reduces the role of the Muslim clergy.

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<sup>1</sup> There are many understudied aspects related to Islamism which we analyze in some our works (Grinin *et al.* 2018).

It would be a mistake to present Islamism as some outgrowth on the body of Muslim societies. On the contrary, as we will show, Islamism in many respects reflects the essence of modern Muslim societies and of their mode of thought and life.

**Islamism is a mass and ramified movement.** Islamists operate in many social groups. Islamism and Islamist organizations perform many functions in Islamic society: help the poor, contribute to self-organization in addressing the pressing issues, struggle for morality, organize spiritual education and discussions of religious issues; it is also an opportunity to promote talented people. Islamists actively penetrate into business, education, even in the lower municipal bodies, they organize medical assistance, mediate in the delivery of money to families of migrants, *etc.* It is important *that many Islamists come from the lower strata of society so they have even more sympathizers among the poor in the lowest layer of middle class (and also in other social strata).* And this is where their strength originates. In fact, Islamism not only spiritually but also functionally permeates the social fabric of a society. Therefore, even with a strong secular state and with bans on Islamist organizations and repressions against their activists, it is extremely difficult to drive them out of society. Islamism also relies on ideas, namely religious-cultural and religious-political, that are clear to the absolute majority of people, regardless of their level of education. This is another advantage over other political movements. Besides, being a grassroots movement, Islamism most often becomes an opposition movement and this fact even more strengthens it since the criticism of the authorities appeals to the population. Islamists are at the head of the organized struggle for the fulfilment of certain demands, *etc.* Consequently, from this point of view, Islamism acts as a kind of societal control over the authorities and societal institutions. It also helps to get protest voices heard in the world of injustice. Thus, Islamism is a broad popular movement.

**Definition of Islamism and its movements.** In short, Islamism is often defined as ‘politicized Islam’ or ‘political Islam’ (see, *e.g.*, Levin 2014: 4; Ignatenko 2004: 40; Achilov and Sen 2017: 608). This is convenient, but because of the brevity, it is not entirely true. Islamism is not only a political, but also a social ideology, a way of life and action. It is often emphasized that Islamism is a political movement based on radical ideology (see, *e.g.*, Mirsky 2015: 4). However, we should take into account the fact that Islamism is heterogeneous, torn by contradictions, and that almost the main enemies of radical Islamists are not secularists, but moderate Islamists (Osman 2016: 260).

Radical Islamists seek to forcibly impose the strict traditions of Islam in society, as well as to get a total control over human behaviour, and to replace secular laws with the Sunnah. To achieve this, they are ready to use illegal and violent actions, including intimidation of people, terrorism and overthrow of governments. Moderate Islamists while disseminating their views try to respect certain human rights, to integrate into the political landscape, and to join the legal struggle for power; they also respect the rights of freedom and are ready to cooperate with the West.

Radical and terrorist Islamism is a sad and cruel reality. It represents a formidable and often invisible danger because anyone can become its victim. However, this threat, which also can be naturally exaggerated, hides the most important fact that *radical Islamists make up a very small part of the adherents of the ideology while the most part of Islamism movement is not radical.* The majority of population do not support radical Islamists, otherwise the entire Middle East would have long ago become an analogue of the infamous

'Islamic State'.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, it is extremely important to keep in mind the fact that Islamism can be moderate, and sometimes even democratic and liberal.

One should understand that within radical and moderate Islamism there exist numerous trends and variations. Thus, in general, Islamism is extremely diverse and contradictory, and prone to various changes and transformations depending on situation. In addition, it has many levels and manifestations: from quite respectable political parties and academic debates to the stream of consciousness of an illiterate Muslim, from the state level to groups of fanatical terrorists, from moderate political movements to violent actions of radical Islamist groups.

Therefore, the following definitions seem more suitable. It is a political movement that favors reordering government and society in accordance with laws prescribed by Islam (Hooper 2015). '...Islamists are people who believe that Islam has an important role to play in organizing a Muslim-majority society, and who seek to implement this belief' (Poljarevic 2015).

