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paper

# **RADICALISM AND MODERATION IN THE ARAB REGIMES**



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- **About the author:**

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- **Paper abstract:**

After the events of Sep 11<sup>th</sup>, the Arab world has been divided into 2 extreme poles ( moderate and radical) , and almost putting all Islamists within the radical pole, starting with Hamas in Palestine, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt ending up with Hezbollah in Lebanon. While putting all Arab countries in the second pole of moderation like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Palestinian authority, morocco, Tunisia and others leaving Syria the only reluctance country as a result of it alliance with Iran, despite the absence of any resisting behaviour in the Syrian regime. This approach remained credible to the former American administration and the European union, despite the intentions of president Obama to get out of this mere dualism , looking for other real dimensions that could help understanding the complicated situation in the Arab world and getting both parties into their suitable place away from what the pretend to be.

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This paper is one of a non periodical serial of papers produced by the Forum,  
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team, the papers does not necessarily reflect the Forum Opinion.

No doubt that shades of duality (moderate and radical ) exist in the Arab world even before George Bush in the era of the former president (Anwar Al-Sadat) which is After the initiative of peace made by President Al-Sadat, the Arab world was divided into moderates and radicals, peaceful path promoters and resisting path ones leading to the existence of the axes of rebel led by the Baathist systems in Iraq and Syria. Without shooting a bullet to Israeli army that is still occupying Julian ( part of the Syrian territory) till now

Egypt was also accused of betrayal to Arabs which left a tough mark on a wide stratum of the Egyptian public opinion that isolated itself after any crisis, under the pretext that Arabs wanted to engage into war with Israel till the death of the last Egyptian soldier. Despite the Arab contribution of money and soldiers in “the 73 War” was clear and notable.

### **A New definition for the Moderation Concept:**

Although moderation concept in Arab world was considered as a shame to most of the Arabs, because it always meant having special relation with the United states and the normalization with Israel, till the first model that refreshed the meaning of being moderate ( that came from a country that has a regional weight like Turkey) , although it has relations with Israel, a membership in the NATO, has a radical secular regime against Islam and the Islamic culture, ending up with the acceptance of ruling civil party that respects the Islamic culture and values (justice and development).

The new Turkish government under the rule of (Tayeb Ardogan) took many strict stances against the Israeli attack against Gaza, exceeding many of both radical and moderate Arab regimes’ stances. The Turkish model turned into a recognized model and a force of pressure on Israeli massacres despite the tries made by the Muslim brotherhood to prove its invalidity as a non-Muslim experience.

The Turkish prime minister criticized Israel with a wise, well-said words unlike what usually happens in Arab countries that they use naive language against Israel, making sure he shows sympathy with the Gazans- not as a Muslim- but as a human being, without falling in the anti-Semitism trap, to make it inevitable and credible to the international community . Condemning Israeli actions as war crimes and that it should be accounted for them.

No doubt that Turkey is an advanced moderate country; it is a part of the international system, dissolved with it in an economical way, achieving its political and economical reform especially in the past 10 years, as it

didn't stand still Egypt thorough out 30 years. This held Turkey responsible for building relationships with the West to develop both economical and political institutions with a real democratic system.

It wasn't enough for Turkey to condemn Israel, but it also listened to Hamas's needs and considered it a partner to negotiate and joined a position (yet marginal) in the Western decision makers cycles (despite the increase of its influence in the research centers in Europe and the U.S), it sees the importance of the dialogue with the moderate Islamic notion, looking at Hamas as a (national liberation movement) not a terrorist group, although it has many mistakes and a closed ideological discourse, but it can develop to be a part of the political process or at least a notion in it.

There is a great notion in Arab countries outside the official elite and another one in turkey outside the official elite that see Hamas as ( a movement that was democratically elected by the Palestinians and it had faced an international and regional siege in an early phase , and the decision of the violating the fire-cease and launch missiles again , without any awareness of the consequences, but we have to remember that Gaza was totally occupied (land, air and sea) by the Israeli siege, where the Palestinians were deprived of food and medical care in a unjust, non-humanitarian scene.

