ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS IN MOROCCO AND THEIR TYPOLOGY

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Abstract

The Islamist movements are far from homogenous. Pluralistic by nature, Moroccan Islamism can be divided into two groups: The Party of Justice and Development (Hizbo al- adala wa- Tanmia, PJD) under the direction of Abdelilah Benkiran, and Justice and Charity (al- adl wal- Ihsan, JC) led by Mohamed Abbadi. All groups and organizations that constituted Islamist movements have different and diverse objectives. While the non-political groups have no concrete political objectives, they have a number of goals closely linked to the religious and moralistic dimension of Islam. On the other hand, the Islamist political movements, which are the subject of this study, target the restructuring of state- society relations in the image of Islam's early golden years; others raised issues of equity and justice in open public discourse. The study traces back the birth and the growth of Islamist movements, mainly apolitical Salafists and militants, whereas the Islamist political movements that grow from a group to a party have evolved drastically and differently.

Keywords: Islam-oriented movements, ideology, political Islam, Salafi movement, Typology

Historically, Islam has always served as a vehicle for the expression of socio-political and economic dissent, particularly in times of crises. According to Ibahrine (2007), due to their agenda regarding state and society, Islam-oriented movements and/or Islamist movements have increasingly become assertive. In the context of the weakness of institutionalized politics, these movements have now turned to be the leading political opposition force or to play the role of governance in the case of PJD in Morocco, Nahda (Renaissance) in Tunisia and Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

Amaghar (2007) states, about three decades ago, that political Islam in the Maghreb was exclusively about Algerian and Tunisian variants. However, it seemed unlikely that Islamism could emerge in Morocco. He

also argues that Moroccan observers and political figures alike were firmly convinced that the king's political function – the commander of believers – stood as a shield to protect the country from this ideology. However, all that changed at the beginning of 1990s when Islamism burst upon the Moroccan political scene.

Morocco has a history of Sunni movements dating back to the end of the eighteenth century (Darif, 1988: 250). The Salafis were followers of a late eighteen century reform movement associated with Mohammed Ibn Abdel Wahhab. During the twentieth century, the presence of the Salafi strand in the nationalist movement and the struggle for independence marked the orientation of the movement. This current was identified with the Salafi thinkers, such as Taki Dine Al Hilali and Allal Al-fassi. The Salafi movement advocated the return to the basic sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunna. It stressed the religious identity of the national community and emphasized the need to sustain its authenticity understood as the Islamic religion.

The term 'Sunni' or 'Salafi' is widely used in Morocco to refer to those Moroccans who are "puritans" and claim they merely follow the practice and theology of prophet Mohammed's followers in the early time of Islam (Munson, 1993: 154). The Sunni movement (Al- Faqih Al- Zamzami and Mohamed Fezzazi in Tangiers and Mohammed Maghrawi in Marrakesh) is not organized in political groups.

One obvious aim of the Sunni is to increase the educational and moral levels of Moroccan people and to renew their understanding of Islamic spiritual activities. They are concerned in implementing Shari’a (Islamic Law) in a range of ritual and personal behavioral practices linked to worship and everyday behavior.

Another facet of the Salafi landscape in Morocco is the small but militant groups (Ibahrine, 2007: 113). The beginning of these new offshoots from Sunni groups dates back to about 1990s when veteran Mujahidins in Afghanistan returned and began forming small-size groups. Most of the small militant groups have been active mainly in poor sections of large urban centers, such as Casablanca, Fes, Sale and Tangiers where the famous preachers of the Salafi tendency were based (Ibahrine, 2007: 114). Asserting that Islam is not just a set of beliefs and ritual actions but a comprehensive ideology embracing public as well as personal life, they call for the implementation of Shari’a in all walks of life (Darif, 1992). They preached strict adherence to the founding principles of Islam. Among the key ideological concepts that place these groups in a different category than Islamist political movements, for instance, are the concepts of "Al- Jahiliya" and "Jihad". Muslims are called upon to pursue Jihad against rulers deemed to be apostate.