Some experts tend to keep the 'Islamist' labels for the radicals, whereas they prefer some other terms to designate moderate Islamism, say, 'Islamic activism' (see, e.g., Tsaregorodtseva 2017). On the other hand, there is a tendency to doubt the existence of moderate Islamists. In our opinion, the latter approach is inefficient both in academic and practical terms. Firstly, Islamism in the very meaning of the word is associated with the promotion of Islam and spread of its principles to different spheres of life, but it must not necessarily require a violent overthrow of the ruling regime. Secondly, there are many examples of transition of moderate Islamists into radical Islamism, like, for example, a part of the 'Muslim Brotherhood'<sup>3</sup> in Egypt after July 2013, and vice versa, radical Islamists in Iran have become moderate enough in order to observe the rules of democratic elections. Such a seemingly radical Islamist organization as Hezbollah in Lebanon participates in elections and it has representatives in the parliament, and, moreover, forms the government bloc together with Christian and secular parties.

In fact, it is wrong both to consider moderates as non-Islamists and to confuse radicals and moderates. In addition, despite the enormous differences in attitude toward terror, participation in political life, etc., Islamists are united by certain (yet, vague) common ideological approaches.

From the above said one can define Islamism in the following way. **Islamism** is a political and social trend and ideology which is widespread in the Muslim world. It is based on the idea of a high value/superiority of Islam and its rules and traditions and on the necessity to somehow organize life in accordance with principles of Islam interpreted in a definite way; it is oriented at organizing politically around people who put some Islamic (or considered as Islamic) ideas and principles at the centre of political and social life.

## 1.2. Islamic communities as a bridge between the West and East

All the foregoing demonstrates the great and important impact of Islamism on the World System and globalization. Muslims are a huge world; they make up the majority of the population in almost 50 countries. There are also many countries where they make up a significant part of population (e.g., in Russia). Now they have become a visible and growing minority in a dozen European states, their number is growing in the United States. And

<sup>2</sup> The activity of this terrorist organization is outlawed in Russia. – *Editor's Note.*

<sup>3</sup> The activity of this terrorist organization is outlawed in Russia. – *Editor's Note.*

although the media is preoccupied almost exclusively with radical Islamism in Europe and other countries, it is obvious that the absolute majority of Muslims in non-Islamic countries are quite loyal to the authorities. And those who support Islamism are mostly the adherents of its moderate wing, and most often it is just usual and everyday Islamism. Moreover, one should realize that the Western Islamic communities generally produce a positive impact on the rest of the Islamic world since they spread certain culture. Of course, they debase the level of European culture as a whole, but still they improve the Islamic world's culture. This is the peculiarity of globalization – it seeks to smooth the differences between regions and countries, somewhere through improvement, and somewhere through lowering. We have already argued that globalization relies on the economic law of communicating vessels (which means that the process tends to equalize the technological and economic level of developed and developing countries [see Grinin 2013]) but the same law of communicating vessels is applicable to culture as well.

### 1.3. Islamism and power in the Islamic world

**The struggle between Islamism and secular regimes.** The confrontation between a secular state and Islamism started a long time ago. In Arab countries, the secular regimes actively and sometimes even ruthlessly fought with the Islamists' desire to influence the population and to come to power (peacefully or militarily), and although the struggle was a mixed success, on the whole, the secular regimes succeeded. The most impressive example is the struggle (civil war) in Algeria in the 1990s and the early 2000s. The military coup in Egypt in 2013 also showed that secular (military-police) regimes may find the strength to push the Islamists away from power.

