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ISLAMIC RESURGENCE IN THE ARAB WORLD

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At the turn of each century there will arise in my nation a man who will call for a religious revival.

Prophet Muhammad
That an Islamic resurgence has occurred cannot be taken for granted. With the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1978/79, the role of Islam in public affairs attracted much international attention; while there seems to be general agreement that a growth of Islamic feeling has occurred in recent years, some experts on Islam dispute this notion. * These experts argue, with reason, that increased concern about oil supplies and Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OPEC) markets has caused the outside world to note with unprecedented interest the faith of Muslims. In their view, new attentiveness, not new activity among Muslims, marks the surge of Islam. To decide whether an Islamic resurgence does exist, one must begin by defining what it is; only then is it possible to establish whether one has recently occurred and, if so, to inquire into its causes.

DEFINITION OF ISLAMIC RESURGENCE

Islamic resurgence is understood to mean an increase in Islamic activism. Just as the spiritualism and theory of each religion are unique, so does its activism take special forms. How present-day

*For example, note the opening sentence of Mangol Bayat’s article, "Islam in Pahlavi and Post-Pahlavi Iran: A Cultural Revolution?": "The 1978-79 Iranian revolution is too often perceived by the superficial observer, the uninformed media representative as well as the religiously inclined Iranian himself, as symbolizing the rise of Islam and the Muslims against its enemies from within and without."
Muslims act on behalf of their faith differs fundamentally, for example, from what their Christian counterparts do. Christians demonstrate devotion and allegiance by attending services, making donations to the church, engaging in missionary work, and adhering to the ethic of love. In contrast, Muslim activism almost always involves working for the goals of the sharī'a, the sacred law of Islam. The sharī'a, a legal structure without equivalent in Christianity, is therefore the key to understanding Islamic activism.

Islam requires its adherents to follow the regulations of the sharī'a in minute and exact detail. Developed between the seventh and tenth centuries, it is based both on Quranic commandments and on other sources (notably, the sayings and practice of the Prophet Muhammad, reasoning by analogy, and consensus of the Muslim scholars). A devout Muslim makes hardly a move without confronting precepts of the sharī'a; they touch on most of his daily routine, including his eating habits and his familial and social relations. In the public domain, they cover taxation, justice, political authority, and warfare. Ideally, the sharī'a should permeate the mind and actions of a Muslim. Among activist Muslims, it does just this.

The state has a major role in forwarding sharī'a goals. Traditionally, Muslims have viewed their government primarily as a vehicle for implementing the sharī'a; its legitimacy derived from enforcing the ways of Islam. In theory, the ruler must dispense punishments as prescribed in the law books, levy Quranic taxes, and respect the sovereign authority of the legal experts who interpret the sharī'a. He also must protect Muslim subjects against non-Muslims; thus, in certain specific circumstances, Muslim rulers are dutybound to wage war, but they must never make war against fellow Muslims.

These requirements are too demanding; no Muslim community has ever maintained the public provisions of the sharī'a to its own satisfaction. Islamic precepts covering private life are indeed substantially followed, but those covering public life have fared less well. Islam's public goals inspire and beckon, but they have never been fully attained. Much of Muslim political history should be viewed in the light of these unachieved goals.

*Some modern Muslims, such as Mu'ammar al-Qadhābhīf of Libya, have their own ideas about the laws of Islam, which do not correspond to the sharī'a.

† Sufi movements sometimes show less interest in sharī'a activism than do other Muslim movements.

† I use this idea of unachieved goals to explain the Muslims' development of military slavery in my Slave Soldiers and Islam (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981).

Rulers too little concerned with Islamic precepts must either be convinced to change their ways or be thrown out of office. By definition, non-Muslim rulers do not regard the sharī'a as divine precept (even though they may adhere to some of its requirements for convenience' sake), and so they must be replaced by Muslims. This becomes more urgent when they rule Muslim subjects. The efforts of activist Muslims follow from this: either they put pressure on Muslim governments to apply the sharī'a or they struggle against governments (Muslim or not) that refuse to heed it.

Movements in a Muslim-only context are called legalist (applying the law is their immediate concern); those directed against non-Muslims are called autonomist (for them, putting political power in Muslim hands is paramount). Dividing Muslim movements in this manner is somewhat artificial, as they all contain some elements of both legalism and autonomism; yet, the distinction is analytically useful, for in most movements one or the other of these has more importance. Legalism predominates where non-Muslims have no substantial role, autonomism where struggles against non-Muslims are not accompanied by efforts to apply the sharī'a. Legalism attacks non-Islamic customs and attitudes, whether traditional or from the West; autonomism attacks non-Muslim power, whether held by pagan tribes or the British Empire. Often the two elements exist simultaneously, sometimes in fairly equal proportion. For example, both are strong today in the Libyan government of Mu'ammar al-Qadhābhīf, among the Muslim Brethren of Egypt, in the groups that attacked the Great Mosque in Mecca, in Khomeini's revolution, and in Malayan dakwah movements.