The previous discussion has just traced back the birth and the growth of Islamist movements, mainly apolitical Salafists and militants whereas the Islamist political movements that grow from a group to a party have evolved drastically as follows. According to Zeghal (2004), the Islamist movements are far from homogenous. Pluralistic by nature, Moroccan Islamism can be divided into two groups: The Party of Justice and Development (Hizbo al-adala wa- Tanmia, PJD) under the direction of Abdelilah Benkiran, and Justice and Charity (al- adl wal- Ihsan, JC) led by Mohamed Abbadi (Amaghar, 2007)1.

In 1969, Abdel Karim Mouti founded, with his associate, Ibrahim Kamal the Jamaat Ashabiba Al- Islamiya Al- Maghribia (hereafter, Shabiba), the Moroccan Islamic Youth Association in Casablanca (Munson, 1986). While operating clandestinely, Shabiba and its leader Mouti concentrated on recruiting followers, on structuring the organizational base and on socializing and educating members (Darif, 1992). Influenced by Sayyid Qutb, Mouti adopted many of the phrases, symbols and slogans of Qutb's political terminology (Darif, 1992: 228). The Qutbian discourse appealed to many high school and university students and to educated segments of the Moroccan society (Belal, 2012: 114). In 1972, Mouti obtained a legal status for Shabiba, as a religious and educational association. He emphasized that his organization was apolitical and thus using non-violent means to spread Islamic moral values among Moroccans (Belal, 2012; Darif, 1992). Later on, Shabiba declared in a manifesto that one of its most urgent goals was confronting Moroccan Marxism (Darif, 1992: 226). Because of the confrontation of the régime with the leftist in general and its Neo- Marxist elements in particular, the régime supported and approved the organization in the aim of counter balancing the forceful political influence and political relevance of doctrinaire Neo Marxism (Ibahrine, 2007; Tozy, 1999).

As the organization grew rapidly, the régime attempted first to contain and co-opt the leadership of the organization and second to defame the organization and liquidate it if it refused the régime's offers. In 1975, after the murder of Omar Ben Jelloun, the regime announced that a group of people belonging to Shabbiba were arrested for this murder. This incident was used to justify the régime's harsh measures against Sabbiba (Darif, 1992). Mouti left the country and was forced to lead the organization from abroad. In Belgium, he published Al Mujahid, a paper in which he increased his militancy and confrontational attitudes towards the regime by severely criticizing the monarchy and its policies. In the early 1980s, many senior members and activists formally withdrew or froze their membership (Shahin,

1 Abdeslam Yassine was the founder and the spiritual leader of the Jamaa till his death in 2013. Now the Jamaa is led by Mohamed Abbadi.

1997: 188). A small number of young members such as BenKirane, Baha, Yatim and Othmani became interested in the formation of a political organization or a party (Belal, 2012: 118). In 1983, they announced the formation of Al- Jama'a al- Islamiya (the Islamic community) and sought official recognition for their organization.

While seeking formal legalization, Al- Jama'a was urged to change its name and drop any reference to Islam. In 1992, it became Harakat AL- Islah wat- Tajdid (Movement of Reform and Renewal, or MRR). The rationale behind changing the old name is four fold. First, the movement intended to avoid misperceptions of the monopoly of Islam. Second, it reasserts that the organization is one Islamic movement among many. Third, the movement seeks to confirm the movement's readiness to cooperate with other political and social organizations. Finally, it wants to highlight the main focus of the movement activities, which is to reform the conditions of the Muslims by renewing their understanding of Islam (Belal, 2012: 119; Darif, 1992: 276; Shahin, 1997: 190).

Nonetheless, much attention was focused on political participation. The movement of Al-Islah wat-Tajdid articulated the demands of its constituency and ensured the political participation. In 1992, the leaders of the movement announced the creation of a new political party "Hizb At-Tajdid Al- Watani" (National Renewal Party, NRP) and applied for official recognition (Darif, 1999: 172). Although the group asserted that it did not monopolize Islam, nor did it claim to be its sole representative, the régime immediately refused to legalize the party (Ibahrine, 2007).