Egypt didn't even try to be a real moderate country, as it considers its relations with the U.S as strategic one to adopt democracy internally so that it can have a greater influence abroad, to keep the Egyptian stance a strange one, because we cannot say that Egypt is a moderate country like Turkey and it is also not a reluctance country like Iran. And its media discourse could be has features of both discourses; sometimes it becomes moderate where the enemy is (Hamas and the Muslim brotherhood)and talks about peace and democracy while some other times its discourse turns to be radical when it comes to the American criticism of the human rights in Egypt .

### **The Islamic movements in equal of moderation and radicalism**

The Arab regimes described moderate are not reflecting these concepts, as they are non-democratic regimes and have dozens of political and economical problems. The Arab countries also know many resistant movements i.e.: Hamas and Hezbollah and sometimes conservative movements like the Muslim brotherhood. They also didn't contribute to liberating Palestine or bringing democracy to Egypt

About the resisting type, they nowadays are nominally (resistant movements) but in practice they have a new different agenda hiding behind “resistance”. Hezbollah was a resisting group till the liberation of South Lebanon in 2000 then they turned to be a sectarian-militia extending the Iranian role in the area. The same thing could be applied to Hamas; away from their political and ideological slogans “resistance” and abode by the cease with Israel and became unable to raise a weapon to Israel’s face, and only attacked Abbas and the Palestinian authority, what makes it practically difficult to call the movement a resisting movement. The failure of changing into a moderate movement to promote democracy and peace through the international agreements to enter a non-stop political and media battle with Israel and the international system to seize the Palestinians’ rights.

It is also sure that when Hamas took charge of the Palestinian government forming the first “brotherhood” elected government in the Arab world, requires extra needs different than those at the time of the armed resistance movements. Hence, it was required to present new more (non-ideological) alternatives based upon the local and international balance of powers and not Hamas’ requirements and wishes.

As a matter of fact the strategy of “breaking Hamas” adopted by former the American administration that is built on the economic siege, led to linger the vicious circle that hampers Hamas’s political or ideological reconsideration of its stance towards Israel, and reversed any will or international ability to lobby Israel to abide by the international legitimacy, meaning the ongoing claim by Hamas and the Islamic groups of the “conspiracy theory” that states the enmity of the West against Islam and Muslims which led them to enmity to stay behind the barriers of extremist discourse.

The United States chose not to deal with Hamas, because it is a threat to Israeli’s national security, looking at the Israeli attacks on Gaza strip with all the crimes committed against the innocent civilians as “self-defense” with a shocking stance to humans before any specific political orientations.

This exclusion environment became similar to the regional Arab one as they also wanted to exclude Hamas even if they announced the opposite

The American stance of refusing the dialogue with “the Islamic Hamas” for the sake of Israel was impressive if we compared it to the American effort exerted to invite the Iraqi Islamic fractions headed by “the Islamic Iraqi party that belongs to Muslin Brotherhood and it even more conversed with the violent Islamic fractions that practice some violent actions against occupation and some other times against civilians and innocents which shows a great deal of contradiction especially that the

American side insisted on the Iraqi fractions' participation in the political process, recognizing the role of the religious "Shee'a" in the political process, while it totally refused the results of the Palestinian elections because it resulted in the victory of Hamas ( more moderate than the other Sunni-Iraqi )

No doubt that Hamas's experience qualified the movement to be more radical with both liberal and democratic meanings of the term, but it didn't exert any effort to develop, and the international system didn't help them too, so it remained help her to move forward to this direction. so Hamas stayed locked in the illusion of the victory reflected in controlling the strip under siege and consider that its final aim .

We can notice the paradox of the handling this conservative power internationally, as it succeeded at eliminating the military powers of those movements, but it failed to turn them into a moderate power, or at least contribute to this transformation.

So everybody contributed to consecrate the indolence of the Arab region as it eliminated the real meaning of resisting occupation, and the creation of real political movements that struggle for their political rights and independence in a democratic way.