Legalism and autonomism embody the permanent imperatives of Islam, inspiring all mainstream activist Muslims (fringe groups go off in unpredictable directions). They impose a starkly dual view of the world on activist Muslims, reducing everything to Islam or its antithesis. Taxes, for example, are divided into those stipulated by the sharī'a and those not (maks); meat between that ritually slaughtered and that not (maya); territory by whether an area is ruled by Muslims (Dār al-Islām) or not (Dār al-Harb); non-Muslims into those under Muslim control (dhimmīs) or not (harbīs). Activists

*It does not attack non-Muslims as such, who are accepted if nonthreatening.

† Sometimes the activist groups go to extremes. Recent examples include Alhaji Muhammad Marwa's group in Kano, al-'Ukāffī wa-l-Hijra in Egypt, and some of the Malaya's dakwah movements. Splitter Sīfī groups have a long history of moving beyond the pale of Islam (Assassins, Druzes, Ālalawītes, Ahl-i Haqq, Bahā'īs).
have simple goals: they battle for Islam and against non-Islam; the more extreme their views, the more simple they make this dichotomy.

During the past two centuries, European superiority in virtually all spheres of human endeavor convinced many Muslims to adopt Western ways. Impressed by the wealth and power of Europe, they hoped that emulating it would bring them some of its strength. Islam, hitherto the Muslims' sole political ideology, now faced a rival that advocated goals often contrary to those of the shari'Ca. Nationalism, with its emphasis on territorial allegiance, and secularism, which reduces religion to faith, pushed the shari'Ca aside in most Muslim countries. Virtually all independent Muslim states kept the Western institutions set up by the colonial regimes, and their leaders, like the colonial administrators before them, in good part, viewed Islamic traditions as not conducive to modernization.

Although Islamic faith never lost its hold, the shari'Ca way of life weakened drastically through 200 years of Westernization. Only a small portion of Muslim political elites held to the shari'Ca; the overwhelming majority wanted to reduce the role of Islam in the public arena. Then, around 1970, shari'Ca goals acquired new force.

**ISLAMIC ACTIVISM IN THE 1970s**

Legalist and autonomist movements did exist before 1970, but with only a fraction of their later force. During the 10 years preceding 1970, not a single major legalist movement arose; autonomist movements were only slightly more prevalent. In 1965 the editor of a book of conference papers about Islam in international politics concluded that "most of the principal speakers maintained that Islam is actually of quite limited significance in shaping the attitudes and behavior of Muslim states in international relations today." Few would agree with this assertion anymore; herein lies the Islamic resurgence. Evidence for it comes from all parts of the Muslim world. 3

**Legalism**

In Senegal, Sheikh Abdoulaye Niassé, a leader of the Tijānīya Sīff order, organized the Islamic party. Claiming 300,000 members, he called for an immediate return to the shari'Ca and a turn away from the West. The government of Mauritania began to apply the shari'Ca in 1975. Also in 1975, 87 Muslim members of Nigeria's Parliament, the Constituent Assembly, withdrew in protest against a ruling by the body against a shari'Ca Court of Appeal at the federal level, provoking a major political incident. Followers of Alhaji Muhammadu Marwa in Kano applied the shari'Ca with zeal; they came to international attention in early 1981 when thousands of them were killed in pitched battles against the army. In Morocco, Islamic sentiments have been growing during recent years. A branch of the Muslim Brethren has been flourishing; its most dramatic act has been the assassination of a socialist leader in 1975. Algeria's National Charter made Islam the religion of state and the basis for some laws in 1976. The Society for the Preservation of the Quran in Tunisia has won great numbers of new members in the years since 1970 and now runs many cultural programs, leads public relations efforts, and puts pressure on the government to conform to the shari'Ca.