After failing to gain legal recognition, the party leaders were forced to seek fielding candidates in elections under the banner of officially recognized political parties. At the beginning, the MRR looked for a conservative party. After the failure of an attempt to infiltrate the Istiqlal party in 1993, it opted for a small and little-known political party, "Al-Haraka Shaabia Doustouriya Dimoqratiya" (the Constitutional and Democratic Popular Movement CDPM) of Abdelkarim Al- khatib. Thanks to this latter, the Islamists gained access to political field and formal politics (Willis, 2004).

Harakat at- Tawhid wat- Tajdid (Movement of Unity and Renewal, MUR) was the product of the realignment and the unification of MRR and Rabitat al- Mustaqbal al- Islami (the League of the Islamic Future) of Ahmed Raissouni. The movement adopted the new name MUR; it also built up a sophisticated organization run by a leadership apparatus in charge of overall strategy as well as a ten-member Majlis Ashoura (consultation committee) (Darif, 1992; Ibahrine, 2007).

The unification with the Rabitat al- Mustaqbal al Islamihas played an important role in helping the party (CDPM) gain widespread support among

young Islam-oriented educated Moroccans. In October 1998, the Constitutional Democratic Popular Movement became formally Al- Adala Wat- Tanmiya Party (Party of Justice and Development, PJD). As the president of the party, Al- Khatib, explained that the change of the party's name in terms of a new orientation rather than in terms of a new focuses on new issues of justice and development (Willis, 2004).

All groups and organizations that constituted Islamist movements have different and diverse objectives. While the non- political groups have no concrete political objectives, they have a number of goals closely linked to the religious and moralistic dimension of Islam. On the other hand, the Islamist political movements, which are the subject of this study, target the restructuring of state- society relations in the image of Islam's early golden years; others raised issues of equity and justice in open public discourse.

This historical overview helps use locate the subject under study and trace back its itinerary from an organization through a movement then to a party. Therefore, PJD, as an Islamist party, has gone through a metamorphosis to reach such a status. However, members of the party reject being labeled Islamists; they prefer instead to be called Islam-oriented movements.

The interaction of religion and politics in the contemporary period has been associated with the rise of Islamist movements in the Arab world since 1970s. During that period, Islamist politics came to be characterized by a diversity of actors, modes of action and objectives.

Islamist movements seek to reconstitute identities, institutional structures, ways of life, and the moral code of society through participating, influencing, or controlling cultural, educational and economic spheres (Yuvuz, 2003: 23). The rise of Islamist movements signaled the return of Islam as a rallying cry for socioeconomic opposition to the central authority. Those movements felt not only their economic welfare but also their traditional institutions and values under threat (Burgat, 2003). The movements are diverse in their activism because they can either be directed against the state or demand state power (Offe, 1985). In addition, they can shift from targeting the state to targeting society and everyday life or social codes (Cohen, 1985; Melucci, 1996; Touraine, 1981).

Nonetheless, Islamist movements did not deny engagement with the state, a denial that is built in the definition of "new social movements" by Alberto Melucci (1998) and others. In other words, Islamist mobilization was characterized by a contingent on everyday life before becoming ready to deal with the state (Tugal, 2006). According to social sciences, an Islamist movement is a social institution that has its own role and mobilization tools. These latter determine its goals, its political and/or ideological roots (Okacha, 2008: 8). Islamic political movements articulate complex social

and economic issues and concerns. They rely on religious circles, an institutional network where its repository of Islamic symbols frame social and political issues, to disseminate its ideas and articulate a new set of blue prints for the reconstruction of state and society, individual faith, and community (Yuvuz, 2003: 35). Hence, several Islamist movements' typologies have been cited in the literature; yet, we mention some that serve the research goals.

According to Salwa Ismail (2003), Islamist actors can be classified, largely, into militants, conservatives and moderates. Each of these groupings tends to be characterized by particular social origins and modes of action. Broadly speaking, militants originate from lower-middle-class background. They have social and economic concerns at the heart of their agenda and have used violence as a means of action. Conservatives and moderates belong to middle classes with professionals as their main supporters. Whereas conservatives focus on morality issues and seek the Islamization of society and state institutions but not a take-over of political power, moderates attempt to work within the institutional channels of participation (Ibahrine, 2007).