Islamism originated as an opposition movement and its strength lies just in this role. Between the 1980s and 1990s the Islamist movements dominated and often monopolized the opposition to governments in Muslim countries. This opposition function allowed the usage of the popular discontent to strengthen their authority. However, after the Islamists come to power, the attractiveness of their propaganda often starts to weaken. This is not accidental. The Islamist doctrines, which require the observance of the Sunnah norms and arrangement of life according to the sacred books, come in a rigid contradiction with the realities of modern life, and when they are put into practice this can cause great damage to economy, for example, the tourism industry, *etc.*

It is more difficult for moderate Islamism to show up in power, it begins to fluctuate, and the threat of schism emerges together with the attempts at radicalization and other things that can lead to its political defeat; this is what we observe in Egypt and Tunisia in the last few years. However, in other societies, moderate Islamists have demonstrated significant success in adapting Islamic principles to modern reality (see below).

**Islamism as a victorious ideology.** In general, modern Islamism rarely becomes a state's official ideology in an explicit form, although there are a few cases. Islamism as an ideology has won in Pakistan, but now its role there has decreased. In Iran, one could observe a victory of the Islamic revolution; however, in fact, Iran had a different Islamism than the Sunni and especially Arab countries: in Iran Islamism was closely connected and almost equivalent to nationalism, while in Arab countries Islamism was hostile to nationalism. Radical Islamists ('Taliban'<sup>4</sup>) were once in power in Afghanistan (having created the so-called Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in 1996–2001), but the introduction of ancient

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<sup>4</sup> The activity of this terrorist organization is outlawed in Russia. – *Editor's Note.*

Islamic laws and orders and providing a shelter to bin Laden only caused new disasters in the country. The Islamists aided by the military also succeeded in Sudan, so the years 1994–1996 can be described as their golden age there. In 2000, due to the intensified struggle between the military and Islamists, the role of the latter in government decreased.

**Moderate Islamists in power.** Iran (and especially Sudan) is not the most representative case here since it is difficult to reproduce such success stories. More interesting and important for the future development are the cases when moderate Islamist political parties fit into the political landscape of particular states and become institutionalized. It is this path that is most forward-looking and acceptable for all, including Western countries. This also refers to Iran, where radical Islamism introduced by Khomeini (which significantly undermined the country's economy) quickly grew into his successors' moderate Islamism/post-Islamism that managed to achieve considerable progress in stabilizing Iran while also managing to foster the development of a sufficiently strong and functioning Islamic democratic system (about post-Islamism see Grinin *et al.* 2018).

For most people in Muslim world Islam plays an important role in their modern reality and everyday life. That is why Islamists quite often win at the elections. In some cases, moderate Islamists have demonstrated significant success in adapting Islamic principles to modern reality. There are also examples when they, being in power, implement a sufficiently balanced and effective policy (like, *e.g.*, in Turkey, Morocco, and Malaysia). There are also several countries where Islamist parties come to power on their own or in a coalition, like in Malaysia or Lebanon. This becomes possible because they are one way or another integrated into the political system and accept the rules of the game and respective foreign policy situation. It should also be added that there are certain counterbalances to Islamism in these countries.

## 2. Islamism in the Global Context

### 2.1. Islamism: The opposition to the West

Modern Islamism originated as a response to the huge superiority of the West over the Islamic world, the Western colonial expansion and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War. Islamism became an unexpected and obviously unwelcome phenomenon for the West since it prevented the latter's political, economic and ideological penetration into the Middle East.

It is important to understand that Islamism from the beginning had objectively contributed to the Islamic countries' modernization. This was particularly noticeable during the so-called Islamic Renaissance (from the late 1970s; see below) that could be considered as a modernizing attempt without borrowing Western values and institutions, but rather, on the basis of a return to the supposedly imperishable values of early Islam (Huntington 1996).