Soon after Mu'ammar al-Qadhāfi came to power in Libya on September 1, 1969, he began to replace Italian laws with those of the Quran. For all the attention that cutting the hands off criminals received, very few Islamic laws are actually in effect in Libya; in fact, less celebrated changes in Algeria, the Sudan, and Somalia have been more far-reaching. In Egypt, many shari'Ca-oriented groups have grown significantly during the 1970s, especially the Muslim Brethren. They put pressure on the government to reapply numerous shari'Ca regulations, especially those touching on personal status. In 1970 the Sudanese government of Ja'far al-Numayrī bombed the headquarters of the Ansār, the Muslim party that traces its roots to the Mahdi of the late nineteenth century; some 5,000 to 12,000 Ansār were killed. They and other Muslim groups attempted a coup six years later against Numayrī. In 1977 he acknowledged their strength by signing an agreement of national reconciliation, which led to al-Sīdīq al-Mahdi, the Ansār leader and head of the Umma party, returning to the Sudan. The Muslim Brethren's leader, subsequently appointed attorney general, imposed Islamic regulations wherever possible.

Although Saudi Arabia's rulers pride themselves on their pure and consistent devotion to the shari'Ca, the persons who invaded the Great Mosque at Mecca in November 1979 thought otherwise. Among other demands, they called for full application of the shari'Ca, rejecting the emasculation it had suffered in recent decades. In April 1981 several events marked a sharp swing toward Islam in the United Arab Emirates: a bomb in Dubai's newest luxury hotel was exploded in protest against the lax sale of alcohol; the sexes were ordered completely separated in all UAE schools; and a shari'Ca court in Abu Dhabi ordered full Islamic punishments for two adulterers (death by stoning). Activist Muslims made significant gains in the Kuwaiti elections of February 1981. Jordanian Muslim Brethren used the occasion of a sex scandal in high places to push their viewpoint and gain unprecedented visibility. Muslim Brethren in Syria became the
central opposition to the Ba'th government during the late 1970s, culminating in the near overthrow of the government in the summer of 1980. So badly did they scare the state that mere suspicion of membership in the Muslim Brethren was declared a capital crime.

Despite the near sanctity of Atatürk's secular legacy, the National Salvation party of Turkey prospered from the early 1970s with membership in the Muslim Brethren. Ataturk's secularism. 12 One moment, it had a Westernizing government in the hands of a shah who hoped to use Western techniques to make Iran an industrial and military power. The next moment, a fanatic religious leader replaced him, determined to reimpose the shari'a fully and without delay. Iranians supported Khomeini as a symbol of opposition to the shah, not necessarily because they accepted his views. Yet once Khomeini took control in February 1979, his program met little resistance. The drama of Iran's experience and the thoroughness of Khomeini's program have made Iran the key country for legalism. How things turn out there will deeply affect movements elsewhere; if Iran's Islamic venture fails, contemporary legalist movements around the world will lose their most celebrated model and inspiration.

Through careful maneuvering, the Jama'at-e-Islami in Pakistan has pushed through some of its favorite programs, such as changing the constitution along Islamic lines; declaring the Ahmadsis, a splinter group of Islam, non-Muslim; and making certain offenses punishable according to shari'a regulations. 13 Pakistan is today one of the very few countries, other than Saudi Arabia and Libya, that whips criminals and amputates their hands. It is also at the vanguard of efforts to abolish interest; bank deposits invested in profit-loss-sharing schemes earn no interest but get a portion of the bank's earnings or deficits. The Pakistani state is the first in modern history to require zakah contributions (normally such charitable donations are voluntary) and to collect them. The Council of Islamic Ideology coordinates these activities.

After coming to power in 1978, Maumood Abdul Gayoom gave public life in the Maldives a new Islamic tone. A scholar of Islam who studied in Cairo and taught in Nigeria, he has reversed the secular policies of many decades; for example, he became the first Maldivian head of state in over eight centuries to lead the Islamic prayers. 14

When Ziaur Rahman took over Bangladesh in 1975, he brought an Islamic spirit to the government, and he talked of implementing shari'a regulations. 15 In Malaya, large numbers of dakwah groups are urging Muslims to live by the shari'a. Potentially the most powerful of these groups is the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaya founded in 1971 by Anwar Ibrahim. Legalism in Indonesia has made progress during recent years, and Suharto's government has taken steps to accommodate it (for example, banning gambling in Jakarta). 16 Still, the activists have not begun to challenge the state's determinedly secularist constitution.

