

pered and assumed the leading role. The head of the brotherhood expects, and receives, total submission from his faithful, being considered divine.

There are, moreover, five basic religious orders: the Qadiriyyah, the Khelwatiyyah, Shadhiliyyah, Naqshbandiyyah and Suhrawardiyyah, and their branches are numerous.

Lastly, it was not surprising that the proliferation of sects and dissident groups should lead to the appearance of reform movements advocating a return to the sources of tradition and, in particular, the re-establishment of theocratic authority. At the head of these reform movements was the Wahhabi sect, to which belongs the royal family of Saudi Arabia, whose founder, Mohamed Ibn Sa'ud, embraced this doctrine. The common factor in these reform movements is perhaps the encouragement they gave to national emancipation — what we could call today national "liberation".

Driving force

The purpose of this brief glance at Islam is to establish by disproving the homogeneity of the phenomenon — namely the religion, its practice, and the values it represents — that Islam, both in the Arab and non-Arab world, serves as the seed of nationalism and, once this nationalism has been awakened, becomes its driving force.

Although the doctrinal controversies and "seditious" interpretations within Islam are insurmountable, religion is nevertheless a unifying element in the face of Western intrusion. It should also be noted that according to Islam, Marxist-Leninist ideology is also a pernicious Western invention and, more than that, the product of what today is still referred to as "international Jewry". This paradox may be found in yet another context: the designation "Zionist-imperialist" supposedly applies to Israel and the United States, yet some Islamic countries are allied to the Soviet Union, whose ideology is an "invention of the Jews" for the purpose of world domination. What is even more noteworthy is the fact that atheist Marxist-Leninist ideology is, according to Islam, a form of influence to be fought even more vigorously than the infidel and materialistic, but nevertheless monotheistic, capitalist forces. Infidel does not mean unbelieving, which explains Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's statement that the area should be rid of atheists, namely the Soviets; for Arabs, Jews and Americans — especially Jimmy Carter — have a common belief, if not a common religion.

In order to combat the intrusive and degrading influence of the West, whose exactions have been accompanied by a weakening of religious practice in Dar al-Islam, one must return to the unchanging values and principles of the Koran, which is not only a religious book, but also the inviolable sum of all social rules. It was this that led the Moslem Brothers

in Egypt to state well before the proclamation of an Islamic republic by the Ayatollah Khomeini, that "the Koran is our constitution".

In other words, and contrary to the claims of some, the anti-Western movement and the repudiation of its values is due to a return to Islamic sources, that is, an attempt to revive the dream of Arab greatness through conservative religious zeal.

In the final analysis, this means two things: that this nationalism will inevitably come into conflict with another nationalism, also inspired by Islam but grounded in a different, if not opposite, tradition; and that two anti-Western Islamic movements will not necessarily converge, but may, at a future date, find themselves radically opposed and attempting to renew ties with the West, whose influence would have been curtailed in the preceding period.

Thus one may turn to Mustafa Kemal for an example and conclude that, after 60 years, this "absurd theology", which should be eradicated, is more alive than ever, and if Sunnite Turkey is threatened by instability, it is certainly not because of a disease contracted from the virus that attacked Shiite Iran. Turkey has been carrying the painful seeds of an identity crisis for 60 years.

The bloody conflicts in Afghanistan, which is now a Marxist country, are an indication of the fact that this ideology comes into conflict with religious authorities and principles, and that, from one ethnic group to another, the rejection of this imported prototype begins with heightened religious feeling.

On the other hand, to return to our previous argument, the threat is not to a particular kind of regime, but is inversely proportional to the intensity of Islamic practice. This clearly explains — and here it is the surprise of the "observers" which is surprising — why, after Egypt and Israel had made peace, it was Saudi Arabia that took over the leadership of the states hostile to this "betrayal" of Arab Islam. The very concept of moderation when one speaks of Islamic regimes is a pitifully self-centred one, and it leads to a chain of errors. For although a given country may, in a given matter, adopt the American point of view, this so-called moderation affects only a superficial detail, and has little bearing on that regime's philosophy. Thus, the more "moderate" of two régimes is not necessarily the one that refuses to increase the price of its oil while proclaiming its religious leadership, but perhaps the one that increases the price while proclaiming its indifference to religious faith. A Wahhabite reformist is a nationalist in the full sense of the word, since his nationalism is based on Islam, whereas a supposedly extreme nationalist socialist is in a precarious position and no doubt sees socialism as a rapid means of attaining his ends.

In these circumstances, if the crescent is a symbol of anything, it is the symbol of the crescent moon of Islam.