The ideological roots of radical Islamists lie in the hatred towards the West, which for such organizations as 'al-Qaeda'<sup>5</sup> is a guide for action.<sup>6</sup> The reference of Ayatollah Kho-

<sup>5</sup> The activity of this terrorist organization is outlawed in Russia. – *Editor's Note.*

<sup>6</sup> One of the leaders of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, who was executed in August 1966, Sayyid Qutb, whose ideas still inspire many Islamists, wrote: 'All Western states are guided by one source, by a materialistic civilization that has no heart, no morality, and no conscience. It is a civilization that does not hear anything but the sound of cars, and does not discuss anything except trade... How I hate and despise these people of the West! All of them without exception!' (Calvert 2010: 121). Notably, the hatred of the West is not connected with ignorance of Western life. On the contrary, the ideologists and

meini to the United States and Israel as ‘Great and Little Satan’ provides a very vivid illustration of this attitude.<sup>7</sup>

Such animus toward the West (largely well-deserved) is also typical of moderate Islamists, all the more so since this kind of criticism is generally a safe choice in social demagoguery. The negation of Western values is also very widespread among law-abiding and peaceful people. This is not surprising but quite understandable (and not only in terms of the long confrontation between Christianity and Islam). The criticism of the alleged soullessness of Western civilization largely compensates for resentment and discontent arising from the situation when Muslim societies are backward compared to the West, and most Islamic societies are relatively poor. Therefore, the confrontation between Islamism and Westernism can be considered as one of the very important global dichotomy of the modern and globalised world. This dichotomy has penetrated the hearts and minds of tens or hundreds of millions of Muslims, common people without extremist ideas.

## 2.2. Islamism: A brief history in terms of globalization

**The rise and strengthening of Islamism (the late 19<sup>th</sup> century – the 1960s).** The main concepts of Islamism as an ideology were laid down as early as in the nineteenth century in the writings of Islamic thinkers-reformers like Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1839–1897), Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849–1905), and others. As we already noted, Islamism emerged as an attempt to find a counterbalance to Western influence on Muslim societies. In the second half of the nineteenth century the world trade rapidly grew, telegraph and railways were constructed with unprecedented speed in Asia, the colonial empires expanded rapidly, Islamic countries were involved in semi-colonial dependence; in other words, the European globalization turned the fundamental cause of the origin of Islamism.

**The 1920s and 1930s.** This period was an important stage of the development of modern Islamism ‘from below’ as an ideology, as organizational activity, and as structures. Moreover, Islamism created combat groups and organizations. This happened mainly in Egypt and India which fought against dependence on Great Britain (this trend was a harbinger of a new threshold in the development of globalization when the number of independent countries started to grow). In particular, this period was marked by activities of the All-India Muslim League in British India (which was especially active in the territories of modern Pakistan and Bangladesh) and emergence of the ‘Muslim Brotherhood’ in Egypt in 1928 led by Hassan al-Banna. A bit later, by the end of the 1940s, the influence of the ‘Muslim Brotherhood’ spread beyond Egypt – into Jordan, Syria, and Iraq (Osman 2016: 4). Thus, Islamism becomes international in organizational terms. Yet, its significance remained generally small.

**The period between the 1940s and 1960s** was a very important period for the Islamic world. First, some former colonies with Muslim population created a number of new independent states. Among them are Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Indonesia, Syria, and Pakistan, *etc.* Second, the founded State of Israel led a continuous struggle with surrounding Muslim countries (the first war took place in 1948) and this confrontation was the subject of universal concern. Third, almost all new states had a secular regime,<sup>8</sup> the rulers and the ruling elite were generally hostile to the Islamists and persecuted them some way. The national

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leaders of modern Islamism were educated in the West, often lived there for a long time, studied languages, in a word, were familiar with the West.

<sup>7</sup> He called the Soviet Union the ‘small Satan’.

<sup>8</sup> Islamism had the greatest influence in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan.

revolutions contributed to strengthening of secular regimes (including military coups with far-reaching consequences in Egypt (1952), in Iraq (1958 and 1963), in Libya (1969), *etc.*) so that strong leaders came to power who were influential far beyond the Arab world (such as Gamal Nasser). It is no wonder that just in this period, which lasted until the early 1970s, the ideology of Islamism in the Arab world was significantly weakened by the ideology of Arab nationalism and other ideologies (socialism, non-alignment policy, *etc.*).