Autonionsm

Beginning again in the west, Qadhdhafi's first priority on taking power in Libya in 1969 was to rid his country of its U.S. and British bases; they left a few short months later. Qadhdhafi vehemently opposes any non-Muslim interference with Muslim sovereignty. Under his leadership, Libya has become a powerful international agent of Islamic autonionsm. Muslin Brothers in Egypt have long been fearful of domination by non-Muslims both domestic and foreign. In the late 1970s they advocated laws that prompted fears among the Coptic (Christian) community and resulted, in part, in the deterioration of Muslim-Christian relations. The Muslim Brothers also strongly opposed peace with Israel and U.S. military presence in Egypt. 17

Civil war in Chad began in 1966 when Muslims of the north rebelled against the central government dominated by Christians and animists of the south. This conflict became more complicated in 1972 as Libyan intervention altered the political divisions, blurring the Muslim/non-Muslim conflict. By early 1981, Qadhdhafi, in alliance with one group of Muslims, had achieved some control over the whole country. Idi Amin's policies resulted in a surge of Muslim activities in Uganda. He appointed an increasing number of Muslim officials and Islamic cultural and social activities were enhanced. 18 Ethiopia faces a Muslim rebellion in the Ogaden desert, populated by Somalis who want the region to become part of Somalia. Somalia in turn claims the Ogaden and aids the insurgents fighting the Ethiopian armed forces there.

Saudi Arabia's close ties to the West were attacked by the Mecca besiegers; they and other autonomists reject a key U.S. role in the country's finances and defense. Israel witnessed a rise of Islamic sentiment both among its Arab citizens, those who have remained since 1948, and the Arab population of the West Bank and Gaza. In February 1981 Israeli authorities broke up a group of Israeli Arabs operating within an autonomist Muslim ideology.

Bosnian Muslims in Yugoslavia expressed such interest in the activities represented by Ayatollah Khomeini that President Tito
visited their region and warned of "severe measures" against any efforts to attain Islamic political goals. Albanian Muslims living in the Kosovo Province of Yugoslavia staged violent demonstrations in early April 1981 demanding autonomy and even unity with Albania.

Relations between Turks and Greeks on Cyprus degenerated so badly in the early 1970s that the Turks rebelled and (with help from the Republican of Turkey's army) won their own autonomy in 1974. Similarly, in Lebanon, persistent Christian political superiority contributed to the outbreak of civil war. The National Front, predominantly a Muslim organization, rebelled against the controlling Christians, which led to a bloody civil war during 1975-77 and which is not yet entirely over. Islamic groups in Syria intensified their antiregime activities in 1980, and a civil war almost erupted in Aleppo. One target of the attacks of the Muslim group was Soviet military advisers.

Although autonomist strains in the Iranian revolution are often overlooked, they were as important to Khomeini's ascendancy as legalism. Khomeini contended that the shah had occupied the throne since 1953; he was a U.S. puppet who had in effect placed Iran under non-Muslim rule. Thus, Khomeini declared the shah to be a traitor to Islam, a claim that had an important effect in galvanizing support for the revolution.

Reports about Muslim dissent in the Soviet Union are fragmentary and inconclusive, but one finds indications of ferment even there. The 45 million Muslims under Soviet rule are the only large Islamic population still part of a European state; eventually they will awaken to this fact. Reports about Islam's role in Iran have gotten through, and, more important, hearing about Soviets killing Muslims in Afghanistan spurred autonomist feelings.

Fighting in Afghanistan began as legalism in a struggle among Afghans over the nature of their government. Since the Soviet intervention in December 1979, the conflict has increasingly pitted Muslim autonomists against Soviets. Nearly all the Mujahidin groupings have Islamic names. Since the war of 1971/72, Pakistan's dealings with India have taken on a more Muslim tone. Within India, the Muslim minority has grown more assertive and united; especially since 1979 a string of riots has demonstrated the minority's unwillingness to accede to Hindu interference. Most dramatically, in Kashmir, a region claimed by both Pakistan and India, local Muslims in mid-1980 for the first time publicly expressed their solidarity with Pakistan.

Burma has an embryonic Muslim autonomist organization in the Rohingya Patriotic Front, disaffected Muslims pushed out of their homeland. Thailand's Muslim minority in the far south has organized several rebel groups, most notably the Pattani United Liberation Organization, which has been fighting the Buddhist-run central government since 1975. Likewise, Muslim groups on southern islands of the Philippines, led by the Moro National Liberation Front, began struggling in 1972 for autonomy, possibly independence. Although the Moros have won wide international Muslim support, they have extracted few concessions from the government of Ferdinand Marcos.

In Malaya, relations between the Muslim Malays and the non-Muslims (mostly of Chinese origin, but including also Hindu Indians and pagan tribesmen) have been tense since the communal rioting on May 4, 1969. In the subsequent decade many Muslim groups intent on attaining unilateral Muslim control arose, but until now the United Malay National Organization has continued to share political power with Chinese and Indian parties.