Definitely the Israeli politics is responsible for weakening the credibility of the Palestinian authority to the Palestinian and Arab citizens, making the failure of the "moderate" secular and extremist Islamists the main gate for movements like "Al-Ka'ada" to enter the region as an expression of depression and vain.

### **Which context are the Arab Islamists in?**

Questions regarding the democratic- political reform resulted in a discourse where Islamists are seen as an obstacle to democracy. The real question in this case regarding the relation between the Islamic groups and the political reform path is to know if the these groups have structural deficits that halt the democratic openness and if the obstacles to their democratic dissolution are "genetic" in other words according to the nature of the philosophy the movement was based on ? Or if the problem is related to the main political frame of the Islamic movements!

Based on that logic we can imagine a fragile democratic framework and a reform to the Islamic discourse to be suitable to the democratic basic principles.

In general, the history of both ideas and political movements was always connected to socio-political framework, and it is difficult to separate

changes made by the European socialists 1960 and 70s, and the liberal atmosphere in Western Europe.

Political Parties in Western Europe witnessed a different experience than those other Eastern European countries under the uni-party system. Hence, we can't separate the Islamic movements discourse in the Arab world and the nature of political systems and the social facts surrounding them.

The critical dialogue with Hamas is inevitable, as many of its sayings should be refused, making the critical dialogue with the international system the main tool to develop it, counting on the duty of the international society to include moderate Islamists and resistant systems (even if they were wrong sometimes ) in the international system. Like what it did with many radical movements in Europe after the WWII. In addition that the European Union's experience is an integrating one, either in dealing with either European Muslims, or the measures on which they accept new member states in the union. All these values can be a good base for a critical dialogue with radical movements in the Arab world to help them turn to moderation and democracy, and finally to abide by the international legitimacy rules that both Israel and Hamas violate.

So the ongoing boycott to Hamas that everyone does is illogic without any lobbying on Israel at least for supporting the "moderates project" "the Palestinian authority" to build an independent Palestinian state, at the same time we think that holding an Arab democratic stable world is possible to come to existence.

## **Conclusion**

The Arab world's crisis is not due to the disagreement between moderates and conservatives, but in the absence of a right way to establish a healthy democratic interaction between both parties, in several cases that were radical powers trying to make changes via revolution and extremist ideas and critics to the dominating system. But the development of these powers was a result of the interaction with a political-democratic system that allowed extremist powers to be dissolvable, and to develop its discourse to have critical view to the current political equation.

Concerning the danger of existing power that tries to destroy the legitimacy of the regime or violate the basic principles of its legitimacy. In many societies some leftist-revolutionary powers wanted to destroy the existing capitalist system "or any other ideological movements", yet the

question is how these systems built modern democratic institutions turning most of these powers to reforming powers within the regime, i.e. how communist parties in Europe changed to be socialists within the political system interacting with the system itself criticizing itself within. This also happened in a similar Turkish experience, in 1995 when Al-Rafah party got to power which is- in my own point of view- the Turkish version of the Muslim brotherhood, this experience within clear rules and modern institutions yet not fully democratic let in the end to halt the experience and the launch of a new party “justice and development” in 2002 to reconsider the old party’s cases and ideas to turned to be part of the running political system.

What happened in the Arab world is failure to both parties due to many issues related to the regional environment, on the other side the local environment and the internal political system.

The current scene became the existence of moderate powers unable to make democratic transition , others are conservative outside the political action, while other resistant are unable to have legitimacy within its own borders, territory or even the international system.

Respecting democratic principles help having a dialogue with the radical powers in the Arab world to direct them towards political participation, and develop to respect the international legitimacy. It is expected that everybody stops to boycott Hamas without practicing real pressuring on Israel; if a political dialogue took place with Hamas in parallel with making real pressure on Israel, the “moderates’ project” to establish an independent Palestinian state will be easier, opening the door for a new birth to a stable- democratic Arab world.