

**Chapter 8: Chapter exercises**

**Globalization and Islam as a political ideology**

The end of the Cold War signalled the eventual triumph of liberal democracy and capitalism over communism, its main ideological adversary. As a result, many now regard liberalism as the mainstream and dominant ideological force in international affairs. However, in direct opposition to the perceived monopoly of western democratic models, Islam (although far from being unified and coherent in its doctrine), not communism, currently stands as a major global ideological alternative to the pervasive spread of liberalism and its associated socio-economic traits.

Islam as a political ideology in the contemporary sense (also known as the 'Islamic Revival') came to be in the aftermath of the 1967 Six-Day War, after the defeat of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan by Israeli forces. With the effective failure of the pan-Arab movement, Islam was able to renew its political significance. From the early 1970s, there was a significant rise in the use of Islamic language and symbols not only by the state but also by social and political movements, which had begun to mushroom in the region and beyond. One example was the ideology of Hassan al-Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood, which presented the newly educated middle class with a way to respond to their sensibilities and aspirations for reform and change.

The rise of globalization had a massive impact on the Middle East as well as on political Islam. In Egypt, President Anwar Sadat pursued a more 'open door' policy for Egypt and looked to the West. Within the world of political Islam, this meant further cooperation between Arab Islamists with more global Islamic movements. The 1970s saw several militant groups splinter from the Muslim Brotherhood to later become part of the global jihad movement known as al-Qaeda. The rise of these global Islamic groups can also be explained against the backdrop of Cold War geopolitics. Due to windfall revenues after the oil shock of the early 1970s and its rivalry with Iran, Saudi Arabia tried to gain leadership of the Islamic world by funding mosques and religious education around the world. This directly contributed to the promotion of Wahhabi Islam, which assimilated well with parts of conservative Muslim countries like Pakistan. Another key event was the 1979 revolution in Iran, led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. In an effort to export the revolution, the Islamic government also began funding and founding groups abroad, including Hezbollah in Lebanon.

That same year, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, thus further providing a new opportunity for Islamism to become implicated in the Cold War. Islamist movements and groups found funding from a typically unlikely source, the United States. In the long term, this saw the training and arming of groups such as the Mujahedin. Afghanistan thus became an important training ground for would-be jihadists from around the world, the most famous being the Saudi Osama bin Laden. After the Soviets were driven out, the Taliban established a government and Afghanistan came under austere and strict Sharia governance.

In the post-Cold War globalized world, the MENA region has thus far failed to produce a real alternative to the spread of free market liberalism throughout the area, although it has seen a huge

rise in political Islam, not least in the rise of so-called Islamic State, which you can read more about at the links below.

***In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, do you feel that Islam is able currently to present a realistic alternative to authoritarian leaders?***

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/isis>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11476731/The-brutality-of-Islamic-State.html>

<http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-genesis-and-growth-of-global-jihad>

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/04/04/world/middleeast/isis-documents-mosul-iraq.html>