Islamic feeling has also increased in countries far removed from Islamic strongholds. Extreme legalism has developed among many of the Turks living in West Germany (who for years have numbered more than a million persons). German authorities are concerned about violence among them; already one Turkish leftist, a teacher, has been murdered. A community of Muslim converts is growing quickly in South Korea, as evidenced by the building of mosques and the Korean Islamic College. In the United States, an extremely varied Muslim population (made up predominantly of blacks and South Asians) has organized itself politically in recent years.

CAUSES OF THE RESURGENCE

What has influenced Muslims to turn increasingly to Islam as a political bond and a social ideal? Despite innumerable newspaper articles on this topic and a fair amount of scholarly interest, few analyses have encompassed the whole Islamic resurgence; most look only at individual countries. Valuable as these are, they do little to explain currents found in the entire Muslim world. Just as the causes of such international developments as terrorism or inflation cannot be located without an encompassing view of politics and economics, an explanation of the international Islamic resurgence requires a broad perspective. It is not enough to look for common elements in disparate countries and combine them into a pattern. If any single explanation can deal with the growth of Muslim feelings during the 1970s in such varied countries as Nigeria, Libya, and the Philippines, it must touch on the Muslim world as a whole. The Islamic resurgence is more than the sum of events in individual countries. What are the larger currents of change that affect these countries collectively?

The most widely credited explanation emphasizes the failure of Western ideology. R. Hrair Dekmejian argues this persuasively in
"The Anatomy of Islamic Revival." Muslims abandoned Islamic political customs and goals during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when the West enjoyed predominant power. More recently, however, not only has the West lost much of its old power, but Western ways have failed to provide Muslims with the fundamental needs of public life: political stability, social and economic justice, and military success.

By the late 1960s due to the confluence of these catalytic factors a multi-dimensional crisis situation was engulfing the Arab and Islamic countries, which continue to dominate their social and political life today. To confront the crisis situation, elites and counter-elites have proposed and often implemented a variety of approaches ranging from communist totalitarianism, to socialist-statist, mixed capitalist and theocratic systems. Thus, the Islamic alternative and its variants constitute but one of these approaches to crisis management.

In their search for solutions, leaders in Muslim countries have tried a wide variety of alternatives; Islam is just one of these—yet one with growing appeal. It offers clear and confident answers to the problems Muslims face most acutely. Thus, "to an increasing number of alienated Muslims, Islam does appear to provide a practical political alternative as well as a secure spiritual niche and psychological anchor in a turbulent world." When Dekmejian’s argument has evident truth, it does not explain why Muslims have turned to Islam at this time. Have Western ideologies failed them worse than previously? Such an argument appears untenable: many Muslims are experiencing a surge of political power and wealth without precedent in modern history. While some countries experienced severe strains in the 1970s (for example, Somalia, Lebanon, Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan), others have settled down after years of tumult (for example, Nigeria, the Sudan, Syria, Iraq, and Indonesia). Systematic compilations of political and social unrest show no notable increase in disruption after 1970.

Perhaps, then, the passage of time has aggravated matters? Colonial rule in most Muslim countries ended between the end of World War II and 1961. Independent now for some decades, perhaps they have grown more impatient with the shortcomings of Western ideologies? But Muslim encounters with colonialism have no chronological pattern; some never fell under European rule (for example, Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan), while others remain ruled by non-Muslims (especially in the Soviet Union). These variations are simply too wide to find a rhythm.

Some tie the Islamic resurgence to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the most visible Muslim autonomist cause of the past generation. Raphael Israeli argues that the soul-searching that followed the collapse of Arab armies in the June 1967 war and the subsequent attempt to Islamize the conflict by bringing in other Muslim countries (especially Turkey and Iran) gave impetus to "a renascent sense of an international Islamic identity." A fire at the al-Aqsa mosque in August 1989 furthered this sense and led to the convening of the Islamic Conference a month later; this organization gave Islam an international voice. Then Muslim confidence, already gaining, soared in late 1973; Arab military success in crossing the Suez Canal, the sudden quadrupling of oil sale revenues, and the oil embargo combined to give the Muslims a sense of power without precedent in modern times. This is the point to emphasize: the many ramifications of the OPEC boom that began in late 1970 and that steadily continues.