In regard to Islamist movements with political inspiration, other scholars (Darif, 1992 and Entelis, 2002) distinguish between three different categories of contemporary Islamist movements: the radicals, the reformists and syntheticals. These three broadly defined types have different understandings of political and religious changes in the Moroccan context as well as different strategies to pursue their goals. This typology is based on a typology developed by Entelis (2005) and a typology elaborated by Darif (1992).

Radicals: They are those who adopted the term of Al- Jahiliya[2]. They argue that both the state and society have become un-Islamic. To re-Islamize the state and society, they use political violence and political assassination understood as Jihad. They do not tolerate "gradualism"[3]. They operate most of the time underground and are organized clandestinely into cells and networks (Ibahrine, 2007). Salafiya Al- Jihadiya serves as the paradigmatic example in Morocco.

Syntheticals: they reject the official interpretation and practices of Islam. Theoretically, they accept the democratic principles but refuse the participation in all aspects of the Moroccan society, except institutionalized

[2]. Historically, the age of pre-Islamic 'ignorance' associated with polytheism. It shows the lack of guidance of the community prior to the revelation of the Koran. For modern Islamist movements, the term can also refer to the situation of unbelief and corruption that characterized contemporary societies worldwide. (Volpi, 2011)

[3]. It is the policy of seeking to change something or achieve a goal gradually rather than quickly or violently, especially in politics. From the Free Dictionary by Farlex

politics. Political change is not their ultimate target. They believe that political change must be the outcome of a "bottom-up" strategy of acculturation, socialization and education (ibid). In addition, strict religious education is at the center of their educational program.

Reformists: Educationally well-equipped, they want to transfer power by democratic procedures, including political organization, mobilization and participation. They totally reject violence as a means for bringing political and religious transformation. Unlike radicals, they refuse to work underground. Al- adala Wat- Tanmiya party or PJD (previously Al- Jama'a Al- Islamiya, the Islamist group) and Harakat Al- Islah wat- Tajdid Al-Maghribiya, the Moroccan Movement of Reform and Renewal, Harakat Al-Badil Al- Hadari (the Movement of Civilizational alternative), and Harakat Min Ajli Al Umma (the Movement for Nation), may serve as an equally illustrative type.

However, there are some Islam-oriented groups, which remain politically marginal in Morocco (Ibahrine, 2007: 111). These groups evade political dimension in their expression and their activities, and thus, advocate no political agenda. Their religious activities focus utterly on Da'wa. They accept the existing religious establishment and do not question the religious legitimacy of the monarchy; nor do they defy the official religious institutions. Jama'a at-Tabligh wad- Da'wa is the typical representation of non political Islamist movements.

Okacha (2008) differentiates between two types of typologies. The first takes into account the movement's goals. In this respect, there are movements that seek Da'wa (proselytizing) such as (Da'wa wat- Tabligh), and others who target politics like PJD and Al'Adl wa- al Ihsan. Within this typology, Okacha distinguishes between three different categories: revolutionary, participatory and left-oriented. The second typology is characterized by the mode of mobilization: they are either radical or moderate. In Morocco, the radicals are scarce and represent a minority, such as the Wahabbi Salafists and some militant groups such as Salafia Jihadia (Okacha, 2008: 47).

All the aforementioned typologies agree on the fact that Islamist movements are either radicals or moderates. However, they differ in labeling the third category such as syntheticals, conservatives and non-participants by Darif, Ismail and Okacha respectively, though they refer to the same category.

Table 1. A synthesis of Islamist movements' typologies (It is mine)

Darif	Ismail	Okacha
Radicals	Militants	Radicals
Syntheticals	Conservatives	Non participants
Reformists	Moderates	Moderates

Last but not least, many definitions have been used in the literature to define different trends among Islamism: moderate vs. radical or extremist, reformist vs. revolutionary, peaceful/civilian vs. violent or armed movements. While moderation and radicalism are by definition subjective and cannot be easily defined, the reformist-revolutionary divide could also be misleading in an authoritarian context and is likely to change over time within the same movement. This idea is of paramount importance in this study because it will assist my investigation into PJD's itinerary in quest for power.

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