**The major events of the period from the 1970s to the 2010s.** *The late 1970s was a threshold in the development of Islamism (see below) and this launched what is known today as the Islamic Renaissance, which made a great success in the 1980s and 1990s.* This period was marked by the rise of the Islamist movement in different countries which appeared completely unexpected turn for many analysts and politicians. The Islamic Resurgence was a broad intellectual, cultural, social, and political movement that spread throughout the Islamic world. It was created on the basis of religion and sought to impose strict observation of Islamic customs and rules.<sup>9</sup> One could observe a powerful growth of terrorism in those days. Also this period was marked by the rise in oil prices and the rapidly growing importance of the oil-producing countries of the Middle East.

**The 1990s and 2000s** witnessed another rise of international terrorism under Islamist banner and the infamous 9/11 terror attack. The unification of states in struggle against terrorism became an important trend in the political globalization of the world.

**From the end of 2010,** a number of revolutions and counter-revolutions took place in Arab countries which were called the ‘Arab spring’. This has generally led to the destabilization of the region and the rise of radicalism. The 2000s and 2010s were a period of active interventions by the United States and Western countries in the Middle East. The USA invaded Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003; Libya, Syria and Yemen were destabilized by Saudi Arabia and the West during the ‘Arab spring’. Below we consider some detail of these events.

**Victories of Islamism in the 1970s.** The 1970s turned in many respects a heyday decade for Muslim societies and witnessed the rise of political Islamism and rapid spread of Islamist ideas in many Muslim societies. Among these achievements were: 1. *The rise in oil prices in 1973–1979 and the growing importance of the OPEC, in which Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States began to play a leading role, but it also included states from different regions as well as non-Islamic ones.* The beginning of the rise in oil prices was connected with the October War of 1973. The fact is that for the first time the developing countries succeeded to defeat the economically developed countries (see Korotayev and Grinin 2017; Grinin and Korotayev 2015; see also Goldstone 2016; Harper 2016) affected the Islamist worldview in a very significant way. In addition, there were obtained powerful financial resources for independent from the West development and for the funding of Islamist organizations. The explosive rise in oil prices changed both the relations among Arab countries, having increased the role of oil-producing countries, and the attitude towards the West on the part of some oil-consuming nations. On the other hand, the US intensified policy in the Middle East, as well as disillusionment with the socialist path of development, led to the situation when some states, including Egypt, came under the sway of the United States in those years. All this promoted a considerable strengthening of Is-

<sup>9</sup> However, of course, such a ‘backward’ movement affected only some spheres of life. At the same time, in some respects, the development was accelerated. This, in particular, concerned the growing level of education, including female education. Never have there been so many students in the Middle East.

lamism in Egypt, other Arab and Islamic societies. 2. *The victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 and the originating idea of its export.* Meanwhile, the Iranian revolution contributed to the intensification of the US struggle against Islamism. 3. *The starting rise of the Islamic movement in Afghanistan.* In 1979, the USSR invaded Afghanistan. This caused the rise of Islamic 'patriotism' and respective growing influence of Islamism (see, e.g., Kepel 2004). The Afghan Mujahideen got huge assistance from the USA, as well as Pakistan and other Islamic countries. It eventually brought ominous implications for the United States themselves. After all, 'al-Qaeda' actually grew out of the Afghan war and American aid. The victory over the USSR (and this is how the radicals perceived the withdrawal of the Soviet troops) greatly contributed to the increasing self-esteem among radical Islamists. In addition, the Islamist Taliban state emerged (see above). 4. *The general rise of Islamism in Muslim countries* (see below).

**The 1990s and the rising radicalism.** The 1990s were important for the growth of Islamism for a number of reasons. During this period, the financial, demographic, and political conditions suitable for the growth of Islamism were formed. First, international Islamic terrorism emerged (it was mostly 'al-Qaeda'). Second, there rose Islamic movements in the Balkans (in Bosnia, Albania, and Kosovo). Third, the Islamic communities in Europe rapidly grew as well. Fourth, the expansion of Islamism in the Islamic territories of the former USSR, the rise of Chechen separatism and the temporary victory of the Chechens in the war with Russia would seemingly confirm the possibility of a victory over a superpower, because some still considered Russia a superpower.