SAUDI ARABIAN AND LIBYAN ACTIVITIES

Increases in the price of oil affect everyone, but virtually only Muslims profit from them. True, smaller oil booms are taking place in Aberdeen, Alberta, and Alaska. True, most Muslims pay high prices for their oil. Muslims, however, virtually monopolize the export of oil. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries has 13 members, all but 2 of which (Venezuela and Ecuador) are ruled by Muslims. Eight are Muslim states of North Africa (Algeria and Libya) and the Persian Gulf (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, and Iran); Indonesia has a 90 percent Muslim population; Nigeria, about half Muslim, had a Muslim president in 1980; and thoughGabon’s Muslim population is minuscule, its president converted to Islam in 1973. In addition, numerous other Muslim states (Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Oman, Bahrain, Malay, and Brunei) gain significantly from oil exports.

The boom in oil exports has, more than anything else, caused the recent Islamic resurgence. The controlling of oil has brought new wealth and power, greatly enhancing the Muslim self-image. For so long, Muslims were poor and weak; today, a highly visible portion of the Muslim world enjoys an unprecedented affluence and influence. Further, these massive infusions of oil wealth have deeply disrupted normal life, causing Muslims to turn to the familiar—Islam. These general developments have been discussed elsewhere.*

*Principally in "This World is Political!: The Islamic Revival of the Seventies," Orbis 24 (1980): 17-39. Briefly, the OPEC boom only...
discussion focuses on one dimension of the oil boom: how two countries, Saudi Arabia and Libya, help Islamic causes in the Arab states.

These two countries each have a long heritage of Islamic political action. The Wahhābi movement of Arabia began in 1745; the Sanūṣi movement reached Libya in 1841. Both contained powerful liberal and autonomist elements; indeed, the Wahhābis were probably the most fanatic and influential liberalists in the history of Islam. Although these movements lost their fervor with time, Arabians and Libyans are long used to exerting an influence on foreign Muslims disproportionate to their small numbers and simple cultures. Wahhābis expanded from their small area in Najd to control the huge area of present-day Saudi Arabia; they have tried to push their vision of Islam on all other areas of the Arabian Peninsula and in the past even reached militarily into the Fertile Crescent. Sanūsīs did not view Libya as their only home and made efforts to expand to its south and west. Although Qadhdhāfi overthrew the Sanūsīs in 1969, Libya still strongly bears the impress of their influence.

Saudi Arabia and Libya have complex relations. Their foreign policies, which operate in Arab, Islamic, and international spheres, occasionally coincide, but usually they conflict. In intra-Arab politics, the two countries invariably disagree; while the Saudis seek Arab tranquility as the best guarantee of their own stability, Qadhdhāfi prods and disrupts, not fearful for his regime but aggressively taking the fight elsewhere.

On the international level, they are also at odds. The Saudi government has been aligned for decades with the United States; it claims communism is antithetical to Islam and views the United States as its best defense. Despite his own reservations about communists, Qadhdhāfi has received nearly unbounded political and military support from them; by 1975 Libya was cooperating closely with the Soviet Union. Both of these countries are important in the current plans of the superpowers. Saudi Arabia exports several times more oil than any other country, it has immense reserves, and it straddles several of the world's most vital regions. Libya too has a key location, near Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, with ports on the Mediterranean; the Soviet Union will probably depend heavily on it for logistic support in conflicts in any of these areas.

The two countries also approach Islamic causes differently, yet here they often work in tandem. Temperamental and ideological differences remain, but their goals are compatible: both fervently support liberal and autonomist movements. The Saudis usually aid governments and apply pressure on them to favor Islam; Qadhdhāfi generally supports Islamic groups in the opposition. Between the Saudi anvil and the Libyan hammer, many Muslim communities have moved perceptibly toward Islam.

Virtually every Arab state has been the object of intensive Saudi or Libyan interest. The following surveys their activities, from west to east, in member countries of the Arab League.

Mauritania's turn toward Islamic law began with the fall of Mochtar Ould Daddah. Explaining that "the defense of Saudi Arabia begins at the shores of the Atlantic," the Saudi leadership had supported his military efforts in the Western Sahara, where Mauritania and Morocco were battling Algeria. The Saudis were also involved in numerous nonmilitary projects in Mauritania. But early in 1978 Saudi suspicions about the use of their funds led them to reduce their aid; by June of that year, Ould Daddah, fearful of the growing discontent among his military officers who were owed back pay, was desperately awaiting its full resumption. The money did finally arrive in the middle of July, but too late; Ould Daddah had been overthrown on the tenth.

During the final month of his rule, Ould Daddah made the shari'ah the basis of Mauritanian law and declared that the country would soon become an Islamic republic. These were final, desperate attempts to extract money from his two major donors, Saudi Arabia and Libya. A leading Mauritanian official visited Tripoli the day these measures were announced. The Saudi press announced these Mauritanian intentions with favorable comment. Subsequent Mauritanian rulers carried these intentions through, still hoping they would win Saudi and Libyan funds. Shari'ah courts of the Mālikī rite were established in May 1980, and Islamic punishments of death and the cutting off of thieves' hands soon followed.

Socialist secularism weakened in Algeria after 1974. Islamic symbols came to the forefront: Friday replaced Sunday as the day of rest, and the campaign to replace French signs with Arabic ones became government policy. Libyan influence was reported to be a factor behind these changes. Tunisian Muslim Brethren (properly, the Movement for the Renewal of Islam) are thought to receive funds...
from both Saudi Arabia and Libya; according to another report, however, they anathematize Qadhāhīfī, calling him an "atheist, a miscreant, an agent of communism, a traitor to the Prophet." 

In the first four years after he came to power, Qadhāhīfī did his best to cooperate with Egypt, hoping eventually to unify the two countries. A high point of Libyan involvement came in June 1973 when Qadhāhīfī made a remarkable 18-day visit to Egypt advocating a "cultural revolution" along lines announced just two months earlier for Libya. Fundamental to it was a new legal code based on the Quran. Qadhāhīfī's relations with Anwar al-Sadat, always shaky, broke down after the October 1973 war, when Sadat negotiated with Israel to disengage Egyptian and Israeli forces in Sinai. As their relations further degenerated, Qadhāhīfī used every means available to strike at Sadat's regime; in particular, he worked through extremist Muslim groups in Egypt.

He first called for revolution in Egypt in December 1973 and first attempted a coup there in April 1974. Libyan funds for the Islamic Liberation party, Muhammad's Youth, the Army of God, the Society for Holy War, and other groups soon flowed in. In 1977178, fundamentalist Muslim groups in Egypt had been outlawed by Ḥamdī al-Maḥdī of the Khatmiya) grouped together in 1972. In the first four years after he came to power, Qadhāhīfī had his best to cooperate with Egypt, hoping eventually to unify the two countries. A high point of Libyan involvement came in June 1973 when Qadhāhīfī made a remarkable 18-day visit to Egypt advocating a "cultural revolution" along lines announced just two months earlier for Libya. Fundamental to it was a new legal code based on the Quran. Qadhāhīfī's relations with Anwar al-Sadat, always shaky, broke down after the October 1973 war, when Sadat negotiated with Israel to disengage Egyptian and Israeli forces in Sinai. As their relations further degenerated, Qadhāhīfī used every means available to strike at Sadat's regime; in particular, he worked through extremist Muslim groups in Egypt.

He first called for revolution in Egypt in December 1973 and first attempted a coup there in April 1974. Libyan funds for the Islamic Liberation party, Muhammad's Youth, the Army of God, the Society for Holy War, and other groups soon flowed in. In 1977178, fundamentalist Muslim groups in Egypt had been outlawed by Ḥamdī al-Maḥdī of the Khatmiya. In 1972, Ḥamdī al-Maḥdī of the Khatmiya groups together in 1972 to form the National Front, they had Saudi Arabia's encouragement, perhaps also its funds. Qadhāhīfī's aid soon followed; before long, most of the National Front was based in Libya. These groups made a dramatic attempt at a coup d'état on July 2, 1976, and came close to succeeding. Qadhāhīfī's backing was revealed by a Libyan military plane circling the skies above Khartoum, carrying the coup's leaders, who tried—without success—to direct their forces on the ground. So many participants in the coup had received training in Libya and carried Libyan arms that Numayrī called it "the Libyan invasion." 

This event apparently convinced both Numayrī and the National Front leaders that they should end their antagonism; with active Saudi encouragement, they signed their agreement of National Reconciliation in July 1977. For Numayrī to allow the National Front leaders a role in his government was so striking a change in policy that many observers thought he was motivated, at least in part, by a desire to please the Saudis. If Saudi leaders brought old enemies together, Qadhāhīfī encouraged them to stay apart. While Mahdi returned to the Sudan in September 1977, Hindi remained in Libya, causing a split in the National Front. Relations between Libya and the Sudan subsequently warmed to the point that Qadhāhīfī agreed in September 1978 to close all remaining National Front camps in his country. But then Numayrī supported Sadat's peace initiative toward Israel, angering Qadhāhīfī and delaying implementation of this agreement until May 1979. Two years later the problems continue, and Numayrī still fears an activist Islamic rebellion sponsored by the Libyans.