Finally, to achieve their goals, the United States actively supported Islamists in Southern Europe, the Balkans, former Yugoslavia, the North Caucasus, and for some time in the territory of the Central Asian states. One of the particular sad results of this is the situation in Kosovo, which, according to some observers, has become a disgusting drug mafia scam under the guise of a state (Escobar 2017).

**The 2000s and 2010s. The role of the United States and the West in the growth of radical Islamism.** Being supported by different actors the terrorist Islamism began to gradually transform into an international phenomenon now threatening any nation. This became particularly evident with the activation of 'al-Qaeda' and an open declaration of war by the United States. Osama bin Laden called for 'washing away the injustice committed against the Muslim nation by a coalition of Jews and Crusaders' (Mirsky 2015: 8). Bin Laden's plan to launch an open attack upon the USA and thereby provoke the USA to invade Islamic countries actually worked out after September 11, 2001. These events shocked not only the American society but the whole world, and eventually led to the American invasion of Afghanistan. In 2003, the USA invaded Iraq and quickly overthrew Saddam Hussein's regime. This whole operation based both on a far-fetched ground and an incorrect analysis of consequences led to destabilization of the Middle East, the results of which are still perceived. The 'Arab spring' and the overthrow of strong regimes were another step in the rise of radical Islamism (about the 'Arab spring' and the role of Islamists, see: Mirsky 2015; Grinin 2012; Grinin and Korotayev 2016; Grinin *et al.* 2016).

Obviously, a strong secular power can act as a deterrent of Islamism. A strong power in the Middle East is still an authoritarian power. Meanwhile, strong secular rulers always displease the USA and its ally, Saudi Arabia. As a result, the overthrow of strong secular leaders in Libya, Egypt, and Yemen as well as the attempt to overthrow the Syrian regime have only contributed to the increasing outburst of Islamism in its most brutal and violent manifestations of the most extremist and radical Islamism, the synonym for which is terrorism.

Thus, *the USA bears a large share of the responsibility for spreading and strengthening of radical Islamism.*

### **3. Causes of Strengthening Islamism**

Why has the Islamic Renaissance become possible?

1. First of all, because it enjoyed a broad support of the population. This support rooted in the peculiarities of Islamic religious life, in particular, its democratic nature, the absence of church hierarchy, the popularity of Islam, and the autonomy of religious institutions from the state.<sup>10</sup>

2. The growth of education in Islamic countries also significantly contributed to the rise of Islamism. There were quite a lot of educated people and still the number of semi-literate or illiterate people was much larger and really considerable. And this is a favorable situation for religious reformation, when a lot of believers cease to simply listen to the sermons of official ministers of the cult, and try to read and interpret the sacred texts independently. At the same time, people open their eyes to the discrepancies between what is written and reality, which leads to a change in their consciousness and behavior. The median level of education, strange as it might seem at first sight, leads to the growth of radicalism and terrorism as one of its manifestations. In pre-revolutionary Russia there was observed a similar situation with education when along with a significant number of highly educated people, many were semi-literate, and a huge number were completely illiterate. However, among the youth the majority had the primary level of education.

3. The rise of Islamism was promoted by the ideological vacuum emerging as a result of the declining Arab nationalism, as well as left-wing (socialist) and liberal (western) ideologies.