National Front activities, which have dominated Sudanese politics since 1976, have been manipulated by both Saudi Arabia and Libya. Perhaps more than anywhere else, domestic politics in the Sudan have been determined by these two countries. It is noteworthy that the Saudis aided both the government and its strongest Islamic opposition during most of the 1970s, assuring them a powerful voice in Sudanese affairs. (They have wielded a similar dual influence in other Arab states, too, notably Egypt, Jordan, and Syria.) As Somalia and Ethiopia shifted great-power alignments, Saudi Arabia hastened to welcome Somalis back into the fold of Islam-oriented, anti-Soviet states. In return for Saudi munificence, cushioning the Soviet cutoff, President Siyad Barre deemphasized Marxist socialism and made gestures in favor of Islam. "If you read the Quran properly and believe in it, then you have to be socialist," he has said. Although it has not activated sharī'ah regulations, the government treats things Islamic with new respect (in contrast to 1975 when 10 religious leaders were executed by firing squad). Somali efforts to take over the Ogaden also won Saudi support.

In Saudi Arabia itself, the single activist Islamic movement against the government apparently had Libyan backing. The two Libyans who took part in the Mecca mosque attack in November 1979 had connections to Qadhāhīfī's regime; much of the financing and gun-running for that escape was reportedly arranged by Libya. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is primarily a secular organization with leftist overtones, but its struggle against Israel embraces a basic component of the Muslim struggle against non-Muslim rule. Qadhāhīfī's strong antagonism toward Israel inspires him to support the most intransigent groups of the PLO. Palestinian radicalism distresses the Saudis, but they grant the PLO large sums in
order to be left in peace. After 1967 most of the states bordering on Israel began to receive huge grants from the Arab oil producers, including Libya and Saudi Arabia.

Both countries aided the National Front in the Lebanese civil war between 1975 and 1977. Like the PLO, the National Front has no Islamic goals in its program, but in effect it fought for Muslim interests in Lebanon. Again Qadhafi supported the group enthusiastically because of its radicalism; the Saudis did so despite this. Qadhafi urged it to fight till victory; the Saudis arranged a peace settlement, which reduced the fighting.

Saudi aid to the Muslim Brethren of Syria helped propel them into a position from which they could threaten the regime of Hafiz al-Asad. Although the Saudis provide his government with about $1 billion each year, they oppose many of his policies, especially his reliance on the Soviet Union. Funds to activist Muslims arrive through various means: the Muslim Brethren in Jordan (contributing to the tensions between Syria and Jordan, almost leading to war between the two countries in November 1980), Saudi-sponsored Islamic institutions (for example, the Muslim World League), and the Saudi ambassador in Beirut. This last in intriguing: the Organization of Islamic Officers was founded among members of the Syrian military serving in Lebanon who were displeased with their government’s reliance on the Soviet Union; besides money, they apparently also receive false identity papers from the Saudi embassy. These they pass on to the Muslim Brethren within Syria.

Perhaps foolishly, the Syrians antagonized Saudi leaders when the state-controlled press argued that the film Death of a Princess was much less anti-Islam than the Saudis claimed.47 Saudi Arabia withdrew its ambassador from Damascus in protest and presumably increased its aid to the Muslim dissidents.

CONCLUSION

These Saudi and Libyan activities in Arab countries constitute only a small portion of the means by which the two countries exert international influence. Their pressure on the West with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict has been widely noted, but their efforts on behalf of Islam go largely unremarked. Both countries have established extensive patronage networks that reach around the world and touch on many matters unrelated to Israel. Because Islam lies outside the usual concerns of journalists, political analysts, and government officials, these networks attract little attention—even now when one hears so much about Islam.

Just as the United States and the Soviet Union extend their influence through financial, cultural, and military means, so, too, do these Middle Eastern countries. Both great powers espouse a distinct world view (liberal capitalism, Marxist socialism); so, too, these states promote Islam. In country after country, they exert influence by adding their weight to activist Muslim movements. Though often working at cross-purposes, their effect is usually complementary.

Impressive as it appears today, however, Saudi and Libyan power is ephemeral. Neither country has a viable industrial base or the means to generate incomes internally; both depend entirely on wealth received from abroad. So long as the price and consumption of oil remain high, they will continue to enjoy wealth and power; but when energy needs change, the oil-based wealth that fuels so much of the Islamic resurgence will decline. Current waves of Islamic activism will die along with the OPEC boom. More than any other single factor, the oil market will determine how long the Islamic resurgence lasts.

NOTES