4. The oil crisis and the growing wealth of Islamic societies played an instrumental role in the growth of Islamism and Islamic radicalism. In our view, the oil price hike to a large extent promoted the growth of Islamist trends in the Muslim world (see also Huntington 1996: 167). Oddly enough, but this issue is discussed less often than others. The oil price hike had numerous consequences. Firstly, the oil-producing countries considerably lost the intention for Western type of modernization. These countries believed that they could solve all problems since they had money. Secondly, it seemed to be ideologically backing Islamism – it was Allah who could give such grace to the faithful. Thirdly, part of this money went to non-oil-producing countries through different channels, and this shifted the focus from Western countries to the less developed Arab ones. Fourth, a part of the money went to support the struggle against Israel (and against the USSR in Afghanistan), which strengthened radical Islamism and terrorism in particular among the Palestinians and the Afghans. Fifth, the intensification of Islamist tendencies in the 1970s was facilitated by a sharp increase in the flow of labor migrants from Islamic countries to the Arabian oil-rich Islamist monarchies. The economic prosperity combined with the Islamist order made the migrants believe that the establishment of such an order in their home countries would bring the same prosperity. Sixthly, the sharply increasing amounts of financial resources in the hands of Islamist monarchies (mostly in Saudi Arabia) allowed them to

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<sup>10</sup> Radical Islamism relies heavily on bellicosity, the aspiration to make non-Muslims turn to the right faith and calls for jihad *etc.* while in Islam there can be found ideas about peace and coexistence with other religions.

significantly increase funding and strengthen targeted activities to spread Islamism in the world.<sup>11</sup>

5. Historical reasons. Historically, there were formed no powerful states in the Middle East where the population would associate themselves just with a particular state. The conquest of this region by the Arabs, the establishment of Islamic Khalifates, common religion and the Arabic language led to the fact that the Arabs tended to believe that religious life was more valuable than state life since the latter tended to constantly change; while the Muslim community (Ummah) and Islam remain stable. As a result, today in the Middle East, apart from Israel, there are actually three states whose borders are supported by a sense of national identity: Turkey, Iran and Egypt (and yet in the first two countries there is a problem of the Kurdish separatism). For the rest of countries, the spiritual relationship of the population with these states is still weak. It is especially fragile in Libya, Yemen, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. At the same time, pan-Arab and later the pan-Muslim Islamism has easily taken root on the basis of pan-Arab nationalism.

6. Geopolitical factors. The geopolitical situation in the Middle East region was also important: firstly, it was the oil rich region; secondly, it was an arena for wrangling between socialism and capitalism, the USSR and the USA; moreover, it was the proximity of the region to the USSR borders that increased the US desire to dominate. Thirdly, there was the connection with the Arab-Israeli confrontation. At the same time, the USA actively used radical Islamism, nurtured and armed it to achieve its foreign policy goals.

Finally, a very important reason for the growth of radicalism was the interference in the life of Islamic societies, since the overthrow of political regimes contributes to the fast growth of radicalism and terrorism. The interventions in Afghanistan eventually led to the fact that this state became a nest of radicalism and terror (not to mention drug trafficking), and, by the way, it is there that 'al-Qaeda' originated. The intervention in Iraq eventually raised the level of terrorism there to an unprecedented level and the intervention in the affairs of Syria, together with the setback of the Americans from Iraq, opened the doors for the 'Islamic state'. The wave of Islamist terror is also observed in Libya which was deprived of stability. Thus, it becomes obvious that the military intervention only fuels radicalism since with weakening state authority the Islamism, including radical, very quickly organizes the abandoned territories in its own way (Chumakov 2018: 138–142, 152–163).

### **Conclusion. Does the Way Forward Lie in Moderate Islamism?**

The Middle East is quite a challenging and conflict region. One may say that it involves the whole world in its problems, and simultaneously shows its abhorrence of alternative lifestyles, and continues to fight for the preservation and victory of Islam. As we have seen, Islamic societies began to benefit more from globalization in the 1970s and 1990s (see Grinin and Korotayev 2016: Ch. 5). This was especially perceived in the oil-producing countries of the Middle East which in a certain sense completely transformed as a result of the Golden Petrodollar Rain. Their role in the world has also increased dramatically. It is oil that feeds many trends, including Islamism. After all, it has attached importance to the Middle East in the world and in relations with the West, and consequently

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<sup>11</sup> According to some sources, in the 1980s and 1990s Saudi Arabia, through the channels of its charitable foundations, spent about US\$ 70 billion for the construction of mosques controlled by Wahhabi, madrassas, Islamic centers, as well as for support and training of radical militant Islamists in about twenty countries around the world (see Kaplan 2003).

has boosted the confidence of the inhabitants of the region. Thus, over the past few decades the World-System role of the Middle East has significantly increased. However, at present, the Middle East can be considered as semi-periphery countries at best. Nonetheless, its peripheral and semi-peripheral importance for the World-System is precisely the significant source of power for Islamism.

Consequently, it is critically important to make Islamism more moderate and respectable. That is a challenge. It is necessary to create an environment in which Islamism will become more moderate.

Radicalism, in our opinion, is an integral part of a current that is an unpleasant and dangerous but still an all-encompassing process in the development of Islamism. Any doctrine has radical wings. It is important that moderate Islamism does not choose up the side of radicalism. Therefore, the main task is – when speaking of the World-System – to create as little conditions as possible for the growth of radicalism. Thus, it is important to choose allies for the struggle with radicalism. The authoritarian governments can become such allies although temporarily. The attempts to establish democracy in countries with fragile statehood (*e.g.*, in Libya) via military revolution, intervention and overthrow of the government clearly provide the fertile ground for terrorism, similar as the attempts at establishing a socialist republic in countries such as Afghanistan (which were made by the Soviet Union). Another factor supporting the growth of terrorism is the attempt to use such organizations as ‘al-Qaeda’, ‘Jabhat al-Nusra’<sup>12</sup> for geopolitical purposes.

And if one considers that radical Islamism is intolerable, then this order must be restricted at all costs. So the problem is not a choice between authoritarianism and democracy, but between a secular authoritarian regime and radical Islamism. Thus, it is extremely important to understand that radical Islamism can be defeated (weakened) under current conditions only in the Islam field proper, by supporting moderate and law-abiding Islamism and cooperating with it where it is possible.

The events of the ‘Arab spring’, however, have sobered those who aspired to the soonest establishment of democracy in the Arab countries. On the one hand, one should fall a victim to the Western obsession with democracy, on the other hand, we can hardly allow the Middle East democracy ‘to be of no matter or be less important than in other parts of the world’ (Dalacoura 2015: 420). We disagree that the Middle East democracy ‘does not matter’ but emphasize that the path to democracy lies in the first place in the cooperation with moderate Islamism, even if these Islamists can obtain an absolute majority for some time. And if there is a danger that more radical Islamists can come to power then, in our opinion, autocratic regimes are more preferable since it is the lesser of two evils.

Islamism is multi-faceted and covers many spheres of life and in this sense it represents a comprehensive ideology of a totalitarian type (it is absolutely totalitarian with respect to the rigidity of some regulations). That is why Islamism cannot be eradicated at the present stage; but Muslim societies can well grow beyond it (Bayat 2007; 2013; Hossain 2016; Amin 2017; Holdo 2017). Yet, this will take much time. One can agree that Islamism – regardless of how it is defined and which movements, parties and groups are affiliated with it – will remain a political actor at the national, regional, and global levels for more than one generation (Malashenko 2015: 122).

The attempts to completely oust Islamists from the legal political field lead to constant confrontation. It is no coincidence that the experience of the Muslim world, at least since

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<sup>12</sup> The activity of this terrorist organization is outlawed in Russia. – *Editor's Note.*

the early 2000s, demonstrates the failure of extreme secularism in such countries as Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Tunisia, and Turkey. In contrast, Indonesia and Malaysia are positive examples of the contribution that Islam can make in national affairs within a democratic framework, including different religious, cultural, and ethnic identities.

Anyway, one should clearly understand that it is impossible to reduce the dangers of radical and terrorist Islamism only by force. We may hope that its impact will be reduced only being separated from moderate Islamism and make the latter more respectable, open and involved in normal political life.

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